

Plan to Honor Memory of First Hungarian Settler in Bethlehem

Glancing at the pages of the history of Bethlehem, particularly of the colonization period when men and women of various nationalities and faith, with daring spirit crossed the ocean in search for a new land, freedom and happiness, not thinking of the danger and hardships that would meet them on his continent — we find among others who came from the old world and settled in Bethlehem, a young man of 21, born in Hungary

and who settled in the newly-founded Moravian colony, (now Bethlehem) in the year of 1746, the first Hungarian settler in the Lehigh Valley. His name was Anton Schmidt.

According to the Nisky-Hill cemetery records, of which a book was written by Dr. Augustus Schultze, "Anton Schmidt, was born near Presburg, Hungary, Feb. 23, 1725, capital of Hungary and officially known as "Pozsony".

"His parents emigrated with him for conscience's sake to America. He came to Bethlehem in 1746; was married first to A. C. Reidt, who bore him three sons, and then to Beata Ysselsteyn, with whom he had six children. Departed March 15, 1793."

Thus, we find Anton Schmidt, who spent 47 years of his life working with the Moravian pioneers, cutting down trees in the forests, building homes and helping to establish the community, which was founded by Count Nicholas Ludwig Zinzendorf in 1741 and later named by him as the City of Bethlehem.

Count Zinzendorf, being a German religious leader, was the founder of the society of United Brethren, and he established the first missions among the Indian tribes.

Zinzendorf was known among the Indians by his clan name, "Tgarihontie," which means "messenger." Joseph Mortimer Levering, Bishop of the Moravian church, in his book, "History of Bethlehem," in the footnote on page 292, gave an explanation of the fact that those who were communicating with the Indians "were given names because their names being foreign, the Indians could not remember them."

Bishop Spangenberg was named, "Tgirhitontie," (row of trees,) Zeisberger, "Ganosseracheri," (on the pumpkin.) John Joseph Bull was named "Shabosh" (running water,) and Anton Schmidt, ("Rachwistoni," the meaning of which was not known to the historian.

During the Indian uprising in the fall of 1755, which was instigated by the French, Henry Frey and Anton Schmidt were sent out from Bethle

hem to warn the brethren in Lynn township, Shamokin, Sunbury and Mahoning. They rescued the missionaries from these Moravian stations and saved their brethren, both the whites and the Christian Indians.

According to the historian, Marcus Kiefer and Anton Schmidt became veterans in facing the dangers of savage surroundings. They were dispatched to the Gnadenhuetten by Justice Horsfield, to the militia gathered at that point (which was known as Fort Allen, located on the east side of the Lehigh river, now the site of Weissport) to find out how things stood there and stanting that provisions would be sent them if needed.

Returning to Mahoning on Nov. 27, Anton Schmidt, according to the records, came upon a place where Indians raided the settlement and burned the home of Fabricius and killed him with others and burned their bodies. The only living friend found by Schmidt was a dog, watching over the bodies. Schmidt hastily made a coffin, in which he placed their charred remains as he could collect them, and buried them in the corner of the garden, which is now known as "The Little Cemetery."

Years later when Anton Schmidt was up in age, we find his name recorded in the account vouchers, showing the items of expense in connection with the removal of the Continental hospital from Bethlehem, which under the direction of Gen. Lachlin McIntosh, took place during April, 1778.

The account bill was presented for collection to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia on Oct. 23, 1779. Among other workers, Anton Schmidt was listed as a locksmith.

(This historical account is compiled from the pages of the "History of Bethlehem"—giving all the authentic particulars which can be found by examining the following pages; 292, 306, 314, 315, 318 and 482.)

The Hungarian churches and civic organizations located in Bethlehem and its vicinity, hope to participate in the commemorating celebrations of the 200th anniversary of the founding of the city of Bethlehem, thus honoring the pioneers who through much difficulty, years of battle and torture withstood the greatest tests of manhood, many dying the deaths of martyrs in doing heroic deeds in behalf of these communities, and for the country.

What they have suffered and what they have achieved is written on the pages of American History.

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