

MAHANOY CITY CHRONICLES/Researched by Lorraine Stanton

More community pioneers...

By **BILL O'BRIEN**
Herald writer

DAVID FOCHT was the son of a Schuylkill County judge but he kept a low profile during his years in Mahanoy City. He quietly conducted a wholesale grocery trade until 1890 when he sold the business and retired. He was then 41 years old and residing at 106 S. Main St. with a son, James, age 10.

Mr. Focht was the grandson of Daniel Focht, one of the earliest settlers on the site of Pottsville.

According to the Samuel T. Wiley Biographical Cyclopeda of Schuylkill County (1893), Daniel was born in 1780 in Oley Township, Berks County, where his father, George, was a pioneer settler.

There was no Schuylkill County and no community of Pottsville when Daniel Focht arrived there in 1806. The county didn't come into existence until March 1811 and Pottsville, although laid out 1816, didn't become a borough until February 1828.

The reason for Daniel Focht's appearance there was to work with John Pott in the erection and subsequent operation of a charcoal furnace and forge. Their partnership continued until 1812, when Mr. Focht moved to East Brunswick Township, near Orwigsburg, and formed a partnership with Daniel Graeff to erect a forge along the Little Schuylkill River. The Focht & Graeff partnership continued until 1836 when Mr. Focht retired.

In addition to his pioneering role in the iron industry, Daniel Focht was instrumental in bringing the Evangelical Church to the county. As a founder of the

Evangelical Association, he helped sow the seeds of faith which spread throughout Schuylkill during the succeeding decades.

Daniel and his wife, the former Esther Yoder, raised two girls and 10 boys, one of whom was James Focht, the Schuylkill County judge-to-be.

JAMES FOCHT was born in East Brunswick Township on Oct. 8, 1818, and left there in 1836 to seek work in Pottsville.

After 10 years working as a clerk-salesman for various dry goods and grocery stores, he opened his own general store in 1846, selling dry goods, groceries, oilcloths and carpets.

He served terms on the Pottsville borough council and school board, and in 1862 was appointed by Governor Andrew Curtin to serve as a judge succeeding the late George Rahn.

Judge Focht and his wife, the former Martha Evans of Luzerne County, had five children. One of them, David, followed the example of his father and opened a dry goods business in Mahanoy City.

The man who kept books for David Focht was Thomas L. Thomas, who eventually became a co-owner.

THOMAS L. THOMAS was one of the few boys of his era who stayed in school long enough to obtain a high school diploma. Most youngsters had to leave the classrooms to work in the dusty confines of the breakers, picking slate 12 hours a day six days a week.

Thomas was a baby when his parents left Minersville and came to Mahanoy City in 1864. He was



61 YEARS AGO — This was the scene at Casimir's Church, Maple and Catawissa streets, following a fire of electrical origin on the evening of Monday, Jan. 10, 1927. The flames were discovered about 7 p.m. in the area behind the altar and gutted the structure which had been erected in 1903. In the absence of the pastor, Rev. Peter Bienko, who

graduated from the local high school in 1880 and went on to the Eastman Business College, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., where he received a diploma in 1882.

Returning to Mahanoy City, he became a bookkeeper for David

Focht's wholesale grocery firm. When Mr. Focht sold the business in 1890 to Daniel Stull and D. L. Van Horn, Mr. Thomas continued as bookkeeper.

Finally, after the death of Daniel Stull in 1900, a new part-

nership composed of Van Horn and Thomas, took over the business and continued to operate it through the early decades of the new century.

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THE QUICK FAMILY has been

on the scene in Mahanoy City for many years.

They are descendants of Samuel and Maria (Stephens) Quick, natives of England, who came to America in 1837. After a brief stay in Philadelphia, the couple came to Pottsville and Mr. Quick found a job in the mines. In 1856 they moved to the newly developing town of Ashland, where they spent the remainder of their lives.

Samuel and Maria had 14 children, only two of whom were alive in 1916 when the family biography appeared in the J.H. Beers History of Schuylkill County. One son, James, was living in Columbia County, and the other, Samuel, lived on his farm in Butler Township.

In 1860, son Samuel went to California and spent five years. His mother, Maria, died there while visiting him. He returned East in 1865 and settled in Girardville where he became a teamster. In 1867 he married the former Ann Harlan of Centralia, and they eventually had 13 children, eight of whom survived to maturity.

Two of this clan, William and Hannibal, were responsible for planting the Quick roots in Mahanoy City. Other brothers and sisters alive in 1916 were Aaron of Ashland, John of Harrisburg, Mrs. John (Maria) Trout of Pottsville, Mrs. R. (Anna) Seitzinger and Mrs. Gustave (Sallie) Klase of the Ashland area.

In 1882, their father, Samuel Quick, retired from the Girardville teamster business and devoted the remainder of his life to working the farm he purchased in Butler Township.