

Jackson Township

Cambria County, Pennsylvania



Chapter 5

Annals of Jackson Township

Mrs. Betty Burkhart
Nanty Glo Journal
May 7, 1942

In Jackson township particularly in that part that is now Nanty-Glo, we have many residents who are of Welsh descent. After the founding of Pennsylvania in 1682, the Welsh were the most numerous of immigrants coming over and many towns in Pennsylvania are named for them. After 1700, however, according to "Making of Pennsylvania" by Sydney George Fisher, when English, Germans, Scots and Irish started coming in large numbers, they became fewer in number, and emigrated farther west. Penn had given a tract of land consisting of 40,000 acres of ground near Philadelphia, and there they had a little government of their own. Later, however, when the land was opened to other nationalities, they started west and many of them came here. Summerhill, which is near this township, is a Welsh settlement and the name Nant-y-Glo is Welsh, meaning vein of coal. The town of Ebensburg, also, was first a Welsh settlement. Thomas Davis, who was born in Wales in 1851, came here when 15 years of age and has many living descendants living here.

When these first pioneers migrated west, they made paths that followed routes that could be little improved upon. The Lancaster Turnpike was originally the path of the wandering Welsh, it being first a rough path through the woods. The first road built in Jackson township was the one officially known as the Frankstown, or Galbreth road, but in this vicinity is generally referred to by old timers as the Washington road. It was first laid out in 1790 and entered the township where later Joseph Burkhart cleared the land and established his home, which in later years was occupied by John Shultz, but which has long since returned to its original seemingly untouched state. It crossed just north of where the Pike Brethren Church now stands, followed a route to the top of Pergrim Hill, thence north west a short distance and on to the top of Laurel Hill Mountain, crossing what is now the Vintondale road just slightly north of the Wm. Penn Highway, paralleling that highway for some distance and then intersecting it on the west slope of the Laurel Hill Mountains.

The Frankstown Avenue in Pittsburgh is the western terminus of this road. Portions of this ancient highway may still be seen in some parts of the township. On the old Burkhart farm, now a favorite hunting ground, hunters have watched for deer coming down the old roadway.

There was lots of travel along this highway which resulted in the organizing of a number, of turnpike companies of different names, one being Harrisburg, Lewistown, Huntingdon and Pittsburgh Turnpike company. It developed, however, that the road could be kept in better repair by shorter operating companies. There was the New Alexandria and Conemaugh company (1816), and the New Alexandria and Pittsburgh company (1821).

Roads first built were of plank. Timber was plentiful and easy to get and a smooth road was quickly made. The drawback was that planks soon wore out and had to be replaced. Here and there clay pikes were built. Little work was required to keep them in repair good enough for the wagons and pack horses that traveled over them.

In the days of the Washington road, large droves of horses, sheep, cattle and hogs and turkeys would be driven overland, for that was before the days of easy shipping by train. Sometimes as high as 500 hogs would be herded for a long distance to a market. There was also one instance of 2,300 turkeys having been fed at a certain place during one month.

Route 22 that passes through Mundy's Corners follows an old Indian trail which in turn followed a buffalo path. The bridle path followed the Indian trail and was in turn the wagon road. Some places the wagon road was corduroy, made from small wooden ties about eight inches in diameter and 12 feet long, especially used through swampy places. Glimpses of these roads may still be seen in places. Later the road was piked, using stones set on edge then covered with soil.

This road, Route 22, was first known as the Huntington, Indiana and Cambria turnpike, or Northern Pike. It was authorized on March 10, 1810 but the road was not finished until 1821. The year following its completion money from tolls amounted to \$5,838.25 and the expense of upkeep was \$4,267.60. This road led from Hollidaysburg to Pittsburgh and there were nine toll gates.

Over this highway stage coaches were a familiar sight, and teamsters constantly plodded their slow way from distant city to distant city. Horses used for this purpose were trained for the service. A barn for the horses stood until comparative recent years at Ford's Corners.

Travel in this way was sometimes very pleasant, for there was not the hurry to get places that there is today. It was slow, but every few miles there were inns where travelers would stop and refresh themselves. Roads were not graded at that time as they are today, and it would be a long pull to the top of the numerous hills through this part of the country. At that time, too, a circus would travel overland, and the old watering trough that stood on the Mundy place at Mundy's Corner was often the scene of a large gathering of strange animals, foreign to these woods. Covered wagon traveled through here, too, emigrants on their way farther west. The first toll gates used were of iron, later wooden posts being used. When the Baltimore and Ohio railroad was completed in 1852 much of the necessity of the stage coach and wagon was taken away, and from then on the turnpike was not so flourishing.

On September 9, 1819, while the Northern Pike was being built, a road was laid out leading from Johnstown to what is now Mundy's corner, then known by another name. It was 35 feet wide. This route has been the main highway between Johnstown and Ebensburg ever since. Before that time travel between those two points was by the way of Sumnerhill. The road from Nanty-Glo to the Teeter school was built about 1903 and the one from Nanty-Glo to Mundy's Corner, which is a very old one, connected Indiana and Johnstown.

Another old road that is now abandoned entered the township near Nanty-Glo, on what was the Murray tract, went up past the Adam Shuman farm to the old Lambaugh cemetery and to the top of Chickaree Mountain. The road was abandoned before 1860, but is still visible in many places.

About 1910 automobiles came into use in this community after which a different type of roadbed was built. In 1917, however, there were still more horsedrawn vehicles than automobiles. Women began taking their place behind the wheel about that time. Mrs. Harris Wakefield of Vinco lays claim to being the first woman automobile driver in this section of the community.

To Be Continued Next Week

[Back to top](#)
[Annals](#)

-