MIFFLINBURG'S EARLY HISTORY

The borough of Mifflinburg is on land received from the Penn Proprietors by Ensigns Foster and McMeen for service in the French and Indian War. They sold the land to George Nagle. The McMeen tract then passed to Elias Youngman, a hatter, and his wife Catharina (daughter of George Nagle) in 1781.

Youngmanstown

In 1792, Elias Youngman laid out Youngmanstown ("Younkman's Stettle"). The surveyed town began where South Third and Fourth streets meet, continued north on Third to Walnut, west to Seventh, south to Green and east back to Third, encompassing Chestnut and Market, Fourth (John), Fifth (High) and Sixth (Catherine) streets. A spring ran through town, providing water for the residents. Youngman later acquired land south of the original tract (now the site of the cemetery), and provided land for a church.

By March 1793 Youngman had sold 32 town lots, 60 by 120 feet each, and 56 outlying lots of one acre each. In 1793, Youngman has 208 acres, two cows, two horses, and one still.

Rotestown

George Rote purchased the Foster tract. In 1775 he had 30 acres farmland, two horses, five cows, nine sheep and one servant. Rote had surveyor Frederick Evans lay out a town in 1797 that became known as Rotestown or Rhodestown. The lots were of differing sizes, depending on the purchasers' wishes.

Early Residents

Residents in 1793, living in log houses with perhaps a log stable or shop, were Thomas and Elias Youngman, gunsmith John Dreisbach, blacksmith John Earnhart, mason Ludwig Getgen, weaver Henry Longabaugh, tavern keeper Martin Withington, storekeepers Robert Holmes and John Irvin, tailors Henry Neal and Jacob Welker, carpenters Nicholas Sampsel and Christopher Wagner, jobbers Jonathan Holmes, Nicholas Reeder and William Welker; storekeepers Robert Holmes, John Irvin and George Youngman.

While some goods and raw materials arrived from the coast and Europe, early towns were largely self-sufficient. Local merchants and craftsmen supplied townspeople and farm families with needed items, and farmers provided agricultural products.

By 1796 the town had a shoemaker, William Black, nailor Michael Bartges, saddler Nathan Evans, tanner John Leighty, cropper Henry Noll, another tavern keeper, Kimber Barton, another tailor, Charles Ross, and another carpenter, Michael Lyman. George Youngman was commissioned a Justice of the Peace. He became Postmaster in 1798 when the post office was established.

Tavern keeper Kimber Barton was also assessor for the district. Taxes collected to pay for the Revolutionary War included a tax on window glass. Residents would sometimes remove the glass from windows and replace it with oiled paper to avoid paying the tax.

Youngmanstown was the largest town in Buffalo Valley by 1799. Newcomers were clockmaker John Ely, school teacher George Paget, wheelwrights John Patterson and Andrew Patton, and brewer Henry Hassenplug (the only brewer in the county).

Other new taxable residents were shoemakers James Ayers, John Carmony and Peter Young; tanners Moses Carothers and Daniel Clark; jobbers Adam Clark, Michael Colins, Patrick Moss and James Skiles; farmers Christopher Eilert and Christopher Wagner, laborer Simon George, joiners Christian Derr, John Gibbons and Michael Layman; coopers Adam and Nathan Herring, carter Phillip Peters, tailors Jacob Crotzer, Rudy Nicolas, Jacob Walker, Charles and George Russ; blacksmith Jacob Schoch, carpenters Michael Schoch and John Crotzer, tavern keepers James Foster and Richard VanBuskirk, hatter John Webb, and Jacob Rockey.

By 1802, schoolteacher Christopher Derring, silversmith Peter Withington and surveyor Frederick Gutelius had come to Youngmanstown. Gutelius would become a Justice of the Peace, and County Commissioner in the newly formed Union County in 1813.

In 1827 Youngmanstown and Rotestown were incorporated into the borough of Mifflinburg, (for Thomas Mifflin, the first governor of PA). There is a bend in the streets where the 2 towns joined.

Mifflinburg's growth through the 1800's will be explored in the next article. Meanwhile, readers can learn more at the Union County Historical Society, Lewisburg, and the Herr Memorial Library in Mifflinburg.

Sources:
Annals of Buffalo Valley 1755-1855 by John Blair Linn, 1877
History of Mifflinburg by Richard V. B Lincoln, 1900
Mifflinburg, a Bicentennial History by Charles M. Snyder, 1992