

History Of Markleysburg, Pa

1860-1976



Before the service station came into being, gasoline was sold as a side line by a variety of businesses. Here it was a farm supply store at Markleysburg. Early 1900's.

Written By



**Mrs. Minna Myers
and
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State Representative
LARRY ROBERTS
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INTRODUCTION

In 1976 in honor of our nation's bi-centennial, two ladies of the small mountain community of Markleysburg, Pennsylvania decided to make a contribution to the celebration by writing a history of Markleysburg. Using the resources available to them, what they could remember and what the older members of the community could tell them, they wrote the following brief history.

The history was read on numerous occasions in Markleysburg during the bi-centennial year of 1976 and then was carefully copied on to a scroll. The scroll was then delivered to the wagon train as it passed nearby on Route 40 as part of the National Pike Festival. The wagon train delivered the scroll with its history to Uniontown, Pennsylvania where it remained for a short time before being returned to Markleysburg.

This history was shared with four local people who were familiar with the community and its history. They gave of their time and knowledge and offered brief revisions regarding portions of the history. 1. Mrs. Jean Cox, Connellsville, PA., wife of Dr. Ralph Cox. Dr. Cox was the son of one of the early physicians in Markleysburg. Jean is a direct descendent of Alexander Thomas, one of the early settlers in the Markleysburg area. 2. Mary Markley Heinbaugh a direct descendent of John Markly and who continues to live on a portion of land upon which John Markley built the first house. 3. Beatrice Glover Bowser, another direct descendent of Alexander Thomas and who has lived in the community all her life. 4. William K. "Bill" Umble a direct descendent of another early family of professional and business people. 5. Emerson Blaine Cuppett a life-long resident of the community with an interest in its history. A special thanks is also given to Michael Kosko of Uniontown who created the cover page for this history and Representative Larry Roberts for his encouragement and help. Using additional information and the thoughts and ideas supplied by the above four people, and time permitting, a more detailed history of Markleysburg may follow. It is my hope that my mother, Mrs. Katherine Workman Thomas and my Great Aunt Minna Myers will approve of the efforts to update, not improve the "labor of love" that these ladies devoted their time and effort to more than a quarter of a century ago.

J. B. Thomas

MARKLEYSBURG 1860-1976

In Southwestern Pennsylvania near the Mason-Dixon line and about one mile from the Cornerstone marking the juncture of three states, namely Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania is located the pleasant little community of Markleysburg.

It was laid out by Squire John Markley and bears his name.

John Markley was born November 22, 1819 in Barbour County, then Virginia. He came to Pennsylvania to work on the National Highway (Now US Route 40). On February 22, 1844 he married Barbara Myers, daughter of a prosperous farmer and landowner, Jacob Myers.

In 1860 Mr. Markley laid out the village that was named for him. He was elected Squire and maintained his office in the front room of his home. He later built a building adjacent to his home, known as the Squire's Office. This building was used to hold town meetings and one part was used to confine persons accused of breaking the town laws. It was called the Lock-Up. Mr. Markley also operated a store known as Markley and Hicks. He died in 1903 and was buried in a small family cemetery near his home. One of his descendants, Mary E. Markely-Hinebaugh resides with her mother Mrs. Chas Markley in Markleysburg. They own the only service station in the borough.

The town as originally laid out had one principal street (Main Street) and three back streets, one now known as First Street and one as Alley Street and one Cross Street.

The first house was built in 1860.

Markleysburg is mentioned in the "History of Fayette County, 1882" by Ellis and I quote from this famous old history quote, "The present (1882) residents are Hiram Griffith, Merchant; Hiram Umbel, Merchant and Post Master; S. K. Thomas, Boarding House Keeper; J. Reckner, Cabinet Maker; S. Surtzer, Dr.; Jonas Seese, Carpenter; John Myers, Minister; Adam Sell,

Lumber Man; Mrs. Julia Markley; Mrs. Little; James Cassidy Finner; Mrs. Brown; F. Thomas, Farmer; Watson Gerard Shoemaker; John Howell, Blacksmith; C. Thomas, Farmer; Moses Chrise; Shoemaker; Silas Myers, Farmer; John Matthews, Teacher." Many descendants of these families still live here. Others have left

and became well known lawyers, judges, teachers, musicians, ministers, nurses and doctors.

The first store was kept by Philip Myers and W. Brown and later run by George Thomas. The building burned while Mr. Thomas was owner.

A new building was built on the site and run by Hicks and Markley, followed by J. Reckner, then Daniel Umbel who moved the store and formed a partnership with Reckner. The partnership lasted only one year and Sylvanus Thomas took over from Reckner.

In 1874 Hiram Griffith built a new store house and kept it until 1879 when Hiram Umbel became owner. Mr. Umbel was also postmaster, funeral director and boarding house keeper. The name of the boarding house was Mountain City House. The Mountain City House considered the most elaborate building in the mountains was also noted for its hospitality and good food. It was destroyed by fire. The building on the lot is now owned by Melvin Prinkey. Mr. Hiram Umbel's store, funeral home and Markleysburg post office were across the street from the hotel. The post office remained in this building until October 1, 1961 when it was moved to the present modern building. Postmasters who served were Hiram Umbel, Oak McKee, George Umbel, M.M. Thomas Amideo Suse, Charles Markley, Doris Welch and our present Postmaster C. H. Glisan.

In 1862 Benjamin Feichtner came from Virginia and located here. He formed a partnership with Dr. S. Switzer from Maryland but soon moved to Confluence, Pa. Dr. Switzer remained here and practiced medicine until his death. Many of Dr. Switzer's descendents continue to live in Markleysburg. Humbert's Variety Store is owned by his great granddaughter, Mrs. Adam Humbert. A granddaughter Vallie Switzer lives in Uniontown with her niece Mrs. Betty Marva.

Following Dr. Switzer was a young man named Dr. James Cox. He made his home in Mountain City House and married Alice Umbel daughter of the Hotel Proprietor. Dr. Cox and his wife had three sons. All followed their father in medical professions. Dr. Ralph Cox is living and is a Doctor on the staff of Connellsville State Hospital. Dr. James Cox died about 1908. He was replaced by Dr. W. T. Myers. Dr. Myers married Oma Umbel daughter of Hiram and Lucinda Umbel, proprietors of Mountain City House. I am sure there are some folks here tonight who remember Big Doe and Oma Myers. They had two

children, Wilbur and Elinor. One night, Wilbur who was a bright little boy about six years old was struck by a bicycle while playing on the sidewalk. Everything that medical skill could do was done to repair the injury. At this time he is still in a private hospital. The damage to his head was permanent.

After Dr. Myers moved to Uniontown, Dr. Ralph Cox opened an office in the one formerly occupied by Dr. Myers. Dr. Cox stayed a short while and moved to Somerfield. Other Doctors followed, namely Dr. B. B. Briscoe – McAdoo – Baird and B. B. Barton. None remained long except Dr. Barton. He bought a home here and was the only doctor here at the time of his death. At present, Dr. Harold Kamons has modern offices on Route 40.

In 1901 George Umbel was funeral director, post master and general store manager. His partner in business was Grant Umbel.

For many years Markleysburg had four stores, and it was said you can buy anything from a needle to a thrashing machine in Markleysburg.

The one store, S. M. Thomas & Sons was a two story building. When Markleysburg Grange No. 1947 was organized in 4/19/1926 they used the upper room for their meeting place. Silas Thomas had the Ford agency and Model T. E. M. Thomas's grocery store was near the school building. It had two stories. Gibson photographers had a studio on the second floor. The only photographic studio in Markleysburg. Russell Thomas, son of E. M. Thomas had the agency for Essex Cars.

For many years Russell Thomas was manager of Hagan's Ice Cream Factory in Brownsville, Pa. He also had the agency for McCormick Farm Machinery. He sold everything from a hoe to a thrashing machine. He built a garage to house his machinery. When he quit the agency he sold his building to C H & Ralph Miller Lumber dealers. This building was destroyed by fire and replaced with a large brick structure which is now G. W. Superett. Miller's built the only apartment building in the borough.

W. K. Umbel's store and home was destroyed by fire in January 1946 and was never rebuilt. The lot was bought by the members of the Pentacostal Church of God. They built the Gospel Center Church on it. Mr. Umbel built a new home and lived in it a short while. It is now owned by Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Keplinger. Mr. Umbel lived to be 95 years old. His son, W. K. Umbel, Jr. lives on the farm in Henry Clay Township.

Ross E. Fike came to Markleysburg in 1922. He bought the building that at one time was the home of the Order of Macabies. Mr. Fike remained in the mercantile business for more than 40 years. He built the building used as a theatre. It was the only motion picture theatre ever located in Markleysburg. It was operated by Robert Jones of Uniontown. When the theater closed the building was purchased by the Markleysburg Grange in 1947 for their regular meeting place. It was also famous for buck wheat cake suppers and is available to other religious or civic organizations for business or pleasure. (They planned on an observance of their 50th anniversary this summer). S. M. Thomas & Sons continued in business on the site originally used by H. Griffith. When they retired they sold to Alvin Sowers. The Sowers Brothers bought a strip of vacant land along Main Street. They laid this land out in lots. Two rows front and back with alleys or roads between the rows. This is known as Sowers Addition. Paul Hook followed Al Sowers in the store and in turn was succeeded by Harold & Mae Frazee, James & Eva Martin and Larry Martin. Present owners are Kenneth & Helen Chidester.

Adam Humbert came to Markleysburg and opened his variety store in a garage built by Sam Frazee Lumber Dealer, now owned by Mr. & Mrs. William Wilson. He bought a building adjacent to Harry Tallentire's Feed Store and Mrs. Humbert continues in business at this location. Harry Tallentire who came to Markleysburg from West Virginia, owns and operates the only feed store in the borough.

The old Geist Mills was built by Mr. Nedrow. It stood near what is now Spear Convalescent Home. After Mr. Nedrow, Isaac Myers moved into the Mill House and operated the Mill. The old mill house burned while Mr. Myers and family lived there. Next to run the mill was Jonas Ault, father of J.R. Ault, a well known Markleysburg resident.

In the 1940's when the Youghiogheny Dam took over Jockey Hollow and Somerfield, H. H. Rodahaver & Son, funeral directors moved here, and built a new and modern funeral home. It remains the only funeral home in Markleysburg or Henry Clay Township.

Three brothers John, Joseph and Albert Welch were carpenters and along with three Myers brothers George, Josh and John helped build many of the homes and large barns in and near Markleysburg.

During World War II two lumber dealers had offices in Markleysburg, Frazee Lumber Company and C. H. & Ralph Miller. The lumber company provided labor for the residents of Markleysburg and Henry Clay Township. John Spear built the first Rest Home east of the Mountains. The latest addition to it has made it one of the best in Fayette County.

The Shoemaker Church, which John Markley was a member, was built in the early 1840's. It was located along the road leading to the Maryland line. This church burned and was replaced in 1868 on land now owned by Chas. Conneway. In a deed dated June 16, 1894 Silas & Laura Myers donated a tract of land to George Umbel Baptist, J. M. Arnett Church of God and Grant Umbel Baptist as trustees of the Union Church or their successors. The present church was built and at present it is being used by Winebranarian Church of God. Reverend Jack Grey, Pastor and the Baptist Reverence Thomas Crogan, Pastor.

In 1880 a large church, 76' x 40' with a seating capacity of 1000 people was built by the German Baptists, also known as Dunkards. The congregation was made up of Fikes, Thomas's and Myers's. Reverend John Myers was the first pastor. This building was used until 1926 when the congregation then known as Brethren moved into their new and modern building on Main Street. Reverend Robert Miller was pastor.

In 1929-30 Reverend & Mrs. Kipe Sowers came to Markleysburg, rented the vacant storerooms and had religious services. They soon increased in number and saw the need for a church home. They bought a lot in Sowers addition and built the church calling it the Second Church of God. The congregation divided and their church is built on the lot formerly owned by W. K. Umbel, Sr. and is known as the Gospel Center Church. The members from the Gospel Center Church also bought the farm owned by W. K. Humberston and on this land built a large tabernacle and modern cabins. The cabins are used for visiting members during assemblies, conventions and bible school. The two-room school building was built on land provided by the Markley family for school purposes only. Not many years later the population decreased and only one room was needed. In 1945 the enrollment had increased and Katherine Kurtz was hired for grades first through fourth. Ida Glass Conneway remained as teacher for fifth through eighth grade. It continued this way until May 29, 1959. Beginning September 1959 the pupils were sent as tuition pupils to Henry Clay and Markleysburg. Henry Clay then formed a jointure and became Marclay School District. In 1966-67 Marclay became a division of Uniontown Area School District. The borough school building was sold to the borough and the lot

reverted to the Markley heirs and the borough bought the lot. The building is used for council meetings and boyscout headquarters.

Due to lack of time we could not positively confirm some dates and information included in this history. We plan to have more dates and names of persons who have helped to make our town a better place to live.

The following are the names of some of the teachers who taught our parents and grandparents: John Matthews, Jacob Anderson, Ross Matthews, John Workman, Pansy Laub Clister, Sadie Thomas, Dorsey Welsh, Caren Glass, Ruth Frazee Thomas, Ida Conneway, Jessie Workman, Fike Thomas, Emily Sowers, Rebecca Rodkey and Roy Myers.

The Markleysburg/Henry Clay Fire Company was organized in 1954. It is indeed a worthy addition to our community and deserves our support.

Several persons born in Markleysburg became well known in their chosen fields of labor: Ross Matthews, Fayette County Judge; Robert Umbel, Fayette County Judge; Robert Arnett, Bank President; H. P. Myers, Doctor; Frank Frederick, Owner of Frederick Music Store in Uniontown, Pa and father of the late Oliver Frederick Conway, noted musician and composer.

The 1920's are notable years for the residents of Markleysburg. Bell Telephone Company extended its line into the borough and provided service to business places and a few residents. Today few homes are without a telephone. The hard top road - route 40 to borough line was built from 1920 through 1925. The road from the borough line and West Virginia line was completed in 1928. In March 1928 West Penn Power Company brought light and power to Markleysburg. It was not until October 1970 that C. B. Welch, Jr. purchased modern equipment and began operating as Welch Disposal Service. He provided weekly garbage pick-up service for borough residents as well as those living in surrounding communities.

Mr. Ellis in his famous 1882 history of Fayette County had a vision of Markleysburg and made this statement: "Situate on level lands, the village has room to grow into a large town." The population in 1880 was 77. Today almost

100 years later it is 291. We leave you with this question. Would we, as residents, of this little town, be happier if Ellis's vision had become a reality or are we happier as just a pleasant little village?

Signed,

Minna Myers, Katherine Thomas