

## Early History of Meyersdale

The pages that follow are a Meyersdale Republican newspaper article that was found among the papers of the late Irvin H. Dietle, my grandfather, who was born in 1899. The article was written by the 76 year old grandson of a pioneer who settled in the area in 1776. The date of the article is unknown. The Meyersdale Republican was founded in 1900.

Lannie Dietle, March 29, 2015

# A CHAPTER OF EARLY HISTORY OF MEYERSDALE

## One of Oldest Living Residents Jots Down His Recollections of Pioneer Families and Occurrences in the Olden Times.

How many residents of Meyersdale are familiar with the early history of the town? How many are aware that the place has had no less than half a dozen different names during its existence,—from the time that the first settlers came, about the beginning of the Revolutionary War, to the present day?

Only a few of the oldest living inhabitants can remember the time that it was known otherwise than as Meyersdale, and before that, as Meyers Mill. Yet it has been variously known since the beginning, as Sparta, Moyer Stadt, Moyer's Mieh, Meyers Mill, Fairfield, Coal Dale, Dale City and Meyersdale.

Mr. John M. Olinger, who is now 76 years of age, is perhaps the best posted man on the early history of the town now living. Mr. Olinger is frequently asked by his friends for information about the early history of the town. While his own recollections go back less than three quarters of a century, he remembers many of the traditions handed down to him by his parents and grandparents.

Mr. Olinger's grandfather located here in 1776 and originally owned the land on which the greater portion of the town of Meyersdale is now situated. At the urgent request of the editor of The Republican and others of his friends, Mr. Olinger has kindly written for publication some of his recollections of the early history of the town and its pioneers, which we present herewith.

Mr. Olinger has made only slight mention in his article of one of the prominent pioneer families, the Buechleys, or Beachleys, as the name is now spelled, for the reason that he is not so familiar with the history of that family as of others of whom he has written. He will let some one better qualified give the genealogy of that pioneer family and tell about the important part they took in founding the village.

evening to make this last stage of his journey. The Pocahontas people who sheltered him and his family were quite poor, yet they gave the best they had and sent the two men along without any pay.

Grandfather Olinger had his "tomahawk right" surveyed in 1784, and obtained a patent in Harrisburg in 1786. It contained 253 acres, and the "allowance" which gave 6 per cent. in addition, in size, and a number of valuable corners along the Casselman river, not included, which my father later had surveyed and for which he obtained a second patent which made the farm the size of about 275 acres, altogether.

### Original Land Owners.

The adjoining owners were Andrew Berntrager, on the south, now the Meyers land; Henry Ambrose on the east, now the E. M. Berkley farm; John Yother on the north, now the Marteny farm, and John Burgen, on the west, now the Marteny farm.

It may not be out of place to explain here that a "tomahawk right" was so called because in those early days when the greater part of this country was still an unsurveyed wilderness, and the colony of Pennsylvania was a dependency of the British crown, it was customary for a man who wanted land that was still part of the public domain, to select a site for a homestead, erect a cabin upon it and then with an ax, or tomahawk, fix the boundaries of his claim by blazing the bark off one side of the trees facing the body of the land he wished to appropriate. By "squating" on a certain length of time he could have the land surveyed and secure a patent for the same. The government, however, would not grant a "tomahawk right," and let

to keep the larder well supplied with meat at all times of the year. There was no legal protection for deer, or any other kind of game, then a back. Years ago the deer would travel and forth between the Allegheny ridge and Negro mountain, and some of the best deer trails passed right through the present site of Meyersdale and vicinity. I remember seeing on different occasions deer running through here on their way from one mountain to the other and many were shot on their journey.

Hogs cost very little, 20 to 25 cents for a four-weeks-old pig. They could be grown on acorns, chestnuts and hickory nuts.

### Traveled Miles for Salt.

Salt, which was almost indispensable, could not be had in the early days in this section of country. Some used certain wood ashes to preserve their meat, and in a few instances a few neighbors would take each two horses with pack saddles and go through the woods along trails so far east before they could buy a few bushels of salt that it took a week or ten days before they returned. They often went as far as Winchester, Va., for salt, and they found no shelter for the night, on the way, they would tether their horses and let them eat grass and leaves, while the men would eat what they had brought with them and roll themselves in blankets and sleep on the ground. A few bushels of salt supplied a family for several years.

The people then used no salt to melt the ice.

### Coffee Measured by the Grain.

In the early years of my grandfather coffee was a scarce article. Everybody used parched rye as a substitute. But a few of the wealthiest families would get a pound or two of "store" coffee, as they called it, which would last for a year or more. Only on special occasions would a few grains of store coffee be used with the rye. It was said that a prominent visitor, so she ordered her daughter to prepare dinner and mix seven grains of store coffee with the rye. The daughter discovered that they had only five grains any more. The mother said to use what they had.

### Some Early Buildings.

In 1790, Grandfather Olinger built a six-roomed house of hewn logs just about a rod to the south of the

...the reminiscences of  
my boyhood days and the early history  
of the town of Meyersdale, allow me  
to give a brief history of my ancestors  
as far back as known by my father  
and mother, and gathered from other  
sources dating back to 1749.

My great grandfather, Johan  
Ohlinger, came to this country in  
1749 and settled in Berks county,  
Pennsylvania. He emigrated from  
Germany and was of Polish descent.  
My grandfather, John Olinger, (he  
dropped the h from his name) was  
born in Berks county in 1750, but his  
father moved with his family a few  
years later to York county, Pa., near  
the Susquehanna river.

My grandfather Olinger was mar-  
ried in York county in 1775, to Mary  
Zuek, a Swiss girl, who came to this  
land west of the Allegheny river, near  
the Susquehanna river.

He started early in the year of 1776 on horse-  
back, and arrived in what is now  
Stonycreek township. Finding nothing  
there to suit him, he came to what  
is now Meyersdale and settled on the  
land for many years afterward known  
as the Olinger farm. There was then  
a small log hut where C. W. Truxal's  
dwelling house now stands. He occu-  
pied that for some time. It had  
about an acre of ground cleared  
around it. He bought a "Tomahawk"  
from Henry Ambrose, who had  
named the place Sparta. My grand-  
father paid 300 pounds for it (\$800, a  
Pennsylvania pound being \$2.66 2-3.)

#### Pioneering in Wilderness.

After he bought this land he return-  
ed to his family in York county,  
gathered his few goods and started in  
a two-horse wagon for his new home.  
He came by the way of Hagerstown  
and Cumberland, Md., following Gen.  
Braddock's trail, the route over which  
the National Road was later built. A  
few miles west of the present site of  
Frostburg, Md., he left that trail and  
struck out for Pocahontas, or a point  
near that ancient village, where stood  
an inhabited hut in which he put up  
for the night. He tethered his horses  
out in the open to help themselves  
with grass and leaves. Next morn-  
ing he fed his two horses a loaf of  
bread, his horse feed having given  
out. As the country between Poca-  
hontas and Sparta (now Meyersdale)  
was at that time an almost impene-  
trable forest, he secured the services  
of two men of the family whose hos-  
pitality he had enjoyed, to help him  
from there to his new home. It took  
from early morning until late in the

...the Peter Meyers  
...near Jonestown, Lebanon county, Pa.  
Jonestown is on the Swatara creek, a  
stream some larger than our Cassel-  
man river.

Grandfather Olinger lived here 41  
years, then sold the Olinger farm to  
my father in 1817, and moved to Tus-  
carawas county, Ohio.

My father was married in 1816. He  
paid 3000 pounds, equal to \$8000, for  
the farm.

The war with England from 1812  
to 1815 raised the price of all pro-  
ducts which naturally increased the  
value of land. During that war a  
two-year-old steer would bring \$40.00;  
wheat, \$2.50 per bushel; rye, \$1.00;  
butter, 25 cents per pound; eggs, 25  
cents per dozen. My father worked  
almost his entire lifetime to pay  
for his farm, because the first year  
after he had bought it the bottom of  
all farm products dropped out. A  
two-year-old steer then would sell for  
\$10.00; wheat, 75 cents per bushel;  
rye, 40 cents per bushel; eggs, 6 cents  
per dozen; butter, 10 cents per pound.

#### Hardships of Pioneers.

My father often related the hard-  
ships his parents had in those pioneer  
days. There was no money. People  
then needed very little money except  
for taxes. Clothing was all home  
made. Flax was raised and prepared  
for the loom to make the linen and  
summer wear, and wool raised and  
prepared for the loom for the winter  
clothes. The women would spin the  
flax in the winter on their little spin-  
ning wheels and the wool in the sum-  
mer on the large wool wheels. There  
were then a number of looms in the  
country. To color the yarn, copers  
and ashes made into lye was the color  
and about all linen pantslooms were  
white and yellow barred. About all  
woolen goods were colored with but-  
ternut bark; it made a brown color  
and cost nothing but the labor. A  
little later about all woolen goods  
were colored with madder, a cheap  
red color.

#### Plenty of Wild Meat.

The meat eaten in those days con-  
sisted principally of venison and pork.  
Venison cost nothing but the price of  
the powder and shot used in slaying  
the deer, and as the animals were  
tame and plentiful and the pioneers  
expert marksmen with the flint-lock  
musket, or more modern percussion  
cap rifle, it did not take many shots

...in Bedford county.  
...and secured all the timber in it to  
Brothersvalley township.  
Somerset county came into exist-  
ence in 1795. Previous to that date  
it was Bedford county.

The birth of Summit township was  
in the year 1842. Previous to that  
time this section of the county was  
Brothersvalley township.

This explains how the timber was  
cut in Bedford county and Brothes-  
valley township for buildings men-  
tioned.

#### Olinger Genealogy.

Grandfather Olinger had seven chil-  
dren, all born here, four sons and  
three daughters. The sons were  
John, Christian, Jacob and Abraham.  
The daughters were Anne, Elizabeth  
and Mary. Anne was married to  
Jacob Peck, grandfather to our Jacob  
W. Peck, and maternal great grand-  
father to our William Peck.

My parents had seven children,  
three sons and four daughters. The  
sons were William, Jacob and the  
writer, John M. The daughters were  
Mary, Eliza, Annie and Catharine.  
William died when 23 years old, and  
Jacob died when 22 years old, both  
single. Mrs. S. H. Garey (Catharine,)  
now living at Carleton, Neb., is now  
78 years old. She and I are the only  
living representatives of the family.

I considered myself of some im-  
portance when I was old enough  
to go along with my sister, Catharine,  
to drive the cows. One field, I re-  
member very readily, I liked to take  
them to, was the field where McCa's  
news stand is located at present.  
That narrow alley between McCa's  
place and the stone building was  
the line between the Olinger and  
Meyers properties. Formerly a pe-  
road leading from here to E.  
divided the land, the line run-  
ning about in the middle of the road.  
My father sold up to the line. This  
is all on the Meyers side.

#### First Town Surveys.

The first land my father sold  
the farm was four acres to Peter  
Wm. Meyers. It included about  
along Centre street to the Flaugh-  
bridge, thence down the creek to  
laundry, thence to power house, thence  
to McCune's to place of beginning.  
In 1844 my father had about  
acres surveyed and laid off in  
lots on both sides of Main street,  
starting from the Smith alley and  
west to near the B. & O. railroad  
the east. The size of these lots  
one-fourth of an acre, 66 feet front  
165 feet deep. The lot where  
D. C. C. Ho-

...settled in  
...miles east  
...Pioneer Meyer  
...Moyer, Jr.,  
...two sons an  
...sons were Pe  
...the daughter  
...Moyer, Jr., was  
...creek  
...age of 44 year  
...Moyer or Me  
...called in Engl  
...1807 and died in 18  
...to Lydia Miller;  
...They had eight child  
...two daughters. The  
...sons Joseph, Wil  
...Detail and Jacob.  
...intency. The d  
...Barbara E. and da  
...surviving.

...William Meyers w  
...died in 1853, ag  
...married to Mar  
...to  
...children—one  
...daughters. The s  
...Jacob, now deceased  
...wed Annie, (Mrs. A  
...ed) and Emma, unma  
...in Meyersdale.  
...Eliza, the daughter  
...Jr. and a sister to P  
...Meyers, was marri  
...Buchly. The two  
...and William, always  
...posed towards each o  
...abilities, intell

...the average cle  
...When the  
...drowned, they w  
...but managed th  
...and were partne  
...William Meyers, wh  
...will directing a  
...partnership whic  
...the brothers.  
...a willingness  
...the proper  
...William getting five do  
...dollars. The w  
...the letter.

...Townsite Enlar  
...1852 my father had  
...lots laid off o  
...Main street, from Gr  
...B. & O. railroad  
...alley considerable  
...and than at the east  
...blunder as to the s  
...Main street, and  
...to all other lo  
...D. C. C. Ho-

Nauge block is located brought the highest price at the public sale of that survey, \$195.00. Some were sold as low as \$50.00.

Golfrey Bittner, a blacksmith, built the first house on this survey on the present site of the Hartley store. The surveyor failed to get these lots at a proper angle which makes it a difficult matter to set buildings flush on main street, especially below Centre street.

#### Various Names of Village.

The town was now named Fairfield. The office, however, was continued at the Mill. Later the town was named Coal Dale, then Dale City. On account of the many names it finally resulted in a judicial contest, when the court decided in favor of naming it Myersdale.

The town was named in honor of the Meyers family, although the Meyers, or Moyer family were not the earliest settlers, but as they owned the mill and were most prominent in business for many years, the place became known as Moyer's Mill. In Pennsylvania German, and Meyers in English.

#### History of Meyers Family.

Jacob Moyer, Sr., lived in Lebanon, Pa. He was married to a Buechly. She died about the year, 1800 according to my mother's recollection. They had six children three sons and 3 daughters. The sons were Jacob, John and Christian. Jacob was married to Barbara Yorty, from Lebanon county. The daughters were Magdalena, Catharine. Magdalena was married to a Henry

to Jacob Olinger.

Moyer, Sr., came to this county about 1785 and purchased a tract of land from Andrew Bern... and soon after that bought a tract of land from a Buechly on which a tub mill thereon erected, where the Buhl & Gatesman mill now stands. The mill was built about 1780.

Jacob Moyer, Jr., was born in 1783. When 31 years old, or about the year 1814, he came to this county, he and his brother-in-law, Henry Meyers, who was married to Magdalena, and took possession of all the Jacob Meyer, Sr., land which they obtained as an inheritance. Of the six children of Jacob Moyer, Sr., four of them settled in this county, namely, Christian, John, Jr., Magdalena and Catharine. Christian bought from a Trushall, where C. C. Heckel now lives. Catharine, my mother, settled on the Olinger farm. Jacob and Magdalena

About the year 1869 Peter Meyers laid off a number of lots. The size of those fronting on Flat and Second avenue is 40 by 120 feet; on Large street, 50 by 150 feet, except where the Flaugherty creek made it necessary to make some deeper and some shorter; on Keystone street the same size, with a few exceptions.

In 1869 and '70, I built the house I now live in. C. G. Lint built right below me about the same time, and John Topper built the one above me a year later, now the Mrs. Albert Graves property.

My father, Jacob Olinger, built what is known as the "yellow house," in 1848. In his account book, which is in my possession, the charges and the credits show that wheat sold then for \$1.00 to \$1.25 per bushel; 56 cents for rye; 35 to 40 cents for oats; 6 1/4 to 7 cents per pound for sugar; 8 cents for lard; butter 12 to 15 cents.

The best laborer worked then from sunrise to sunset at from 40 to 50 cents per day and board. A first class stone mason received \$1.00 a day and board; a good carpenter, from 62 1/2 to 75 cents per day and board.

#### Civil War Times.

The next date of any importance was the Civil war from about 1861 to 1865 when a number of citizens were drafted. I also figured in that draft. We here were required to report at Chambersburg for duty. Some were pronounced unfit upon examination; some put in substitutes and many went into the service. I paid the commutation fees; so did many others. The road from here to Chambersburg was very bad, the country was returning and some going. This county was required to report by townships, and as there was no railroad through here, the drafted men went by private conveyance and were quite merry.

On April 1, 1864, my wife and I commenced housekeeping. I paid \$5.50 for 10 pounds of green coffee. Calico sold for about 40 cents or over. Butter brought from 40 to 55 cents per pound for the whole summer's product, according to quality. A two-year-old steer brought from \$40.00 to \$50.00; wheat, \$2.00 to \$2.50 per bushel; oats, \$1.00 per bushel; dressed hogs, 14 to 15 cents per pound. Wages were about the same as now.

#### Amusing Incidents.

Many amusing incidents occurred in my life and many would not bear to be published. But allow me to state a few innocent anecdotes. In my early days there were

#### Dog's Long Journey.

I remember of my mother telling me that when Jacob Moyer, Jr., moved from Lebanon county, Pa., to this place, he brought a favorite dog along. The dog evidently got homesick and returned to his old home, a distance of about 175 miles, and as there was no bridge across the Susquehanna river, he must have swam the river, which is about a mile wide at Harrisburg.

J. M. OLINGER.

#### POLITICAL ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Cardinals reading office at the Primary Election June 3rd, 1911, can have their cards inserted in The Republican at \$5.00 each during the interim, cash to accompany the order in all cases. Rates and terms for other campaign printing and advertising will be furnished on application. Our facilities are of the best for turning out quick and satisfactory work. Photo engravings supplied in any size, and of best quality, on short notice, at very low prices.

FOR COUNTY TREASURER,

**HARRY B. FREEBURN,**  
OF WINDBER BOROUGH.

Subject to the decision of the Republican voters at the Primary Election to be held on Saturday, June 3rd, 1911. Your vote and influence respectfully solicited.

FOR COUNTY TREASURER,

**U. F. RAYMAN,**  
OF BROTHERSVALLEY TOWNSHIP.

Subject to the decision of the Republican voters at the Primary Election to be held on Saturday, June 3rd, 1911. Your vote and influence respectfully solicited.

FOR COUNTY COMMISSIONER,

**MILLARD W. WALKER,**  
OF BROTHERSVALLEY TOWNSHIP.

Subject to the decision of the Democratic voters at the Primary Election to be held on Saturday, June 3rd, 1911. Your vote and influence respectfully solicited.

FOR COUNTY COMMISSIONER,

**C. C. HECKLE,**  
OF SUMMIT TOWNSHIP.

Subject to the decision of the Republican voters at the Primary Election to be held on Saturday, June 3rd, 1911. Your vote and influence respectfully solicited.

FOR DIRECTOR OF THE POOR,

**J. W. PECK,**  
OF SUMMIT TOWNSHIP.

Subject to the decision of the Republican voters at the Primary Election to be held on Saturday, June 3rd, 1911. Your vote and influence respectfully solicited.

FOR SHERIFF,

**J. W. HANNA,**  
OF NEW CENTREVILLE BOROUGH.

Subject to the decision of the Republican voters at the Primary Election to be held on Saturday, June 3rd, 1911. Your vote and influence respectfully solicited.

C. W.

where C. C. Heckel lives. Catherine, my mother, settled on the farm. Jacob and Magdalena Anna, married to ... settled in Dauphin county, miles east of Harrisburg.

**Pioneer Meyers Drowned.**  
 Peter Moyer, Jr., had three children—two sons and one daughter. The sons were Peter and William, and the daughter, Eliza. Jacob Moyer, Jr., was drowned in the ... creek in the year 1827, at the age of 44 years.

Peter Moyer or Meyers, as the name was called in English, was born in 1807 and died in 1870. He was married to Lydia Miller; she died in 1873. They had eight children, six sons and two daughters. The sons were Cyrus, Nelson, Joseph, William H., (doctor) Dennis and Jacob. Jacob died in infancy. The daughters were Barbara E. and Ida E., the last named still surviving.

William Meyers was born in 1811 and died in 1853, aged 42 years. He was married to Mary Miller, a sister to ... children—one son and two daughters. The son's name was Jacob, now deceased. The daughters were Annie, (Mrs. A. F. John, deceased) and Emma, unmarried and residing in Meyersdale.

Eliza, the daughter of Jacob Moyer, Jr. and a sister to Peter and William Meyers, was married to Daniel Beachly. The two brothers, Peter and William, always were kindly disposed towards each other, and in business abilities, intelligence and good judgment, they were considerably above the average citizen of this community. When their father, Jacob, was drowned, they were quite young yet, but managed the estate fairly well and were partners in business.

William Meyers, who died in 1853, will directing a dissolution of the partnership which existed between the brothers. That will decreed a willingness to divide the property in the proportion of 5 to 7, William getting five dollars to Peter's ... dollars. The will was carried out to the letter.

In the year 1856 the estate was appraised, both real and personal. The estate was appraised by two men from Somerset, I think, C. Benford and J. ...

**Townsite Enlarged.**  
 In 1852 my father had about thirty additional lots laid off on both sides of ... street, from Grant street to ... B. & O. railroad. In making ... alley considerable wider at the west end than at the east, it corrected the blunder as to the shape of the lots on Main street, and gives a proper front to all other lots north of ...

to be published. ... state a few innocent anecdotes. In my early days there were ... and several men in the ... The late ... Foust was my father's shoemaker. In the fall, as a general rule, the shoemakers were so rushed with work that it took from 4 to 6 weeks before a customer could get his shoes; he was supposed to take his turn. Peter Albright, now living in town, when a boy lived with my parents and went to school in the winter. My father promised him a pair of boots—the first he ever had—and when he had his measure taken he did not get them so soon as he wanted them. He went to Mr. Foust about every day for his boots. Mr. Foust took for an excuse that he could not make them until the people butchered as he was just about out of bristles which were necessary to adjust to the wax threads. Mr. Albright was about 10 years old then. He concluded he would overcome that difficulty. At dinner time he ate just ... minutes—and went out. And soon the pigs in the pen commenced to squeal and I, wishing to finish eating, was a little slow to investigate. But cutting my meal short, I ran to the stable and met Peter coming out with a bunch of bristles in one hand and a big pair of tongs in the other. When I asked him what was the matter with the pigs, he answered that Mr. Foust could not make his boots until he got bristles "and now I have them." He showed me how high the big pig jumped when he jerked a pincer full of bristles out of his back.

The joke was too good on Mr. Foust. I did not say anything about it, but in a few days the boy had his boots.

**Early School Teachers.**  
 My first school teacher was Michael Glotfelty. He was determined to carry out that he was master of the situation, and he punished the disobedient severely. There were then no common or free schools and many grown boys from the country came to school for from two to three miles around. Later M. D. Miller, Gen. W. H. Koontz, Dr. C. G. Stutzman and a few other noted teachers taught the Meyersdale school. The common school system came into existence in Summit township about 1844.

I remember that when I was probably 22 years old I went with Joseph Keim, who was a successful hunter, to hunt deer, and I had a grand opportunity that day to shoot a deer, but I had forgotten that I had a gun until the deer was out of sight. My chief thoughts were to get out of the way, so the deer would not run over me.

FOR CLERK OF THE COURTS,  
**WILSON C. PAUL,**  
 OF GREENVILLE TOWNSHIP.

Subject to the decision of the Republican voters at the Primary Election to be held on Saturday, June 3rd, 1911. Your vote and influence respectfully solicited.

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L. J. Esken will sell a carload of draught and general purpose Horses the same day. Mr. Esken is an expert horseman and has selected for this sale **the very best**. They will be stabled at the Slicer Hotel barn, where they can be **looked over** before the sale.

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