

MAHANOY CITY CHRONICLES/Researched by Lorraine Stanton

Bowmans prominent pioneers

By BILL O'BRIEN
Herald writer

THE BOWMAN family played a key role in the birth and early growth of Mahanoy City, and their name is memorialized by the Mahanoy Township village just north of town.

Brothers David and Jonas Bowman were 1863 signers of the petition for Mahanoy City's incorporation as a borough. Together with a third brother, Peter, they operated the colliery associated with Bowmans Patch from 1862 until the early 1870s when the bigger companies moved in to monopolize the industry.

Two members of the family served as chief burgesses in town, another served as tax collector, and two others were pioneer photographers who recorded scenes of the town's early decades to afford subsequent generations some idea of the community's appearance in the day of its forefathers.

The Bowmans have been in America since colonial times, and the borough of Bowmanstown, Carbon County, is named after them. The first of the ancestors to reach the United States was Hans Dieterich Bauman, who came from Germany in October 1727 and settled in Northampton County. His son, Heinrich Bauman, was a captain in the General Washington's army at Valley Forge during the Revolutionary War, and Heinrich's son, Hans Dieter Bauman, was a major in the War of 1812.

The spelling of Bauman was changed by a mistake attributed to a schoolmaster in Carbon County during the early 1800s. When he wrote the children's name as Bowman, it became thus permanently.

The Bowman brothers who came to Mahanoy City were among eight children of Major

Hans Dieter and Margarethe (Newhard) Bauman who settled Bowmanstown when he build a stone mansion there in 1813.

DAVID BOWMAN was the sixth child of Major and Mrs. Hans Bauman. He was born May 18, 1808, in Towamensing Township, Northampton (now Carbon) County.

For some years he was a hotelkeeper and mercantile merchant at Parryville. He came to Mahanoy City in 1863 to join the coal operations which his brothers had begun a year earlier. He also ran a mercantile store here for a brief period.

David died at his home, 66 S. Main St., on Dec. 17, 1895, age 87 years. He's buried at Lehighton with his wife, Susan Lentz, a native of Mauch Chunk.

Their children included:

—John, the town's first photographer who ran the business until 1872 when he joined his father in the operation of Bowmans Colliery and other coal mines in the county. He later located at Aspen, Colorado.

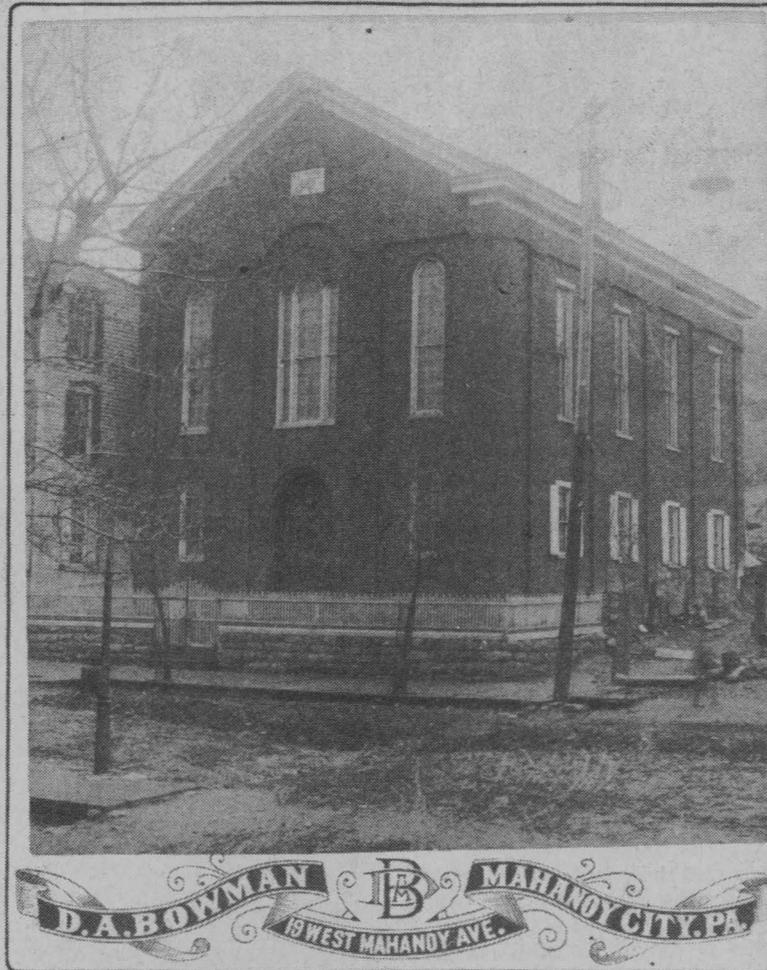
—David A., who ran the photography business after John gave it up. He later moved to Philadelphia and engaged in manufacturing.

—Oliver, who was associated with his father in the operation of Bowmans Colliery and later left here for Trenton, N.J., where he engaged in the manufacture of pottery and porcelain ware.

—Mary, who married Dr. Phaon Hermany, a pioneer local physician. One of their four children, Horace D., also became a doctor.

—Harriet, wife of James Jarard, proprietor of the American House Hotel in Mauch Chunk for many years.

JONAS BOWMAN was the oldest of the three local pioneer colliery operating brothers. He was born in 1805 and came to Mahanoy City in 1862.



PIONEER PHOTOGRAPHER — This view of the old Methodist Church, Fourth and Mahanoy streets, was recorded by David A. Bowman who, along with his brother, John, were the town's pioneer photographers. The church was built in 1865 and replaced by the present edifice in 1893. The photo, part of the Elwood Young collection, is provided by George Barlow.

After the family's coal mining operations were taken over by larger companies, Jonas opened a millinery store which was conducted by his wife, the former Catherine Koons, at 33 E. Centre St.

Jonas and his wife had 13 children, three of whom were living in Mahanoy City at the time of his death in 1876: John, Frank and Howard. A daughter, Jennie, was living in Delano, the wife of Hiram Blodgett.

PETER BOWMAN the eighth and last sibling in the family. He was born July 10, 1814, and grew up to become a builder of railroads, trolley lines and collieries. During his early adult years he served as the first treasurer of Carbon County and served two terms in the state legislature, 1846-48.

He was one of the early mine operators in Schuylkill County, having sunk the Newkirk Slope near Tamaqua in 1848. He was entombed by a cave-in there but was rescued after three days. The following year he opened mines near Tuscarora and New Philadelphia, then went to Pottsville in 1858 to operate several collieries in that vicinity and in the Heckscherville Valley.

He came to Mahanoy City in 1862 and in addition to his mining enterprises here he conducted a mercantile store for several years while getting his colliery into production. He was elected borough tax collector at age 78 in 1892.

His first wife, Polly Romig (Romich) or Hanover Township, Luzerne County, died here on May 6, 1866, age 45. They had eight children. Those who survived to maturity included:

—Mark, a civil engineer who served for a time as consulting engineer for Mahanoy City and Shenandoah boroughs, also as superintendent of Shoemakers Colliery.

—Robert, a clerk associated with his brother Mark in the family mining operations and a local chief burgess for one term.

—Milton, who was associated with his father in the coal business and served a term as Mahanoy's chief burgess before moving to western Pennsylvania to work for the Duquesne Steel Company.

—Mrs. George (Mary) Silliman of Altoona.

—Mrs. Daniel (Isabel) Dillman, mother of noted local historian

Augusta (Dillman) Thomas.

In February 1869 Peter took a second wife, Margaret Carl, but they had no children. Peter died at his home at 226 E. Mahanoy St. on Dec. 4, 1901, age 87 years.

Should any Bowmans Patch resident desire to visit the grave of this pioneer who founded their village — the only one of the brothers buried in this area — his burial plot may be found in the German Protestant Cemetery.

ISABEL DILLMAN, the eldest daughter of Peter Bowman, was 92 years old when she died at the family residence, 420 E. Mahanoy St., in 1933. She first set foot in town in April 1862, having come here from Parryville, Carbon County, where she was teaching school.

Isabel was extensively educated. She had attended grade school in Tamaqua, the Arcadian Institute at Orwigsburg and the Marcia Allen Private School in Pottsville, specializing in art and music. She was an accomplished artist whose paintings were exhibited at the New Orleans Exposition of 1885.

A few months after arriving in Mahanoy City, she married Daniel Dillman, a Pottsville attorney, and moved to the county seat where her three children were born.

The family returned to Mahanoy City in the mid-1870s and daughter Augusta was graduated from MCHS in 1891 and from West Chester State Normal School in 1893. She taught school here for eight years and was keenly interested in history. Data received from her mother and uncles helped her write a history covering the period from the 1860s to the 1930s, which is printed in the borough's current quasiquintennial book.

Augusta's brother, Robert, died in 1876, and the older brother, D. Walter, became a civil engineer in Altoona.