

## MAHANOY CITY CHRONICLES/Researched by Lorraine Stanton

# 'Calnon' spelled 'cleanliness' ...

By **BILL O'BRIEN**  
Herald writer

CALNON spelled cleanliness to Mahanoy City residents during the last decade of the 19th century and half of the 20th century.

Calnon's Laundry did a bustling business at at Second and Pine streets, the site now occupied by the Dave Jarrett Funeral Home.

The laundry was owned by Charles and Bridget Calnon, both of whose families were residents here before Mahanoy City's birth as a borough.

Charles was seven years old when he came here in 1863 from Loretto, Cambria County. His Irish parents, Charles and Johanna (Crowley) Calnon, had come to America in 1854. Their family here included four other boys and a girl, all of whom died in childhood.

After attending a few grades of elementary school in Mahanoy City, young Charles began working around the mines and then became a carpenter's apprentice, a trade he followed for 12 years.

By 1894 he has saved enough to buy the Mahanoy City Steam Laundry which had been opened only six months earlier. It became of the busiest spots in town, washing machines humming and steam pressers hissing as 16 employees processed incoming loads of soiled laundry and dispatched neatly stacked piles of clean laundry.

**CHARLES WAS** married on Sept. 15, 1884, to the former Bridget Power, who was one of the early school teachers of Mahanoy Township.

She was four years old when she came to this area in 1959 from Millerstown, Perry County. Her parents, Patrick and Bridget (Fitzgerald) Power, were immigrants from County Limerick, Ireland.

According to family history passed on by Mrs. Calnon, her family's first place of residence in this area was Barrys Patch, a lonely spot two miles north of town along the old Catawissa Turnpike. The Power family settled there in 1859, which

reveals that homesteading existed in that vicinity about the same time that Mahanoy City was in its infancy. This makes the Power family one of the earliest settlers in the patches of Mahanoy Township. The spot wasn't known as Barrys when the Powers arrived there, not having aquired the name until the early 1860s when P. J. Barry, the contractor who drove the Mahanoy Tunnel at Buck Mountain, opened a small mile there.

It was the impending advent of the Lehigh Valley railroad that lured the early settlers to Barrys. Surveying for the rail route was in its early stages. By 1864, the company would have trains running into Mahanoy City and Shenandoah, and as far west as Mount Carmel.

In its heyday, Barrys was a busy spot on the railroad, serving as a junction point for connecting the western end of the loop running into Mahanoy City. Westbound Lehigh trains coming down the grade into Mahanoy switched off the main tracks at Park Place. When leaving Mahanoy, they went west to a point near Elmwood Collier (Foundry Row) before swinging northward over Bear Ridge to connect again with the main line at Barrys.

The village of Barrys is now but a memory. Strip mines wiped it off the map in the 1960s, and the last family to live there, the Frank Chesko clan, moved a half mile down the hollow to Bowmans Patch.

**FOR SEVERAL** years prior to her 1884 marriage, Bridget Power was a teacher in the Mahanoy Township District, having taught in village schools at Jacksons, Hills, Myers and Saint Nicholas.

With the opening of the family laundry business in 1894, she assumed an active role in its management. She became sole owner when her husband died on Dec. 28, 1913, and was still listed as such when she died on June 21, 1951, three months shy of her 96th birthday.

During their early married life, the Calnons lived at 27 S. Catawissa St., now the Dr. Mark

## SHIRTS

*"as he likes them"*

*Professionally  
Finished*

### CALNON'S LAUNDRY

PHONE 393

**AD FROM THE PAST** — Advertisements such as this appeared regularly in the Record-American during the many years that Calnon's tidied up the town's soiled laundry.

Holland residence. Later they lived in Park Place, and finally at the laundry address, 201 East Pine street.

The couple had seven children and Bridget outlived all but one. The only surviving offspring at the time of her death was Mrs. Anthony (Mary) Ludes who, like her mother before her, was a teacher, serving as art supervisor in the Mahanoy City schools.

A son, Charles, was foreman of the laundry for years until his death on Sept. 6, 1940. A daughter, Helen, died Nov. 4, 1939. The other four children died prior to 1907.

In 1949 Mrs. Calnon was honored as Mahanoy City's mother of the year by the Civic Association. She was 94, still alert and keen of memory as she told of happenings from the days when both she and Mahanoy were young.

She was also survived by a brother, Michael Power, who was 93 and made his home with her.

After her death, the laundry was taken over by Walter Jones of Pottsville until, like other landmark industries of Mahanoy's past, the business fell victim to the economic downtrend

coal industry, offered this toast which speaks for itself:

"To Burd Patterson, the gentleman who originally projected the anthracite experiment in Pottsville and the first friend of every enterprise which advances the interests of Pennsylvania."

**POTTSVILLE** was but a small village when this remarkable man first viewed the site as a visitor in 1824. He was a native of Juniata County, born there in 1788, and was teaching at Mount Airy College, Philadelphia, when he first set foot in Schuylkill County. At that time, according to the Patterson memoirs, Pottsville consisted of 12 homes on an island swamp.

A year later he was back as a permanent resident. He made his first abode in a stone house at Centre and Mauch Chunk streets while erecting a mansion on Mahantongo street between Eighth and Ninth streets.

In 1825 the mining of anthracite was just beginning and would soon bring a great influx of people from all parts of the nation and abroad, thus making Pottsville America's first industrial boom town.

Patterson foresaw the future in anthracite and entered the coal land real estate business. In various sections of Schuylkill County, including the Mahanoy Valley wilderness, he acquired large tracts as a speculative investment. One of his partners was Abraham Pott, whose father, John, was the founder of Pottsville. Together they laid out the Pott-Patterson addition to Pottsville which encompassed the middle and northwest wards and much of the south ward. At his suggestion, the Garfield Square monument island was included as part of the West Market street layout.

Patterson was the founding president of the Schuylkill Coal Operators Association and used the novel approach of offering cash prizes for solutions to problems confronting the industry. He was thus able to take advantage of the knowledge not only of the professional engineers but also the practical miners who

knew the trade best because they worked at it. One of the obstacles he was able to surmount in this manner was a method for drainage of mine workings below water level.

**WHEN THE** Civil War broke out, Patterson was a staunch supporter of the Union, so much so that he refused to associate with anyone who sympathized with the South. Governor Andrew Curtin consulted him on matters pertaining to the coal region.

A man not easily discouraged, he lost his early fortune in a depression which followed the panic of 1837. But he didn't despair, simply went to work building another fortune and eventually paid all his debts.

One of Patterson's most important contributions was the pioneer use of anthracite for iron-making. He ran the Pioneer Furnace on the river island at the south end of Pottsville from 1839-46.

After the war, he became interested in the Bessemer process steelmaking and sent two men to England to study it. He then formed a company and erected a building in Schuylkill Haven to test the process, but he died on March 30, 1867, and the project never came into being. On the day of his funeral, the business places of Pottsville closed in tribute.

**BURD PATTERSON** lived to the ripe old age of 79 but not long enough to witness the communities which would spring up from the land that he was daring enough to risk his fortune upon.

He was the son of George and Jane (Burd) Patterson. His greatgrandfather, James Patterson, migrated from England in 1717 and settled on the banks of the Juniata River where he and a son, James, built Fort Patterson and traded with the Indians.

Burd's mother was a descendant of the first mayor of Philadelphia and Burd proudly told of visiting that city and seeing General George Washington passing on the street.

Burd and his wife, Emily (Dower), had one son, Joseph S.