



Editor: Lorne R. Smith

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From Your Editor

Lorne Smith

This has been an exciting few months for your editor as it relates to the Markham Berczy Settlers. As reported later in this newsletter, Carol and I enjoyed a trip to Scandinavia in June. In the Copenhagen Rigsarkivet or Archives I found an agreement signed by my ancestor Francis Andrew Schmidt and William Berczy on April 19, 1792 for land in New York. How I wished I was able to read German when I found the two boxes of materials containing this contract.

Our second big experience was hiking the Williamson Road over Laurel Mountain near Liberty, Pa. on October 15, 1997. I hope you find our experiences interesting to read. I remain excited about the strong support we receive from the folks in Pennsylvania and New York. Marie and Theodore Aylesworth in Liberty, Pa., Dick Sherer, Historian for Steuben County in Bath, Larry Turner, Historian in Groveland, and Roger Grigsby, Director of the Benjamin Patterson Inn in Corning/Painted Post have all been so helpful in providing information about the sojourn of our ancestors from September, 1992 until they left for Upper Canada in May, 1794. Some of this information is included in the newsletter. The Association will publish a separate folder on the Williamson Road to show the exact route from Williamsport to Geneseo. This will help anyone wishing to retrace the route of their ancestors by auto.

Your editor still finds himself being asked to tell the story of the Berczy Axemen. On Wednesday, October 1 it was at the Learning Unlimited program in Woodstock. On October 19 two bus loads signed up for a trip around Markham and Scarborough to hear about the importance of the Rouge River and the history of the people who first settled on it. At one point I found myself beside the two historical markers at the Berczy Burying Ground, north of Unionville, surrounded by 100 people who were obviously interested in hearing the story of our ancestors.

We were saddened to hear of the auto accident of our President, Bob Shank on Saturday, October 12 just north of Orillia, Ontario. Fortunately Bob sustained no permanent injuries and his wife Luella is recovering from a serious back injury. As of writing Lue and Bob have returned to their home in Kanata.

I hope our members will continue to keep their eyes and ears open for new information about our ancestors. I am firmly convinced there is still lots of information out there if we can just find it. We welcome new information to publish in the Gazette.

The Late John Lunau Recognized

On Wednesday, Sept. 24, Mayor Don Cousens and Mike Filey of the Ontario Heritage Foundation presented Aileen Lunau with a 1997 Heritage Community Recognition Award in memory of her son, John Lunau. John was the founding President of the Markham Berczy Settlers Association. This new award, established by the



Ontario Heritage Foundation, recognizes persons who have made an outstanding lifelong contribution to heritage conservation in their local communities. The award states "Presented by the Ontario Heritage Foundation in appreciation of heritage conservation achievement in preserving, protecting and promoting our Province's rich heritage". Only seven awards were given across the province this first year. The Ontario Heritage Foundation is the group responsible for the blue plaques that are placed across the province to recognize important events and buildings.

John Lunau's name was nominated by the Town of Markham on the recommendation of Heritage Markham. The nomination submission notes that John, at the age of 20, assisted by Alex Bruce and Wesley Gohn, produced the first Historical Sketch of

MARKHAM BERCY SETTLERS ASSOCIATION

1997 Annual Meeting

Wednesday, November 26, 1997
Bethesda Lutheran Church
20 Union St., Unionville, Ontario

Receive Reports of Committees
Receive Financial Statement
Elect Directors
Walking the Williamson Road
over Laurel Mountain
A Family History

Markham Township in 1950. In 1955 he wrote Markham Fair's 100th Anniversary book. He was the first President of the Markham Historical Society in 1969 and was instrumental in the founding of the Museum in 1971. This was a well deserved award for John's 43 years of service to our community.

New Finds for MBSA

Carol and I had a wonderful trip to Scandinavia in late June. While we were in Copenhagen, Denmark, I took my free time to visit the Rigsarkivet (Archives). Within 15 minutes I was able to locate two boxes of materials related to the migration of our ancestors from Hamburg, Germany. The first packet of information in the first box contained a number of documents that mention "the London Associates and the Genesee Association". Of course all of these documents are in German script. Contained within this packet was a contract dated 19th of April, 1792 and signed by William Berczy and Franz Andrew Schmidt (my Berczy Settler ancestor). This document gives the details of the agreement each settler would have signed before leaving Germany in May, 1792. Fortunately I was able to bring a copy home with me. This find certainly added to the enjoyment of my vacation. We are doing our best to get this document translated so it can be published in the next newsletter.

Why is this material in Copenhagen? In 1792, Schleswig-Holstein was part of Denmark, and Altona is just inside the border. Thus all of the official opposition to the recruitment of settlers



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Articles for the Berczy Settlers Gazette are welcome.

Query Column: we will publish specific names you are trying to trace along with your name and address.

by the Genesee Association came from the Senate in Copenhagen.

Subsequently I forwarded this new information to Wilhelm Hoop, my contact in St. Dionys, Germany (see page 3, Volume 4, Number 1, Spring 1997). He made further inquiries in Copenhagen and wrote to me recently that he has obtained approximately 100 pages of materials related to our ancestors migration from Hamburg. The following is a partial text of his letter.

Translation of Wilhelm Hoop's letter.

Historical situation in North-Germany about the year 1792

Ilona Lattner

At that time Germany was a conglomerate of small states. In the north, the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein reached as far as the River Elbe. The Danish king was also a German count and duke of Schleswig and Holstein.

Hamburg was still relatively small. Many parts of what now makes up the city of Hamburg (Altona, Harburg, Wilhelmsburg, Bergedorf, and others) did not belong to Hamburg at that time. Altona was still in Holstein. Lauenburg (just to the south) was a Saxon Duchy and was connected with the Electorate of Hannover. The English king, George III, of the line of "Welfen" was also Elector of Hannover. In this case it was only a "personal union" not a union between the countries. This union lasted from 1713 to 1837.

In France, the revolution started in 1789 and changed all of west and middle Europe. Since the Electorate of Hannover was connected with England, France turned against Hannover to strike out against England. France probably viewed Hannover as an English province. Soldiers from Hannover served for England in many parts of the world, such as Gibraltar, East India, and other places. From 1793 on they were also engaged on the English side in the coalition war against France.

Since Austria and Prussia also formed an alliance against France (1792-1797) this was a very turbulent time for all northern Germany. Because of the close relationship between Hannover and England, the new English colonies in America seemed to offer a brighter future for landless second and third sons of farmers and also for tradesmen and their families. As well, unmarried women saw America as a chance to escape their employment as domestic servants.

The 7 year war of Prussia against various countries and the following alterations from 1740 to 1760 affected all of northern Germany. Everywhere recruiting officers were looking for soldiers. In order to escape the constant pressure into military service, many young people fled from the Hannover area to Holstein where they were safe under Danish sovereignty. There is no indication whether any of them might have been among the Berczy settlers. Certain, however, is that the majority of Berczy settlers came from the region around Hamburg and that they were looking for a better life in the new country.

From the documents it is absolutely clear that the settlers were not of doubtful character and that they were not lazy people, who did not want to work in Germany and were looking for opportunities elsewhere.

Notice for MBSA Research Committee

The Fall meeting of the Research Committee will be combined with the MBSA Annual Meeting on Wednesday, November 26 at Bethesda Lutheran Church. See the notice of the 1997 Annual Meeting.

Report from the Spring Research Committee Meeting

Cliff Barnard, Chairman

The discussion on the First Five Generation Charts brought out three main points - there are a number of families where information for 2 more generations is not available and considerable work would be required. The current First Three Generation Charts are not big sellers. Finally, adding 2 more generations adds a large number of descendants to the families, which would greatly increase the size and cost of the books. For these reasons it was decided that MBSA would not proceed with this project at this time.

Bob Shank's project to develop information on the first 2 generations, as outlined in the notice for the Spring 1997 Research Committee Meeting, is still active and he is asking you to share with him any information you have.

A number of possible projects for the Research Committee have been suggested and these will be discussed at the fall meeting. One of these would be to see if it is possible to provide an identification marker for the gravestones of the original Berczy Settlers. Please let me know if stones exist for your family.

Walking the Williamson Road

Lorne Smith

On October 15, 1997, Carol and I had the opportunity to walk the part of the Williamson Road over Laurel Mountain. Marie Aylesworth of Liberty, PA arranged with a local game and forestry club to get permission to pass over their lands. Joe Guillaume, a member of the club acted as our guide.

The historic and meaningful experience began on Tuesday night when they permitted us to camp beside the trail on top of the mountain in our modern conestoga wagon (truck camper with 200 horses under the hood). It was a beautiful but cool moonlit evening as we dosed off to sleep thinking of how my ancestors, Francis Andrew Schmidt, his wife and young child, would have been camped almost on the very same spot exactly 205 years ago after cutting the road over the most difficult section through the Allegheny mountains. Carol's ancestor, Christian Reesor, passed this very spot in 1804 when he brought his whole family from Pennsylvania to Upper Canada in the summer of 1804 in five conestoga wagons drawn by horses.

Wednesday morning dawned bright and clear with the sunshine filtering through the coloured leaves of the hardwoods. We planned to walk southward from the top of the mountain down over the trail to Route 15 just north of Trout Run. It had been agreed that we would begin to walk the trail from our campsite and Joe and Marie would catch up with us in a four wheel drive truck. We left sharp at 8 a.m. There was a distinctive cool dampness to the morning but the walking was invigorating and satisfying. The mountain has been logged of its white pine and hemlock over the years and a new growth of hardwoods now covers the sandy soil. Where the trees are not thick the ground is covered with mountain laurel and ferns.

By 9:45 a.m. we became concerned that Joe and Marie had not caught up to us. We wondered what had happened. The walking was good but we had not found the trail we knew we should be on. Yes, you guessed it: The Germans were lost on Laurel Mountain again, just



Joe Guillaume & Marie Aylesworth

as their ancestors were over 200 years ago. We had missed the turn-off and gone too far. Fortunately another club member came along and delivered us back to the starting point where Joe and Marie found us about 11:20 a.m. I think they really were glad to find us. Maybe they had visions of Canadian newspaper headlines: "Canadian couple lost in the Allegheny Mountains". For the remainder of the journey they never let us out of their sight.



Germans lost again!

The original part of the trail leaves a logging road at right angles and goes straight down the mountain. It was at this point that Marie says they changed their direction and headed east around the side of Laurel Mountain rather than going west up Pigeon Hollow to Steam Valley. This part of the trail has never been changed. It is covered in deadfalls and in places it is cut so deep that a tall person can walk through it and not be seen from above. Certainly it would have washed out over the years as the horses hooves and wagon wheels loosened the soil but it is pretty evident it would have been very hard clearing the original route. At one point there is a branch of the trail leading off at about 30 degrees. This was clearly an earlier branch of the road because big pine trees are now growing up in the centre. But it also is quite deep. As we came down the mountain we found the place where they left the river to head up over the mountain: the confluence of Deep Run and Pigeon Hollow Run. (Pigeon Hollow takes its name from a passenger pigeon nest found many years ago.) We stopped on a little island in the river to brew a "spot" of tea and munch dried nuts and fruit. The trail follows the Trout Run down to Route 15 just north of the community of Trout Run. The river merges with Steam Valley Run and flows south to the Susquehanna River at Williamsburg.

It was a glorious day about the same time of the month of October as our ancestors would have been working on the road. Joe was an excellent guide and Marie and her son-in-law Richard were perfect companions even if they teased us all the way down the mountain. We saw white tail deer, wild turkeys and squirrels. It is very difficult to put into words the mountain top experience of this walk. It is truly an exhilarating experience to walk the trail of your ancestors. It helps one understand the hard work involved in clearing the trees and cutting the roadway around the side of the mountain. It is now easier to understand the fear and trepidation of the women. We understand why they felt they had been brought into the wilderness to die.

Many thanks to Joe Guillaume and Marie Aylesworth for making this trip possible for us.

Williamsburg Log Cabins

Groveland Historian, Larry Turner, provides some interesting information about the settlement of our ancestors near Williamsburg. He has been using a metal detector to locate the outline of buildings of Williamsburg. Route 62 passes right through the centre of what was the original community of Williamsburg. The following quotes from material supplied by Larry describe the situation in 1792-93 in New York state.

At the time of Berczy's arrival, Dec. 21, 1792 (Cowan, 1942: 179) Williamsburg appeared to be thriving with "52 lots taken" (Cowan, 1941: 71-72). Berczy and "his Germans" found ready "only two rough log cabins for 39" people. (Cowan 1942: 6), although Williamson states that he had half a dozen huts ready for the Germans (Williamson's notes, Osgood Papers, p. 299). These may possibly have been "Brown's old house" and "Raddick's place" mentioned in a letter from John Johnston to Williamson in Jan. 16,

1793 as being where Berczy had settled his people (Williamson Letters, Osgood Papers). At the time, Berczy was said to have had in Williamsburg 2 blacksmiths, 1 locksmith, 2 weavers, 1 cartwright, 3 joiners, 4 carpenters, 1 potter, 1 brewer, 1 tanner, several shoemakers and 2 bakers (Cowan, 1942: 242-243).

Berczy himself made two settlements. "One is over the Canescraquy and Cashequa and the other along the east dissides the Canescraquy" (Cowan, 1942: 185-186). A bridge was needed across the Canescraquy which has "very high banks and a muddy bottom so that wagons and sleds cannot be carried through..." A bridge was also necessary because "all our meadows were over the Canescraquy" and the men had to carry the hay across on their backs (Cowan: 1942: 187) The creek was about 60 feet wide at the narrowest place where a bridge could be constructed.

Berczy raised 45 log cabins, each 24 x 16 feet (Cowan 1942: 7). He had built "two common log houses of 24 x 16 feet, one for a store of provisions and the other for a dwelling house for my family; in the middle of these two houses I built a small frame 17 feet square and 9 feet high for an office...besides those...I ordered three small log houses more of 20 by 16 ft...one for the baker, one for the shop of two joiners...and two for the young men which also had preferred to remain as servants. All these houses I placed in a small square near the settlement dissides the Canescraquy..." (Cowan, 1942: 186). Berczy bought kettles and pots from Broughton, 30 miles to the northeast and, on returning, passed by a potter's place and bought earthenware (Cowan, 1942: 7).

It is further stated that the Germans were "placed out...on the land between Williamsburg and the Indians" (Cowan, 1941: 73). The race track, prepared for the Fair of 1793 was laid out "below (north of) the German Cabins, at the forks of the Canaseraga and the Genesee" (Cowan, 1941: 73). At the same time Williamson's barn was extended to 200 feet to shelter visiting horses (Cowan 1942: 17).

References: The Rochester Historical Society, Publication XIX, Charles Williamson, Helen I. Cowan, Rochester, New York, 1941.

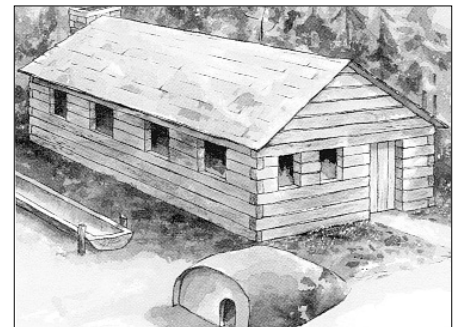
The Rochester Historical Society, Publication XX, Part II - William Berczy's Williamsburg Documents, A. J. H. Richardson and Helen I. Cowan, Rochester New York, 1942.

Larry also provided a copy of a very early map that gives the Indian names of communities in the Genesee and Finger Lakes area. Some of these are the names we have been unable to locate in the Sommerfeldt Diary.

The Clarion News, Thursday, November 28, 1996, carried an extensive article entitled "Settlers' Descendants visit site of Williamsburg". It quotes Janet Iles "I realized our ancestors must have possessed fortitude and great determination to have survived the hardship they endured". Vicky Munro is quoted as follows "my emotions were running high just thinking from a woman's point of view how they could cope with the conditions. People were sold a bill of goods probably thinking they were coming to a civilized village or town as they had left in Germany. The sanitary conditions and just plain living conditions much have been beyond comprehension to them. When they were beyond endurance, 15 of their men were thrown in jail. The anger that they must have felt is understandable. It amazes me that Americans still remember the jail incident 200 years later..."

Blockhouse, Liberty, Pa., built in 1792

This is the artist's conception of the 20' x 40' log block house built in 1792 as a temporary shelter and storehouse for the Berczy Settlers across the creek at Liberty, Pa. It served as a convenient stopping place after the most difficult part of the trail over Laurel Mountain. In 1793 it was converted to a tavern. Note the bake oven and the split-log feed trough for horses and oxen near the house. The sur-



rounding area is shown with a split-log feed trough for horses and oxen near the house. The sur-

rounding settlement was known as Blockhouse for several decades until it was given the present name of Liberty. A plaque on a stone wall in front of the Lutheran Parsonage identifies the exact site.

Billy Bishop

Bob Shank

Did you know that Canada's greatest war hero, Billy Bishop, was a Berczy Settler descendant? His great-great grandparents were Johan Engelhard Helmke and Mary Ann Stiver. A family history done many years ago states that Helmke married Mary Quantz, but our Research Committee has decided that was incorrect. The Helmke's seventh child was Elizabeth and she married Avery Bishop, a hotel keeper in Unionville. Avery and Elizabeth had a son named Eleazar who eloped with Sarah Kilbourn and moved to Owen Sound. Billy was their grandson.

When WW I broke out, Billy joined a cavalry regiment and sailed to England with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in October, 1914. Slogging in the mud was not to Billy's liking, so he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps as an observer, photographing German positions on the western front. By March of 1917, he had taken training as a pilot and was sent to a fighter squadron in France. During two stints at the front totaling a mere 8 months of combat, Billy destroyed 72 enemy aircraft, an amazing feat. For his efforts, he was awarded the Victoria Cross, the Distinguished Service Order and bar, the Military Cross and the Distinguished Flying Cross, as well as other medals.

While on leave in October, 1917, Billy married Margaret Burden, a grand-daughter of Timothy Eaton. They had two children: Arthur, a WW II fighter pilot and author living in Toronto; and Margaret Marise "Jackie", who lives in Rockcliff, Ontario. Jackie, her husband Hugh Raymond Willis-O'Connor, and their daughter Catherine were at our celebration in August, 1994. You undoubtedly ran into Jackie (in her chartreuse hat) because she was the hostess for the occasion. She and Hugh collected nearly 700 signatures of attendees for the guest book. Catherine helped Bill van der Zande at the Helmke booth where she had Bishop family histories on display. Arthur Bishop's daughter is Diana Bishop, a TV broadcaster often seen on CBC and CTV.

For more reading on Billy Bishop, see: "The Courage of the Early Morning" by Arthur Bishop, and "Billy Bishop, Canadian Hero" by Dan McCaffery. Billy himself wrote two books, "Winged Warfare" and "Winged Peace".

Charles Williamson's Ledger

The following information is from the Williamson Ledger held in the Steuben County Historian's office in Bath, N.Y.

Williamson's travel account: (all of the amounts are in dollars and cents)

January 1792	
My expenses going to London in July 91	100
My expenses pd for provisions for the voyage to America	444.44
My expenses of freight to Baltimore	1452.12
My expenses to Genesee & Back	439
	<u>2435.56</u>

There are three pages of journal entries of expenditures to the "Germans". Here are a few examples

Oct. 9, 1792 To cash, pd for Sundries as per Journal	218.97
Nov. 10 Cash paid R. Irwin for sundries for them	300
Cash paid to R. Biggar for leather	300
Nov. 26 Cash paid R. Biggar for leather	266.66
Cash pd Fink for waggoning	5.50
Dec. 18 Cash advanced by the Bank of Albany to W. Bertzie	2000
Cash paid Ben Patterson for Services to W. Bertzie	118.40
Feb. 7 Cash paid for Farming Utensils	263.60
March 14 Cash paid William Hepburn for provisions	1665.38
Cash paid Hepburn & Cowden on their Acct., being the amount of drafts in their hands	637.30

Editor's Note: These provisions would have been provided the previous fall when they were cutting the road as Hepburn lived just north of Williamsport. Our ancestors left the Genesee Valley

in May of 1794. Williamson's ledger indicates he continued paying bills attributed to the Germans.

Sept. 12, 1795 James Towar for Sundries as per Account	2,573.31
Oct. 21, 1795 to Walsh & Staats, paid on account of transporting their bags. Omitted in 1792	742.17
Paid Alex Alexanders account against them	887.49
Paid Col. Benjamin Walker for Sundries omitted in 1792	5,886.85
August, 1797 Cash paid Amos Stone on account of keeping Berczie cattle	9

The last item is

July 1800 Paid to James Wadsworth (no explanation)	749.17
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Editor's Note; Was this poor book-keeping or was Williamson "cooking the books" to blame his poor financial position on Wm. Berczy and the "Germans"?

Other entries on another page are interesting.

In January 1792 Williamson bought 20 musquets and paid Muncy for a Rifle	104 50
In March 1794 he paid John Johnstone for carriage and storage of Musquets	27.94
In May of 1797 he paid Benjamin Walker for 211 "Stand of Arms"	1250

Christmas Special

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A Story of the Markham Berczy Settlers are still available.

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Send orders and make cheques payable to:

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10292 McCowan Road, Markham, Ontario,
Canada L3P 3J3.

Letters

I am sending you a cheque towards your projects in memory of Evelyn Luno, former wife of Philip S. Lunau of Fairview Ave., London, Ontario who died in September, 1997.

Margaret and Charlie Nagy, Westbank, BC.

(Philip Lunau was the oldest Berczy descendant at the August, 1994 Celebration.)

May I ask you to add my grateful thanks to Prof. Bruce Elliot for photographing the tombstone of Charlotte Allamand Berczy which he found in the Anglican Cemetery near Sorel, Que. It has solved a long family puzzle and one that Dr. Andre never located. Belleville, Ontario



Some of the 100 interested people at the Berczy Burying Ground