

## MAHANOY CITY CHRONICLES

# Amazing woman, Mrs. Mulvasie

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**FEW RESIDENTS** in the history of Mahanoy City could match the saga of Lucy Voche Loiseau Mulvasie. This amazing woman was an experienced miner, mother of eleven, a successful business woman and the town's oldest resident when she died at age 92 on July 30, 1938.

She was born in Dou, Belgium, and orphaned in childhood. Her mother, Rose, died when Lucy was two, and her father, Antoine, passed away when she was nine.

As a family without parents, the children had to fend for themselves, and the only occupation available around their home town was mining. At the tender age of nine years, Lucy Voche was introduced to the labors of coal mining.

Whatever jobs the men did, Lucy did as well or better — mucking, laboring, cutting coal, driving rock tunnels. By the age of 20, she was a seasoned miner. In fact she became a legend in Dou when she set a record by loading 101 mine buggies in a single shift, a feat which won her an industry citation.

The man she married, Joseph Loiseau, was a native of the same area. They later lived in the mining region around Nancy, France, before coming to the United States in 1881. After 10 years in Sandy Run, they came to Mahanoy City in 1891.

The industrious couple first established a dairy business which they ran for 16 years. In

1907 they switched to the cafe business, opening at the Hotel Loiseau at 130 E. Centre St. which she ran until 1919, when she retired. Her husband died in 1911 and she later married Joseph Mulvasie, who died in 1927.

The mines were not kind to the family of Lucy Voche. She lost a sister and a brother to mining accidents in Belgium, and a son, Joseph, was killed in a Tamaqua area mine in April 1924.

Some of her children were born in Belgium, some in France and some in the United States. This was the status of the survivors at the time of her death:

Belgium born — Josep, deceased; Mrs. Mary Coulson, deceased.

France — Louis, Mrs. Lucy Brida, Tamaqua; Thomas, at home (520 E. Mahanoy St.); Antoine, died in childhood.

United States — Sarah Harris, Thomas, Mahanoy City; Victor, deceased; Isabella and Rose, died in childhood.

**GEORGE DENNIS** was a pioneer who came to Mahanoy City four years before it became a borough, got his start as a colliery worker, then opened a dry goods store at 17 E. Centre St. and became successful enough to be elected to the board of director of the First National Bank.

He was born in Bloomsburg on April 11, 1852, and was nine years old when his family moved here.

After working around the mines for some years he was promoted to the position of hoisting engineer in charge of the big stationary engines that lowered



**PIONEER TOWN** — Midtown Mahanoy City looked like a wild west frontier town in 1865, with hitching posts at the street corners and the old wooden Cooperative Building at the northwest corner of Main and Centre streets, a ramp at the rear leading to the

and raised the cages carrying men, mules and cars into and out of the underground depths.

In the 1880s he opened the business which he conducted for 30 years, retiring in 1908.

According to the biographical

information in his obituary, Mr. Dennis was a builder of the First Methodist Church and an officer of the congregation since its inception. He was also a charter member of the Citizens Fire Company and was vice president of the First National Bank at the

time of his death.

He spent summers at the seaside resort of Ocean Grove, N.J., and served as an usher at the auditorium there.

He died on May 27, 1926, at his 224 E. Centre St. residence,

leaving three daughters: Mabel, Irma and Ruth, all at home; a sister, Mary, in Nebraska, and four brothers: Herbert, Seattle, Wash.; Lloyd, Philadelphia; Edward, Los Angeles and Charles, Mahanoy City.

**PHOTOS TAKEN** of the North Eighth street section of Mahanoy City prior to 1920 show a large factory building in the area where the public basketball court is now situated.

Here's the story of why that structure cannot be seen on any photos taken after Jan. 11, 1926:

"Fire of undetermined origin destroyed the Unrivald Hosiery Mill and Mahanoy City Paper Box Factory located in the same building on North Eighth street last evening.

"When discovered the fire had gained considerable headway on the first floor about the middle of the long wooden structure. Two large trucks used to convey workers to and from the plant were saved, but the all the machinery and stock in the building were lost.

"The A. C. Leshar hosiery mill, located on the second floor, employed 75 girls. The box factory, in the first floor, employed 25 men and boys. The loss of employment will be a hardship for many of their families who depended on them for income during the current mine suspension.

"The Leshar firm occupied the building in 1919 and the box factory opened on the ground several years ago after another hosiery company closed shop."