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Davidson Township

Davidson Township was established in 1833, by a decree of the Court of Quarter Sessions of Lycoming County. The territory was taken from Shrewsbury Township and originally comprised also a portion of what is now LaPorte Township. It was named in honor of Hon. Asher Davidson, one of the Associate Judges of that court. It is located in the south-eastern section of Sullivan County, bordering on Luzerne County and Colley Township on the east, Columbia and Lycoming Counties on the south, Shrewsbury township on the west and LaPorte township on the north.

At the time of its organization, Davidson contained the following 59 resident taxables:

Peter Anderson…..Ido Arms……James Biggers…..Joel Bennett……Thomas Bennett, Sr.

Thomas Bennett, Jr……Moses Crothers…..William Crothers……..Thomas Crothers

Joseph Converse, Sr……Joseph Converse, Jr…….William Clark…….Eliphas Earl

Peter Fulmer……James Glidewell…….Rufus Hiddleson…….John Keeler, Sr.

John Keeler, Jr………..John Little…….David McClintock……..Ann McClemmons

William McClemmons…….John Pennington…….Edmond Pennington……Charles Plummer

David Philips……Griffith Philips………John Phemmer………Thomas Reed….James Rogers

David L. Sanders……..Sarah Swank……..William Stevens……..Clinton Stevens

Daniel Savage………John Strawbridge, Jr………..William Smith, Jr…….Miles Sperry

Samuel Sperry…….George Sones……….John Sones………William White

Daniel Whiteman……..William Whitacre……Thomas Glidewell…….John Glidewell

Samuel Wilson……..Philip Genter……….John Hiddleson………Jacob Herrimen

William Robbins……..Permenas Sanders………Asa Sanders…..Ephraim Sanders

Daniel Wilson………Stephen D. Sanders……..Josiah Warrin……..Joseph Wilson

William Yocum

Davidson was made an election district in the spring of 1834 by an act of the Legislature. Consequently, its first vote was given on the second Tuesday of October following. Lycoming County at that time contained in addition to its present territory all of Sullivan County and about half of Clinton County. There was a very warm contest at this election for the office of Sheriff. In the early part of the campaign, there were eight candidates in the field but as it progressed the interest centered on two candidates--William Harris, an ex-county commissioner and treasurer, and Thomas W. Lloyd, also an ex-county treasurer. After the election, the returns came in very slowly and Lloyd was a few votes in the lead of his opponent, not having heard from Davidson. When Squire Hiddleson brought in the returns from this district, it was found that Davidson gave Harris 18 votes and Lloyd none, electing Harris by a majority of 7 votes. It was proposed by the friends of Lloyd to contest the election of Davidson, as it was thought that in the new township in the woods it would not be possible to conduct an election according to law. After a careful examination made by the attorneys, it was found that the voters of Davidson had fully complied with the election laws, and no errors could be found. William Smith of Davidson who assisted in holding the election had not been favored with great educational advantages but was careful to fully comply with the law. The result gave him a reputation for conducting public business that a few years later secured for him the election to the office of county commissioner.

EARLY SETTLERS

The first settlement made in what is now Davidson Township was about 1806 or 1808, at the base of the western end of North Mountain. David Richart, Colonel Derr and Nathan Howell, of Columbia County, while on a hunting expedition, discovered the beautiful and fertile plain at the base of North Mountain. They were very much pleased with it and returned with their families. Adam Derr was an officer in the Revolutionary War and settled on lands now owned by Hon. M.J. Philips. David Richart was a stonemason and schoolteacher. He built the stone barn at Eagles Mere in 1817. Thomas and John Strawbridge came in 1811. David McClintock, Thomas Reed and William McClemmons came in 1812.

PHILIPS FAMILY

Griffith Philips 1st, came to Davidson Township in 1812 and settled at the base of North Mountain, clearing up the farm owned by his grandson, Harvey E. Philips. His father, Steven Philips was born in Pembrokshire, Wales. On coming to this country, he remained for some time at Philadelphia, later removing with his family to Cooper Township, Montour County. Griffith Philips married Mary Hughes of Danville and came from there to North Mountain in 1812, but his name was struck off, and his brother David who had accompanied him to his new home, went and was wounded at the battles of Lundy’s Lane, Chippewa and Stony Creek. Griffith Philips was the father of five sons and two daughters:

* Rachel married Samuel Livergood of Hughesville
* John, married Susan, a daughter of George Sones
* Hannah, married John Robbins and moved to Iowa
* Evan H., married Mary Jane Laird
* Thomas, married Hannah Low and settled near the Hemlock Grove schoolhouse, reared a family of 11 children and died in 1902
* Griffith 2nd, married Mary Ann Rogers
* David J., married Elizabeth Taylor

John Philips, whose wife was the daughter of George Sones, one of the first settlers of Sonestown, settled at Sugar Grove near Sonestown on the farm now owned by Daniel and John A. Philips. Unto John and Susan Philips were born:

* Thomas A., wounded at Gettysburg, died at Elmira
* Rachel, married Isaac Wilson, lives near Sugar Grove
* Griffith 3rd, married Mary Sellers, lives at Sonestown
* James K.P., died of consumption when a young man
* Mary, married Samuel Crist of Sonestown
* Edward, died of consumption aged 34 years
* Sarah, lives at Central, Columbia County
* Daniel S., married Ella Philips
* John A., lives with his brother Daniel
* Rose, married Watson Speary, lives near Sonestown

Evan H Philips settled on what is known as the John Gowen farm near the Hemlock Grove schoolhouse. He was justice of the peace when Davidson was still a part of Lycoming County and was elected the first Sheriff of Sullivan County. He later moved to Lairdsville, Lycoming County where he died at the age of 87 years.

Griffith Philips 2nd, settled on the farm now owned by his son Hon. M.J. Philips. He was elected county commissioner of Sullivan County in 1850 and was a member of the board when the first courthouse was built. He was married to Mary Ann Rogers of Exeter Township, Luzerne County. She died in 1865, her husband surviving her until 1898, when he passed away. Unto them were born:

* Maynard J. married to Mary C. Pennington
* Hughes G. married to Seda Kahler, of Hughesville, lives at Benton
* Florence H., married William Yocum, of Benton
* McCellan A., married Anna Labaugh, lives at Benton
* Hester A., died at the age of 20 years

David J. Philips lived on the farm owned by Griffith Philips, 1st. He was married to Elizabeth Taylor, a daughter of Robert Taylor 2nd. He died in 1880 and his widow still lives on the old homestead with their son, Harvey E. Philips.

ROBERT TAYLOR FAMILY

Robert Taylor 1st, many of whose descendants are residents of Davidson Township, came to Rock Run, Shrewsbury Township, in 1804. He was the father of 12 children: Frederick, whose son, Robert 3rd, settled in Davidson, Robert 2nd, who lived at Muncy Valley, William, James who settled at Muncy Valley, Richard, John, Matthew, George W., Mary Ann, Jane, Eliza, and Katharine.

Robert 2nd married a Miss Bennett and in 1838 moved from Shrewsbury Township to the valley of Muncy Creek. He was for many years Justice of the Peace and was twice elected County Commissioner. He was one of the first to offer inducements for establishing tanneries and upon his lands was erected the Muncy Valley tannery. To him and his wife were born:

* George, of Williamsport
* Elizabeth married David Philips of Hemlock Grove
* Rosetta, married John Hiddleson of Iowa, and after his death, Fletcher Speary
* Angeline married Edwin Corson, of Lansing, MI
* Carl S., of Danville
* Jeremiah, died
* Harriet Jane, died when 10 years of age
* David M.

James Taylor also came to Davidson Township in 1838, settling the farm below his brother, Robert’s. He was for many years postmaster of the post office then called Muncy Bottom. He was also the first Treasurer of Sullivan County. He was married to Delia Edkin and to them were born:

* Matthew, of Shrewsbury
* Alfred, who lived on his father’s homestead
* Katharine, married James Stroup
* Sarah Jane, died when 10 years old
* Margaret Jane, died in 1863.

SONESTOWN

The first improvements where the village of Sonestown now stands were made by Timothy Crawley and Peter Anderson in 1818. They kept the bachelor’s hall until Crawley married, then they sold it to Benjamin Fiester who afterward sold it to George Sones, who together with his son John for many years owned all the land at the head of the valley and from whom it very appropriately takes the name of Sonestown.

In 1818 James Glidewell came to this section and in 1820, settled at Sonestown on the land now owned by Samuel Crist. He came from England in 1801 and first settled in Northumberland County on land owned by Joseph Priestly. Mr. Glidewell was married to Mary King of Elkland Township and they were the parents of ten children: Hester, Thomas, Elizabeth, Mary, John, William, Sarah, Ann and Dinah.

Thomas Glidewell, who settled on lands near his father, married Hester Lacy and to them were born: James, Josiah, Sarah, Thomas, Ann, Dinah and Charles.

John Glidewell settled above Sonestown on the high plateau which overlooks Muncy Creek, where he lived past ninety.

William moved to Elkland and settled on the farm now owned by Dr. Chaffee.

In 1822, John Witacre came to Sonestown and settled on lands which had been improved by John Sones. His son, William, succeeded him and afterward sold it to Peter Armstrong who laid out the village of Glen Sharon.

ELK LICK

The first settlers in the Elk Lick settlement were James Rogers and George Wilson, who came from Huntingdon, Luzerne County, by way of the Susquehanna and Tioga Turnpike to a point called Spring Bridge, from there cutting their way to near Thorndale. They came for the purpose of making maple sugar, their first trip being in the fall that they might make sap troughs. In the spring, they brought their families with them, James Rogers settling where John Botsford now lives and George Wilson where William Bostian lives. In 1825, the road leading from Nordmont to Central was cut out by the citizens of Huntingdon, who wished to reach this settlement that they might make maple sugar. During the construction of this road, they had an encounter with a bear, which was finally shot by Christopher Bowman. From this incident, the little stream on the mountain at this point derives its name. This road has ever since been a public road.

JOHN KEELER FAMILY

In 1826, John Keeler came from Fishing Creek to this section. He was married to Elizabeth Smith of New York state and to them were born three children, James, John and Susannah.

James Keeler married Mary Robbins and their children were: Daniel, Catharine, William, John, Elizabeth, Susan, James, Ellen and Mary Jane.

John Keeler was married to Sarah Bartleson and they were the parents of the following children:

* Nancy R., married Henry Kopensparger
* Eliza Ann, married Daniel Keeler
* Edward
* Susan Jane, married Thomas Mostellar
* Frederick Roher
* Thomas Jackson
* Emily, married Newell Smith, later John Anders

Susannah married William Robbins and their children were Henderson, Thomas, Leonard, Joseph and Mary.

John Hiddleson came in April 1826. He was born in Chester County in 1790, and was a carpenter and joiner by trade. He built a sawmill, cleared a large farm and here resided until 1865, when his health having failed, he joined his children who had all previously moved west. He died in Illinois in 1875.

Soon after, Jesse Pennington came and took 300 acres of land. His children who came to this county were:

* Edmond, cleared a farm in Laporte Township
* Jesse, resided in Davidson, later moved west
* Mary, married Samuel Speary
* Martha, married John C. Botsford
* Anna, married Thomas L. Little

In 1826, Miles Sperry came from Huntingdon, Luzerne County and took up a tract of 400 acres. He was the father of seventeen children as follows:

* Ann, his oldest child taught the first school in the Elk Lick settlement in 1827
* Wooden, remained in Luzerne County
* Lucy, married Jacob Good of Luzerne County
* Amelia, married a Mr. Tovins
* Permelia, married Abraham Ephliam
* James L., died at the age of twenty
* Samuel, married Mary Pennington, lived in Davidson
* Christopher, married Rachel Benscoter of Luzerne
* Susan, married Benjamin Beach of Bradford County
* Orphia and Miles died in infancy
* Sophia, married John Flick
* Julia, married John Snook, resided at Williamsport
* Charlotte, unmarried
* Asa, married Jane Fiester, lived on the homestead
* Mary, married Benivel Horn, lived near the homestead

Joseph Converse came to Elk Lick in 1828. His children by his first wife were:

* Martha, married Charles Miller, lived in Davidson
* Caroline, married Rufus Hiddleson, lived at Laporte and later in Illinois
* Joseph, married Ann Redenhouse, settled near the southern line of the county
* Henry, married Martha Worthington, resided for many years in Laporte twp., later in Lycoming County

His second wife was a Mrs. Edgar who came from Huntingdon in 1830 and lived with the Converse’s. Their children were:

* Susan Ann, married Edmond Pennington
* Sarah Robinson, married William King of Laporte Twp.
* Jane, married Job King, of Elkland Township
* Permelia, married Richard Harding, of Lycoming
* Abigail married Charles Martin

Mrs. Edgar had two sons by her first husband, Abram, who became a minister of the M.E. church, and Andrew.

Andrew married a daughter of James Glidewell and always lived near the Converse farm. Their children were: Esther Ann, Amanda R., Thomas, Rachael, Sarah Jane, James, Joseph, Andrew and Jeremiah.

In 1833, William Smith came from his Muncy Valley farm to the Elk Lick settlement and there resided until nearly eighty. He was County Commissioner when Sullivan was still a part of Lycoming County. He also held the offices of Associate Judge and County Treasurer in Sullivan County.

In the year the new township was formed, 1833, the Elk Lick settlers built a house at the intersection of the Muncy Creek and North Mt. Roads, ever since known as the Corners.

About 1844, Joseph Wilbur and his son Amos C. came to the Elk Lick settlement from New York state, having been induced to take up a residence here by Rev. Houst, a Methodist clergyman. They purchased improvements made by Jacob Rogers, the father Joseph living but a few years in his new home. He had one daughter who married a Mr. Kilmer of Fox Township. Amos C. Wilbur was a carpenter and millwright by trade, and a man of more than usual intelligence. During the winters, he taught school. In following his trade in different parts of the county, he became well acquainted with the people, and received their votes, electing him to the office of Sheriff in 1854. He moved to Laporte, where he aided materially in the improvements of the town, the fist tannery being built under his supervision in 1856. He later returned to Davidson and about 1868 moved to his former home in New York state. He was twice married, having two children by his first wife, Judson and Sarah, who married a Mr. Howell.

John P. Smith purchased the Wilbur farms. He was the first settler in this neighborhood from the northern part of Lackawanna County. In 1865, three of his neighbors came to reside near him. Edward Clark who had lived in Laporte Township purchased the John Hiddleson farm, but five years later returned to Laporte, selling his farm to his son-in-law, D.C. Gritman. Two other sons-in laws also located here, Henry Small who purchased the Miller Hiddleson farm, and Amos Foust who purchased the Daniel Savage farm. A few years later, the adjacent farm, which had been cleared by Charles Miller, was purchased by Thomas White, also of Lackawanna County.

In December 1869, Mrs. Stevens and her two sons, E.J. and W.M., and E.J. Brundage, also came from Lackawanna County, and purchased the Pennington properties. Mr. Brundage engaged in building and operating saw mills. E.J. Stevens for a time was engaged in the mercantile business at Nordmont. W.M. Stevens, now a prominent lawyer of Williamsport, owns a portion of this land and resides here during the summer months.

MUNCY VALLEY

Muncy Valley takes its name from the beautiful valley of Muncy Creek, in which the town is located. Trout Run, the outlet of Hunter’s Lake, here empties into Muncy Creek. The town is built almost entirely upon the farmlands of Robert Taylor, who has already been mentioned. He was very earnest in his efforts to locate a tannery here, offering substantial inducements, and, in 1867, L.R. Bump built a small tannery with a capacity of 150 sides a day. Mr. Bump was engaged in tanning about five years when the tannery burnt down. It was sold at sheriff’s sale to L.R. Robertson. Mr. Robertson owned the tannery about one year and sold out to D.T. Stevens and son, of Sullivan County, N.Y. Three years later, the plant was again destroyed by fire. It was greatly enlarged when rebuilt. In 1893, D.T. Stevens & Son sold out to the United States Leather Company. From a capacity of 150 sides per day, the plant has been enlarged until the present capacity is 750 sides per day. Between 80 and 100 men are employed with a pay roll of $1800 every two weeks. Sole leather is manufactured exclusively. J.P. Miller is superintendent. He was first employed when D.T. Stevens & Son were the proprietors of the plant and has ever since held that position, the various changes in ownership not having affected him. The tannery has practically built up the town, which is now a prosperous and growing village. There is also considerable farm trade and the various businessmen are all prospering finely.

Careful attention is paid to the education of the children, a three grade school being maintained. The Methodist Episcopal’s own a pretty church here. The pastor. Rev. H.N. Ash, resides in the neat parsonage that adjoins. Those of this neighborhood who embrace the Catholic faith are included in the parish of Rev. Fr. Enright, of Mildred.

When the tannery was transferred to the United States Leather Company the store was sold to W.L. Hoffman, of Hillsgrove, and A.P. Starr who had charge of the store under the Stevens ownership still conducts the business. He is assisted by two clerks. Frank Magarel conducts a general mercantile business, E.E. Webb a confectionery and green goods store, Hyman Herr a clothing store, C.A. Miller a furniture store, and his wife Mrs. Bernice Miller a millinery store, Taylor Brothers a meat market, Torrence Bender an undertaking business, James E. Hause a bakery, and G.W. Bigger and C.J. Secules each conduct a blacksmithing business. John Girton looks after the painting and paper hanging. G.W. Meyers and Dennis Palmatier are the proprietors of the two hotels. James Magargel barber, Robert Hess life insurance agent, J.E. Gallagher bookkeeper, and A.P. Miller inside foreman of the tannery are also among the substantial businessmen of the town.

DAVIDSON’S SOLDIERY

Davidson Township has always firmly upheld the honor of the flag and has contributed her quota to its support whenever occasion called. One of the fist band to penetrate her forests and claim of her a home, Adam Derr, was a colonel in the Revolutionary War. In the days of 1812, when the young republic was struggling with England for an existence, one of the then few settlers, David Philips, left for the scene of action, fighting gallantly until for the second time the Briton was driven from our shores.

In the days of ’61 when the very life of the nation was threatened, many responded to their country’s call and among Davidson’s citizens in the ranks were: G.W. Simmons, J.N. Simmons, Daniel Philips, A. Biggers, Peter Sones, J.W. Speary, B.C. Speary, T. Edgar, T. Glidewell, E. Gower, J. Bennett, T.S. Simmons, S. Wilbur, C.W. Larish, D. Larish, W.F. Larish, Simpson S. Simmons, D.S. Simmons, G.W. Pennington, James Speary, D.M. Speary, William Arms, G.A. Skinner, D. Taylor, C.S. Taylor, P. Miller, T.A. Dent, William Lorah, G.T. Philips, William Wilson, J.Gower, E.S. Howell, B.Horn, J.J. Miller, J. Lorah, G..W. Bigger, S. Swank, C. Martin, J.N. Hazen, Asa Speary, C. Miller, E. Smith, Jacob Wilson, C. Glidewell, Jackson Philips, J. Biggers, Washington Sheets, Nelson Johnson, and Thomas A Philips.

JEREMIAH STACKHOUSE

Of Sonestown, he was born in 1848 in Jordan Township, Lycoming County. His father, James Stackhouse, was born in Columbia County and was a son of Thomas Stackhouse. The Stackhouses were among the first settlers of Pennsylvania. They came to America from Yorkshire, England, sailing in the ship Welcome with William Penn. The family is very numerous in Pennsylvania and Ohio, though members may be found in every state in the Union. A number were engaged in the Revolutionary War and the family has always been closely identified with State and National affairs. Mr. Stackhouse came to Sullivan County in 1883 and lived near Eaglesmere until 1903. In 1903, he took charge of the Lorah House at Sonestown. He was married in 1871 to Cynthia Bigger, who died Feb. 11, 1874, leaving one daughter, Olive B., who married Solomon Steiner of Lycoming County. He was again married in December 1874 to Redocia Philips, a daughter of David Philips of Davidson Township. To them have been born: Harvey C., Monroe E., Myrtle L., Mazie L., Emma Lula, Maynard J., Carrie E., Eva S., and Thomas.

GEORGE W. BIGGER

County Commissioner of Sullivan County, he was born in Franklin Township, Lycoming County, the Biggers family being among the early settlers of the Muncy Creek Valley. He came to Sullivan County in 1849 with his father who settled in Davidson near where Hon. M.J. Philips now resides. He learned the blacksmith trade and was a sawyer for 23 years. In 1863, he enlisted in Co. H. 43rd. Reg. P.I. and re-enlisted in 1864 in Co. E. 209 Reg. P.V.I. being honorably discharged in 1865. Since the war, he has been engaged in lumbering and is now conducting a blacksmith ship at Muncy Valley. He has been school director and held other minor offices and in 1902 was elected County Commissioner. He married Ida Worthington of Lycoming County and they are the parents of one daughter, Mrs. T.J. Schug, and six sons: Charles E., Ulysses E., James B., Hurley D., Harold P. and Oliver R.