

MAHANOY CITY CHRONICLES/Researched by Lorraine Stanton



DRESCH ALBUM — LEFT PHOTO: Jacob Dresch, his wife Magdalena (seated right) and their daughter, Mrs. Carrie Bernstiel. NEXT: Charles Dresch (son of Jacob) and



his daughter, Mrs. Dorothy Hines, pictured in Saint Clair where they resided (Mrs. Hines provided the photos). NEXT: Anna (Lineburg) Dresch, wife of Charles, in a costume she



wore while singing contralto roles at the famed Kaier Opera House. RIGHT: Conrad Dresch, son of Jacob, and wife Kate Knerr.



Dresches were Stony Point pioneers

By BILL O'BRIEN
Herald writer

THE DRESCH FAMILY was among the earliest white settlers to arrive in the northern Schuylkill area. As early as 1784 the name of David Dresch appears as one of the first two settlers in Locust Valley, then part of Northampton County (Schuylkill didn't make its appearance until 1811).

Another branch of the family tree, headed by Conrad Dresch, was one of Mahanoy City's pioneer families who settled here in the late 1850s.

According to an early map drawn by W. J. Cox and Walter Scott of Philadelphia, the year 1862 found only 29 homes in the seven blocks of Spruce street from Main street westward. Eight of those dwellings were in the east (700) block, known as Stony Point, which was erected by Edward Silliman to house the employees of his North Mahanoy Colliery. The Dresch family occupied one of these "Silliman's Patch" homes.

In later years, descendants of Conrad Dresch settled at Vulcan Patch and the family name was prominent there until the mid-20th century.

JACOB DRESCH, son of Conrad, was the first of the clan to live in Vulcan where he secured work in the mines. His obituary was published in the Dec. 9, 1911, edition of the Record-American:

"The angel of death entered the bright cheerful home of Jacob Dresch at Vulcan yesterday

morning at 8 o'clock and with his keen sickle mowed down the head of that family. His illness was of short duration although he complained for several years. The direct cause of death was heart failure superinduced by Bright's disease.

"Mr. Dresch was born in Germany in 1850 and was six years old when he came to America with his parents, Conrad and Caroline Dresch. During his childhood he resided in Mahanoy City.

"He was married on Aug. 20, 1872, to the former Magdalena Honecker of Mahanoy City, who survives with seven of their 12 children: Mrs. Lizzie Schlier, Wilkes-Barre; Mrs. Carrie Bernstiel and Conrad, Mahanoy City; Mrs. Georgina Myers and Charles, Vulcan; Mary (a Mahanoy Township school teacher) and Minnie at home.

"He also leaves two brothers and two sisters: Frederick, Conrad and Ms. Charles Lorinzen of Philadelphia, Mrs. Jacob Smith of Sellersville.

"He was a member of Saint Paul's Reformed congregation from its earliest days when the worship services were held in the Spruce street school and later in the Presbyterian Church, until Saint Paul's constructed its own edifice at the northwest corner of Main and Maple streets (building now occupied by Sheehan distributors) on Sept. 17, 1865. In that year Jacob Dresch, aged 10 years, was a member of the first class confirmed by the pastor, Rev. Dr. L. K. Derr."

The funeral was held from the home at Vulcan and a special train carried the casket and cortege from Vulcan over the one



Mary Dresch
50 mile a teacher

mile distance to the German Protestant Cemetery.

CONRAD DRESCH, Jacob's younger son, was born in Mahanoy City in 1880 and lived in town until 1926 when he located at Vulcan.

Nicknamed "Cooney," he was inside foreman at Vulcan Colliery and served on the Mahanoy Township School Board for 16 years, 1926-42.

He was married to the former Catherine Knerr (a member of the Hosenock-Park Crest Knerr family). She died on Sept. 9, 1955, and he followed three months later, Dec. 7.

They had five children: Helen and Mrs. Margaret Langham (a Warne Hospital nurse), at home; Robert, New Jersey; Mrs. Ruth Selegraph and Conrad Jr., Harrisburg. Dorothy (now Mrs.

CHARLES DRESCH, Jacob's older son, was born in Mahanoy City in 1878 and like his father and brother, he spent his life working in the coal industry.

At age 18 he became an inside foreman at the Vulcan Colliery and was serving as a fireboss when he left Vulcan on March 1, 1912, to take a position as foreman at Maryd and Middlport collieries. He moved to Saint Clair shortly afterward and died there on Dec. 10, 1952.

During the early 1900s, Charles' wife, Anna Lineburg, taught Sunday school in the Mahanoy City First Congregational Church and sang contralto in performances in the famed Kaier Opera House. Before coming to America, her father was burgermeister of Limburg, Germany. After leaving Germany he settled in the New Haven and Stratford region of Connecticut.

His knowledge of electricity brought him to the anthracite region in the late 1800s to help build the municipal power plants in Mount Carmel and Shenandoah. He married a native of Alsace Lorraine and they had two children, with a third, Anna, three months on the way at the time of his death.

At the age of six weeks, Anna was sent to Connecticut and raised by Aunt and an uncle who was a minister. During a trip to Mahanoy City to visit her sister, Mrs. Walter (Ida) Yiengst, Anna met her future husband, Charles Dresch.

At the time of his death, Charles was survived by his wife and four children: Charles, Saint Clair; John, Leah and Dorothy, Harrisburg. Dorothy (now Mrs.

Hines) and John now live in Saint Clair.

MARY DRESCH, daughter of Jacob and sister of Charles and Conrad, was born on Aug. 26, 1892, in Mahanoy City and was a teacher at Mahanoy Township High School for 50 years. She retired in 1968 and died in 1981.

Many are the memories that "Mammy" Dresch left for the countless students she tutored in English literature at township high. From "Little Women" to "Tale of Two Cities" to "Shakespeare," she drummed the importance of good books into the consciousness of the coal picking "shiny snoots" from the township mine patches.

She was a no-nonsense school marm, a stately, refined and quiet lady who never raised her voice — unless she thought you needed some manners put on you. Then, look out!

The late Julius Luschinsky, one of the Shenandoah kids drawn to township in the mid-1940s because of the reputation of the school's faculty, often recalled his first meeting with "Mammy" Dresch. He said it was his first day as a freshman in her classroom. While Miss Dresch was occupied at the blackboard, her back to the class, one of the guys from Jacksons, a cutup named Brennan, engaged in some mimicry which caused Julius to laugh out loud.

Without a word, Miss Dresch left the blackboard and strode down the aisle to Julius. She grabbed him by the back of his collar, steered him to the front of the room, gave him the bum's rush through the door and threw his books into the hall after him.

Next day when Julius returned to class, Miss Dresch stopped him at the door and told him he'd not get back in without a permission slip from the supervising principal. So up to the office of Miss Cornelia Griffith tramps the forlorn young fellow. After hearing his explanation, Miss Griffith gave him a slip initialed with her familiar "C.E.G." and it was his passport back to the classics. Never again did Julius Luschinsky so much as crack a smile in English literature.

THE DRESCH history in Ryan Township began in 1784 when David Dresch built the first log house on Klingaman's farm and planted the first orchard in Locust Valley.

David had two sons, Washington and David. Washington was married to Wilhelmina Ackerman. They had a daughter, Annie (later Mrs. Correll) and a son, Jonas. Jonas was born in Ryan Township on July 28, 1875, and was baptized in Saint Peter's Church, Locust Valley, on May 21, 1876, by Rev. Hartman. He had two daughters, Viola Dresch Kaufman and Mabel Dresch Kelly. His brother David had a son Benjamin and daughter Mary.

CIVIL WAR records for Schuylkill County list two Dresches about whom no other available information is available at the moment:

—Pvt. Elias Dresch, Mahanoy Township, served in the 48th Regiment from 1861 to 1865.

—Pvt. David Dresch (Dress), Saint Clair, served with the Lafitte Rifles, 48th Regiment.

Saint Nicholas Patch in the good old days

These 78-year-old views of Saint Nicholas Patch are from the album of Shirley Thomas Ryan of Allentown whose grandfather was William R. Thomas of Suffolk. They're dated Oct. 17, 1910, and were taken by Mahanoy City's noted historian, Augusta Dillman Thomas. The children at left are the Bonenberger family, who include George, William, Charles, Mary, Janet and Josephine. On the photo at right, the only person identified is Ruth Jones Smith, seated with the dog at right. The view affords the glimpse of the neat homes that once lined the village street. The skyline in the background even then was silhouetted by the wastebank from the old Saint Nicholas Breaker. The patch takes its name from the colliery that began operations on Christmas Day 1862. Today it consists of one home, occupied by the Joseph Hillbush family.

