

The History of this House



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HISTORY OF THE GEORGE LOY MANSION HOUSE

This is the story of the George Loy mansion house. The house is currently located along Route #74, approximately 2 miles south of the village of Ickesburg, Pa in the township of Saville, county of Perry. The house and land have an interesting history, one that should be recorded and preserved for future residents of the house, so that they may enjoy and appreciate the heritage and marvel of the rich and unique culture of rural America that has too often been lost as time moves on. Our hope is that this rich history will be passed on to the future residents of this beautiful old house so that they too can feel the life that has penetrated the very soul of its existence and that they can become a part of its continuing history.

Michael Loy

The original property was part of an original land Grant in 1805 and finalized in 1836. A portion of the land grant was sold to Michael Loy of Tyrone Township. This was the same Michael Loy after which the town of Loysville was named. The original property purchased by Michael Loy was located on the Big Buffalo Creek and consisted of approximately 220 acres. Michael chose his land wisely. The Big Buffalo Creek afforded to him a forever water supply full of native trout for the taking. The woodland on both sides of the creek provided timberland full of hardwoods and pines that were in great demand. The lowland fields were easily cleared for tilling. This was the perfect property to establish a farm, as Michael was a wealthy and influential farmer and businessman of the time. He was primarily a grain farmer, growing buckwheat, wheat and oats. As early as 1843, Michael was known for the sale of his clover seed, having established a clover mill to clean the harvested seed that was in high demand. However, to our knowledge, Michael never actually lived on the property. At the time of his death in 1846, he specified in his will that the property be sold.

George Loy

Michael Loy had several sons, but his son George obviously saw the value of the Saville Township property and he soon became the owner. We can speculate that George used his inheritance money of \$600 to make the purchase. The road leading from Ickesburg to Loysville ran directly through the property. In the early to mid-1800's, this was a very important road. To the north, it provided access to Juniata County and points northward. To the south, it was a trade route through Loysville and onward to Cumberland County and beyond. Grain was sent by waggoneers to the Baltimore markets and the road from Ickesburg to Loysville was at the very beginning of that route. In those days, creeks were forded at their lowest point, but crossing open water could prove to be extremely difficult, especially after heavy rains. The Big

Buffalo Creek was no exception and the road through the Loy property did not have a bridge. This was a hardship for George Loy when trying to send his crops to market. So, in 1848, George Loy built a bridge across the Big Buffalo Creek, providing access over the water for all of those travelers making their way by wagon or horseback from Ickesburg to Loysville and points beyond. For this, he received from the County of Perry a sum of \$350.00 for construction of the bridge. He now had an easy access for hauling his grain to market. We don't know if a smaller house existed on the property prior to the mansion house, but we do know that the mansion house was not finished until eight years later in 1856.

The building of a house of the size and magnitude exhibited in this piece of work is truly an art form lost to history. The foundation of the house is constructed of hard, flat stone that was harvested from the ridges located on the property and hauled to the construction site using only horses and mules. These were formed and fitted together tight enough to hold the monumental weight that was about to be placed on top of them. The framework of the house was from the giant hardwood trees that grew for hundreds of years on the woodland that surrounded the cleared fields along the Buffalo Creek. These were cut and hewed by axe before they were fitted onto the foundation of the house that would eventually be large enough to provide a fitting home for a growing family. A saw mill was set up on the property to cut out the wood that was used as framework for the two and a half stories high with a full basement beneath. Most amazing of all is the incredible brickwork constructing the exterior walls of the house. Every one of these bricks was made by hand using the clay from the lower meadow located along the Big Buffalo Creek! A plaque near the top of the house proudly displays the inscription "G. Loy 1856".

We can guess that the barn was built during the same time frame. It is a bank barn, typical of the German heritage of the time. Its foundation is made from the same type of bricks used for the house exterior. The rafters are hand hewn. The barn is larger than most barns built in this time period, indicating that George Loy was a large grain farmer. The barn has three sections for hay and two barn floors, and the addition of a series of grain bins built onto both sides of the upper portion of the barn. In addition, at the time, George also built a spring house, a washhouse, and a carriage house.

Apparently, George Loy died unexpectedly, leaving his widow and six children in a difficult situation. Unfortunately, the total personal property of George Loy was insufficient for the payment of all of his debts. The Orphans Court appointed Joseph Newcomber as Administrator of the estate and the beautiful Mansion house with all of its land was offered for sale. The house and property was offered for sale at public sale on September 5, 1868.

Samuel Spotts

The new owner of the property was a man by the name of Samuel Spotts. Mr. Spotts was apparently an investor and saw value in the purchase of land. To our knowledge, Mr. Spotts never lived in the Mansion house. The 1870 census still shows George Loy's wife and family living in the residence. Mr. Spotts kept the property for another three years before selling it for a return on his investment.

Christian Swab

Christian Swab (Schwabb) arrived in America in 1833 from Germany. According to his history, he landed in the port of Baltimore as a child of nine years old. He and his family drove by wagon across the Blue Mountain to Green Park and first lived in a log cabin. In 1872, approximately forty years later, Christian and his family moved to Saville Township and bought the beautiful Mansion House on the Loy farm. The Swab family remained on the farm until Christian's death in 1895. In 1903, the heirs of Christian Swab sold the Mansion House and the surrounding farm and wood land.

Horace Orwig

The Mansion House was bought by Horace Orwig. Once again, the farm was apparently bought by a land investor, for Mr. Orwig only owned the farm three years until it was once again sold.

David and Katie Alexander

David Alexander was a railroad conductor by trade when he purchased the Mansion House and farm in 1906. He and his wife Katie lived on Penn Street in Harrisburg at the time. Katie was his second wife and they had no children of their own. There is no indication that the Alexanders ever resided in the Mansion House. However, Katie was the great-granddaughter of Peter and Elizabeth Reisinger, who were original settlers in the Ickesburg area, and so she had many relatives living within a small radius of the Mansion House. Perhaps they bought it to rent to other family members or maybe they used it as a summer home for Katie to return to her roots. They owned the property for approximately 20 years until it was once again listed for sale. It was the son of David and his first wife who listed the property for sale. Perhaps he was helping

his aging father to take care of business. The property was advertised for sale on November 4, 1925.

Earl and Ida Rowe

The story behind the purchase of the Mansion House, as told by the Rowes' grandson begins with the listing of the property for sale and Ida Rowe's great admiration for the beautiful brick house that stood magnificently along the well-traveled road from Ickesburg to Loysville. By this time, automobiles were all the rage and could be seen easily from the double tiered porches that frame the front of the house. According to the grandson, Ida's love for this great house prompted Earl to purchase it the following spring in March of 1926. Earl and Ida had four small daughters, Dorothy, Ethel, Catherine and Jean, who surely made the floors and walls of the great house come alive once again. Sadly, Ida only lived in the house of her dreams for less than nine months when she died from a diabetic coma. Her oldest child was just 9 years old at the time and the youngest was just 4 years of age. Earl never remarried and the oldest daughter soon took on the responsibility of raising her sisters. Earl kept the Mansion House until 1961.

Harold and Mabel Reisinger

Harold Reisinger was a local farmer who was looking for extra land that could be used to expand his farming operation. He purchased the Mansion House from Earl Rowe in 1961. Unfortunately, the Mansion House, now over 100 years old, was sadly in need of repair. Perhaps Earl had lost his passion for the house once his wife was no longer there to maintain and enjoy it. Harold used the barn for raising farm animals and maintained the farm fields with a variety of crops, but the house was uninhabited for several years. Harold died suddenly in 1973, leaving his wife Mabel with two farms to operate and maintain. Several years later, their son took over the farming operation and Mabel, after some renovations to the first floor of the Mansion House, made it her home.

Rich and Sue Binger

As Mabel became older, maintenance of the Mansion House became increasingly difficult, so in 2007, she sold the Mansion House and property to her daughter and son-in-law with a life estate clause so she could continue living in the Mansion House. Mabel passed away April 10, 2012 and once again the Mansion House was standing empty.

Alison Binger

The granddaughter of Mabel Reisinger, Alison Binger had waited patiently for many years, hoping that she too could some day know the joy of living in the Mansion House. She had many warm memories of the house while her grandmother hosted Christmas and other holiday events within its warm walls. An artist, she saw the beauty in the mastery of the house, from the hand-hewn logs of the basement to the beautiful architecture that went into the design of the house, much of which was the original from when the house was built in 1856. She also saw the amount of work needed to restore the Mansion House to its original glory. To pursue her dream, her parents, Rich and Sue Binger, transferred to her approximately 12 acres that included a modest amount of land along with the farm house and buildings in October 2012. Shortly thereafter, the renovations began and slowly the Mansion House came back to life. On the exterior, the bricks were repointed and the interior was remodeled. The old wiring was completely replaced, horsehair plaster removed, original bricks were exposed, the original wood floors were refinished and the beautiful winding staircase was restored to its original luster. Alison and her husband and their three small children were able to move into their new home by 2013. For the past ten+ years, the Mansion House once again embraced the joy and laughter of children.

The Next Owner

Now, once again, the Mansion House is being offered for sale. It is time to continue the story of the George Loy Mansion House. May this old house offer the next owners the joy and pride it has provided to all of the previous owners that have graced it with such a rich history.