

Mazeppa

The Union County village of Mazeppa is named after the legendary Ukrainian folk hero in a narrative poem by English poet Lord Byron.

The town was originally called Union, then Boyerstown, after early settlers Samuel and Sarah Boyer. When a post office was to be established in 1886, a new name was needed, as there were other Boyerstowns in Pennsylvania. Schoolmaster Clement E. Edmunds had read Byron's poem "Mazeppa," first published in 1819, and proposed the hero's name for the town.

The poem tells the story of Mazeppa, a soldier of Swedish King Charles XII, his illicit love of Countess Theresa, his banishment, suffering and survival. There was a real Ivan Mazepa (sic) who served in the Polish Court of John II Casimir c. 1660, and as military commander of the Ukrainian Cossacks, but no record of him being exiled from Poland, or any of the adventures recounted in Byron's poem. Currier and Ives produced an illustrated edition of the poem in 1846.

Mazeppa (Rentschler's) Mill was started c. 1789 by John Rentschler (Rengler), and continued under his son Daniel, whose children sold the mill to Wm. P. Cameron. James Packer, married to Cameron's daughter Mary, inherited the mill, and rented it to millers Levi, Henry and Charles Arbogast; Benjamin Rehner, and Harry Baker. Wm. Beaver, Clarence Auten, Fred Johnson and son Eugene Johnson were successive owners. Water from Buffalo Creek powered the mill until diesel engines were installed in the mid 1900's.

In the 1800's Mazeppa had two doctors: Asher Dieffenderfer and Isaac Fetterolf; three blacksmiths: Jacob Delcamp, Frank Knapp and Frank Whitman; two shoemakers: James Mathers and David Glace; three wagon-makers: Theodore Fangboner, Benjamin Minium, and John Stahl. Others included gunsmith John Beeber, chairmaker Peter Stahl, mortician Frank Straub, saddler Elmer Feaster, and barber Frank Delcamp. Milton Remaly sold and repaired pianos and pipe organs. A creamery operated in the early 1900s.

In Sept 1916, a fire destroyed six houses and barns, Whitman's blacksmith shop, Brown's and Shuck's stores, and Gross' shop. The Wm. Cameron Engine Company of Lewisburg and the residents of Mazeppa were able to contain the fire and save the rest of the town.

The Mazeppa Union Church, serving the Lutheran and Reformed congregations, is the oldest church building in the county to continuously hold services. Land for the church - "50 perches strict measure" - was purchased in 1841 for \$15.64 ½ from Peter Stahl. The one-story 45'x60' building was built of brick made by Henry Poeth in Smoketown (outside Lewisburg). The church was dedicated December 25, 1841. The property was enlarged, and the original building was remodeled over the years.

The Union Emanuel Evangelical (United Methodist) Church was built in 1859 and remodeled in 1875 and 1897. In July 1926, a tornado came through Buffalo Valley and the church lost its tower and bell, chimney and part of the slate roof.

The one-room Union School, built in 1836, taught English and German, and the building was available for Christian worship on Sundays and weekday evenings. A second school was built in 1885. The Union Schools continued in use until 1953, replaced by the new school at Buffalo Crossroads.

The town of Mazeppa remains a charming example of the small villages in the Union County countryside, with local social events, and historic houses and buildings.



Mazeppa Union Overview