

MAHANOY CITY CHRONICLES/Researched by Lorraine Stanton

The first cashier at the first bank

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Herald writer

WILLIAM YODER earned a niche in Mahanoy City's history when he became the first cashier of the town's first bank.

The borough was one year old when the First National Bank opened for business on Dec. 13, 1864, and Mr. Yoder was the to supervise the operations from day one.

The bank was organized on Sept. 26, 1864, by a seven pioneer entrepreneurs who met for that purpose in the Mansion House Hotel. In the group were Abram Focht, (first president of the bank), Henry Meyer (store proprietor), William Reagan, lumber company proprietor; Frank Carter, engineer/surveyor; Edward Boyer, grocer/dry goods merchant; Edward Silliman and David Phillips, coal operators. They pooled their resources to put up \$50,000 to get their institution under way.

The first place of business for the new bank was in a store room in Dr. Louis Thompson's commercial building at the northeast corner of Main and Centre streets. Later, the bank would purchase this site and in 1930 erected the granite structure which stands there today as the home of the Pennsylvania National Bank.

Mr. Yoder, then 34 years old, adopted Mahanoy City as his home and became one of its most prominent residents, as the following credits attest:

—An organizer of the Mahanoy City Gas Company in 1872 and company treasurer for the next 20 years.

—An organizer of the Mahanoy City Light, Heat and Power Company in 1888.

—A director and treasurer of the Union Saving Fund.

—A stockholder in the Serial Building and Loan Association.

—A founder of the First Methodist Church; superintendent of its Sunday school for 16 years; member of its building committee responsible for erecting the new edifice in 1893.

—A member of the borough school board.

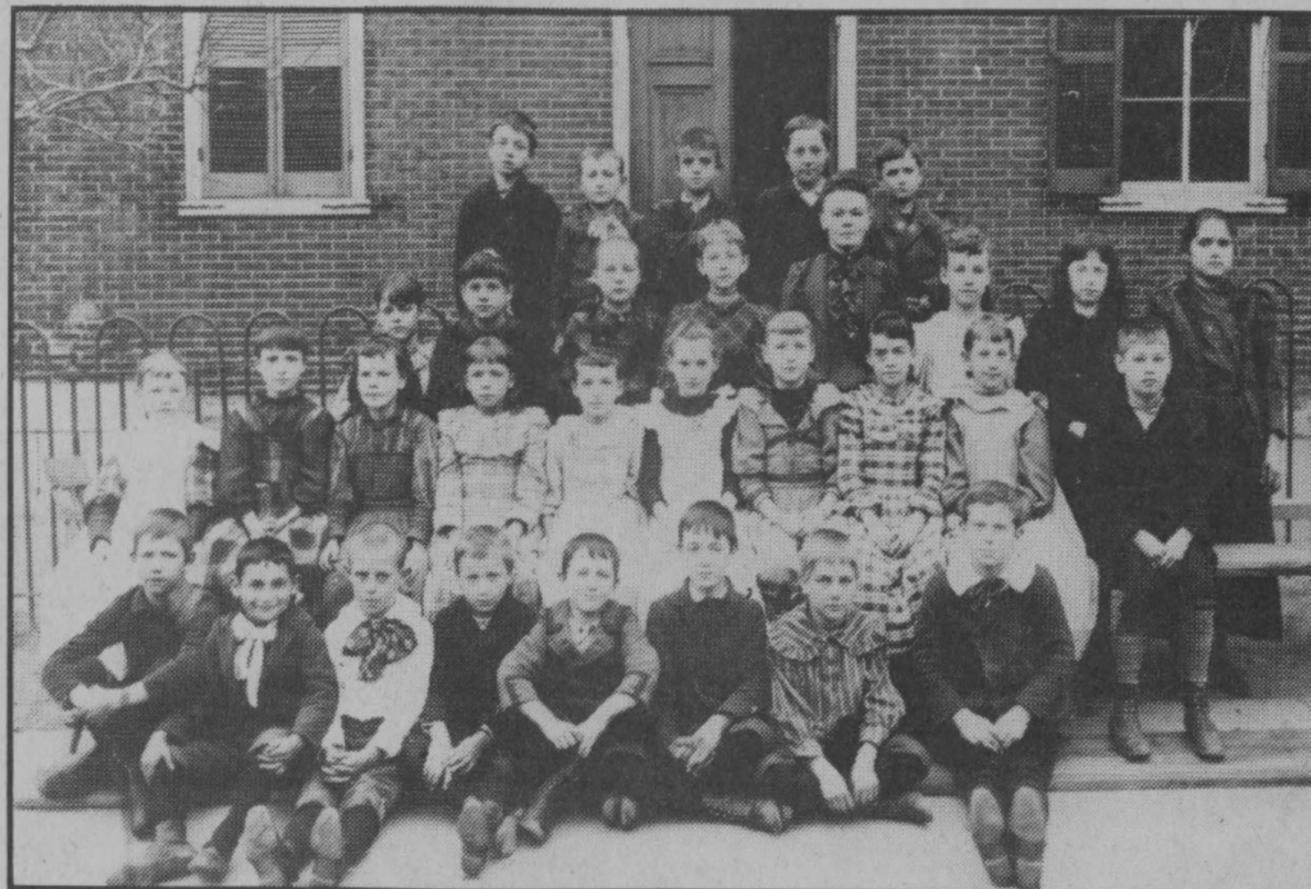
—A past master and treasurer of Free and Accepted Masons Lodge 357, also treasurer of Mizpah Chapter 252 Royal Arch Masons.

Mr. Yoder's ancestry in the United States dated back two generations in Berks County, where his grandfather, Peter Yoder, was a farmer, merchant and hotel keeper.

Grandfather Peter had eight children, one of whom was Daniel, born July 15, 1789, who was to become the father of William, our historic bank cashier.

In 1825, Daniel and his wife, Mary La Rosa, moved their family north to the new county known as Schuylkill, which had been formed 14 years earlier from parts of Berks and Northampton. They settled in the farming area near Orwigsburg, which was then a well-developed town, founded in 1796 and the first town laid out in the new county.

Daniel had made a living as a tanner in Berks County, when he moved to Schuylkill he took up a new trade as a builder of boats for the Schuylkill Canal which



SCHOLARS OF OLD — The old Spruce street school is gone from the scene and so are these youngsters who were students there when this photo was taken more than 93 years ago, Nov. 21, 1894. In front are (from left) Irvin Wertz, Soni Eber, Willie Kelley, Elmer Heiser, James Dochney, Thomas Dochney, Roy Steiner, Stanley Sollenberger. Second row: Miriam Parker, Sauretta Joyce, Sophia Maltchion, Sadie

opened in 1820 between Port Carbon and Reading. In 1850 he moved to Pottsville and became a pump manufacturer and water line construction contractor.

William Yoder was born on

March 19, 1930, while the family was living near Orwigsburg. He finished school at age 14 and worked as a clerk in Pottsville for the next 16 years. In 1860 he was appointed municipal receiver of

Steinberg, Edith Heiser, Ursula Parmley, Ellen Trewella, Katie O'Brien, Willilam Wesner. Third row: Margaret Dunlap, Annie Molusky, Katie Hensyl, Edna Kranch, Lizzie Price, Nellie Lynch, Sonisa Weinreich, Nellie Donahoe. Back row, Roy Hieb, Frank Krause, James Pearson, John Kleindienst, Leonard Paul. The photo is from the Schuylkill County Historical Society.

taxes for Pottsville. Two years later he became deputy collector for internal revenue in the counties of Schuylkill and Lebanon, which position he held at the time he was invited to

assume the bank duties in Mahanoy City.

He brought his wife (Anna Wooley of Pottsville) and three children (Howard, Clara and Emily) to Mahanoy City and took up residence at 5 E. Centre St.

By 1890, two of the Yoder children had left Mahanoy City. Howard was in New Castle, Virginia, working as cashier of the First National Bank there; Clara was married to Charles Stine and living in Norristown. Emily was still at home and making a living as a music teacher.

The historic significance of Mahanoy City's First National Bank reaches beyond the borough, since this was it also the first national bank established in Schuylkill County. It was a thriving institution until the Great Depression claimed it as a victim along with thousands of other banks across the country.

The bankrupted institution officially passed out of existence on June 7, 1937, when the U. S. Comptroller of Currency assigned its assets and liabilities to the Union National Bank.

The First National Bank of Mahanoy City, along with the man who supervised its daily business during the booming decades of the town's existence, are long gone from the scene, but they surely merit a share of remembrance as the community glances back at its 125 years of history.

Next time you pass the granite building at the northeast corner of Main and Centre streets, tip your hat to the memory the First National Bank and Cashier William Yoder. They represent the things that Mahanoy was made of.