

# The Petitioners of the Charter- 1863

*Research by the late Thomas L. Thomas has made possible the following brief biographies of the signers of the petition for the borough charter. In his notes he acknowledges his indebtedness for data to Mrs. Mary Dwyer, Mrs. Isabel Dillman, Miss Kate Kemery, John Cleary, William Bradbury, John Both, John Feichtner, William Boyer, James Creedon, and Mr. and Mrs. Edward Fisher.*

The biographies follow:

PATRICK J. BARRY, better known as P.J. Barry, came to Mahanoy City from Lancaster, Pa. He was the contractor who drove the Mahanoy Tunnel at Buck Mountain and laid the railroad track from that point to the old Philadelphia and Reading station which stood at the site of the present freight station, of the company. His dwelling was at 17-23 West Center Street, the site of which is now occupied by the Kline building. Mr. Barry had a son whose name was Philip.

JOHN FRICK was a stone mason. He was a native of Germany. His friend, Henry Litsch, and he prepared the face stones for the tower of old St. Canicus Roman Catholic church from the rough mountain stone secured on the hills to the north and south of the community. Mr. Frick owned property at 104-106 East Mahanoy Street, but later moved to 122-124 East Market Street, where he conducted his office as Justice of the Peace for a number of years. He was a member of St. Fidelis Roman Catholic church. Six of his nine children grew to maturity, the other three died during the small-pox epidemic of 1872-1873. IN his later years he moved to Catasauqua, Pa. where he conducted a knife and saw factory. During the building of the "old" Center Street school building Mr. Frick assisted with the masonry. He also aided in erecting the first stone bridge over the Mahanoy Creek at Main and Market streets.

GEORGE F. WIGGAN was in partnership with a man named Triebels, who operated a colliery at Wiggans under the corporate title of Wiggan and Triebels. His residence, set back in a beautiful yard, was surrounded with huge shade trees. It was located at 128-138 West Center Street. Later when Mr. Wiggan moved to Philadelphia, the dwelling was occupied by Edward F. Smith, a hardware merchant.

CHARLES M. HILL, Jr., was the owner and operator of Hill's (now Mahanoy City) Colliery in conjunction with a Mr. Harris. The firm was known as Hill and Harris. The Hill residence was at the extreme south end of Main Street. It was large and was adjoined by an

extensive lawn at the south. Croquet, played on the lawn of the Hill home, was a favorite pastime of the younger set during the early days of the town's history. The Hill family were members of the Episcopal church.

SETH KALEY was the proprietor of the Eagle Hotel, on the site of which was later erected the Kaier hotel, 41-51 North Main Street. Mr. Kaley who later moved to Reading, Pa., had a daughter, Ellen, who married Isaac Wingert.

EDWARD BOYER first engaged in business at 11-13 West Center Street in a frame building, which he erected, and which was later occupied by Wesley Hammer when Boyer built a brick structure at 22 East Center Street, where he engaged in the grocery business. Adjacent to his first establishment, on the west side, Mr. Boyer had an enclosure where deer were kept. Below this site was located a tent where enlistments in the Union Army were received during the Civil War.

RUFUS VASTINE, a stone mason and plasterer, was the son of the junior member of the firm of Pott and Vastine, which maintained offices at the Washington and Coal streets, Pottsville. He resided at 34 West Mahanoy Street.

C. BARTHOLOMEW, who resided at 84 South Main Street, was a brick layer and contractor. Among the structures built by him was the original First Methodist church. He married a Miss Kaer, whose father was a local real estate dealer.

DR. GEORGE F. BRENDLE came to Mahanoy City when the borough comprised but a few dwellings and practiced medicine here until his death in August, 1907. He was united in marriage to Maria Smith, sister of Edward F. Smith, proprietor of a local hardware store, and also one of the petitioners for the borough charter. Dr. Brendle was an elder of the First Presbyterian church of town for many years.

CHARLES W. SMITH came to town from Vermont when his brother, Wilbur Smith, purchased the Mansion House in 1862. He conducted a store in the hotel block and also had charge of the livery stables connected with the hostelry. Mr. Smith resided in Mahanoy City until his death in April 1903. His residence was at "the gashouse" where he had charge of the making of illuminating gas for the borough in his later years. He had two children, Charles O. and Miss Maude Smith. The latter was a teacher in the Mahanoy City high school for a number of years.

HARRISON DERRICK was the owner of the "Washington House" located at 37-39 East Center street, and later he was proprietor of the Eagle Hotel, the name of which he changed to the Derrick House, on North Main street. The Kaier Hotel was afterwards built on this site. A son, Charles, who clerked at the hotel, married Miss Margaret Fox. In 1884 the Derrick family moved to Buffalo, N.Y.

PETER OTTERBACH had a hotel in the first block on East Center Street. That he was a successful businessman is attested by the fact that he built the mansion, now known as the Kaier residence at the northwest corner of Eighth and Center streets. He built the house for his wife and young child, but they never resided there, both dying before it was completed. For several years he resided there himself. He adopted a child, Harriet Sheetz, who afterwards married Michael Salmon, who served in the Union Army during the Civil War. Mr. Otterbach was one of the first directors of the First National Bank of Mahanoy City.

DAVID STEWART, a land agent for Dundee, Biddle, Troutman, and Company, was a civil engineer. His office was located at Main and Pine Street where the Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company building now stands. At first, he resided at 75-79 South Main street (in the rear of Christ's Lutheran church), but later he moved to 32 East Mahanoy street. He was active in the affairs of the First Presbyterian church.

MATTHEW DONAHUE was a saloon proprietor who resided at 305-387 West Center Street, his establishment adjoining the office of Squire Groody. His business place was the polling station in the west ward, in the early days' of the borough's history. (When Mahanoy City was incorporated there was only one voting place, but shortly afterwards two wards were created, East and West).

WILLIAM NAGLE conducted a flour and feed store at 44 North Main Street, where the home of the Edward Silliman family is now located. On this lot, Mr. Nagle also managed a store for Edward S. Silliam, Sr.

CHARLES EGOLF, a carpenter, build and resided in the property later owned by David Bowman at the corner of Main and Mahanoy streets. Mr. Egolf also became a partner of Mr. Nagle in the flour and feed business. A number of houses in Mahanoy City were erected by him. He married a Miss Reese, whose home was at 216 East Center Street.

EMANUEL BOYER was the first permanent resident of Mahanoy City. He came here from Tamaqua on April 20, 1853, taking up residence in the possession house of the Little Schuylkill Company, on what is now South Main street, between Centre and Market streets. Later he resided in this hotel at 10 East Center Street. The site is now occupied by Noonan Bros. furniture store.

JOHN SCHUTH was a German tailor who originally resided at 110 East Center Street, later engaging in the clothing business at 132-134 East Center street. Afterwards he started in the candy, ice-cream, and bakery business. Mrs. Mary (O'Keefe) Dwyer was employed by Mr. Schuth's tailoring establishment. He was regarded as a substantial citizen. His son John, Jr., married Barbara Klitsch, and his daughters, Katie and Lizzie, married, respectively, William Frank and George Meyer.

EDWARD S. SILLIMAN was a coal operator. First residing in the 600 block on East Center Street, he later moved to 42-46 North Main street. He was the owner of Silliman's (North Mahanoy) colliery, the third president of the First National Bank of the town, and president of the Mahanoy City Water Company. He was a member of the Episcopal Church. He had six children, Edward, James, Charles, Howard, Ellen, and Emily.

ALFRED LAWTON was a coal operator and owner of Lawton's Colliery, one of the early local mining operations. He resided in Mahanoy City until about 1866.

WILLIAM KRAUSE, a butcher, had a slaughterhouse at 103-105 West Market Street. Later he moved to Locust Valley where his descendants still reside. A daughter, Annie, married John Latham.

EDWARD F. SMITH, a hardware merchant and tinsmith, signed the petition for the firm of which he was senior member, and which was known as Edward F. Smith and Company. His store was located at 31 East Center Street. He came to Mahanoy City from Port Carbon, Pa. with his sister, Maria, and they maintained their residence in the store building. Subsequently she married Dr. George F. Brendle, also one of the petitioners. Her brother married Frances Hughes, of Catawissa, Pa., and they resided in the former Wiggan property at Center and Linden streets. In 1885 Mr. Smith moved to Philadelphia. Mr. and Mrs. Smith had three children: Marshall, Carrie and George Smith.

VALENTINE BENNER, who resided at 213-214 East Center Street, conducted a saloon on the premises. He was one of the first four school directors of the Mahanoy City and at one time served as a Schuylkill County Commissioner.

NATHAN FEHR, a grocer, resided at 32 West Mahanoy Street. His son, Charles, later conducted a store at the corner of Mahanoy and Linden streets.

JOHN TOBIAS, a stone mason, and general mechanic, resided on the north side of East Mahanoy Street, between First and Second streets.

EDWARD BRITT built a dwelling at 234 East Center Street, where he opened a saloon. Afterwards he moved to Ashland, Pa.

PHILIP YOUNG conducted a saloon at 133-135 East Mahanoy Street. He was one of the early leaders of the old Citizens Band. A daughter, Elizabeth married John Schaeffer, a machinist at Delano, Pa. Other children included a daughter, Abbie, and several sons.

JOHN RUDLOFF resided at the eastern end of the community. He was Mahanoy City's only paid policeman in the early 1860's. His son, George, was a policeman also, serving on the local force. Besides his son, he had two daughters, Louise, and Lizzie.

BLASIUS DREYER was a carpenter and resided on East Mahanoy Street. He was the father of Christ Drehr, deceased, and grandfather of Ronald Drehr, of Robinson's.

DAVID BOWMAN was part owner, with his brother, Peter and Jonas, in the firm which operated Bowman's Colliery. He first resided at 104-106 West Center Street, where he managed the company store for the mine owners. Later he moved to a corner property at Main and Mahanoy streets, where he resided until his death in December 1895. He had four sons, Oliver; John; Alexander; and David; and three daughters, Harriet, wife of James Jarrard; Mary, wife of Dr. Phaon Hermany; and Sallie, wife of Harry Swalm.

CHARLES KAIER opened a liquor store at the corner of First and Center streets and later moved to the opposite side of the street in the same square. About 1887 he purchased the mansion built by Peter Otterbach at Eight and Center streets and resided there until his death in 1899. He had six daughters and one son: Ella wife of John Lieberman;; Josephine, wife of Michael Haughney; Margaret, second wife of John Lieberman; Mary, wife of Lloyd Fahler; Crecentia, wife of Charles Kirby; Amelia, wife of Henry Schreyer, and Charles D. Kaier, Jr.

CHARLES C. HAGENBUCH, a son of Robert and Hannah (Bomboy) Hagenbuch, opened a drugstore at 100-102 West Centre Street, later moving across the street to 101-103, where the business was continued. He was succeeded by his son, the late Dr. James Hagenbuch, in the business. Mr. Hagenbuch came to Mahanoy City from Bloomsburg, Pa. He was accompanied by his sister, Nellie, who later married Dr. William Harris of Hamburg, Pa. and brother, Abner, who resided in the 500 block on East Centre Street at first, and later at 801-803 East Center Street. Charles C. Hagenbuch was Mahanoy City's second postmaster. He married Anna Ramsey, of Bloomsburg, and to them were born four sons and two daughters: Dr. James, George, Horace, Bert, Mary and Nellie. He resided in Mahanoy City until his death in 1893.

HENRY LITSCH was a native of Germany. When he came to the United States he resided first in New York City, moving to Ashland, Pa. in 1854, where he remained until 1858 when he located in Mahanoy City. He was a stone mason by trade and was associated with John Frick in the building of the old St. Canicus Roman Catholic church and the first Centre school building. These two petitioners also constructed the walls of the Mahanoy Creek channel. Mr. Litsch was one of the early members of St. Fidelis Roman Catholic church. He resided at the corner of Centre and Third streets at first, and later moved to Pine and Third streets. In his declining years his home was located in the 800 block on East Pine Street. He was the father of twelve children, six of whom grew to maturity: John, Maurice, Henry, Peter, Mary, and Lena.

D. A. CRAWSHAW was a boot and shoemaker and repairman. He resided at 121 West Centre Street. He is described as having been a very tall man. His son, George, was killed in an accident at St. Nicholas Colliery.

MATTHIAS WALLERIUS was a breaker carpenter. His residence was situated on the south side of the 300 block on Centre Street. He was the father of one son, Matthias, Jr., and two daughters. The family left Mahanoy City for the middle west, locating at Salina, Kansas.

MICHAEL FLANAGAN originally located at 136-138 East Mahanoy Street, but moved to 31-33 West Centre street, where he conducted a liquor store until his death. He had two sons and three daughters; Peter; Thomas; Margaret, wife of John Dolphin, Esq.; Mary, and Elizabeth, who taught in the Mahanoy City public schools for many years.

MATHIAS HERRES was a brother-in-law of Matthias Wallerius, also a signer of the petition for the borough charter. His residence was located on East Mahanoy Street, opposite the hose house of the Humane Fire Company. He married a widow, Mrs. Kate Klitsch.

JOSEPH HUGHES, an Englishman, had a saloon in the basement of Seth Kaley's residence in the 100 square of East Pine Street. Previously he had conducted a similar establishment in the 200 block on West Centre Street, and afterwards he opened a shoe store at the same address.

WILLIAM SCHWEITZER, a blacksmith, also conducted a saloon at 537-539 East Mahanoy Street. His shop was on Pine Street to the rear of the business establishment. He was a member of the Reformed Church.

JOHN EICHMAN was born in Germany. He was the first Chief Burgess of Mahanoy City and served the borough in that capacity six times. He held the office of tax collector also. Together with his son, Peter, he engaged in the grocery business in the 300 block on East Center Street. He was a member of the St. Fidelis Roman Catholic church.

HENRY PIRMAN (PIERMAN) had a grocery store on the north side of the 500 block on East Mahanoy Street. Later he resided at 115-117 East Center Street, where his daughter had a millinery store. His family were members of the Reformed Church. He had five daughters: Susan, wife of Alfred Scheirer; Lizzie, wife of Charles Drumm; Lena, wife of Charles Sunday; Clara, wife of Fred Kleindienst; and Miss Carrie.

DR. ROBERT B. SWAYZE came from Bloomsburg, Pa., locating on the south side of the 200 block on West Centre Street, on the site now occupied by the Graham Ford automobile agency. He was the father of four children: Lizzie, Mary, Clark, and Robert, Jr. The former was a milliner, while Mary studied medicine and practiced at Pottsville for many years.

SAMUEL RINEHART, a carpenter contractor, first resided on West Spruce Street and later at 700 East Mahanoy street. He owned the property at 329-331 East Mahanoy Street where his office and lumber yard were located. A pioneer settler, his services were in much demand, and he erected many local buildings. He had five children named William, Benjamin, Winfield, Nora and Walter.

WILLIAM RAEGAN first located on East Mahanoy street, and then moved to 30 Spruce Lane. This latter dwelling had been built by Frank Carter, (the engineer who laid out the present borough arrangement, correcting the earlier Sheaffer map), who sold the house to Mr. Raegan when he moved to Pottsville. It is now (1934) owned by the Leon Lewis, Sr. family. Together with his brother, Washington Raegan, and Eli Washburn, Mr. Raegan built the Cooperative Building, which stood at the northwest corner of Main and Centre streets for half a century. It was removed when the Union National Bank purchased the site and erected the building occupied by them until their removal into the First National Bank building. Mr. Raegan had two sons: Maurice and James, and a daughter, Miss May, who later married the Reverend Mr. Kirkland, an Episcopal minister.

HENRY LEITENBERGER (LIGHTENBERGER) was engaged in the furniture business. His establishment, where he maintained his office as a funeral director, was located in the middle of the 200 block of the south side of East Centre Street. He disposed of this property to Jacob Becker, Sr., and moved to the opposite side of the street. Afterwards he had a confectionary store in the Cooperative Building on North Main Street. He had two sons and three daughters: Charles; Harry; Isabel, wife of Dr. Hains; Emily, wife of Harry Crum; and Lizzie.

FERDINAND METZ had a hotel at the southeast corner of Main and Market streets. Above the hotel was Metz's City Hall, which was the communities earliest "opera house". In 1885 Charles D. Kaier purchased the property and in 1893 built Kaier's Opera House, the leading theatre in the region for many years. Prior to the Kaier purchase, Constantine Metz, a nephew of the early proprietor, operated the hotel and managed the theatre for a number of years. A daughter, Lizzie, married Frederick Bosch and the couple later moved to St. Louis, Missouri.

EDWARD D. CRONIN, who assisted in the driving of the Mahanoy Tunnel, resided at its eastern end until its completion. Moving to Mahanoy City he opened a blacksmith shop at the foot of "Baumgarten's", 104-106 East Centre Street. Later he resided on North Main Street, where he had a flour and feed store at No.23. He had three sons: Edward, William, and John, and two daughters, Annie and Kate.

JULIA A. LEBO is the only woman who signed the petition for a charter for Mahanoy City. She had a clothing and dry goods store opposite the Mansion House and later at 100 East Centre street.

FRANK WENRICK came to Mahanoy City in 1862 from Tuscarora, Pa., where he located after leaving Lebanon County. He opened a butcher shop with Jonas Heins as a partner. In 1872, Wenrich served as Chief Burgess. He was Lieutenant when the Silliman Guards was formed as a military company in 1875. He was known for his public-spiritedness. Only one of the children born to Frank Wenrich and his wife, Kate, grew to maturity. This was a son, Francis. Another son, William, was killed when the "Gem" exploded at the reading station in 1878.

JOEL MILLER was a butcher who was employed by John Knapp. He resided in the 600 block, south side of East Centre Street.

THOMAS FITZGERALD and his brother, Michael, were railroad contractors. They resided on North Main Street.

GEORGE GINTHNER (GUNTNER) was a blacksmith and resided at the northwest corner of Pine and First streets. He also had a wheelwright shop on Pine Street. Solomon Kleckner, the first wheelwright in Mahanoy City, was employed by Mr. Ginthner.

J.O. ROBINSON had a store at 33 East Centre Street, and later on West Centre street, next to the Mansion House. He was manager of Robinson's Colliery, which was named for him. Mr. Robinson was a brother-in-law of the owner of the mine who resided in New York City and never located here.

THOMAS S. WESTCOTT resided at 9 East Pine Street. He was a civil and mining engineer. He was active in fraternal organizations and served as secretary of several. He was a vestryman of the Church of Faith (Episcopal) also.

SCHONE HORSKER (JOHN HERSKER) was a locksmith and shoe repairman. He resided in the 600 block on East Mahanoy Street and later moved to 29 East Center street, where he conducted a saloon. In 1895, he built the Hersker Opera House, afterwards known as the Family Theatre, and more recently, the State Theatre. He discontinued the hotel business and opened a confectionary store and later conducted a hardware store at 101 East Centre Street. This signer had four sons and six daughters: William, John, Harry, Louis, Mrs. Mary Klinger, Mrs. Minnie Seivert, Mrs. Christina Knoblauch, Mrs. Annie Lloyd, Misses Emily and Mathilda.

JACOB FRANK had a four-story hotel at 433-435 East Mahanoy street. The top floor was used for lodge rooms in the early days of Mahanoy City. For many years the Masonic and Odd Fellows lodges met there. Later Mr. Frank owned the hotel property at the southeast corner of Centre and First streets. His children were: Frederick, Jacob, Carrie, and Molly.

JACOB DEEM was a wheelwright who located at the northeast corner of Second and Mahanoy streets. He built two houses at 203-205 East Mahanoy Street and took up residence in the latter. Some years later he moved to 518 East Mahanoy Street. His brother, William, was associated with him in the wheelwright shop. Afterwards he moved to Locust Valley, where he died. He had a son, George, and a daughter, Annie.

CONRAD GURS (GUERS), one of the earliest comers to the community, resided on West Spruce Street. Later he moved to Locust Valley, conducting a dairy route through Mahanoy City over a long period of years. He had several sons and daughters.

FREDERICK ROMMEL had a saloon at 112-114 East Center Street. Later he bought a farm at Hosensock, where he succumbed. His household included two orphan nieces in addition to several sons and daughters.

M.L. JOHNSON was a plasterer and stone mason. He resided on the west side of North Main Street above the Reading railroad bridge. Later he became a sewing machine agent and located in the 200 block on East Centre Street. He purchased the Mahanoy House from Emanuel Boyer in 1863.

JOHN MILLER resided about 308-310 East Centre Street. He married the eldest daughter of Peter Forster. Their son, John, married Mary Weber, daughter of John Weber, a beer distributor. Mrs. Charles Metzinger was a daughter of the couple.

FRANKLIN DAVIS was in the freighting business and resided in the 200 block on East Centre Street. His children Robert, Emma, and Agnes were born in Mahanoy City. He moved to Sterling, Illinois, in 1870, where two other children were born, Curtis and Hattie. In 1878 he left for Oronoque, Kansas, residing there until 1880 when he migrated to Salt Lake City where he died in 1902. His wife died in 1921. When they resided in Mahanoy City they were Methodists, but they joined the Church of the Latter Day Saints, in Utah.

BENJAMIN WALBORN was in the saloon business at 11-17 East Centre street. One night ruffians looted the establishment of everything they could find to eat and drink. He closed the shop immediately and moved to 436-438 East Centre Street, where he resided until his death. He owned a number of properties in the borough and was one of the first four school directors. He had four daughters.

WILLIAM HENRY HEIDENREICH resided at the eastern part of town -- in the 600 block on East Centre Street. He also had a farm where he subsequently resided. About 1897 he returned to Mahanoy City, residing at 632-634 East Centre Street until his demise. He owned many properties in the borough and was one of Mahanoy City's first four school directors. His children were William, George, Edward, Mary, Louise, Annie, and Katie.

GEORGE R. GOODMAN had a dry goods and grocery store at 32-34 East Centre street. In 1890 he engaged in the wholesale fruit and poultry business at 136-138 West Pine Street. He had five children: Grant, Oliver, James, George, and Emily.

TOBIAS SCHROEDER, a blacksmith, resided in the 600 block on East Mahanoy Street. Later he engaged in farming in a neighboring county.

JONATHAN LINDENMUTH was the first postmaster of Mahanoy City. He resided on the east side of North Main Street, below the Kaier Hotel property. After several years residence here, he moved to Barnesville.

EVAN J. GRIFFITHS, a contractor and builder, located on North Main Street. He built the properties, 30-34 South Main Street. He was a member of Zion Welsh Baptist church. He had three sons and a daughter: Ryce, John, and William. His grandson, Evan J. Griffiths, was a member of the State Legislature from this district in the 1890's.

JONAS BOWMAN was one of the Bowman brothers who came from Carbon County to operate the Bowman Colliery. He resided at 125 East Centre Street, now occupied by the Schertzinger Jewelry store. Later his daughter, Sallie, conducted a millinery store there. He had thirteen children: Ellen Alice, Sallie, Emma, Lizzie, Jennie, Laura, Lillie, John, Frank, Lewis, Jonas, and Howard.

HENRY SHARP was proprietor of the Merchant's Hotel, later known as the Pennsylvania Hotel, on the north side of the 200 block on West Centre Street. He married Mrs. Kuder, mother of Dr. Eugene Kuder. After his death she married John Wadlinger, of Minersville, Pa. Prior to his second marriage, Henry Sharp resided in the Haas property, at the southwest corner of Catawissa and Spruce streets. He had a son, Antony, who was a tinsmith.

WILLIAM MONROE was a railroader, but prior to engaging in that occupation, he was a carpenter and assisted in the building of many local properties. He built the house at the corner of Centre and Fourth streets (400-402), which he owned, and where he conducted a saloon. Later it was bought by Mr. Klitsch. Then Mr. Monroe moved to 24 East Center Street and opened a grocery store. Afterwards he moved to Illinois and engaged in farming. He was ruined when a plague of grasshopper infested his farm and destroyed the produce.

*Of the seventy-two signers of the petition for a charter for Mahanoy City, descendants of only twenty of them were still connected with the life and activity of the borough, seventy-five years after its incorporation. They included the descendants of Messrs. Frick, Donohoe, Boyer, Silliman, Dreyer (Dreher), David Bowman, Hagenbuch, Kaier, Litsch, Flanagan, Eichman, Scheurman, Metz, Cronin, Ginthner, Hersker, Frank, Heidenreich, Rudloff, and Goodman.*