

Rockwood

Rockwood, situated at the junction of the Baltimore & Ohio and the Somerset & Cambria railroads, is one of the most enterprising, thrifty and fast growing villages in southern Pennsylvania. The place is still young, and its business interests are constantly increasing in extent and importance. Rockwood now contains four general stores, two groceries, four hotels, three blacksmithshops, one tannery, one gristmill, one planing-mill, one tinshop, one shoemakershop, two carpentersshops, one tailorshop, three churches and one graded school. Two ministers and two physicians are residents of the place.

The town was laid out by Philip Wolfersberger, in 1857. Martin Meyers was the principal surveyor. The first house was built in 1856, by P. & D. Wolfersberger. It was a two-story frame building, and was used both as a store and a dwelling. The first hotel was erected by John Poister in 1860, and is now owned by Alexander Rhoads. Solomon Bechtel erected the first blacksmithshop in 1857. The first tannery was built in 1869, by Henry Werner, present owner. The planing-mill of A. Growall & Sons was built in 1872.

The railroad depot at this place was built in 1871. The postoffice was established in 1868. From that date until 1871, mail was brought from Gebhart's, the citizens, by voluntary contributions, paying the mail-carrier. During the first quarter, the receipts of the office amounted to four dollars and fifty cents. The succession of postmasters has been as follows: F. B. Long, William S. Kreger, E. D. Miller.

The first schoolhouse in the place was erected in 1858, at a cost of three hundred and seventy-five dollars. The first teacher was S. A. Will, now an attorney of Pittsburgh, succeeded by E. D. Miller, George M. Baker, R. H. Dull, and others. The graded school building, two stories, 48x50 feet, was erected in 1875, and to date has cost twenty-five hundred dollars. The present number of pupils in attendance is one hundred and twenty-five. Among the recent improvements are the Rockwood house, built in 1882 by D. H. Wolfersberger, and the Merchants' Hotel, a very fine building, erected the same year by Samuel Buckman.

The village was first known as Shaff's Bridge, named after John Shaff, one of the early settlers of the township. The bridge was erected by Samuel Miller, in 1843. Afterwards the name Mineral Point was given, on account of the minerals found in the vicinity. The present name was finally settled upon, after much discussion. At least half a dozen meetings were held by the citizens, at the schoolhouse, without coming to any decision. Finally E. D. Miller, P. S. Wolfersberger and B. S. Harrington gave the town the name which it now bears. Wolfersberger, being ticket agent of the Baltimore & Ohio railroad, prevailed upon the managers of the road to call the station Rockwood, and Miller, who was then postmaster, succeeded in changing the name of the postoffice. Thus, the matter was settled ere the citizens were aware.

The railroad was, of course, the main agent in building up Rockwood.

Daniel Miller, a wagonmaker, was born in Eastern Pennsylvania, about 1787. He removed to Summit township, in this county, early. He died in 1856. He married Mary Long, and was the father of ten children: Jacob D., Gabriel, Daniel D., Josiah, Ephraim, Manasseh, Lydia (Meyers), Rachel (Lichty), Susan (Lichty) and Lena (Saylor), all living but Lydia. Daniel D. Miller settled in Milford township about 1838. He is a farmer, now living a retired life. Formerly he followed wagonmaking. Hon. Joseph D. Miller, son of Daniel D. Miller, was reared in Milford township. He served three years in a Somerset county company during the late war, and was wounded at New Market, Virginia, May 15, 1864. After the war he taught school in Maryland several terms. During the session of 1879 he was transcribing clerk of the house of representatives at Harrisburg. In 1870, he engaged in the mercantile business at Rockwood, erecting the store now occupied by J. D. & E. D. Miller. J. D. Miller was elected to the legislature in 1865, and served during two sessions. He has since devoted himself entirely to his large and constantly growing business. Ephraim D. Miller, brother of Hon. J. D. Miller, was born in Milford township, and worked on the farm until he was seventeen years of age. From that time, until he was twenty-four, he was engaged in teaching in Allegheny county, Maryland. He then formed a partnership with his brother, and engaged in mercantile business.

Henry W. Werner came from Germany to America in 1853. After living fifteen years in Summit township, in 1869 he came to Rockwood, bought two lots and erected a tannery; the latter costing three thousand dollars. This tannery was the first one of importance in the township.

Edward Henry Werner was born at Meyersdale, Pennsylvania, February 19, 1860. He attended the public and private schools of his native town until nine years of age, when his father (Henry W. Werner) removed with his family to Schaff's Bridge, in Milford township. At the age of sixteen he entered the Glade Academy, at New Centreville, which he attended the four succeeding years; teaching during vacations in the public schools of Milford and Elk Lick townships, in all five terms. At school his studies were not confined to the text-book of his class, but a large portion of his time was given to

reading standard works of literature. In August, 1881, he accepted a position on the Meyersdale Commercial as local editor. He resigned this place in May, 1883, and at once began the work of establishing a new paper - The Times.

In 1870 Harrison Snyder bought the store of Peter Phillippi, and engaged in the mercantile business, which he still continues. Mr. Snyder is a native of Turkey-Foot township. He served in the late war in Co. K, 171st regt. Penn. Vols. Henry D. Snyder, father of Harrison, was born in Milford township, in 1797. In 1824 he moved to Turkey-Foot and bought one hundred and ninety-eight acres of land for three hundred dollars. This farm he improved and tilled until his death in 1872. He married Mary Shaff, and his children were: Noah, Michael, Harrison, Lena (Struckoff), Clarissa, Sarah (Sechler), Mary A., Elizabeth (Phillippi) and Susan (Meyers).

Samuel A. Haines, son of John Haines, was born in Milford township. He taught school seven years, and in 1853 purchased a farm on which he lived twenty-one years. Mr. Haines served as school-director for ten years. In 1873 he sold his farm, and in 1874 he engaged in the mercantile business in Rockwood, which he continued until 1880. Since that time he has kept hotel in Rockwood.

Anthony Growall, a native of Portugal, came to America about 1780, and settled in Elk Lick township. He died in 1803, aged about sixty-eight. His children's names were: John, George and Elizabeth (Sebauch). John, the eldest, was born in Elk Lick about 1795; settled in Milford in 1850; died in 1863. he married Elizabeth Johnson, and was the father of thirteen children; Eli, Anthony, Peter, Henry, John George W. (deceased), Matilda (deceased), Mary A. (deceased), Elizabeth, Rachel, Margaret, Lucinda (deceased) and Harriet (deceased). Anthony, son of John, Sr., came to Milford township in 1839. He has followed carpentry since he became of age. He served three years in Co. C., 142d regt. Penn. Vols. In 1872 he built a planing mill in Rockwood, at a cost of one thousand dollars. This mill is now owned by Mr. Growall and his sons, Jonathan P. and Annanias.

William Harrington, a native of England, came to America in 1818, and settled in Perry county, Ohio. In 1825, while on his way from Arkansas, where he had purchased land, he was drowned in the Mississippi river by an accident to a boat. He had been in Somerset county previously, and his family was here awaiting his return in order to accompany him to the west. Mrs. Harrington (nee Lydia Hunter) purchased a farm of George Gebhart in 1831, and here reared her family. The children were: Samuel H., Joseph W. and Zillah (Friend), the last named being deceased. Joseph W. engaged in the tailoring business in 1836, which he has since followed. He built a shop in Rockwood in 1877. Two of Mr. Harrington's sons were in the late war: Francis R. and Silas W. Francis was killed at Pittsburg Landing. Silas was wounded at the Wilderness.

Samuel Buckman, a native of Northampton county, came to Rockwood in 1880. He kept the old Eagle hotel for two years, and in 1882, erected the Merchants' Hotel, at Rockwood - a building which is an ornament to the town - at a cost of ten thousand dollars. Mr. Buckman has followed the occupation of a contractor and builder of bridges. During his lifetime he has erected, in various parts of the United States, one hundred and twenty-seven railroad and other bridges. Since coming to this county, he has built seven bridges in the county.

D. R. Hess, Jr., a native of Lancaster county, came to Rockwood in 1882. Mr. Hess is a charcoal manufacturer by trade and is now conducting an important business. He ships to the firm of S. D. Wood & Co., McKeesport, about three hundred and fifty thousand bushels of charcoal annually, from different points along the line of the Baltimore & Ohio railroad.

Source: The History of Bedford, Somerset and Fulton Counties, Pennsylvania -- 1884

Reformatted: 17 March 2022

Somerset County portion of the [PAGenWeb](#)