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Front Matter

ADAMS COUNTY HISTORY



2001

Volume 7

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Statement of Purpose

The Adams County Historical Society is committed to the presentation of the social, economic, political, and religious history of the county and to the promotion of the study of that history. Expressing its commitment, the society maintains museum displays and a valuable library of publications, and archival and manuscript material which includes estate papers, deed books, land surveys, and newspapers. In addition, it publishes important historical studies and reprints of earlier studies on Adams county history, a monthly newsletter, and a journal.

The editorial board of Adams County History encourages and invites the submission of essays and notices reflecting the rich history of Adams county. Submissions should be typed double spaced. Contributors should retain copies of the typescript submitted. If they desire return of their submissions, they should enclose a self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage.

Submissions and inquiries should be addressed to:

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Editor's Note

How can one make an absence flower,
Lure a desert to sudden bloom?

– John Montague

A decaying, wooden, humpbacked bridge spanning a railroad cut and the barely remembered gravers whose tombstones preserve in slate, sandstone, and marble, not only the names, dates of birth and death of the county's early settlers, but also the Scots-Irish and German folk art once used to memorialize those dead – these have inspired the two essays collected in this year's volume of *Adams County History*. Superficially unrelated, the two articles together nonetheless remind us again how fragile and fugitive and endangered are the material remains of our past.

Unprotected from vandalism and weather – and, indeed, from cultural indifference – the county's rural graveyards are becoming smaller, their stones breaking and becoming more illegible each year. Even sadder, the early craftsmen, who usually pursued their love of stone-work part-time, when demands of their vocations allowed, comprise a largely unknown group. Yet to their communities they were essential. Long a student of early folkways and folk-art, Nancy DeLong has endeavored to resurrect the identities of as many of those stone-gravers as still feasible, sometimes discovering surprising connections among them that crossed ethnic – that is, German and Celtic – boundaries, oftentimes uncovering veritable dynasties (Bighams and Mealses) of gravestone-makers, whose crafts, style, and traditions were carried on generation after generation.

Bureaucratic indifference and insensitivity also assault the county's material legacy. In his essay, Elwood W. ("Woody") Christ investigates the history of Guernsey's wooden, arched bridge, decreed as fit for demolition by the commonwealth's Public Utilities Commission. Endeavoring to assess ultimate responsibility for maintaining the structure and thus perhaps providing the Friends of Guernsey some justification for preserving it and obtaining funding to repair it, Woody's meticulous detective work not only clarifies something of the bridge's mysterious origin, but also uncovers a history of the hamlet of Guernsey, together with the latter's business and social ventures, that helps explain the puzzling and seemingly irrational configuration of roads and properties that surround the Butler township landmark.

Both essays offer significant views into our history: DeLong's examines the lives of artisans we who appreciate and value gravestones hardly even think about; and Christ's details how geographic anomalies and today's half-recognizable clusters of houses at cross-roads may embody complex social and economic histories. Both reveal directions future work might pursue and suggest approaches and articles for inclusion in next year's *ACH*. If this publication is to continue, it must be in a position to draw upon the resources and interests of its readership. Essays for inclusion in volume 8 are now being considered, and we hope that anyone interested in submitting a piece for publication will get in touch with the editor as soon as possible.