

MAHANoy CITY CHRONICLES/Researched by Lorraine Stanton

Their names are etched in history

By **BILL O'BRIEN**
Herald writer

JOHN HALEY was a young teenager when he worked on the Mahanoy Tunnel project (1859-62) and decided to make Mahanoy City his permanent home.

A native of the Hamburg area, he came here with his uncle, Daniel Haley, who was a foreman of the crew laying track from the tunnel westward to connect with the railroad at Mahanoy Plane.

In his retirement years during the early 1920s, Mr. Haley liked to reminisce about Mahanoy City's pioneer days. He spoke of some of those memories in a 1922 article in the Record-American.

He said the tunnel was driven by two separate crews who worked from opposite sides of the mountain. He worked on the north side, under supervision of David Mack, while the south side crew was supervised by P. J. Barry, the general contractor.

Haley's job was to carry steel bits from the blacksmith shop to the rockmen who drove the holes for blasting.

He was one of the workers who took up arms to support contractor Barry in the legendary confrontation with the railroad. When the tunnel was finished, the railroad moguls refused to pay Barry the balance due him, which meant he couldn't pay his men their wages due for several weeks. At Barry's request, the men fortified themselves at the tunnel entrances and vowed war if the railroad tried to pass. Barry's army won.

The muzzle-loading rifle wielded by Haley in that episode remained in his permanent possession, and he used it many times thereafter for hunting. The only problem, he said, was that it took four copies of the Miners Journal for wadding each time he tamped a charge.

His recollection of the creek was that it was a smaller stream than in the 1920s, and began at Buck Mountain, running a meandering course through the land on which the borough would be built. All along its length, he said, the stream was inhabited by trout, many of which he caught as far east as Buck Mountain.

The north branch creek, coming down the ravine from Bowmans, ran under the property at the northwest corner of Main and Centre and thence westward along the north side of Centre street to the end of town, where it crossed the road and joined the creek from Buck Mountain.

During those early days there were few buildings on the site of Mahanoy City, so Haley and his uncle stayed in a boarding house west of the borough at Coles Patch near Tunnel Ridge Colliery.

He recalled that most of the area was covered with thick forest and swampy brush land. Men were engaged in cutting the timber which was hauled via log road to the sawmill at Tunnel Ridge Colliery. This log road later became West Centre street.

When the job of laying the railroad was completed, Haley said, the crews turned their attention to constructing the streets which surveyors years



PIONEER MERCHANTS — Two of the downtown stores that Mahanoy City folks patronized during the town's early days were

earlier had mapped out for the town of the future.

Those were the pioneers whose sweat and labor laid the foundations on which Mahanoy City was built.

HENRY GARBER'S name is etched in history as the second

male child born on the site of what was to become Mahanoy City.

His birth was recorded on Dec. 12, 1862, a full year before the county courts granted the borough its charter. The only male birth to precede him here was that of William Boyer, born

the Wesley Hamer Dry Goods/Grocery Store and the Frank Wenrich Meat Market, located at 5 and 7 W. Centre St.

Feb. 15, 1858.

Mr. Garber's father, Phineas, was one of the pioneer blacksmiths who fashioned the steel bits for the rockmen who drove the Mahanoy Tunnel (1859-62).

Phineas Garber built for his family the stately home which

still stands at the northeast corner of Main and Spruce streets, later occupied by the Harrison Ball family and more recently by John Kline, the retired automotive dealer, recently sold it and said he was pulling up stakes for Florida.

Young Henry could claim a distinction of another sort in Mahanoy history: he was player-manager of one of town's first baseball teams, during the late 1870s. Some of the other players he could recall were Marshall Smith, Tom O'Connor, Bill Heiser, Art Jenkins, Tom Holland and Sam Patterson.

Henry left Mahanoy City in the early 1880s to live in Berwyn, Chester County, but returned every Labor Day for the Garber clan reunion at McKeansburg. He said there were four branches of the family whose ancestors left their native Bavaria, Germany, in 1772 and settled in America.

DANIEL L MOLL was another school administrator who gave up education for a career in banking.

He came to Mahanoy City in 1879 to launch a teaching career and was serving as a principal when he resigned in 1888 to become a teller at the First National Bank, a position from which he retired in 1907.

Born in Milton on Jan. 29, 1853, he was graduated from Millersville State Normal School and Bucknell University.

In Mahanoy City he resided at 227 W. Mahanoy St. and at the time of his death on Feb. 13, 1922, he had daughter, Mary, on the teaching staff at Millersville State College.