



**The Courthouse in New Berlin, PA**

### **NEW BERLIN BEGINNINGS**

From a handful of early settlers in 1792, on land laid out for George Long by surveyor Frederick Evans, *Longa Stettle* or Longstown, grew in size and importance, becoming the county seat for Union County in 1814 to 1855.

The promising town site, part of 226 acres purchased by Long from George Albright (Albrecht) of Lancaster County, was located on a bank above the flood mark of Penns Creek, which would be useful for navigation of goods and as a water power-source for mills.

The earliest families to settle in New Berlin were Beatty, Berger, Black, Carstetter, Clark, Cook, Gill, Grove, Henderson, Herman, Miller, Mitchell,

Moyer/Meyer, Overmeier, Parks, Rarick/Rearick, Rothrow, Seebold, Smith, Specht, Treaster, and Wagoner.

In 1814, when New Berlin was selected as the county seat for the new Union County (then also containing Snyder), there were 30 log houses, 17 log business buildings, and one frame house. Craftsmen included a tanner, saddler, millwright, tinker, stocking weaver, tailor, shoemaker, blacksmith, cooper, two potters, and two gunsmiths. Six joiners, two carpenters and a turner were busy in the building trade. Two merchants and three innkeepers, a justice of the peace, physician, and schoolmaster served the community.

The New Berlin courthouse was built in 1814, with the first courts for the new county held in Mifflinburg while awaiting its completion. This fine brick building still stands on the corner of Main and Vine streets.

Religious congregations in New Berlin included German Reformed (Calvinist), Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Evangelical or Albright Church. The wooden Albright Church built in 1816 was the first in the US.

The first schoolhouse was a log structure erected in 1800 at Main and Cherry streets, followed by a frame building near the courthouse in 1820, and an octagonal brick schoolhouse near the Emanuel Church in 1824. Union Seminary was established by the Evangelical Association in 1854. A three-story brick building was erected in the north end of town in 1855 with the first class admitted in 1856. The seminary had varying success, was remodeled and reorganized in the 1880's, and closed in 1902.

From the 1820's through the 1850's, New Berlin had weekly English and German language newspapers supported by the dual language population.

The earliest papers were *The Union*, *Advocate of the Union*, and *New Berlin Gazette* (later renamed the *Union Times*). German language newspapers included the *Union Adler*, *Union Demokrat*, *Volksfreund* and *Der Christlicher Botschafter*. In 1828 *Der Anti-Freymaurer Advokat und Freund des Freyen Volks* and the English language *Antimasonic Star* (later the *Union Star*, then *Union County Star*) began publication in response to the political furor over Freemasonry.

Topical printings included religious books, the semi-monthly *Temperance Advocate and Family Visitor* and the temperance paper *Good Samaritan*.

### **Celebrating New Berlin Heritage**

Residents and visitors gather on the third Saturday in August for the Annual New Berlin Day for traditional German and American food, music and entertainment. The New Berlin Heritage Museum, in the original courthouse, is open to the public. Street vendors offer antiques, arts and crafts - a delight for all collectors and casual shoppers. In 2009, New Berlin Day is August 22, 9 to 5, rain or shine.

For more information, see the following sources:

"History of Union County: New Berlin and the townships of Limestone and Buffalo," by Richard van Boskirk Lincoln originally published 1899-1900, reprinted as *Union County Heritage Volume XV*, 1996 by UCHS.

"Description of Early Years in New Berlin" by Murray R. Kline, *Union County Heritage Volume IV*, 1974, UCHS

*Union County, Pennsylvania: A Celebration of History* by Charles M. Snyder, UCHS, 2000.