

Chapter VIII

Tales and Folklore

Kauffman Farm

An old homestead was located in a wooded area on the brink of south side of area where Camp Security was located in the early 1900s at the end of a road, now gone, beyond the Kauffman farm buildings.

Horace (or Isaac) and Amanda Landis lived in this house, built of logs and covered with boards. This writer has childhood memories from the early 1940s of a house foundation, a fenced-in garden, vegetables and flowers, which bloomed profusely in the summertime. By 1979, it was all in deterioration. Shared by Charles and Anna Lease, Horace and Amanda had these known children: George, James, (who lived in Stony Brook), Salinda and Lacinda. The family lived in Waser home in Stony Brook (the house was torn down when the Stony Brook Shopette was built); Amanda's daughter, Emma, married a Sutton. Amanda (known as "Mom" Landis) and her son George still lived there in the early 1920s. Mr. Frank Paules (born 12-7-1895) lived on the Kauffman Farm. He played croquet in the area where Camp Security had been in operation. He remembers, when they worked the farm, there was a fence and a tree in the area. They threw stones removed from a circle in this area. There was no writing on these stones. He believed these stones were unmarked grave markers from the war.

Frank's wife, Estella (born July 25, 1907), provided information about "Mom". On the premises of the log house in which they lived was also a barn. There was a road came up past the Mennonite cemetery and back past the Landis', past Daenke's property, and below the Poorbaugh's homestead. Speaking of this area, Arlene Imes shared information about the Landis homestead. Earl Landis earlier owned the Poorbaugh farm. The roadway from Poorbaugh's continued out to what is now the East Prospect Road. Beyond Amanda Landis', a Dettinger lived. Arlene's parents, Clayton and Clara (Smith) Diets, lived near Locust Grove in area of Wisheaven, where Mr. Dietz had a blacksmith shop, from which he then later located in Springettsbury Township. Mr. Paules later farmed for Kauffmans. Frank Paules parents were Clayton and Catherine Paules. A spring near Amanda (Mom) Landis' home supplied her needs and the Kauffman farm. The water was provided from the spring by wooden pipes. Frank Paules helped Charlie Kauffman put new pipes in along the creek and on this side of what was then an orchard. It was shared that Civil War soldiers (Confederate) rested there on their way to Wrightsville in June 1863. Area where Mom Landis lived (around 1900) was not wooded. She used land (rent free) for a truck farm.

A small home was located just west of the Kauffman farm. Earlier was a Fitzkee. In 1940s Samuel Knaub lived here. Sam's wife's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Moul, lived on the first farm west of the Mennonite cemetery on Stone Ridge Road. Lillian Rowe's residence is part of what was Moul homestead.

The Kauffman farm is now the John Weist farm, and was owned by Brubakers when Camp Security was in existence. Daniel Brubaker owned the land, four and a half miles east of York. When the Camp Security was built 100 acres was cleared, and then they cleared an added 30 acres, which he filed a claim for and later received. This was about 1780s. In 1800, Jacob Holtzinger owned this land for three quarters of a century. In 1886, Isaac Kauffman owned it. Great grandfather came here from Lancaster County; his grandfather

Joseph Kauffman married Susan Sprengle. They are buried in the Mennonite cemetery on Stone Ridge Road after having had 11 children. Isaac owned a farm in Stony Brook area. His three sons, Joseph, Alan and Charles, had the farm. Charles never married. He lived in a small house on property in 1940s. Alan Kauffman's children: Grace, Frances, and Clair, who managed the farm, which were farmed for half shares by Albert Snyder. Grace married a Mr. Nau. Alan and Charles Kauffman received transfer #4319 from Joseph Kauffman, December 31, 1909.

A Fish Tale

Horace Smyser owned the property on Sherman Street in the area of our sewer treatment plant. The large brick house had quarters for two families – the owner and a tenant farmer.

Martin Schaeffer and Mabel later owned the property. Across the road were two homes and a small stone building. William and Mar Heindel lived in one of these. Their son, Russell, shared the gold fish story with us.

The Smyser as a private grinding mill used the stone structure on the east side of Sherman Street. Students of Vo-Tech, per Springettsbury Township desire, restored it, as they now own this area as part of their sewer treatment plant property.

Russell remembers the area at the corner where Mt. Zion Road meets Sherman Street. On the eastern side, an ore hole had filled with water, thus forming a pond. Mr. Smyser stocked gold fish in this pond. When there was a heavy rain, the fish were washed out of the pond, and often washed into the road and the roadside gutters. Mr. Heindel gathered these “flopping” fish and had a nice collection for himself. Even as late as the storm “Agnes” fish washed out. When the area was filled in with soil, the fish were removed. Some were put in the pond of Mr. Livingston, in the Ridgewood Road area. Mr. Livingston retains a natural habitat setting for many wild species. His beloved area was recently threatened by progress of modern development. It was saved and retained as a natural habitat.

The more recent owners of the Smyser residence are the Sam Longs, of Ava-Long family. Mrs. Long is the daughter of Donald Wolfgang, a Springettsbury Township resident, who owns a shoe store and sporting goods store in North York. The Smyser farm now contains about 38 acres of land. The house has 18 rooms.

Manny Landis

Emanuel Landis, son of Levi, married Susan Hursh on September 10, 1908. The following year they rented a place near Glades school, back of Hellam. The next year they moved to a 28-acre farm near the Shoe House in Hellam Township. Their three children were Lydia, John, and Susan.

Just last year Lydia shared with us some interesting things about her father and her growing up years with her family, here in this area.

“Dad’s friends all call him ‘Manny,’ and he had lots of friends. Because his feet were crippled, he had a difficult time to walk after the farm harrow,” she explained. “In his retired years, after he had sold his farm and built a nice home and garage in Springettsbury Township, ‘Manny’ became quite an artist.”

We certainly agree with Lydia that her father was a likeable and talented man. He used to sit on our porch on Old Orchard Road and sketch – often Pennsylvania Dutch

designs – then give his sketchings to our children. And he also gave some of his pretty plants for planting in our “Friendship Garden.”

His daughter also remembered when her mother, Susan Hursh Landis, worked at a cigar factory then located at a curve on the Stone Ridge Road, with the Witmer girls, Martha and Annie, and Susan’s sister Emma Hursh. Emma then lived along that same road, across from the Mennonite Church Cemetery. The cigar factory later became the personal residence of Charles Kauffman.

An old family tale that Lydia retold to us will bear repeating. It’s about “Manny’s” uncle, Dave Landis. The story goes that when this uncle was a youth in 1863, and was sitting on a roadside fence, the Confederate soldiers came marching through our township on their way to Wrightsville, in pursuit of the Yankee army.

Carrying rifles and feeling cocky, they asked young David for his hat. He wisely and promptly gave it to the rebels and was thus still around to watch when they came marching back in the other direction a few days thereafter. They had been unable to march across the Susquehanna, because the Northern troops had set fire to the bridge just prior to their arrival.

The blaze had caught a lumber yard and from thence had begun to consume the town, so the rebel soldiers voluntarily worked to save the town of Wrightsville from being consumed, as the flames eerily lighted the sky for miles around.

Ridgewood Road Area Tales and Folklore

There used to be horse sheds and water troughs in the Ridgewood Road and Memory Lane area, and for good reason...several fine clear water springs can be found in this vicinity.

The Mt. Herman area, off Ridgewood Road (according to Elmer Snyder, now deceased), is where local farmers herded and hid their horses in the woods to escape their confiscation by rebel soldiers during the Civil War. Southern troops marched right through this vicinity, traveling on what is now called North Hills Road, past the current location of the Central York Middle School, and off through the lane which later became Ridgewood Road.

Had the Confederates uncovered the horses, they would have promptly “liberated” them for their war effort against the North. But luckily, in those days, “Penn’s Woods” were still thick and deep in this part of Springettsbury Township.

Back in the early 1940’s, Nellie Asper still raised sheep on land where Ridgewood and Deininger Roads now meet. When her sheep escaped their fencing, Nellie used to climb the highest hill on her property and “whoop and holler” for them to come home. Neighbors got a real bang out of watching her effective results: The sheep would all return to her, plodding along in a single file, much like in the “Little Bo Peep” rhyme, “wagging their tails behind them.” No sheep dogs, no wranglers, just lung power and the fact that Nellie treated them like pets and they wanted to please her. For sure, they listened better than some family pets we’ve known.

Because this was a township heavily populated with Germans, popularly known hereabouts as the Pennsylvania Dutch, there were those who sought out the services of practitioners of “White Magic,” which was “chust for good,” as opposed to “Black Magic,” which placed curses (or “hexes”) on unsuspecting victims. These practitioners of the occult were known as “Pow-Wow’s” or “White Witches.”

Their believers credited them for a variety of cures, for which these pseudo witch doctors employed the services of the “long lost friend,” or “witches’ bible,” which was packed cover to cover with incantations and recipes for healing both body and mind.

One such Pow-Wow practiced in the Pleasureville area and was credited with many remarkable cures by her superstitious following. Probably her method of curing a man of “Liver Gall,” which caused him excruciating internal pain, is as good an example as any: she muttered an incantation from her “witches’ bible,” then ran a horse hair all over the afflicted area of his body, and finally read passages from the Holy Bible. Her patient is said to have become pain free and completely well again. And, oh yes, there was “no charge.” Like many who had what they referred to as “the power,” she sought only to help and to heal.

Other occult-type tales emerge from the same general area where Nellie Asper used to shepherd her flock. According to Jean Fix, a resident of that sector, if one were to compile folklore from that vicinity, strange supernatural occurrences have been observed. She cites these examples: Two apparitions have appeared off and on, one of a child in long colonial dress and the other of a grown man in attire of the 1860’s era.

That’s scary enough, when it isn’t even Halloween and you see ghosts, but even more frightening is when you simply “feel” them, or vice versa. Like the time an area woman felt a strong hand on her shoulder while ironing, and turned to see no one else in the room, or even in her house, for that matter.

Another resident was standing in the basement of her home and felt a hot, burning sensation in the back of her leg, like getting a knee-high hotfoot. Yet again, no one was there, in the middle of the cellar, and nothing hot was anywhere close by.

A carpenter was convinced the house he was remodeling was “haunted” because a carefully hung door just refused to stay shut. When he voiced his opinion to the homeowners, he learned that, years past, someone had committed suicide in the home.

Moreover, the residents told him, sometimes when they turn off all the lights and go away, they return home to find a light turned on in that upper room!

Time to call ghost busters!