

CHAPTER VII HISTORIC HIGHLIGHTS

Monocacy Road

Settlers west of the Susquehanna petitioned the courts of Lancaster to open the Monocacy Road. In the year 1739, under the authority of the Lancaster court, this route was opened in the present limits of York County. The viewers to locate this road were Joshua Minshall, Francis Worley, Henry Hendricks, Christian Crowl, Michael Tanner, and Wollrich Whisler. The road began on the line between the lands of John Wright, Jr. and Samuel Taylor (now Wrightsville), west to Crawl's run, southwest to a marked white oak tree, west to Canoe run, south and west to west branch of Grist (Kreutz) Creek, west to Little Codorus (Stony Run), west to Big Codorus, west to Perrins run, one and one-quarter miles southwest of York to Springer's field, on and one-half miles to "point of steep hill," west to Loreman's run, to Christian Eyster's land (near Wolf's Church), to Nicholas Croucher's run, to west branch of Codorus Creek, to John Links run by the "Barrens," to Conrad Low's plantation, west four and one-half miles to Adam Forney's land (now the site of Hanover), southwest by Kitzmiller's Mill on Conewago Creek to the line between Pennsylvania and Maryland. The length of the road was 34 miles, 290 perches. It became a prominent highway of travel to the south and southwest.

It was the first road laid out within the present limits of York County under the authority of Pennsylvania. This is in the general location of our present Route 462 (Lincoln Highway) with some variance at certain areas.

The Story of Camp Security

ECCLESIASTES, 3-1: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the sun."

Although we never think of it these days, a crowded, active prisoner-of-war camp was once situated amid the otherwise serene and peaceful area we've come to know and love as Springettsbury Township.

Camp Security was located four-and-one-half miles east of York on a hillside several hundred yards south of the Old Monocacy Road, just east of the current Penn Oaks development. The road, which bordered Camp Security, ran parallel to Lincoln Highway (Route 462).

The importance of this historic area in Springettsbury Township lies in the fact that it helped provide a solution to the prisoner problem during this nation's battle for freedom from English tyranny. It should be a source of pride to know that, despite the many objections to, and apprehensions about, having "a prison in our very midst," and the unfavorable opinions voiced at the time by local ministers from their pulpits, both prisoners and residents gradually accepted each other.

In fact, at war's end, when the prison camp closed forever, and the former inmates were permitted to return to their homelands, some of our former British and German foes chose to remain here and become loyal American citizens. This certainly speaks well of the ultimate opinions that they formed of this area and its people.

But let's begin at the beginning, and learn how Camp Security came into being.

Joseph Reed, president of the Pennsylvania Provincial Council, wrote to Lt. William Scott, commander of the York County Militia, in June 1781, directing him to, "mark out a suitable place, well-wooded and watered," for the accommodation of prisoners of war, "where they may build huts, which must be picketed; if within a small distance of York Town, so much the better."

Lieutenant Scott obeyed, selecting a campsite close to a main road, which site was watered by a creek and boasted a fine, clear spring for drinking water. The area was forested, providing timber for the stockade and the huts, as well as a source of firewood.

This ideal site east of York, in Springettsbury Township (then Hellam Township,) was on the northern slope of a heavily wooded hill, on land then owned by David Brubaker. It was confiscated for military use under orders of the Colonial Minister of War. Then Camp Security was constructed.

Thirty acres of land were cleared of trees, Indian corn, and the animal pasturage was laid waste. Farmer Brubaker's wood became stockades and huts for prisoners and guards. Fenceposts soon were turned into firewood.

When the first prisoners arrived here from the overcrowded stockade in Charlottesville, Virginia, they were comprised of mainly privates and noncommissioned officers from the armies of General's Burgoyne and Cornwallis. These British soldiers had been captured in the fall of 1777, and had already known captivity for nearly four years when they were marched north to the York area. Many were very unhappy to be forced to abandon their huts and gardens in the pleasant Virginia climate.

This first wave of inmates, labeled "The Convention Army," had been in the York area once before. After their capture in New York State in 1777, they had been marched through New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland to Charlottesville, VA. Their trek through the Keystone State saw them pass through this very area in the Christmas season of 1778.

Lieutenant DuRoi, of the British Brunswicker regiment, noted that many prisoners spent a night in York Town and its environs, and they "they could find no quarters anywhere and had to camp out in the woods, although it was very cold. It snowed hard and froze."

Now once again returned to this previously inhospitable area, these prisoners learned that they were to become forced labor, and be obliged to build their own prison stockade, their own huts, and even the guard shacks for their captors.

To be sure, these were not happy campers!

Put to work at bayonet point to clear land, erect camp buildings and erect the stockade's fifteen-foot-high picket fence encircling the several acre campsite, these prisoners had nothing kind to say about their new environment or their treatment here.

Spiked locust posts, hewn from logs sharpened at each end, and driven into the ground close together, enclosed Camp Security. A single gateway allowed access and egress. A guardhouse, with its armed sentinels, stood hard by the gate.

Inmate huts within the stockade were small, poorly constructed wooden hovels with dirt floors. Similar to those at the Charlottesville Stockade, each log hut had no windows, one door fixed in place by five or six nails and no insulation to speak of. Rain and snow leaked in everywhere unimpeded. Cooking fires were made in the center of the floor. Conditions were far from ideal. But, then, this was war!

And at least the British prisoners of war were still alive.

Rumors were prevalent in those days that the British took few prisoners, because of the expense and uncertainty of transporting them back to England for imprisonment. Such

rumors naturally turned the colonists, soldiers and civilians alike, severely against the British and made life all the more an uphill battle for their captive soldiers.

At Camp Security, food, clothing and warm blankets were in very short supply, and disease plagued the prison in those early days. Meal, flour, and occasional beef was supplied the prisoners by the county, but in meager amounts. The lack of food, clothing and warmth encouraged the spread of disease. In a five-week span, more than 40 men, women and children were buried. Suffering was all the greater because medicine was quite scarce, and primarily reserved for the colonists, who were also making many sacrifices and in want due to the war.

As supplies diminished, prisoners simply had to fend for themselves. The provisions that were supposed to be shipped in by Congress rarely materialized. Paroled prisoners were allowed to travel "worry-free, within 10 miles of the stockade," around the countryside west of the Susquehanna River. This policy prevailed until the end of the war.

Paroled prisoners engaged in various trades in their encampment. Men, women and even children employed their time in making lace, spoons, buckles, and tools to peddle and trade throughout the countryside. So, gradually, their situation improved as they acquired needed supplies for their sustenance.

For those who died of malnutrition, exposure, or camp fever, however, no cemetery exists. Their bodies were simply buried near the stockade, generally in unmarked graves.

It is also worthy of note that this initial wave of war prisoners erected, in addition to Camp Security, a small village nearby the stockade, to house some of their non-commissioned officers, as well as some of their women and children. Huts there were similar to those in the stockade, but parole was easier to win. Because of the freedom afforded the 600 residents of this village, it was nicknamed "Camp Indulgence."

In December 1781, the army had confiscated six months after his land, Daniel Brubaker petitioned the "Minister of War of the United States of America" for remuneration for his losses in woodlands, crops and pasturage. And, much to his relief, he was fully reimbursed at a later date by a grateful government.

By 1782, Camp Security was a permanent part of the colonial penal system for war prisoners; a position it maintained until the signing of our final peace treaty with the British in September of the following year.

Prisoners from the Yorktown, Virginia stockade were the final group to be herded into the now bursting Camp Security, during its second year of operation. Between Camp Security and Camp Indulgence, as many as 4,000 British prisoners were incarcerated during its peak operating period.

The Hessian (German) captives, as a matter of policy, were not confined to the stockades. Instead, these mercenaries were hired by farmers to work the fields, do construction work, and repair tools, in what was then Hellam Township, but later became Springettsbury.

This helped link the legend of the Germans with the prison camp. Erroneous tales even linked a "German prisoner" with murder of a local farmer. This doubtless grew from the close proximity of the German laborers to the site of Camp Security.

Guards for the stockade were drawn from among the York County Militia Company. About 150 to 250 men were assigned to guard duty at any one time, and their tour of duty averaged about two months. Some Militiamen served their tour of duty helping build the camp and guard the prisoners. (Ancestors of the author had that distinction. Her great-great-great-grandfather, Ludwig Weyer, Jr., and his father Ludwig Weyer, were a part of Captain Copenheaver's guard staff at Camp Security.)

During a two-month period of active service, guards served one day on duty, then one day of rest, until their tour of duty ended, and they could return home. Thus, many Militiamen served throughout the Revolution without firing a shot at the enemy.

Many others simply failed to serve at all. And at one point, less than 20 men guarded over 1,000 prisoners. This caused the security system at the camp to be very "iffy." In fact, Camp Security was far from "secure."

Colonel Moses Hazen's regular troops were brought in to assume these guard duties in January 1782, and remained until October, but escapes from the camp continued to be prevalent. So the Militia was once again called upon to perform guard duties, which they continued to do until the end of the Revolutionary War.

One escapee, Sergeant Roger Lamb, writes in his "Journal of the American War" of his escape from Camp Security with seven other fellow-prisoners on March 1, 1782. He told how they held a pass allowing them to travel worry-free up to 10 miles from the stockade. Thus, they proceeded to the Susquehanna River, where they quickly learned that the ice was thawing. But with their pass they had no dread of being apprehended, so they simply waited for the cold of the night to re-freeze the river ice. Then they located a Welchman who had deserted two years past, persuaded him to act as their guide, successfully crossed the frozen river afoot, and made their way on through Pennsylvania and New Jersey, eventually reaching New York City.

After the war, Sgt. Lamb returned to Dublin, becoming a teacher and author. He died 48 years later, a staunch proponent of and ardent educator for peace.

To trace the ownership of the historic Camp Security and Camp Indulgence sites, we begin first with Daniel Brubaker, and then for a half-century revert to Jacob Holtzinger, who later sold to Isaac Kauffman.

The Clair Rowe family live in the stone house located by the road at its closest point to the prison camp. Mr. Rowe (now deceased) previously provided information on that house, which was built by Johannes Schultz. He told us that a small signal gun had been placed in the attic, near a window in the eastern wall, for use in case the British approached York.

Guards at Camp Security used this home for their headquarters.

Various opinions exist as to the precise location of Camp Security: (1) Memoirs of General Samuel Graham, then a colonel with the British prisoners in the village called "Camp Indulgence," indicates that the village was a short distance from the stockade on "rising ground, in sight of the stockade." (2) Sergeant Lamb's memoirs note, "The distance was about 200 yards." (3) An archaeological dig in 1979 found evidence of "a village on a hill, east of the creek; and (4) this writer and her father shared some personal observations on the subject, since this particular area had been farmed by her family.

Their careful observations disclosed an area west of the creek, which contained a section encircled, by a 4 to 6 foot wide area of variant color from all the surrounding vegetation. This appears to indicate the encircling strip where the spiked locust posts outlined the enclosed campsite.

Suffice it to say that, while no surveys or plot plans of the old prisoner of war camp can be found, both Camp Security and Camp Indulgence existed as surely as did the memoirs of General Graham and Sergeant Lamb, both of whom wrote of being prisoners there.

The archaeological excavation aforementioned uncovered the sort of straight pins used to make lace, probably bobbin lace. Also found were pottery pieces, window glass, buttons, tools and coins.

We are now far-removed from the years of the American Revolution and the times of Camp Security. In fact, by the beginning of the 19th century, it was all just a memory. Farmers again tilled the soil, and but a few gravestone markers remained to memorialize the site.

Charles Lease (now deceased) had shared his memory of such grave markers with this writer. He recalled from his youth the time when, from an area on the hillside west of the creek, large fieldstone markers then remaining were removed to make way for progress, and thrown into the wooded area beside the creek.

We acknowledge, with deep appreciation all the research and information provided to us by Johnathan R. Stayer for this article.

This article is dedicated to the preservation of more than a legend, but rather the known history of this important Revolutionary War site in our township.

The Civil War

During the Civil War, confederate soldiers were unwelcome intruders in Springettsbury Township. A 2,800-man brigade of Georgia Rebels, commanded by General John B. Gordon, halted for about four hours just two miles East of York along the turnpike on Sunday, June 28, 1863.

Various records indicate that, while here, the troops bivouacked in an area around Avalong Farms, as well as around the orchards of the Isaac Kauffman farm, prior to renewing their march to Wrightsville at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

Yankee General Couch's orders for Major Haller, who commanded our Union forces at Wrightsville, were: "Dig earth works a short distance West of Wrightsville. Resist the approach of the enemy."

Rebel General Gordon's report to his southern command post on August 10, 1863, in speaking of this June encounter, says: "We moved by the direct pike to Wrightsville, on the Susquehanna," and tells of the bridge having been burned by Union forces, and how his own troops formed a bucket brigade around the town's burning buildings.

The Georgia invaders left Wrightsville the following morning, by order of General Early, who had ridden down the turnpike for a personal briefing with Gordon at Wrightsville.

In his reminiscences of the Civil War, published in 1904, General Gordon refers to the dramatic incidents that he witnessed and played a part in while at Wrightsville. He writes: "As my orders were not restricted, except to direct me to cross the Susquehanna, if possible, my immediate object was to move rapidly down a ravine to the bridge, seize it and cross to the Columbia side. With great energy, my men labored to save the burning bridge.

"I called on the citizens of Wrightsville for buckets and pails be none were available. There was, however, no lack of buckets and pails a little later, when the town was on fire. But when the burning bridge fired the lumber yards on the river's banks, and the burning lumber fired the town, buckets and tubs and pails and pans innumerable came from their hiding places, until it seemed that, had the whole of Lee's Army been present, I could have armed them with these implements to fight the rapidly spreading flames.

"My men labored as earnestly and bravely to save the town as they did to save the bridge."

His men on the river's edge passed pails of water from hand to hand towards the burning lumber yards and town buildings until, at the late hours of the night, the raging fires were checked and conquered.

Gordon states, "There was one point especially at which my soldiers combated the fire's progress with immense energy, and with great difficulty, and saved an attractive home from burning. It chanced to be the home of one of the most superb women it was my fortune to meet during the four years of the war. She was Mrs. L.L. Rewalt, to whom I refer in my lecture, 'The Last Days of the Confederacy,' as the heroine of the Susquehanna. I met Mrs. Rewalt the next morning after the fire had been checked. She had witnessed the furious combat with the flames around her home, and was unwilling that those men should depart without receiving some token of appreciation for her. She was not wealthy and could not entertain my whole command, but she was blessed with an abundance of those far nobler riches of brain and heart that are essential glories of exalted womanhood. Accompanied by an attendant, and at a late hour of the night, she sought me out in the confusion that followed the destructive fire, to express her gratitude to the soldiers of my command, and to inquire how long we would remain in Wrightsville.

"On learning that the village would be relieved of our presence at an early hour the following morning, she insisted that I should bring with me to breakfast at her house, as many as could find places in her dining room"

(This Wrightsville home still stands. Your writer recently visited there and saw the room that General Gordon referred to in his story.)

"She would take no excuse, not even with the nervous condition in which the excitement of the previous hours had left her. At a bountifully supplied table, in the early morning, sat this modest, cultured woman, surrounded by enemy soldiers in their worn gray uniforms. The welcome she gave us was so gracious; she was so self-possessed, so calm and kind, that I found myself in an inquiring state of mind as to whether her sympathies were with the Northern or Southern side in the pending war.

"Cautiously, but with sufficient clearness to indicate to her my object, I ventured some remarks which she could not well ignore, and which she instantly saw were intended to evoke some declaration upon the subject. She was too brave to evade it, too self-poised to be confused by it, and too firmly fixed in her convictions to hesitate as to the answer. With no one present except Confederate soldiers, who were her guests, she replied without a quiver in her voice, but with womanly gentleness, 'General Gordon, I fully comprehend you, and it is due to myself that I candidly tell you that I am a Union woman. I cannot afford to be misunderstood, nor to have you misinterpret this simple courtesy. You and your soldiers last night saved my home from burning, and I was unwilling that you should go away without some token of my appreciation. I must tell you, however, that with my assent and approval, my husband is a soldier in the Union Army, and my constant prayer to heaven is that our cause may triumph and the Union be saved!'

"No Confederate left that room without a feeling of profound respect and unqualified admiration for that brave and worthy woman. No southern soldier, no true southern man who reads this account, will fail to render to her a like tribute of appreciation."

Statements have been circulated that General Gordon paused at Ye Olde Valley Inn for refreshments while in our area. And this could very well be true, as the turnpike went by this Inn and the Inn was in operation in those days. Still, we could uncover no positive identification of this and have, therefore, not included the matter as fact.

We do know, though, that at the very time General Gordon was in Springettsbury Township, ladies here were enjoying a publication called, "Godey's Ladies Book and Magazine." Editors Louis A. Godey and Sarah J. Hale provided women with much helpful information in their well-liked publication. A comment for the very month in which General Gordon and company were here has this to relate, "No money is better spent than

that which is laid out for domestic satisfaction. A man is pleased that his wife is dressed as well as other people, and the wife is pleased that she is dressed.”

Contents of this magazine included stories, poems, novelties, sketches, and directions for making children's and adults' clothing. A section of "receipts" (we call them "recipes") was also included. Here are the June, 1863 issue's directions for preserving strawberries:

“To preserve strawberries whole, choose the finest scarlet strawberries with their stalks on, before they are too ripe. Weigh them first, and then lay them separately upon a dish. Pound and sift finely twice their weight of the best loaf sugar, which strew over them. Then take some ripe strawberries, crush them and put them into a jar with an equal weight of sugar, crushed small, cover them close, and let them stand in boiling water until they are soft and the syrup has come out of them. Then strain through a piece of muslin into a preserving pan. Boil and skim it well. When cold put in the whole strawberries, and set them over the fire until they are milk warm, then take them off and let stand until quite cold, then set them on again and make them a little hotter. Do this several times until they look clear, but take care not to let them boil, for the stalks will come off. When the strawberries are quite cold, put them into jelly glasses with their stalks upwards, and fill up the glasses with syrup. Tie them down with brandied paper over them. These look extremely pretty in clear jelly.”

It should also be noted that, although our area did not experience any actual battles during the Civil War, there were numerous patriotic citizens from Springettsbury Township who served in this war between the states.