

## William H. Blind & Union County Sleds

By Jack Fisher

In December 2010, the Union County Historical Society made an important purchase for the society's collection - a sleigh labeled "William Blind, New Columbia, Union County, Pennsylvania."

From those few words, using documents in the county court house and the society's office, a coach maker's life appears.

William H. Blind was born June 6, 1843, the son of Conrad Blind (7/1/1810 – 12/9/1883) and Catherine Seibert (5/5/1805 – 6/3/1892). Conrad was born in Wuerttemberg, Germany and immigrated to America in the 1830's. He purchased a lot in New Columbia in 1836 from Mathew McCollum on the north side of Front Street (now Main Street), and later adjacent to the east side of the railroad tracts. Conrad was a tailor by trade.

In the 1860 Federal Census, William is listed as a "laborer," although he lived very close at that time to Solomon Ranck, a "Coach Maker" and Jacob Troxel, a "Wagon Maker" in New Columbia.

William served twice in the Union Army during the Civil War – first, from June 17, 1863 to July 27, 1863 in the 28<sup>th</sup> Emergency Infantry Regiment during the time of General Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania and the battle at Gettysburg, and second – from Feb. 28, 1865 to August 29, 1865 in the 74<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. In the official records at the Pennsylvania State Archives for this second enlistment, William lists his residence at that time as Manheim, Pa, and his occupation as "Coach Maker."

On March 7, 1867, William purchased a lot containing one acre and 50 perches from Solomon Ranck on the north side of Front Street, bounded on the east by the Ritter/Green/Hoffman Hotel, on the west by the "school house lot" (later Foresman's Store), and on the north by land of Samuel Gemberling. On December 19, 1867, William married Anna (Susannah) Peterman of Milton, daughter of John S. (1812-9/15/1880) and Julia A. Peterman (1814 – 5/5/1877). William and Anna had three sons – Ernest L. (b. 1869), Charles L. (b. 1872), and William A. (b. 1873). Only Charles followed his father's trade, listed in the 1900 Census as a "Coach Maker." However, by 1910, Charles had switched his occupation and became a "Dentist."

The detailed map of New Columbia in the *Atlas of Union & Snyder Counties Pennsylvania* published by Pomeroy & Beers in 1868 shows William's wagon shop (W. Sh.) and blacksmith (B.S. Sh.). The corresponding 1868 Tax Assessment List for Union County shows William's annual income as a Coach Maker to be \$150. William continued in this occupation for over 40 years; the 1870, 1880, 1900, and 1910 Federal Census all list William as either a "Coach Maker" or "Carriage Maker." In addition, William was elected an Associate Judge of Union County, a position he served for five years starting January 1901.

Anna died April 24, 1909, and William March 1, 1912. Both are buried in Harmony Cemetery, Milton, as are two of their sons, Ernest (d. 1896) and William (d. 1908), and Anna's parents, John and Julia Peterman.





**Sleigh made by William H. Blind, New Columbia, Union County, Pennsylvania.**