



**WILLIAMSPORT**  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

# **Lycoming County History, Facts and Information**

*(Ideal for students and school reports)*



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# History of Williamsport and Lycoming County

## *Geology*



Millions of years ago this entire area was part of a great sea. Through the centuries many changes have taken place in the earth's crust. Extreme pressures built up within the earth's core caused great upheavals of rock. (Most of the rocks in this area were sandstone, shale and limestone formed from sediment on the sea floor.) This action is revealed in the exposed rock strata seen in many places throughout the county.

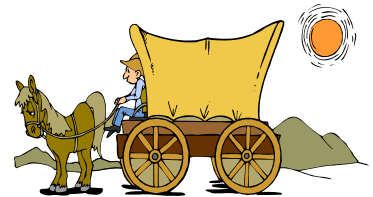
During the great Ice Age at least three distinct glaciers entered the country, the most recent from 11-27 million years ago. The "Devil's Turnip Patch" astride Route 15 about two miles south of South Williamsport and other areas of stony rubble are debris left by the retreating glaciers.

## *Indians*

Artifacts indicate that the region was settled as early as 3,000 B.C. In more recent times the Andantes or Susquehannock Indians inhabited the area. They were eventually driven out by the Wolf Indians, a sub-tribe of the five Nations, who remained here until about the mid-1700's.

## *White Settlers*

Northward expansion into the hinterland of Pennsylvania, following the close of the French and Indian War, brought white settlers to the rich bottomlands of the West Branch Valley in 1765. Self-reliant and hardy, they cleared the land, built cabins from the felled trees; they lived off the land, and hunted for most of their meat.



In 1769 the government of Pennsylvania offered veterans of the French and Indian War land west of Lycoming Creek at 22 cents an acre. Thousands emigrate in a few short months from the Philadelphia and New Jersey areas. West of Lycoming Creek the Pine Creek inhabitants, having no legal body for protection or legislation, formed their own law-making group called the Fair Play System. On the west bank of Pine Creek near Jersey Shore stood the famous Tiadaghton Elm under which, on July 4, 1776, the Fair Play Men drew up a resolution declaring freedom from Great Britain, not knowing that at the precise time the same action was being taken by the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. This elm tree, which grew to more than 17 feet in circumference during its estimated 300 year life span, was removed due to the dutch elm disease and replaced with a young elm tree by the Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on October 25, 1975.

Repeated incursions by the British and Indians from the north reduced the efforts of the pioneers to ashes. Indian massacres and warnings of a massive raid drove the settlers to take refuge in Fort Augusta at Sunbury in the "Great Runaway" of 1778. Returning to the valley to rebuild their homes, they were soon joined by other settlers.

Williamsport was selected the present site for the county seat and then became a borough in 1806. The town did not become a third class city until 1866. It is said that William Hepburn named the city for himself; others believe that it was given the name of Michael Ross's son, William. There is also the belief that Williamsport was named for William Russell who owned an inn at the corner of West Third and Mulberry Streets and supervised a wharf where the riverboats were tied.

With the coming of the West Branch Canal in 1833 and the railroads in 1839 extensive commerce was at last practical.

## *Logging*



Vast tracts of pine, hemlock and hardwood, plus the young nation's need for lumber, provided the ingredients for the rise of a rich young city almost overnight. Saw mills sprang up along the river as early as the late 1830's. In 1846 Major James Perkins constructed the Susquehanna Boom. This was a series of log cribs, extending seven miles up-river from Williamsport, which stored as much as 300 million board feet of lumber that had been floated downstream for eventual distribution to the approximately 60 sawmills lining the river from Newberry to Montoursville. Thus, Williamsport became the Lumber Capital of the World in the 1870's.

The role played by the dynamic and resourceful Peter Herdic in the progress of the City cannot be overlooked. Having become a millionaire thru his many enterprises, his contribution, both philanthropic and civic, provided the leadership necessary for the tremendous growth of the city during the mid to late 1800's.

## *Diversified Industry*

Denuding of the forests and the disastrous flood of 1889 resulted in the decline of the lumber industry that has produced so many millionaires. (Many of their elaborate mansions are still seen along a few blocks of west Fourth Street.) The city then turned its efforts to diversifying its industry. Nevertheless, the depression of the 1930's could have been disastrous had it not been for the efforts of a group of local businessmen. Assisting local business and attracting new industry passed these difficult years without serious effects.

Business firms located in the county today manufacture airplane motors, valves, furniture, apparel, boilers, wire rope, electronic components and metal fabrications, to name a few.

## *Williamsport and Lycoming County Today*

This area boasts the unique distinction of being the hub of a 250-mile radius encompassing 25% of the United States population and 63% of its major industry.

Interstate 80 and other modern highways provide easy access to the area. A good school system is complemented by Lycoming College, a co-educational four year liberal arts and science college, and the Pennsylvania College of Technology, one of the most comprehensive of its kind in Pennsylvania. The many music, art, and drama groups provide a rich and varied fare of cultural activities. Modern hospitals, fine churches and beautiful homes further enhance the attractiveness of the region.



Williamsport is famous as the birthplace and International Headquarters of Little League Baseball where the Little League World Series is played each August. Among the many opportunities for recreation, game lands and mountain streams make this beautiful region a paradise for the hunter and fisherman. About the middle of October the forests and woodlands are breathtakingly beautiful in their fall coloration; nowhere in the world does the blend of evergreens and hardwoods offer a more colorful fall foliage spectacle.

The Williamsport Lycoming County area, while proud of its heritage, looks to a predestined future of progress and growth. It is the place for you to live, work, and play!

*Sources:* Geology date of Soil and Conservation Service, Lycoming County Historical Society Journal Vol. VII, No. 2, "Museum Showcase: A Summary of Lycoming County History" by James Bressler; League of Women Voters of Williamsport Area publication "See by an Eagle's Eye."

# Fascinating Facts About Lycoming County

Narrative by Mike Cummings

Before Williamsport became the lumber capital of the world in the middle and late 1800's, it was one thing to fell trees and float the timber downriver, but it was another to stop the timber. Major James Perkins solved the problem by building a chain of logs to reach out from the river—bank and “catch” the floating harvest. This gigantic outstretched arm was known as the Susquehanna Boom, and it did, in fact, make the lumber business boom. In the peak days of the lumber era, Williamsport had more millionaires per capita than any other city in the United States, and the surrounding forests swarmed with lumberjacks. One of them, Cherry Tree Joe McCreery, moved north in later years to do his lumbering, and author James Humes says that Paul Bunyan legends were based on the real-life exploits of McCreery.



Little League Baseball started in Lycoming County more than seven decades ago with a man of vision named Carl Stotz, a group of eager neighborhood kids, newspaper for bases, and a vacant lot. It would become one of the greatest sports stories of the century, affecting the lives of tens of millions of children and adult volunteers worldwide. Visitors to Williamsport can see not only the place where the first games were played but also the splendid sports complex where the Little League World Series takes place each year before thousands of spectators. The World of Little League Museum & Official Store traces the history and development of the small-fry sport through special interactive exhibits and other displays.



What experts concede is one of the finest toy train collections in the United States is housed in the Lycoming County Historical Society Museum on West Fourth Street in Williamsport. Assembled by the late LaRue Shempp, the collection includes three hundred forty-seven complete trains, one hundred individual locomotives and two working exhibits. Among the rare pieces on display is a No. 1 Gauge German LGB owned by President Ronald Regan. One model train, the Orient Express, has nine cars, each outfitted on the inside with furniture. The value of individual pieces in the Shempp collection ranges to an astounding \$50,000.



In one of the most unusual coincidences in American history, the original settlers of present – day Lycoming County declared their independence from Great Britain while, unbeknownst to them, the nation's founding fathers were doing the same thing two hundred miles away in Philadelphia. Assembling under the legendary Tiadaghton Elm Tree at Jersey Shore, west of Williamsport, the Susquehanna Valley settlers signed and approved their own document on July 4, 1776, then sent it to Philadelphia with two messengers. On their way they encountered hostile Indians but finally arrived in Philadelphia two weeks later, only to discover that a Declaration of Independence had already been approved.



Williamsport's most prominent lumber baron, the wily and fabulously wealthy Peter Herdic, was also an inventor. After he completed construction of a glittering resort hotel, one of the finest in the eastern United States, he invented a horse-drawn conveyance-the world's first taxicab-to take his guests to and from the center of town. Not known for his modesty and humility, Herdic called his invention a "herdic," a word that found its way into the English language and can be found in dictionaries today. Eventually, Herdic's horse-drawn taxi sprouted wheels and took its place as one of the mainstays of urban transportation all over the world.

If you've toured the White House in Washington, you may have noticed the still-life painting by Severin Rosen, the German native who came to Williamsport in the late 1850's and took up residence in a building on the southwest corner of Market and Third Streets. There, smoking his pipe and drinking his beer, he painted his pictures of fruit and flowers, each work extraordinary for its meticulous detail. One Williamsport artist claimed to be able to copy exactly any painting anywhere. But after sending several months trying to copy Roesen, he despaired and ordered the painting removed from his sight, saying, "It's driving me crazy." Roesen was said to have remarked to a young women, "Miss, my paintings will live long after me." And, of course, they did, and eventually found their way into private collections and museums around the country. Jacqueline Kennedy acquired the White House Roesen in 1961.



On Williamsport's Millionaires' row on West Fourth Street lived the wealthiest woman in the world in the late 1800's, Anne Weightman Walker Penfield, the "Woman Midas," as she was called in her obituary. Mrs. Penfield entertained lavishly, and guests wore the latest Paris fashions as they entered her English High Victorian Gothic mansion for parties. It was not uncommon for Mrs. Walker to rent railroad cars and haul her guests off to Niagara Falls for a weekend of entertainment. Her home, at 1005 West Fourth Street still stands today, a reminder of the city's glorious past.

Did you know that when engineers decided to replace the steel cables supporting the Brooklyn Bridge- writer Hart Crane's exalting "choiring strings" – they called upon Bethlehem Steel Corporation's wire rope plant in Williamsport? The plant had earlier made the wire rope that now supports the roof of Madison Square Garden. Did you know that at one time, Avco Lycoming in Williamsport made engines for fifty-seven different auto manufacturers, including the producers of the legendary Auburn, Cord, and Duesenburg? Today, more than one hundred eighty different models of aircraft and helicopters manufactured by thirty-six domestic and exclusively Avco engines power thirty-two foreign companies. Over the years, Avco, located on High Street in the city's West End, has manufactured more than a quarter million aircraft engines.



Williamsport once was an important link in the Underground Railroad, used by runaway slaves to gain their freedom. After they reached the city, Daniel Hughes, a Mohawk



Indian, and received food and lodging, greeted the slaves before they made their way north to Hepburnville, using an old Indian trail. From there they made their way to New York State and Canada.

Although it is said that dead men tell no tales, a Williamsport spook once talked with Mark Twain about the deplorable condition of his grave. It happened on New Year's Eve, 1869. Twain was in Williamsport to deliver a speech, "Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands," at the Ulman Opera House. Twain, then 34, was just blossoming as a major writer, after having published "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." After his lecture Twain visited the run-down Pine Street Cemetery, now the site of Old City Hall, and got the inspiration to write "A Curious Dream," in which a skeleton bemoans the fact that he is unable to get a wink of eternal sleep because of the confoundingly awful conditions of the cemetery.



Move over Mississippi. The Susquehanna River had its cruise boats too. One, a double-decker steam powered paddle wheeler called the Hiawatha, carried up to two hundred passengers from Williamsport to Sylvan Dell Park for picnics and outings. Adults paid a ten-cent fair, but kids rode free. In 1914, the boat fell victim to winter ice, and the spring break-up swept it over the dam. Today, however, a new Hiawatha plies the tranquil waters of the Susquehanna on pleasure cruises, thanks to the Chamber of Commerce and the citizens of Lycoming County, who contributed their time, money, and imagination to launch her. You can ride this beautiful paddle wheeler, a throwback to an earlier day of bustles and bonnets, boarding her at Susquehanna State Park, off Arch Street.

Williamsport isn't exactly a music mecca, but it has had composers whose music is known all over the world. For example, James M. Black, a Williamsport Methodist lay revivalist. Although you probably never heard of him, you no doubt have heard two famous songs he composed: "When the Saint Go Marching In" and "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder." And what about the Rev. J.H. Hopkins, who was pastor of Williamsport's Christ Episcopal Church? He wrote the Christmas favorite "We Three Kings of Orient Are." Williamsport's musicians have done themselves proud, too. When Robert E. Lee, impeccably dressed in a crisp uniform complete with a sword, surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant, unimpeccably dressed in a mud-spattered private's coat, on April 9, 1865, at Appomattox Court House, VA Williamsport's Repasz Band was there to play "Yankee Doodle" and the "Star Spangled Banner." The Repasz Band, today the oldest non-military brass band in the United States, played in Washington for President Taft, Roosevelt, and Reagan.

Well known as an outdoorsman's paradise, Lycoming County was a favorite fishing spot for President Hoover, who was hosted by the Texas Blockhouse Fish and Game Club on Texas Blockhouse Creek. President Jimmy Carter used to come here to try his luck, too. Film actress Katherine Hepburn vacationed at Ogontz Lodge in Salladasburg, between Williamsport and Jersey Shore. The Fin, Fur, and Feather Wildlife Museum in western Lycoming County are an unusual collection of hundreds of wildlife trophies from all continents of the world. There are life size mounts expertly exhibited in authentic duplications of natural habitat.

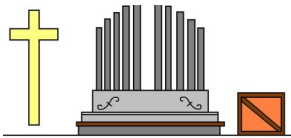


Historians say the United States Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision in 1857 was one of the leading causes of the Civil War. Among the high court justices casting votes in that fateful case was Robert Grier of Williamsport, who lived in a home that still stands on West Fourth Street, at the foot of Grier Street. But Grier was not the city's most famous judge. That honor goes to Thomas Cooper, who served as one of Lycoming Court's First Judges. Of him Thomas Jefferson said: "Cooper is acknowledged by every enlightened man who know him to be the greatest man in America, in the powers of mind, and in acquitted information."



Cooper— a physician, scientist, and writer—was widely influential as a thinker in his day and, as a scientist, discovered a new way to produce potassium. He is said to have originated the phrase "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people," used by Lincoln.

Williamsport's Gothic masterpiece, Trinity Episcopal Church, received a singular honor when it was completed by Peter Herdic's architect in the last century: John W. Maynard presented the church America's first set of Westminster chimes—nine bells weighing seven tons. The church, built of stone quarried at nearby Bald Eagle Mountain, is Williamsport's tallest structure, with a steeple soaring to a height of well over 200 feet.

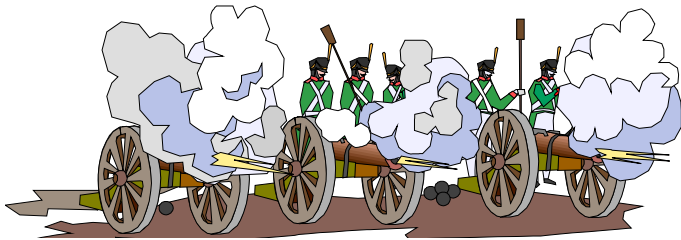


# Land of Legends, Lumberjacks, and Little League



*Simply Spectacular!* That's what most folks say when they see Williamsport, Pennsylvania, seat of historic Lycoming County, for the first time from a mountainside vantage point along Route 15. Under the veil of night the city sparkles like so many diamonds on the sequined dress of a queen or an empress. One travel writer called it the greatest scenic view on the East Coast.

But that's just the beginning. Lycoming County is full of so many wonderful surprises—from the simple charm of general stores and covered bridges to the spectacular beauty of Victorian homes and Gothic towers. Situated in north-central Pennsylvania's Susquehanna River Valley, where Indians roamed the forests ten thousand years ago, Lycoming County is both rural and urban. Never is the visitor more than a twenty-minute world from the nearest stream or forest; never is he out of sight of the gently rolling Allegheny Mountains.



After settlers began arriving here in the middle and late 1700's, traveling by packhorse and keelboat, they established what came to be known as a Fair Play Republic, with three elected commissioners acting as administrators, judges, and legislators. It is a curious fact of history that these Fair Play lawmakers and their constituents,

unaware of developments in Philadelphia, declared their independence from Great Britain at the precise moment that the Founding Fathers were approving Thomas Jefferson's more famous declaration.

During the war the river valley became the "Back Door of the Revolution," its chain of forts vital to the infant nation's defense against British-allied Indians.

Although it was Paul Revere's ride that was immortalized in history, the ride of Robert Covenhoven, a Susquehanna Valley scout, was by far the more daring. Risking his scalp, he galloped up and down the valley, riding distances of twenty-five to thirty miles at a clip, to warn of an impending Indian attack. And although Daniel Boone often gets credit as America's greatest Indian fighter, one historian says the honor should rightly go to Captain John Brady, a Lycoming Countian.

Not long after the war, valley settlers established and laid out a county seat, Williamsport, auctioning off town lots to promote growth. They held court in a tavern, the Russell Inn, until a courthouse was built in 1811. One of the county's first judges was Thomas Cooper, who was also a physician, scientist, journalist, and all-around Renaissance man known to kings and presidents and philosophers.



Thomas Jefferson called him “the greatest man in America.” According to one historian, it was Cooper who originated the phrase “Government of the people, by the people and for the people,” adopted later by Lincoln at Gettysburg.

Although Lycoming County remained quiet and unassuming for the first half of the Nineteenth Century, in the second half it boomed and burgeoned after an ingenious businessman, calico tycoon Major James Perkins, harvested the timber in the rich forest lands, floating it downriver and snaring it in what was known as the Susquehanna Boom, a seven-mile-long chain of timbers reaching out from the shore like the arm of a Titan. When other businessmen, most notably Peter Herdic, invested in the lumber industry, Williamsport and Lycoming County became the largest lumbering center in the world.



Money begat more money, so much that Williamsport had more millionaires per capita than any other city in the United States. Architectural wonders—mansions, churches, and public buildings—rose from the marshes in the central city. After Herdic built a hotel, which was among the finest on the east coast, he got the railroad to build a train station next to it. Cultured and sophisticated, beautiful to look at, Williamsport was crowned the Queen City of the Susquehanna.

Today two museums showcase the county’s history—the Lycoming County Historical Society Museum, recently rated by the state one of Pennsylvania’s top ten tourist attractions, and the World Of Little League, rated by kids and their parents as a pure delight.



Then there is the county seat itself, Williamsport, who’s mid-city is really one big museum. San Diego artist Robert Parker, when traveling the country to draw “Images of America”, stopped here and wrote of Williamsport: “I have never seen a city of this size with so many marvelous buildings. The whole town should be declared a national site.”

Williamsport and Lycoming County—where life can be as simple as a quiet country lane with a one-room schoolhouse or as spectacular as the mansions that line Millionaires’ Row on West Fourth Street.

Lycoming Countians are proud of their community and its rich heritage, and their hospitality is famous. Come, ride our paddle wheeler upriver and into the Eighteenth Century. See the house where lived the wealthiest woman in the world. Worship in a church where preached the pastor who composed “We Three Kings of Orient Are.” Visit the grave of George Washington’s bodyguard or take the kids to see one of the nation’s finest model train collections.



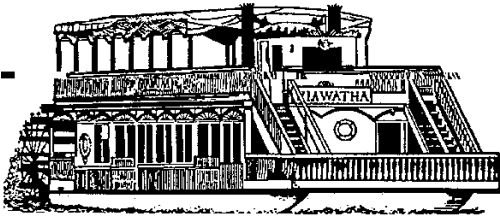
Surprising Lycoming County—it has played host to presidents and once to the king and queen of England. And now it’s ready to play host to you.

# HIAWATHA

## PADDLEWHEEL RIVERBOAT

## The Hiawatha

### A Story of Lore, Lumberjacks & Local History



Welcome aboard the Hiawatha built nearly a century ago after its namesake! This paddlewheel excursion boat is a tribute to hundreds of Lycoming County businesses and private who supplied the monies, labor, and materials to create her. It is just one more way in which area residents, and visitors, too, can recall the remarkable heritage surrounding the Susquehanna River!

The original Hiawatha was a steam-driven stern-wheeler that was one of the delights of the summer season. Under the command of Captain Jack English, the shallow draft craft would take Sunday picnickers to Sylvan Dell Park on the south side of the river about 3 ½ miles below Williamsport. With an 80-foot length, and 18-foot beam, and 2 decks, the original Hiawatha carried several hundred passengers from Market Street to Sylvan Dell in 20 to 25 minutes downstream; the return trip upstream against the current took 30 to 35 minutes. Once aboard the new Hiawatha, one can easily imagine the swish of long skirts, the tap-tap of high-buttoned shoes on deck, and the excited squeals of children as families climbed aboard for a Sunday outing! Alas, in the winter of 1914, the Hiawatha was caught in ice at its Market Street mooring and, during the break-up of the ice the following spring, it was heaved and crushed and finally carried away on the flood.



The body of water that both the original Hiawatha and the new Hiawatha call home is the beautiful west branch of the Susquehanna River. It joins the north branch of the Susquehanna around 40 miles down stream at Sunbury. It then flows south to Harrisburg and eventually empties into the Atlantic Ocean by way of the Chesapeake Bay!



The name Susquehanna comes from the Susquehannock Indians who lived along the river from before 1500 until after the Revolutionary War.

Susquehannock, in their language, means “from the smooth-flowing stream.” Many Indian arrowheads and artifacts can still be found in the fields along both sides of the river.

The Indian heritage of the Susquehanna Valley has its somber side, as well. During the American Revolution, Indians in this area were encouraged by the British to fight against the Colonists! They were given rewards in return for the settlers’ scalps! On July 3, 1778, the worst massacre of the revolution occurred at Plum Tree Thicket, the present day corner of West Fourth Street and Cemetery Streets, in Williamsport. On that day, around sunset, Indians attacked a party of 16 men, women, and children. Twelve were killed and scalped, only their leader, Peter Smith, another man, and 2 children escaped.

After the Plum Tree Thicket massacre, the marauding continued throughout the Valley until Colonial Samuel Hunter, Commander of Fort Augusta in Sunbury, ordered settlers to evacuate the West Branch Valley. Then, a fearless scout and Indian fighter named Robert Convehoven rode through the valley, all the way to Lock Haven, warning the settlers to leave...much like Paul Revere's ride, only in much more dangerous circumstances! The resulting mass exodus that followed is now known as the "Great Runaway" and it took place on the Susquehanna itself! Imagine, if you can, hundreds of people floating down the river on boats, rafts, hog troughs, washtubs, and practically anything that would float...carrying all the possessions they could hold! Not until the Indian menace was subdued years later did the settlers dare to return to their homes and fields.

On the south shore of the Susquehanna River is what used to be the Pennsylvania Railroad, running from Harrisburg to Buffalo. It is now Conrail and hauls only freight, but it is still a major line. Also to the south is the Bald Eagle chain of mountains that used to be home to bald eagles. Much of this range is State Forest land and is now inhabited by hundreds of deer and bear, and even a few bald eagles.



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed the flood control dike on the north shore in 1953. During the Agnes Flood of 1972, the river rose to within one foot of the top of the dike! Also on the north shore of the river is the dry bed of what once was the West Branch Canal, which ran from Harrisburg to Lock Haven. It was built by hand and prospered from 1834 to 1889 when railroads put the canal out of business. Mules or horses that walked along the side of the canal towed the canal boats. In addition to freight boats, there were several huge packet boats that could carry up to 100 passengers! These packet boats took two weeks to travel from Williamsport to Harrisburg on the canal, and they were furnished as luxuriously as the finest hotels of the day!

The Susquehanna Valley was once densely forested with beautiful hardwood and softwood trees. That's why raw timber and, later, lumber played such an important part in the history of Williamsport and Lycoming County.



The first lumbering enterprise that took place on the Susquehanna River was rafting, which began as early as 1796. Rafts made of huge tree trunks were bound together and floated down river to the markets in Philadelphia and Baltimore! Some rafts were 100 feet long and were steered by oars fore and aft. A primitive cabin on board provided a place for the rafts men to eat and sleep. The rafts men were colorful characters with their red wool shirts, high boots, and coonskin caps!

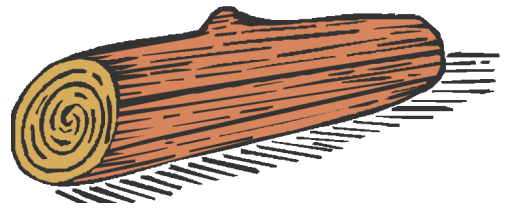
One of the most important kinds of rafts that they piloted was a spar raft. These were made up of straight, round Susquehanna Pine Trees and were used as masts for ships! In the days of wooden ships and iron men, many U. S. Navy warships were built of timber that passed from the Susquehanna Valley to the Chesapeake Bay!



Watch for piles of stones like small islands in the water at regular intervals. These are cribs—the remains of the famous Susquehanna Boom! What exactly was the Boom? Well, it was logsreally a floating fence in the river used to catch and store logs, and the man who started it was calico tycoon, James Perkins!

When Perkins came to the Susquehanna Valley in 1845 he noticed the gentle fall of the river in this section, known as the Long Reach. At the same time, lumber interests upriver needed a way to get more logs down river to their mills without having to waste time and money to watch over them and keep them from floating away on their own. So, Perkins built what amounted to a giant catcher's mitt—a series of square wooden cribs, filled with stones and sunk to the river bottom. Between the cribs, logs were chained end to end to make the “webbing” in the catcher's mitt!

Of course, log catching wasn't free! Lumber companies had to pay a toll to use this huge floating fence called a Boom! And so, after convincing local Williamsport businessmen of the potential success of his idea, James Perkins's Susquehanna Boom Company gradually came into being and was incorporated in 1846.



Lumber interests were well served, as the Susquehanna Boom became an overwhelming success! Here's how it worked. First of all, in the forests upriver, sawmill companies branded their logs with a particular company mark. The trees, mostly White Pine and Hemlock, were cut in the wintertime. They were then skidded or hauled over the ice and snow to the banks of the smaller streams that fed the Susquehanna River. There, they were stacked until spring. When the waters rose with the spring thaw, these logs were floated down the streams to the Susquehanna River and the Boom!

The chain link necklace of logs called the Susquehanna Boom started on the south side of the river and ran up river for 7 miles to the north side. There were 352 cribs in all, each 22 feet high. At the upper end of the boom was a device called a sheer boom. It was 1,000 feet long, operated by a hand-powered windlass, and its job was to gather the logs into the main boom. The main boom could hold 300 million board feet of logs.

At the lower end of the boom, the logs were sorted so that each mill would receive its own branded logs. They were then moved, as needed, into the holding ponds of the 35 sawmills that lined the riverfront in Williamsport! From there, West Branch Valley lumber went all over the world as chairs, tables, desks, and houses!



In the lumber companies' three best decades, from 1861 to 1891, the Susquehanna Boom prospered! And, so did Williamsport! More than 30 million logs were floated into the boom and delivered to sawmills. The sawmills then turned into five and a half billion board feet of lumber...enough lumber to construct 650,000 average houses of today!



Williamsport had 35 sawmills in operation at the peak of activity. The owners of the sawmills were called lumber barons, and no wonder! They became rich and built opulent, Victorian-style homes along what is now Williamsport's Fourth Street. It is still called "Millionaires Row" today! It has been said that the Williamsport sawmills put the "mill" into "Millionaire." These lumber magnets competed with each other in building their rambling, multi-winged houses, striving to duplicate the grandeur of European villas! In fact, the section of West Fourth Street in Williamsport (from the 400 to the 1000 block) had, at one time, more millionaires living on it than any other such street in the world!



The Boom era's most flamboyant entrepreneur was lumber baron Peter Herdic. He undertook one of the biggest financial ventures of the time. It was one of the grandest hotels on the eastern seaboard—Herdic House! This magnificent structure could accommodate 700 guests in luxurious comfort, and its construction cost \$225, 000...a tremendous sum for its day! The main entrance to the Herdic House was a beautiful deer park in which guests could see deer roaming about. Peter Herdic's beautiful hotel, with its lavish furnishings and sparkling chandeliers, made itself a showplace for visiting luminaries for many years. Today, with two of its original four floors remaining, Herdic House can be seen on 800 West Fourth Street in Williamsport!

Not everyone lived as comfortably as those in the Herdic House and on Millionaire's Row. During the lumber era, mill hands worked 12-hour day, six days a week, at \$1.50 per day. That's why, eventually, there was a workers' strike called the "Sawdust War" in 1872. The mill workers wanted ten-hour days with no cut in pay! Martial law was declared, the strikers were arrested, and their leaders were jailed. Lumber baron Peter Herdic, bailed them out! Interestingly enough, one of the strike's ringleaders was Thomas Greevey, a great uncle of Williamsport's recently retired, and quite honorable, Judge Charles F. Greevey!

Of course, Williamsport was a rip snortin' place during the lumber era, too! Just like on old west gold rush town, there were saloons on many street corners to accommodate the boisterous lumberjacks and mill hands. And there were also, of course, houses of ill repute in Williamsport...a common feature of any boomtown of that era!

One of the memorable characters of the boom era was a big, strong, lumberjack named "Cherry Tree" Joe McCreary. He is the Susquehanna Valley's own "Paul Bunyan." "Cherry Tree" Joe was born near Muncy, probably with an axe in his hand! One story tells of how he single handedly broke up a 7-mile logjam on the Chess Creek! And, there's another tale about how "Cherry Tree" Joe actually backed down the world-champion prizefighter, John L. Sullivan, after the two of them exchanged angry words in a Renovo saloon!

And along side the saloons were the stately homes of the wealthy that held lavish balls and soirees! Beside the brothels were beautifully ornate opera houses—The Ulman, the Lycoming, and the Academy of Music that attracted the likes of Diamond Jim Brady and Lillian Russell! The workingmen and the upper crust came together when it was time to get the timber to market. The lumberjacks chopped it, the lumber barons sold it, and everybody was happy because everybody made money!

Now, let's leave the boisterous activity in the boomtown of Williamsport and travel upriver, up the mountainsides, and into the logging camps themselves! The logging camps were limited to hardy souls only! A typical camp included 100 to 150 men who went into the forests late in the fall and, with the exception of Christmas, did not emerge until spring! They imported supplies and food for the winter and had a cook and an assistant to run the camp. The food was simple, yet abundant, and the pay was considered good—as high as \$2.50 a day!



The workday at the lumber camps began before dawn and ended after dusk. Each man did his own particular brand of skilled work. There were “choppers” who used an axe to notch the tree to direct the fall of the tree. “Fellers” who used a two-man cross cut saw to remove the bark from the tree. “Sawers” who cut the trees into various length logs. “Scalers” who determined the amount of board feet in each log. And “Haulers” who transported the logs to the nearest stream for the float to the boom!

The haulers are generally recognized as having the toughest job: getting the logs to the closest stream. Split log chutes, some of which were four miles long, were constructed for this purpose. The chutes were either greased or, in the winter, frozen in order for the logs to slide down. In the lower elevations, oxen or horses could be used to drag the logs to the stream bank. In winter, sleds were sometimes also used. The hauling continued all winter long so that logs would be ready to float away with the high waters in the spring.

When the waters rose with the spring thaw, thousands of waiting logs were pushed down the mountainstreams and into the Susquehanna River! An aerial view of the Susquehanna Boom at this time would have the appearance of millions of floating matchsticks! Naturally, serious logjams developed. Men called jam crackers would then try to extricate the key log in the jam with long, pointed poles known as pikes and cant hooks. Once the logs were loosened, the men leaped to safety for fear of being crushed by an avalanche of logs.

The colorful men who worked the boom...from the lumberjacks in the logging camps to the jam crackers like “Cherry Tree” Joe were collectively called boom rats! You can see the actual tools they used at the Lycoming County Historical Museum, located at 858 West Fourth Street in Williamsport. There, on display, you'll see pile poles, cant hooks, and peaveys, cross cut saws, the brands used by the lumber companies and more! The museum also features dioramas that included the operation of the lumber mill, a log slide, a log railroad, and a diorama of the infamous Plum Tree Thicket Massacre. There's also a mockup of what started it all—the mighty Susquehanna Boom!



Susquehanna Boom day couldn't last forever and eventually it was the forces of nature that combined to bring this magnificent era to a close. The Susquehanna Boom survived numerous floods, but the flood of 1889 marked the beginning of the end. After the devastation of that flood, many owners chose not to rebuild their sawmills, and the mills that stayed in operation began to use the railroad rather than the river to transport their lumber. In 1909 the last log drives went down the Kettle Creek and Little Pine Creek, and the boom stood empty with the closing of the Central Pennsylvania Lumber Company in December 1919.

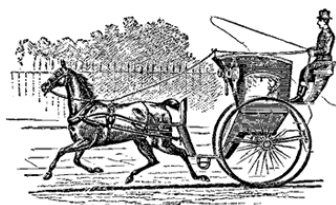


Another factor in the closing of the boom was the diminishing of its natural resources—the forests themselves. Hundreds of thousands of acres of forestland were stripped; so much so that the countryside around Williamsport had the appearance of a barren desert! In the late 1870's, the State legislature bought much of the barren land for a dollar and acre, and this acreage now stands as State game lands and recreational parks! The State also enacted rebate offers to farmers to plant trees in order to prevent erosion. Today, lush, green forests once again surround the people of the Susquehanna Valley!



In addition to Williamsport's place in history as the one-time lumber capital of the world; she boasts many other exclusives, as well! For example, Williamsport is the home of the oldest musical organization of its kind in the United States—the Repasz-Elks Band, formed in 1831. An official band of the National Guard, the Repasz Band played at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia, when Lee surrendered to Grant! It played during the inauguration of Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft! And, the famous conductor, John Phillips Sousa, visited Williamsport and told the Repasz Band director, "You have what I cannot but...a loyalty and enthusiasm..."

Other musical accomplishments include those of James M. Black, a Williamsport Methodist lay revivalist, who wrote "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder" as well as the religious and jazz favorite, "When the Saints Go Marching In." And, he was a former rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Williamsport, the Reverend J.H. Hopkins, who needed a carol for his annual Christmas pageant and wrote, "We Three Kings of Orient Are!"



Peter Herdic was enterprising in other areas besides lumber and grand hotels! He introduced a delicacy to gourmet chefs that was first prepared by lumber camp cooks. It was called "Planked Shad!" And, Peter Herdic also invented the horse drawn taxicab! His idea was later copied in the Metropolitan areas and the word "Herdic" is listed in Webster's Dictionary as "a 19th century American horse drawn cab!"

Today, Williamsport's newest millionaires are the members of the Williamsport Area High School "Millionaire" Marching Band...just one of many indications of the community's pride in its lumbering heritage!

Williamsport is also famous as the birthplace of Little League Baseball. Founded in 1939 by Carl Stotz, the international headquarters and the new Little League Museum are located on Route 15, in South Williamsport. The Little League campus is Lamade Field, the site of the annual Little League World Series Championship in August.

From Indians to Millionaires! From logging camps and boom rats to Little League Baseball! From Peter Herdic to the Hiawatha! Williamsport and the Susquehanna Valley have enjoyed a rich and colorful history...one in which both back-breaking labor and ingenuity brought fame and fortune to a community that still lies nestled in one of the nation's lushes river valleys!

The Susquehanna River still flows smoothly on its way to the Atlantic. And, oh! What stories she could tell! Of Indians on the rampage and frightened settlers floating downstream in the Great Runaway! Of colorful rafts men singing a lusty ballad on the river at dusk! Of brawny jam crackers jumping for their lives just ahead of a log jam unleashed! And, the river could tell us stories about when life was traveled aboard a gaily-painted paddlewheel excursions boat...called the Hiawatha!





# A Phenomenon Called Little League Baseball



Little League's roots extend as far as baseball's history itself – even into the 18th century.



Soldiers of the Continental Army played ball at Valley Forge during the American Revolution. U.S. citizens played more modern versions of the British games of cricket and rounders through the early 19th century, often called "town ball."

In the 1840s, New Yorker Alexander Joy Cartwright and his acquaintances played a game they called "base ball" that was very similar to the game we know today. (Stories later arose saying Abner Doubleday invented the game, but historians generally regard the stories as myths.)

On June 19, 1846, in a contest many historians consider the first scheduled baseball game, Cartwright's New York Knickerbocker Baseball Club was defeated by the New York Baseball Club, 23-1, in four innings.

During the American Civil War, soldiers on both sides played baseball to pass the time between battles. In 1869, the Cincinnati Red Stockings became the first openly professional baseball team. In Williamsport and towns around the country, baseball was becoming the most popular sport. By the end of the 19th century, baseball was known as "America's Pastime."

As early as the 1880s, leagues were formed for pre-teen children in New York, but they were affiliated with adult "club" teams and did not flourish. Children often played "pickup" baseball in streets or sandlots instead, and with substandard equipment. Cast-off bats and balls were taped and re-taped, and catcher's equipment in children's sizes was almost nonexistent.

In the 1920s, the American Legion formed a baseball program for teen-age boys that exists today. American schools also started baseball programs. But there was still a void for pre-teen boys who wanted to play in organized games. Other smaller programs cropped up from time to time, but did not expand much beyond local areas.

In 1938, an oil company clerk named Carl Stotz hit upon the idea for an organized baseball league for the boys in his hometown of Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Carl had no sons of his own, but he often played ball with his young nephews, Jimmy and Major Gehron, and wanted a way to provide an organized program for them.

Carl gathered several of the neighborhood children and experimented with different types of equipment and different field dimensions during that summer. The program still did not have a name, and no games were played.





In 1939, Carl and his wife Grayce took the experiment a step further, enlisting the help of brothers George and Bert Bebble and their wives, Annabelle and Eloise, respectively. Carl, George and Bert were the managers of the first three teams: Lycoming Dairy, Lundy Lumber and Jumbo Pretzel. John and Peggy Lindemuth soon joined the group, with the eight volunteers making up the very first Little League board of directors.

Carl also talked to his friends in the community and came up with the name: Little League.

His idea was to provide a wholesome program of baseball for the boys of Williamsport, as a way to teach them the ideals of sportsmanship, fair play and teamwork.



The sponsorships (the fee was \$30) helped to pay for equipment and uniforms for 30 players. The first three teams were Lycoming Dairy, Lundy Lumber, and Jumbo Pretzel.

On June 6, 1939, in the very first Little League game ever played, Lundy Lumber defeated Lycoming Dairy, 23-8. Lycoming Dairy came back to win the season's first-half title, and faced second-half champ Lundy Lumber in a best-of-three series. Lycoming Dairy won the final game of the series, 3-2.

In the following years, other programs emulating the first Little League sprung up. Boundaries for each league were established to ensure each league could thrive without worrying about neighboring programs "raiding" its players.



The first Little League outside Pennsylvania was formed in 1947 in Hammonton, New Jersey. The first Little League Baseball World Series (called the "National Little League Tournament") was played that year in Williamsport, beginning a late August tradition that helps to define the end of summer for children and adults around the world. In 1950, Panama

became the first country outside the U.S. to have a Little League program, followed soon by Canada.

Today, the Little League Baseball World Series is the culmination of the world's largest sports tournament. More than 7,000 teams begin a tournament around July 1, with only 16 ending up at Little League International's 66-acre complex in the Borough of South Williamsport, just across the Susquehanna River from the city of Williamsport.



Crowds at World Series games number in the tens of thousands. There is no admission to attend the games, and parking is free. Most of the 32 games are televised on ABC, ESPN or ESPN2, giving millions of people around the world a look at the "crown jewel" of youth sports, being played in a history-rich and vibrant area of North Central Pennsylvania.

From those humble beginnings in Williamsport at the end of the Great Depression, Little League has become the world's largest organized youth sports program. In the space of just six decades, Little League grew from three teams to nearly 200,000 teams, in all 50 U.S. states and scores of other countries.

And the basic goal remains the same as it did in 1939, to give the children of the world a game that provides fundamental principles (sportsmanship, fair play and teamwork) they can use later in life to become good citizens.

For more information about Little League, visit [www.littleleague.org](http://www.littleleague.org)

