

EATON TOWNSHIP

THIS township, named after General William Eaton, the hero of Tripoli, was erected in 1817 from the portion of Tunkhannock lying west of the Susquehanna River. The scenery comprises a charming variety. On some of the wilder mountain barrens whortleberries abound, and these have been for many years the resort of parties of berry pickers from all the country round. The township is well watered by deep creeks. The principal one, Bowman's, running nearly through the center of the township, was once famed for its trout; these have been partially exterminated, but the stream is still a popular resort for fishermen, who come often from adjacent States. The river is stocked with black bass, and in the early years of the present century a productive shad fishery was in operation at Hunter's Ferry, but dams have destroyed it. The beasts of the forest and game birds were formerly abundant.

The township had 830 inhabitants in 1870, and 956 in 1880.
(History written in the late 19th century and recorded at the Luzerne County Historical Society.)



William Eaton, c. 1807,
portrait by
Rembrandt Peale

THE HARDINGS AND OTHER PIONEERS

That portion of the township bordering on the river was settled before the Revolution. The first to come were Zebulon Marcy, Adam Wortman, Philip Buck and Adam Bowman, the last three named being low Dutchmen and Tories. All of these, except Wortman, left the place during the Revolution, and a patriot scouting party shot Wortman during a raid. Zebulon Marcy returned after the war closely followed by Obadiah, Aaron and John Taylor. Obadiah, a native of Connecticut, was a soldier of the Revolution. Soon after the war he settled on lot No. 33, at Hunter's Ferry, on the west side of the river. The U. S. government granted him a pension for life. His remains lie in the family burying ground on the homestead, which a grandson, Markland Robinson, has inherited. Joseph Earl and his sons, Solomon and Benjamin, were the next to arrive, coming about 1790. Abraham Frear came about 1792, finally settling on Frear Hill. He married Sarah Patterson Mitchell, the widow of David Mitchell, and had several children. Abraham became a Methodist preacher. His son, William was for many years the pastor of the Eaton Baptist Church, and, another son, James, a prominent merchant in Clinton. Abraham Frear died in 1823, aged 84; his wife in 1845, aged 85. Elisha, son of Stephen Harding, was the next settler. He was born in Colchester, Conn., April 8th, 1760. He lived with his father in Exeter from 1774 until the Wyoming Massacre. In connection with that tragedy, Benjamin and Stukely Harding were killed, but Elisha escaped with other members of the family to Orange County, N. Y. He spent the rest of the Revolutionary period in Connecticut, and was one of the volunteers who went to the defense of New London when that town was sacked by Benedict Arnold. He returned to Wyoming in 1784, just in time to again be driven out by the Pennamites, but soon returned to fight it out. He was captured by the treachery of Armstrong and put in jail at Easton, but escaped and returned. He married Martha Rider, of Pittston, in 1781 and settled near the mouth of the Lackawanna. He moved in 1789 to Eaton. He was justice of the peace from 1799 to 1812. In 1809, he was elected one of the county commissioners of Luzerne county. He died August 1, 1839, and was buried in the cemetery adjoining the Baptist church. Only two of his seven children are now living — Mary, the widow of Thomas Mitchell, now ninety-three years of age, and Jesse Harding, living just above the narrows on the road from Eatonville. Jesse was born in 1802, where he now lives. He was a justice of the peace from 1840 to 1850, and filled several other offices. He was married in 1826 to Nancy Miller, of Eaton, a daughter of George Miller. John Harding, another son of Elisha, settled on a lot north of Bowman's creek. Another brother who occupied a prominent position in the town was Elisha, father of N. J. Harding. He was born in Eaton, in 1790. He married Amy Jenkins, and his second wife was a Miss Nancy Jackson, who survives him, and now resides with her son. He was a justice of the peace thirty years, and may be said to have practically filled all of the offices and managed all of the public business of the town. He acted as general conveyancer and legal adviser for his townsmen.

There is a large number of the descendants of this family in the townships of Eaton and Tunkhannock, who inherit the integrity and independence of their ancestors. Israel, a brother of Elisha Harding, was a member of Captain Durkee's company from Wyoming, was at Brandywine and Valley Forge, and with his company arrived just too late to prevent the terrible massacre of Wyoming. He married Lydia Reed, and came to Eaton after the close of the war. He died in Eaton in 1835, aged about eighty years. Newton Smith, a Methodist local preacher, settled about 1800 just below the Narrows. John Wilson, another pioneer, was for years a Methodist local preacher, later becoming a Baptist. Jacob Patrick came next. He sold out to Samuel Roberts, and removed. A. Wheelock about 1805 purchased one hundred acres where Charles Wheelock now lives; his son Irvin is the present postmaster and merchant, also dealing in lumber, railroad ties, etc. Jesse Lee came about 1804, and kept the first tavern. Daniel and Forbes Lee came about 1812. They were men of sterling character and left their mark in the town, where their sons now occupy a foremost position. John Williams, whose father lost his life at Wyoming, Ezekiel Newman and John Evans also settled in the first years of the present century. Thomas Mitchell, born in Warwick, Orange County, NY, in 1780, was the son of Daniel Mitchell, an early settler in Pittston, where he died in 1787. Thomas came to Eaton about 1818, purchasing the farm on which his son now lives. A log house was the home of the family until the present building was erected. He married Mary, daughter of Elisha Harding, who survives him. John Aumick settled about 1818 where his son Andrew now lives. He purchased the land of Thomas Hawkins. Among those who came later were Christopher Minor, O. W. Benjamin, Chauncey Benson, Damon Stevens, George Rinker, William Moneypenny and Uriah Swetland, whose grandfather was at Wyoming during the battle in the valley. After the massacre he was taken prisoner by the Indians, and suffered great hardship while in their custody. He was also a participant in the Pennamite strife.

Asa S. Dana, who was born in Wilkes-Barre, December 17th, 1794, was the son of Anderson Dana, whose father was killed in the Wyoming massacre. After the war Anderson Dana returned to his father's home in the Wyoming valley, where he spent a busy and active life and died at the age of 80. Here Asa S. was born. In the spring of 1818, he removed with his wife and child to the farm in Eaton directly opposite where Tunkhannock now stands. He built a log house and cleared up this farm. Through his industry, he accumulated considerable property in Wyoming and Luzerne counties. He was twice married and had seven children by each wife, eight sons and six daughters. In 1845, he united with the Presbyterian Church of Tunkhannock, and he contributed liberally of his means for its support. He died July 29th, 1874, in his 80th year.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

The first store is thought to have been kept by Jesse Lee. The first gristmill was erected by Israel Harding, north of the site of Rev. W. O. Stern's residence. There are now two principal grist-mills. O. W. Benjamin's was built in 1832, by Abraham Frear. In 1857, it came into the possession of its present owner, by whom it has been thoroughly repaired, and it is doing a flourishing business. The grist mill at Kingfisher run was built in 1868, by A. W. Dana; it has four runs of stones, and takes water from Sugar Hollow creek by a wooden conduit of great length. The sawmill of W. L. Hunter stands on the site of one that was built 70 years ago. Mr. Hunter has twice rebuilt the present mill; on one occasion it was carried away by high water. This mill does a large amount of work. James Donnelly put up the steam sawmill at Sugar Hollow in 1878; it is now owned and run by P. Shippey. A steam sawmill is run and owned by Charles Rosengrantz. William B. Moneypenny put up in 1830 a large merchant mill at a cost over \$10,000. It was operated over twenty years, when the enterprise failed from the drying up of the stream. It was used at times as a clover mill, and was devoted on many occasions to quarterly meetings and other large gatherings of the M. E. church. It was finally taken down in 1879. The first blacksmith, it is said, was Elisha Harding, sen. Among the present blacksmiths is Charles Edward McVicar. He commenced his establishment in 1868, and has kept adding to it until it is now a well-appointed shop. Volney Rosengrantz has a blacksmith and wagon repairing shop opposite his residence. He owns another shop at the head of Sugar Hollow. The only wagon shop in the town is that of J. F. Garing. J. Hall was the first cooper in the township. The present shop was put up in 1877 by Joseph Neyhart, and is worked by him. Joseph Ace is the only regular boot and shoe maker.

Communications and Post-Offices

In very early days, a four horse stage ran through the township, going up into New York from Wilkes-Barre. The coach stopped at a house on the site of the one now occupied by Anderson Dana, to supply the inner wants of man and beast. There are two post offices in the township, at Eatonville and South Eaton. There are daily deliveries of mail at both. The first postmaster was Jesse Lee. The office was once kept at Mr. Miller's, with that gentleman as postmaster. It is now at the store of Irvin Wheelock, who has been postmaster since 1870. William B. Moneypenny has been the postmaster at South Eaton since 1856.

SCHOOLS

The first schoolhouse (of logs) stood near where the Baptist church stands. Greased paper was used for window glass. Jesse Harding assisted at the raising of the first framed school-house, and was one of the first teachers in it. The first teachers were John Evans and one Scott.

There are now eleven school districts in the township. The first independent district was set off in 1878. The schoolhouse was built in 1879. The attendance of scholars at all the schools is good. Within a few years past a new series of educational works has been introduced.

CEMETERIES

The first burial grounds in the town are the one near Markland Robinson's residence and one near the residence of Mr. Strough, in which the remains of Jesse Lee and some of his descendants are buried. The burial ground adjacent to the Baptist church was given to the township by Elisha Harding, sen., about 1825. The first burial here was that of Abraham Frear, and here lie the remains of the Harding ancestors. Close by is the Dana burial ground, owned by Dr. Dana and laid out in lots. The first burial here was that of Irvin Wheelock's father. There is also a public cemetery South Eaton, and here are buried some of Eaton's best citizens.

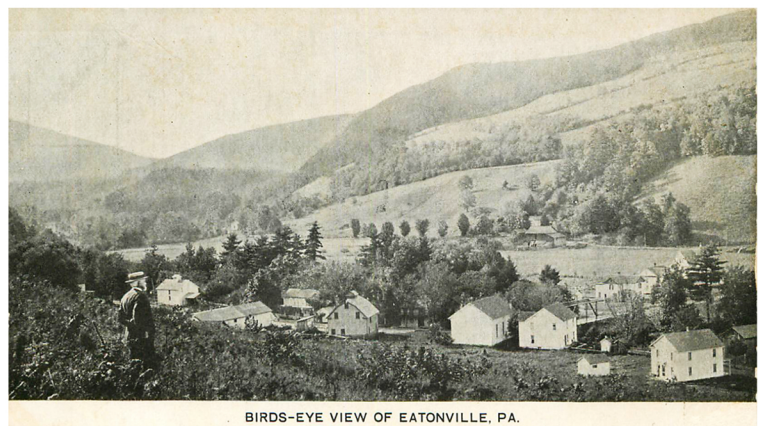
THE BAPTIST CHURCH OF EATON

November 20th, 1823, a council at Eaton formed a church consisting of the persons named below:

William Frear, Zebulon Marcy, Jr., Jackson Smith, Caleb Mead, Shubell Darling, Margaret Wilson, Huldah Bates, Betsy Roberts, James E. Roberts, Sally Mitchell, Eleanor Wheelock, Polly Mitchell, Sarah Smith, Sarah Wilson, Mary Suter, Martha Harding, Mary Mead, Sarah Frear, Elizabeth Durland and Mary Van Tuyle.

Thomas Mitchell and Jackson Smith were the first deacons. Meetings were held at private houses and at the schoolhouse at the mouth of Bowman's creek until 1850, when the present church was completed and occupied.

Rev. William Frear was the pastor until his death, in 1874, more than half a century. He was born in Pittston, PA, November 12th, 1792. His parents were members of the first Baptist church in that place, his mother being the first person ever baptized in the Wyoming Valley. In 1798, the family moved to Eaton and in 1804 to the farm now in possession of the family on Frear Hill. When sixteen years old, William carried the mail from Tunkhannock to Binghamton by way of Great Bend, often on foot over roads almost impassable, running through miles of unbroken forest infested with wild animals. In 1814, he went with Captain Camp's company to the defense of Baltimore. In 1818, he married Hannah Wheelock, of Tunkhannock. He educated himself. He joined the Abington church in 1820. In 1822, he was licensed to preach and ordained. His life was singularly pure and his influence widely and favorably felt. He attended the dedication of Keystone Academy, and, while receiving the greetings of his friends, he fell insensible into the arms of one of them, and in a few moments breathed his last. During his last years, A. J. Furman, P. S. Everett and N. Whitney were associated with him in the pastorate. The next pastor of the church was Elder Grow, who was succeeded by Arthur O. Sterns, since the close of whose pastorate in 1877 there has been no stated pastor, though regular meetings have been maintained. Jackson Smith was the clerk of the church from 1823 to 1856; Samuel Harding and J. M. Miller have since filled the office. The present deacons are George Rinker and A. Fratchey. The Sunday school numbers forty-five scholars. The superintendent is D. W. Herman.



BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF EATONVILLE, PA.