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## **INDIAN HEAD: A PLACE OF FAMILY, FRIENDS AND FUN**

**Uniontown, PA** – Since its founding in the mid-1800s, the mountain community of Indian Head has been through a great deal, including a literal trial by fire. But the tiny Fayette County town along Indian Creek, located across a bridge just off Route 711 between Normalville and Donegal, remains a place where there is always a neighbor to talk to and fun to be had.

Indian Head has been around since at least 1853, when the post office was established, but its existence was threatened in May 1909, when a fire devastated the town. The blaze wiped out several key businesses, including Sparks Supply, and destroyed a number of homes as well. But the community rebuilt, as D.B. Zimmerman took ownership of the town. Zimmerman was a cattle rancher who had come to Pennsylvania due to the coal and coke boom. Under his ownership, Indian Head became a company town, and a company store was built on the foundation of Sparks Supply.

By the late 1920s, Clarence Resh was running the company store, and the town was owned by the Mellon family.

More tragedy struck Indian Head in the coming decades, as floods devastated the little town in 1936 and 1943. Around the same time, the coal industry collapsed, and the Mellons began selling off homes and other properties. Resh continued to run the general store, and Resh's became a landmark in Indian Head until its closing just a few years ago.

It's one of the many places of which Peggy Grimm Mansberry has fond memories.

"Resh's Red & White Store (on property across the road from the fire hall) was a nice place to shop and gather," she said. "A quick trip was an impossibility, as you were likely to bump into several acquaintances who wanted to chat before leaving. Along with fresh meat, cheeses and assorted grocery items, it had a section of hardware supplies. It was still in operation while my kids were growing up, and my grandparents had shopped there, so I know it served several generations before it closed and was torn down."

Mansberry, who grew up just across Route 711 in the village of Melcroft before moving just a few miles from the center of Indian Head, said there also was a store in nearby Davistown bearing the name Sparks, near the site of a recently opened business called Sparks in the Valley.

The store is only one of her many fond memories of the town.

“On Friday nights, there was roller skating for school-age kids at the Lions Club Community Center. That building burnt several years ago, but for many years, it was THE place to hold wedding receptions, community events and reunions. I believe the Lions Club still maintains outdoor pavilions for rent on the premises,” she said. “Also, in my very early years, there was a drive-in movie theater across the road from the community center on 711. Fog rolled in on that low-lying piece of ground every night shortly after dusk, spoiling the movie, so it didn't last too long, but I do remember going there.”

And, like many small communities, the local fire department and church played key roles in everyone's lives. Mansberry recalled the excitement of attending the Saltlick Township Volunteer Fire Department's annual fair, as well as Vacation Bible School at Indian Head Church of God and other places of worship.

“The annual fireman's fair was something we looked forward to attending from one year to the next. Saltlick Township was, and still is, a dry township with no bars, so the fair was a chance for local, single folks to meet and a place for older folks to catch up on family happenings and such,” she said. “I believe it ran for two weeks and ended on a Saturday night with fireworks.

The other annual event every child dreamed of was two weeks of Bible School, filled with Bible stories, songs, picnics, crafts and the opportunity to have fun with friends. It is still very popular with the area's churches.”

But for Mansberry and many other residents, the real draw of Indian Head is the proximity to nature and the quiet, peaceful lifestyle.

“I remember my younger years fondly, due in large part to the number of things to do outdoors. It's still my favorite thing about living in this area,” she said. “We have an abundance of clean water and fresh mountain air. Whether you hunt or fish, ski or enjoy hitting the biking and hiking trails, there is something in close proximity to do outside year-round. We're a short driving distance from ski resorts and Ohiopyle State Park, plus you can set out from the trail in Indian Head and go in either direction for several miles. Or kids can – and do – just play in the creek.”

“Folks here like to garden and sit in their backyards, visiting or having a cookout with friends and neighbors. I think families that reside here would agree that it is a great place for kids to grow up, and they tend to stay here. I can trace my family back to 10 generations consecutively living in this area, and if my granddaughter Alyssa is able to find a home and move back here with her two daughters, we can add an 11<sup>th</sup> generation.”

To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.fayettecountypa.org](http://www.fayettecountypa.org).

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