THE PRESERVATION OF PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN CULTURAL LANDSCAPES: THE CASE STUDY OF BOWERS, PENNSYLVANIA

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To my grandfather, Alfred George Grim

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FOREWORD

In writing this thesis, I am realizing many of the goals I set for myself when I began studying historic preservation. I grew up in a small town about two miles from Bowers, the subject of this study, and in many ways made historic preservation my career because of my family's history. Most of my mother's family has lived in and around Bowers for nearly ten generations, and many still do. I was raised with a strong sense of family and tradition and had the good fortune to experience firsthand the connections that exist within a family that has been firmly rooted in a place over multiple generations. Hearing stories from elderly relatives, being surrounded by family heirlooms, and looking at buildings and landscapes where so much of my own history transpired inspired me to make the preservation of cultural heritage my chosen path.

I approached this work as an "inside-outsider." That is, I was a member of the community which has been academically trained and taken a scholarly interest in that community. Growing up nearby and having so many connections to the place and to the people meant that I was intimately familiar with the resources and this fact gave me access to information that may not have been readily available to a non-community member. My education provided me with the analytical tools and knowledge necessary to approach the subject objectively and think critically about my work. Blending the two allowed me to view the place I thought I knew so well in a different light and, hopefully, give back to the community in a way few others would have been able to.

In anthropology, gaining people's trust and becoming part of a culture is considered to be the ultimate way to gain knowledge about a community. The same can

be said of history, especially local history. In her essay on the Eastern Shore of Maryland in *Sense of Place,* Polly Stewart wrote that in order to truly understand the effect history has had on regional identity, it was imperative that she understand the past from the locals' perspective.[1] I have applied the same concept to this study, using my familiarity with people and places as a starting point for in-depth research and analysis.

I selected this topic not only for my personal connection to the subject matter, but because I believe that it is a worthy topic that has garnered little scholarly attention in recent years. Of the numerous volumes that have been written on Pennsylvania German culture, architecture, and history, little mind has been paid to the protection of the real places where all of those things played themselves out. Given the rapid globalization of American society and continuing loss of distinct places, it seems imperative that preservationists give more attention to places where distinction still exists and people are still connected to their past.

Pennsylvania Germans are a fiercely independent people who often resist intervention by outsiders. Thus, preservation may be a "tough sell" in many places unless it is approached in a way that is knowledgeable of and sensitive to the unspoken needs of the community. It is entirely necessary that action be taken, however, because "Pennsylvania Dutch Country" is situated in the heart of megalopolis and is faced with increasing development pressures as the region continues to grow. Thousands of acres of agricultural land dotted with farms and small villages have little or no protection from suburban housing developers, uneducated property owners, or prevailing economic

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[1] Barbara Allen and Thomas J. Schlereth, eds., *Sense of Place: American Regional Cultures* (Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1990), 73-81.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study has been a labor of love that would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of many individuals and groups. First and foremost I am thankful for the never-ending enthusiasm and guidance of my advisor, Christa Wilmanns-Wells. Her interest in my work and passion for landscape preservation has been truly inspiring. I would also like to thank my reader, Bill Donner, for taking time to read my work and offer his thoughtful insights.

I am extremely grateful to the people of Bowers for their overwhelming interest in the history of their village and in this project. In particular I would like to thank Karen Rauch for prompting me to research the history of Bowers and connecting me with many useful resources. I would also like to thank Jeff Milkins and Steve Parker of the Bowers Hotel for promoting Bower's history and supporting my research.

Perhaps most importantly I would like to thank my family for their understanding and encouragement. My grandparents, Alfred and Rachel Grim, have in many ways inspired me to choose preservation as a career and have been sources of information and support throughout my career. I would also like to thank my parents and siblings for believing in my work and me.

Lastly, I extend my thanks to the many people who assisted with my research and writing. The staff of the many institutions and offices where I conducted research, specifically the Berks County Register of Wills and the Berks County Recorder of Deeds, were especially helpful. My sincerest gratitude to the archivists at the Pennsylvania State Archives for their assistance with securing many of the historic photographs of Bowers.

INTRODUCTION

> *Landscapes fascinate us because they speak through the language of visual observation of the age-old relationship between human beings and their environment.*[2]

One of the major tenets of the historic preservation movement is that history happens not only in the homes of the rich and famous and in our cities; it happens everywhere to everyday people. Local history has been a source of great pride for many communities over time. For a rural farmer living in the same farmhouse his forefathers built two centuries ago, ancient buildings like the Taj Mahal may be no more significant than his 200-year-old barn. The Taj Mahal is foreign to him, outside his frame of reference. His barn is part of his everyday life. It was part of his father's everyday life and his grandfather's before him. It is a physical manifestation of his personal history upon the land and is no doubt a source of great pride to both him and his community. But the barn may be viewed in a different way. Having been around the barn for so many years, he may view it as a permanent part of the landscape, paying it little mind and assuming that it will always be there. He may not know why the barn was put there, or how integral it is to telling the story of the place he calls home. He may take the barn for granted and fail to protect it until it is too late. It is this paradox that the following thesis intends to address.

The scope of this study extends beyond any one barn or building though. It attempts to show how a long time connection to place can be harnessed as a tool for preserving cultural landscapes and the regional identity they embody. In her introduction

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[2] Michael P. Conzen, ed., *The Making of the American Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 1.

to *Sense of Place: American Regional Cultures* Barbara Allen writes that "A sense of place, a consciousness of one's physical surroundings, is a fundamental human experience. It seems to be especially strong where people in a neighborhood, a community, a city, a region, possess a collective awareness of place and express it in their cultural forms."[3] This collective awareness can be a powerful tool for preservationists who seek to protect everyday buildings and landscapes that may fail to attract the attention of traditional preservationists. Most small communities have a general awareness and sense of pride in their history, but in some instances fail to recognize its significance. This disconnect between general knowledge and significance means that all too often small, and especially rural, communities do not take the steps necessary to ensure their long-term survival.

Bowers, Pennsylvania, is an example of such a place where local history lives in the minds of the residents and remains quite visible on the landscape. Bowers is a well-preserved example of a mid nineteenth-century Pennsylvania German hamlet with intact buildings and landscape features that are similar to those found in other settlements across the region. It is small, but contains a diversity of resources making it a perfect case study for a work focused on rural conservation. Furthermore, Bowers shares many historical and physical characteristics with neighboring towns and villages, many of them significantly larger. Understanding in a systematic and analytical fashion how culture, society, and economy affected a small place like Bowers, it becomes possible to apply the same concepts and methods to similar resources in the region.

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[3] Allen and Schlereth, eds., *Sense of Place: American Regional Cultures*, 1.

Aside from the history and physical condition of the village, Bowers was selected as a study site because of the direct relationship of many of the village's current residents to the history of the place. Many people living there today are long-time residents of the community, with some having family connections to the area dating back to the eighteenth century. The argument for significance and preservation can be made most meaningfully and convincingly to people who have a deep seated connection to the place and who would be preserving part of their heritage. This is a critical moment for those steps to occur. The population continues to age and a widespread turnover may occur in the near future. The timeliness of this work will help raise awareness of the resource and hopefully prompt residents into action.

Information for this analysis was derived from a variety of primary and secondary sources. Primary research included extensive archival work, court proceedings, site surveys, and informal interviews with local residents. Research began by talking to long-time residents who pointed out significant buildings and landscape features and told stories from their own experiences and those passed down to them through oral tradition. These interviews provided information that was important on two levels. First, they hinted at prevailing historical trends that could be substantiated or refuted through archival research. They also alerted the author to nuances that may or may not be represented in the historical record, or that might be easily overlooked in a straight documentary approach to recording the area's history. Second, the interviews began to identify the places that the present day population valued. These interviews were followed by a survey of several local histories. Reading these histories allowed for a

comparison between oral history and the written record. These histories also provided important jumping off points for more in-depth research of particular places, people, and events.

Deed searches were conducted for nearly every property within the core of the village and on selected properties on the periphery. An interesting, yet predictable pattern emerged as more and more searches were completed. The division and sale of nearly all of the land in the core of the village occurred within a span of a few years. The deeds all converged and key dates in the village's history began to become evident. By and large these trends corroborated the information gathered during the interviews. The exceptions occurred primarily during the early years of the area's history; well outside the memory of anyone living in Bowers today. The deeds did much more than illustrate how and when the land was divided, however. They contained a wealth of information about the local population, the most significant parts being the people's relationships to each other. The deeds evidenced an intricate kinship structure that was at the core of land transfer and social organization of the area from its earliest settlement. Wills and probates added an additional layer of information on kinship and began to detail the complex social relationships that existed between individuals, both related and unrelated.

Secondary sources relating to Pennsylvania history, economic history, and historical geography helped place the patterns evident in Bowers in a larger context and guide further research. Other secondary sources provided similar insight for cultural values, social patterns, and specific aspects of the area's history. Cultural geography and historic landscape studies were crucial in understanding the relationship between various

elements of the landscape and in determining significance. Lastly, materials on rural conservation, land use planning, and growth management informed the recommendations for preservation.

Rural historic landscapes are the products of systems that shape places according to the cultural, social, and economic needs of people over time. This thesis will explore how the cultural system contributed to the development of the small rural community of Bowers in Berks County, Pennsylvania. It attempts to identify the physical manifestations of culture, society and economy upon the land and through extensive historical and contextual research it defines the relationships between people and place in the distinctive place of Bowers. The final chapters present the significance of landscape features and patterns, both extant and vanished, and include preliminary preservation recommendations. Preserving rural landscapes is a difficult, but achievable, undertaking. They are complex resources whose significance is derived from the interplay between a wide variety of natural and man-made features.

Numerous works on the landscape of Southeastern Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania German culture region have been published over time. However, with the exception of a few local histories, and the occasional regional study, little scholarly work has been compiled on Berks County, particularly the eastern portion. The area has been a watershed of Pennsylvania German culture since the early eighteenth century and the landscape bears witness to the history of that group. This study moves beyond local history to provide analysis of historical fact rather than a simple narrative. That is not to discredit the dozens of local histories that have been written about Berks County and its

communities thus far. Many such sources have been cited in this work and should be regarded as important means of recording events and places that might otherwise be lost or forgotten. Most are celebratory and are written with a sense of pride, their authors waxing nostalgic on the experiences of their forefathers with a hint of the pioneer myth overtaking their purported objectivity. Local histories capture a place in time and record information that was probably within the recent memory of the author of the work but that may be irretrievable to scholars today. This work is different, however. It is analytical, attempting to explain why a place looks as it does rather than simply describing what it looks like. Using this analysis it is possible to present the significance of spatial arrangements, land use patterns, and built resources to each other and to broad patterns of local and regional history. The definition of significance is what will make the preservation of this resource possible.

This study is a preliminary landscape analysis and should be understood as a building block for a more complete analysis in the future. The text covers three broad areas: narrative history; analysis, and preservation. Chapter One tells the story of the place from initial non-native settlement to the present. Chapters Two, Three, and Four explore the cultural, social, and economic factors that affected Bowers and its people and how these forces were manifested on the land. The effects of transportation and circulation systems on the development of the area are examined in Chapter Five. Chapters Six and Seven relate to the preservation of the village. Bowers' role in the larger region, a summary of significant landscape features, and a brief discussion of the current condition of the village is described in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven is devoted to

initial recommendations and suggestions for further preservation action. Together this information tells the story of a place, its meaning over time and the importance of its preservation.

Figure 1: View of houses along Old Bowers Road, date unknown. Private collection.

Description of Boundaries

Bowers, Pennsylvania, is a small, rural village in eastern Berks County seventy miles northwest of Philadelphia. It is located approximately halfway between Reading and Allentown, two large population centers, both historically and presently (Figures 2 and 3). The Village of Bowers, as it is discussed in this study, is comprised of two zones; the core and the periphery. The core is all those properties along Bowers Road between the railroad tracks and the Fleetwood-Blandon Road and along Old Bowers Road between Bowers Road and Kohler Road. The core is characterized by a higher density and diversity of buildings including rowhouses, large freestanding homes, a blacksmith shop, church, cemetery, tavern, and other nonagricultural buildings. This core area is

located entirely in Maxatawny Township. The periphery includes those properties located adjacent to properties within the core and generally includes large fields, farmhouses, barns, and other outbuildings. (See Figure 4 for boundaries).

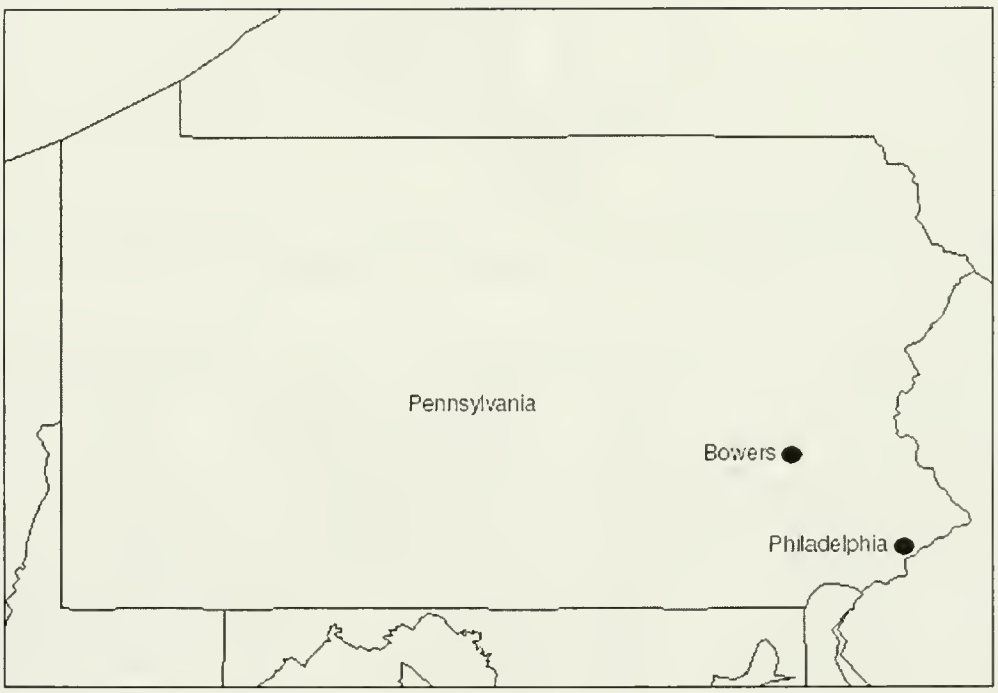

Figure 2: Map of Pennsylvania showing the location of Bowers relative to Philadelphia.

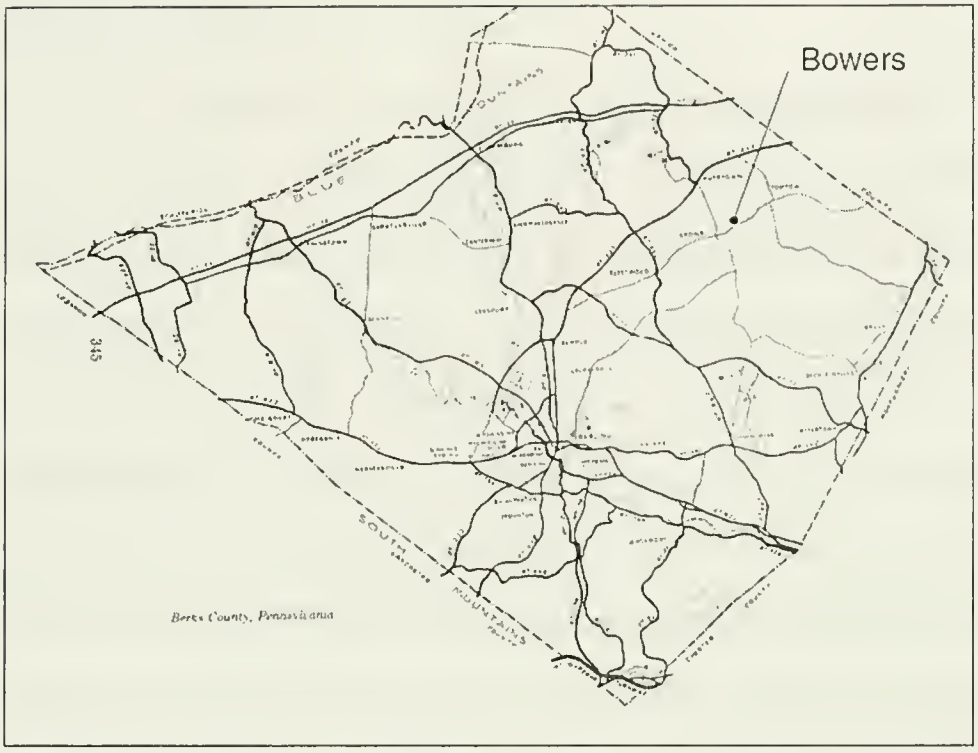

Figure 3: Map of Berks County showing major roads and location of Bowers.

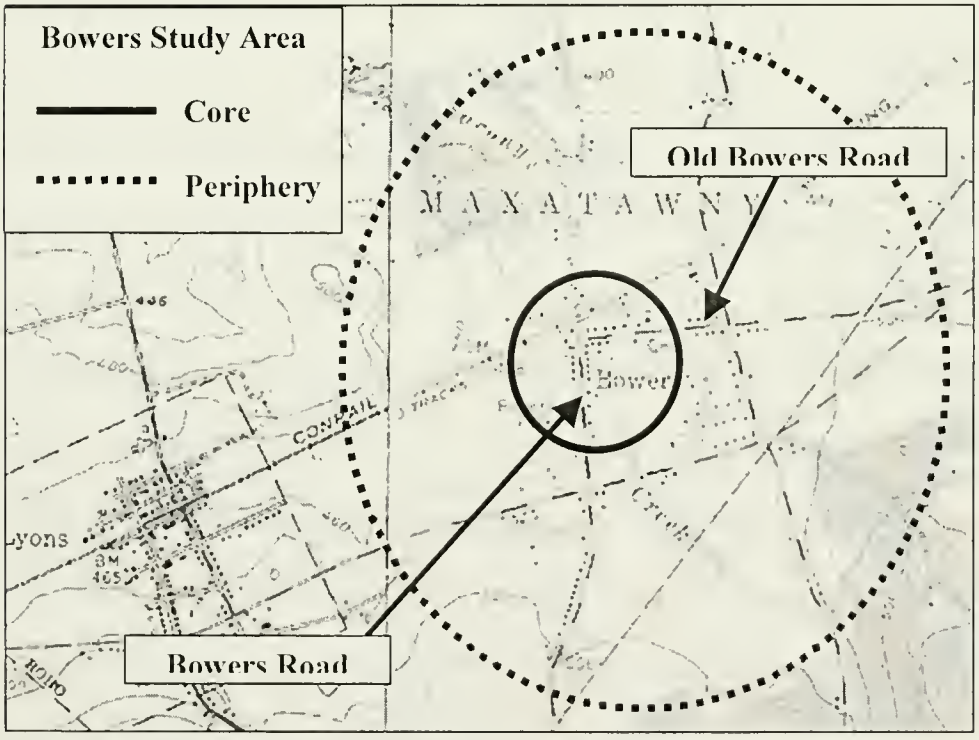

Figure 4: Topographic map of Bowers showing study area boundaries.

Historical Development

Berks County historian Morton L. Montgomery described Bowers in 1887 as "a pleasant village in the southern part of the township, on a branch of the Sacony. It is a station on the East Pennsylvania Railroad, with about two hundred inhabitants, a church, and a number of very fine residences."[4] The village that Montgomery described was at its zenith in the late 1880's, and was the center of a small agricultural community established in the early eighteenth century. For nearly 150 years the area around Bowers was characterized by small farms, irregularly shaped parcels, and the occasional church and gristmill. A flurry of economic activity in the decades following the Civil War resulted in the total transformation of the once sparsely populated agricultural landscape into a nucleated settlement. This development was made possible by the introduction of new transportation systems, the entrepreneurial spirit of a handful of major landholders, and a complex kinship structure amongst the resident population. But while the late nineteenth century development is what is most obvious on the land today, it was built upon the previous century and a half of subsistence farming and related activities.

William Penn's Holy Experiment in Pennsylvania attracted a wide variety of settlers from around the globe, many of whom were in search of new economic opportunities and freedom from political and religious persecution. Philadelphia, the new colony's capital, was among the most important urban centers on the continent within a few decades of its founding in 1682. Its significance as a trade center helped establish Pennsylvania as a major destination for European immigrants throughout the 18th

[4] Morton L. Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Evans, Peck, and Richards, 1886), 1047.

century. However, it was William Penn's tolerance for diverse religions and the availability of high quality farmland that was especially attractive to a great number of settlers. One of the most influential immigrant groups to settle in Pennsylvania emigrated from the Palatinate region of Germany and Switzerland beginning in the first decade of the 1700's. By the end of the eighteenth century tens of thousands German and Swiss immigrants had entered the New World through the port of Philadelphia, and nearly all left the city behind and headed for the hinterlands of Lancaster, Northampton (now Lehigh), and Upper Philadelphia (now Berks and Schuylkill) Counties.

Germans began arriving in eastern Berks County in the early 1730's and were among the first people to patent land in that area. In the spring of 1743, German immigrant Andreas Haak, Senior, patented a 225-acre tract upon which the core and much of the periphery of Bowers is located. The tract had been warranted and surveyed by another German immigrant, Ludwig Deibler, in 1734, but he vacated the survey and never patented the land.[5] Haak paid thirty-four pounds and seventeen shillings purchase price for the entire parcel along with a yearly quit rent of one half penny sterling for every acre until the land was developed.[6] Neighboring parcels were also patented by German immigrants in the early 1740's including 186 acres to Peter (De)Long in 1740, 200 acres to Abraham Levan, 254 acres to George Boone, and 100 acres to Henry Luckenbill, all in 1743.[7]

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[5] Patent Books vol. A-11 p. 358. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.
[6] Ibid.
[7] "Early Patentees of Maxatawny Township." Reading, Pa.: Historical Society of Berks County, 1941.

While the land transfers did not officially occur until the 1740's, church records clearly indicate that there was a sizable population in the area in the early 1730's. The minutes of the Coetus of the Reformed Church of the United States make several references to growing congregations in the Maxatawny area as early as 1734. John Philip Boehm, an extremely active missionary sent from Germany to establish congregations in the Philadelphia hinterlands, reported to the General Synod in Holland that the major population centers were in Oley and Saucon (present day site of Kutztown), "but in whose neighborhood are Macungie, Maxatawny, and Great Swamp, where, notwithstanding their being scattered very far apart, yet a considerable number of people can come together. As the population increases other congregations may be organized; for the present, however, although with much difficulty, they can suitably be served by four ministers."[8]

In 1763 Andreas Haak, Senior, sold 184 acres of his original patent to his son Andreas Haak, Junior. The price increased ten fold in the twenty years since Haak, Senior, acquired the land and Haak, Junior, paid 350 pounds to his father and mother for the smaller piece of land, as compared to the thirty-four pounds Haak, Senior, paid for the entire 225 acre parcel in 1743.[9] It is not clear if or where the Haaks lived on the property, but both father and son are described as being from Maxatawny Township in the indenture. Their twenty years ownership of the land also suggest that there was

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[8] Reformed Church of the United States, *Minutes and Letters of the Coetus of the German Reformed Congregations in Pennsylvania, 1747-1792* (Philadelphia: Reformed Church Publication Board, 1903), 10. For a more complete discussion of the importance of the church in the development of Bowers see Chapter 3 of this study.

[9] Deed Books, vol. 8, p.279. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

sufficient time to construct a house and other buildings for them to sustain themselves on the land.

Andreas Haak, Junior, sold his property to Philip Scholl, a miller from Maxatawny in 1764, less than a year after purchasing it from his father. A deed recorded at Reading on January 23, 1764, transferred all of Haak's 184 acres to Scholl. Scholl paid Haak, Junior, 1000 pounds for the parcel, a clear profit for Haak and an indication of the rising cost of land and perhaps decreasing availability.[10] Scholl's mill and residence are clearly defined in deeds and on later maps as being along the Saucony Creek north of the present day railroad tracks.

Scholl continued the divide and transfer pattern begun by Andreas Haak, Junior, when two years later he sold 147 acres to Michael Bower, reserving the parcel with the house and mill on it for himself. The actual transfer occurred on July 5, 1766, but the deed was not filed in Reading until 1774. Property prices appear to have held steady in that two year period as Scholl paid eight hundred pounds for this smaller parcel. It is this deed that first specifically mentions the millrace, a branch of the Saucony, which Scholl diverted and dammed for his mill[11] (Fig 5).

Michael Bower died intestate in 1794, having made no formal provision for the division of his lands prior to his death. Michael Bower made arrangements with his son Frederick in early 1794 to sell him the 147-acre tract he received from Scholl and an additional 50-acre tract all for 2000 pounds. Frederick was to pay him seven hundred pounds up front and then a mortgage of fifty pounds per year afterwards until the whole

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[10] Deed Books, vol. 7, p. 9, Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[11] Deed Books, vol. 1B, p. 494, Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

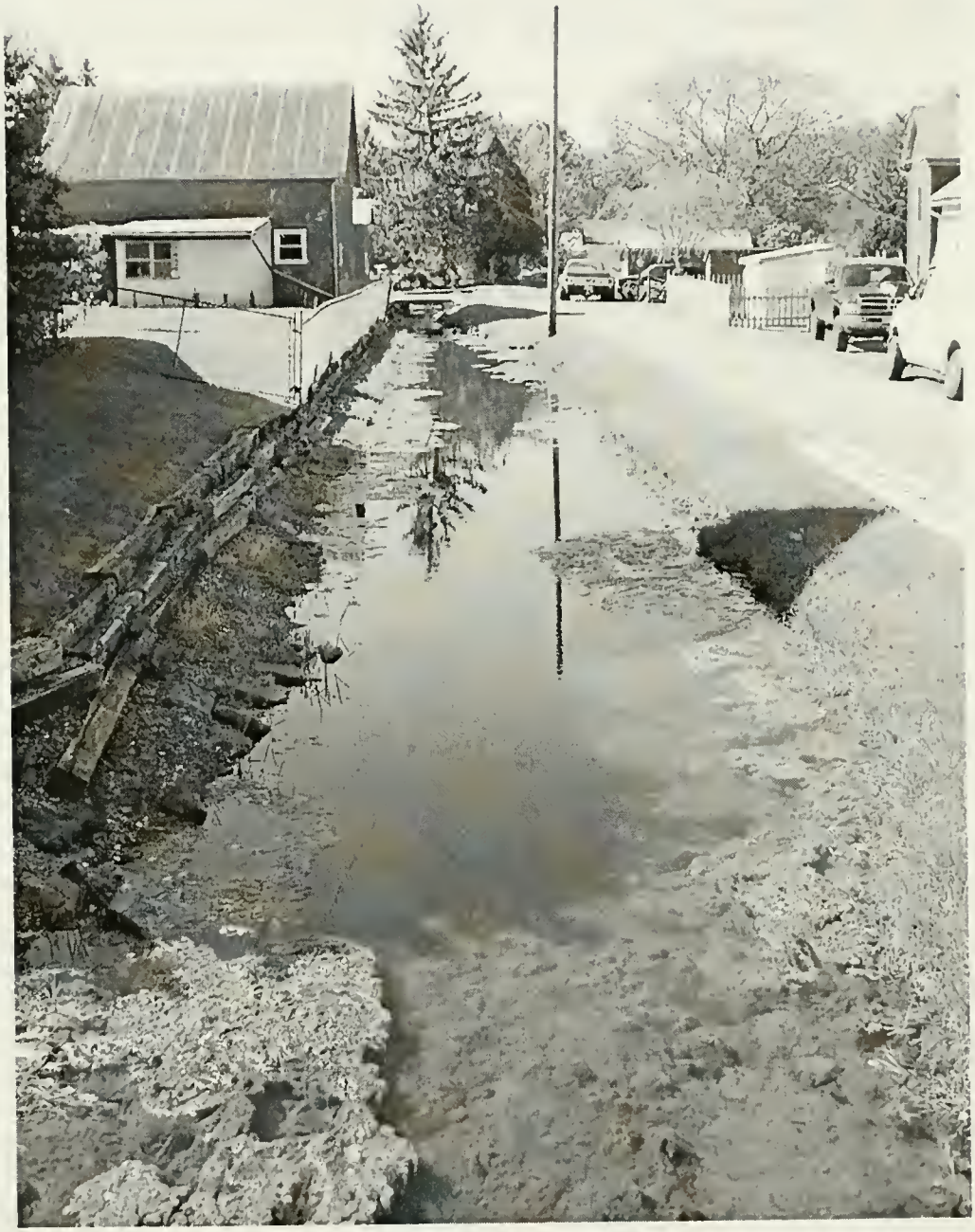

Figure 5: The millrace for Philip Scholl and Daniel Grim's gristmill looking south away from the mill.

sum had been paid. At the time of Michael's death in the spring of 1794, Frederick had paid his father only five hundred pounds. The rightful heir to the property was in question, but Frederick filed several petitions in the Court of Common Pleas of Berks County to prove that he had a legal right to the land. The matter was not resolved until 1802, when the court ordered the executor of Michael Bower's estate, his other son, Michael, Junior, to file a deed transferring the property to Frederick.[12]

Again, it is not clear where the Bowers lived or when the unknown structure was built. Two houses are known to exist on the Bower property, including the earliest portion of the Bowers Hotel, a substantial stone farmhouse (Fig. 6). The house stood at the corner of the road leading from Dryville to Kutztown, now called Bowers Road, and the shorter road, Old Bowers Road, running past the Church and the cemetery on its way to Longswamp. Local oral tradition indicates that this building was constructed in 1820, but aside from field investigations, no clear construction date has been uncovered in the documentation. A small 1 ½ story log structure located behind the stone building may have served as the Bower's original home prior to construction of the stone house.

The influence of the Bower family on the area in the nineteenth century would prove to be one of the most important factors in the transition of the region from a series of scattered farms to a recognizable village core. In 1825 Frederick Bower sold 76 acres of the 147-acre property purchased from his father's estate, to his son Jonas. Jonas clearly purchased a tract of land with buildings upon it. The deed specifically indicates the transfer of a "messuage, tenement plantation, and tract of land" to Jonas. No

[12] Estate Papers of Michael Bauer, 1802. Register of Wills, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

buildings were referenced in the previous transactions.[13] Jonas also reserved the ownership of the millrace flowing through his property, but now mentioned a dam in the creek, the first such reference. Bower owned, and presumably farmed, the entire parcel until the dawn of the Civil War, when he began to sell small parcels, making way for new transportation systems and new construction.

The East Pennsylvania Railroad Company (EPRR) purchased two tracts of land from Jonas Bower and Daniel Grim in 1859, marking the beginning of a new chapter in the area's history. The rail line connected Reading and Allentown, two of the most important cities in eastern Pennsylvania outside of Philadelphia. EPRR purchased numerous parcels in addition to Bower's and Grim's along its 36 mile length, but for the village of Bowers these two tracts proved to be the most important. On Bower's land, EPRR constructed a small depot, making the small agricultural community one of only thirteen stops on the line. Edward G. Knoske, son of a Lutheran minister from Reading and Jonas Bower's son-in-law, is reported to have constructed the first station house soon after the line's completion.[14] Knoske is listed in the 1860 Census as a merchant, and Morton Montgomery reported in 1886 that he was a coal and grain dealer.[15] This claim makes sense, as one of the primary functions of the EPRR was to transfer coal from the coal fields in northwestern Pennsylvania to Allentown and eventually New York via Reading.[16] Moreover, grains, particularly wheat and rye, had long been the staple crop

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[13] Deed Books, vol. 48, p. 168. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[14] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 1047.
[15] Ibid.
[16] James L. Holton, *Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Aged Empire* (Laury's Station, Pa.: Garrigues House, 1989), 261.

of southeastern Pennsylvania and likely comprised the export side of Knoske's business.[17]

Edward Knoske also appears to have been more than simply an importer of necessities to the area. Around the same time that he was establishing his shipping business, he also opened a general store and post office in Bowers, even serving as the first postmaster.[18] According to Montgomery, Knoske was also responsible for the construction of the first new building to be erected in the village, his store at the corner of Bowers and Old Bowers Road on land owned by Jonas Bower (Fig. 7).[19] Knoske ran this enterprise in partnership with his neighbor, Henry F. Boyer, also listed as a merchant in the 1860 Census.[20] But while Knoske may have been the proprietor of these businesses, Jonas Bower retained ownership of all the parcels. It was his ownership and control of the land that helped direct and guide the development of the village over the next two decades.

The early 1860's were the beginning of Bower's boom time, despite the impending national crisis. In October of 1860 Jonas Bower's neighbor, Daniel Grim, sold off a parcel of land facing Old Bowers Road to wealthy farmer Elijah Weiser.[21] A significant portion of Grim's land had been severed from the rest of his fields when the rail lines went in, making it too small and too inconvenient for the miller to farm, but perfectly suited for new construction. It was also his opportunity to capitalize on the

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[17] James T. Lemon, *Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 154.
[18] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 1047.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Population Schedules, *Eighth Census of the United States*, 1860. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[21] Deed Books, vol. 354, p. 30. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

Figure 6: The Bowers Hotel as seen from the intersection of Bowers Road and Old Bowers Road. The stone portion is believed to have originally served as Jonas Bower's home.

Figure 7: Bowers Road looking south around 1900. At left is Edward Knoske's general store. Private Collection.

development activities occurring, or about to occur, on the land surrounding Jonas Bower's home. It is clear from the deed between Grim and Weiser that the land was clear of buildings in 1860, but by the time Weiser sold the property in 1867 a house had been constructed on the site, making it one of the earliest residences in the village core. Weiser's house was a handsome two-and-a half-story brick structure that was reminiscent of Georgian farmhouses built in the area a century earlier (Fig. 8).

Figure 8: Elijah Weiser built this fashionable brick home (right) along Old Bowers Road between 1860 and 1867.

The Village of Bowers began to assume an identity as a distinctive place in the mid 1860s. Documents began to refer to the small collection of buildings as "Bowersville," and "Bower's Station." Around 1860 Jonas Bower converted his substantial stone farmhouse to a tavern, providing another major node of economic and social activity for the area. Montgomery's history states that Bower opened what he

called the "Washington House" in 1859, but documentary evidence has yet to substantiate this date.[22] It is clear, however, that a tavern was operating in Bowers by June of 1860, as Jonas' son Aaron is listed in the Census for that year as a farmer/innkeeper. The tavern served as a boarding house throughout the nineteenth century for day laborers working on nearby farms or at a nearby quarry. With this increased economic activity and the development of local services, the area was well primed for the flurry of building activity that was to occur in the late 1860's and early 1870's.

Bower began subdividing his land along Bowers Road into narrow rowhouse sized parcels around 1867. Priscilla Seibert, widow of George Seibert, the son of early settler Christian Seibert, was among the first to buy land from Bower in the late 1860's. George had died in 1868, and presumably finding their large farmstead just up the road too much to manage, Priscilla purchased a lot "in town" and constructed a small brick home near the store and tavern shortly thereafter.[23] (Fig 9). Others quickly followed suit, and by 1872 houses of all sizes were being constructed on the once empty farmland.

Many of the houses were modest and housed a variety of craftsmen and tradespeople. The 1870 census lists a carpenter, a saddler, several marble cutters, a warehouse clerk, and a brickmaker, Aaron Bower.[24] Aaron purchased a plot of land adjacent to Knoske's store and Daniel Grim's millrace from his father in 1868. He constructed a two-and-a half-story brick home on the site within a few short years, but

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[22] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 1047.
[23] Deed Books, vol. 225, p. 543. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[24] Population Schedules, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870. Maxatawny Township, Pa.

Figure 9: Priscilla Seibert's 1868 "townhome" along Bower Road.

Figure 10: Aaron and Susannah Bower's rowhouse along Old Bowers Road. At the end of the row is the general store and across the street out of the frame is the Bowers Hotel.

quickly fell on hard times (Fig 10). Court documents filed at the time of his father's death in 1882 reveal that Aaron was irresponsible with his money and had a tenuous relationship with his stern father.[25] Aaron Bower and his wife Susanna sold the property to a mortgage agent in 1874, and Susannah retitled the property in her name that same year.[26] It is Bower's occupation as a brickmaker, however, along with the presence of a carpenter that indicates that the construction market was viable by 1870.

While modest dwellings were appearing rapidly along Bowers Road, more stylish homes were being planned for Old Bowers Road. Daniel Grim laid out a series of alleys and lot lines on the remaining portion of his Old Bowers Road tract around 1870. As originally devised, there were to be at least nine lots fronting Old Bowers Road, between Elijah Weiser's 1860 mansion and the church. Grim was anticipating the construction of rowhouses similar to those being built on Bower's land. William Sharadin, a farmer enjoying the benefits of the recent economic boom, had other plans and purchased two of the lots near the church and parsonage in 1872 on which he constructed a large brick mansion set back a considerable distance from the road[27] (Fig 11). Other prominent citizens followed his example and within five years a row of large brick showpieces sprang up amongst the modest rowhouses and fieldstone barns (Fig. 12).

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[25] Estate Papers of Jonas Bower, 1884. Estate Papers, Register of Wills, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[26] Deed Books, vol. 111, p. 687, Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[27] Deed Books, vol. 314, p. 261, Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

Figure 11: William Sharadin constructed this large mansion around 1870 on land once farmed by Daniel Grim.

Figure 12: Looking west along Old Bowers Road. At right are two of the large mansions built by wealthy farmers and merchants around 1875.

Daniel Schweyer constructed one of the largest and most fashionable mansions in the row during the mid 1870's. Schweyer was a marble importer who, along with his partner Levi Leiss, operated an extremely profitable stone importation business until the second decade of the twentieth century.[28] In the early 1860's Schweyer and Leiss purchased a small strip of land along the railroad tracks directly behind the future site of Schweyer's home and used this as their principal loading dock.[29] They converted an old gristmill near Sally Ann Furnace, a cold blast iron furnace founded in 1791, into their sawmill. The business appears to have been quite successful, and at the time of Schweyer's death in 1914 was importing stone from all over the East Coast.[30] One of the most significant sources of stone was the Blue Marble quarries near King of Prussia in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The firm purchased an interest in one of the quarries in 1882 and shipped large blocks by train to Bowers for cutting and resale.[31]

The growing population and economic prosperity the village was enjoying created the need for more schools and a larger church. In 1871 the congregation of DeLong's Reformed Church razed their 63-year-old building and constructed a new building on the same site. The new church was two story, brick, and had an ornate steeple and stained glass. The Reformed congregation joined with Lutherans in the area, and the new building was jointly used as a Union Church until 1900[32] (Fig. 13). In 1874 Jonas Bower

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[28] See Chapter 4 for a more complete discussion of the economy of Bowers.
[29] Deeds for the property refer to it as a shipping wharf. *Source:* Deed Books, vol. 605, p. 274. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[30] Estate Papers of Daniel Schweyer, 1914. Estate Papers, Register of Wills, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[31] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 1047.
[32] Kutztown Centennial Association, *The Centennial History of Kutztown, Pennsylvania 1815-1915* (Kutztown, Pa.: Kutztown Publishing Company, 1915), 79.

Figure 13: This elaborate two story brick building housed DeLong's Reformed Church from 1871-1900. Courtesy of Christ (DeLong's) United Church of Christ.

sold a parcel of land to the School District of Maxatawny Township and a new schoolhouse for the community was erected soon thereafter.[33] School had been held in the parsonage adjacent to DeLong's church prior to the construction of the new building, but the growth of the church and mounting political pressures may have prompted the school to relocate.

[33] Deed Books, vol. 130, p. 186. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

Jonas Bower died in 1882 and specified in his will that his property was to be divided equally amongst his two daughters, Elizabeth Wanner and Catherine Knoske.[34] Catherine and her husband Edward were executors of the estate and transferred their interests in several tracts of land to Elizabeth in 1884. Elizabeth transferred her half interest in the remaining parcels to Catherine in the same year, leaving both sisters collectively owning over half of the tiny village. Elizabeth retained ownership of the tavern, now greatly expanded, her father's house, a creamery, granary, a coal yard, and several acres of fields. Catherine received the store, the lot with the blacksmith shop on it, a two-story brick house, and several other parcels in the village.[35] His only son Aaron received nothing.

New construction in the village core virtually ceased by the beginning of the 1880's but the surrounding areas continued to evolve. Edwin DeLong, an ore contractor, purchased George Seibert's modest stone house and barn in 1876.[36] Almost immediately he enlarged the property by constructing a large Second Empire brick addition complete with scrollwork and a front porch. He also built a more modest, yet still fashionable house across the street, presumably for a tenant farmer.

The landscape of Bowers changed little after the turn of the twentieth century. The most noticeable changes was the destruction by fire of the opulent 1871 Union church in 1900. When it came time to rebuild, the two congregations politely parted ways and the Reformed Church built a new building on the same site in 1901. The

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[34] Estate Papers of Jonas Bower, 1882.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Deed Books, vol. 198, p. 590. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

Lutherans moved around a bit before finally settling on a plot of land on the east side of town on the site of the present day post office (Fig. 14).

Figure 14: The new Lutheran church around the time of its construction in 1925. Private Collection.

Transportation in Bowers was slow to modernize. Horses remained an important means of transportation until the late 1930's. James Barto, son of the town's first blacksmith, operated a forge in his father's shop until the late 1930's. After Barto closed his shop, area farmers had to travel a mile down the road to Lyons to find a hot forge.[37] The first automobile-related services opened in Bowers in the 1930's. Manoah R. Leeser, Senior, purchased a lot across from the store and opened a garage in 1932[38] (Fig. 15). A few years later, in 1938, George A. Grim, great nephew of Daniel Grim the miller and

[37] Alfred Grim, interview by author, unrecorded, Bowers, Pa. December 2002.
[38] Deed Books vol. 713, p. 580. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

Figure 15: M.R. Leeser Motors opened in this building along Bowers Road around 1932.

son of a local farmer and miller's daughter, sold the contents of his farm on the Edwin DeLong property and began selling used cars on his father's farm down the road[39] (Fig. 16). His older brother Will, a Studebaker dealer from Topton, joined him in the venture. This business later became Grim's Used Auto Parts and was operated by his son, David, until the late 1990's.

[39] Alfred Grim, interview by author, unrecorded, Bowers, Pa. December 2002.

Figure 16: Sale poster from the 1938 auction of George Grim's farm. Author's Collection.

Property ownership in Bowers did not diversify until the deaths of Catherine Knoske and Elizabeth Wanner. Wanner died in 1911 and directed her eldest son Solon to sell her various parcels to settle her accounts. The tavern changed owners twice before being purchased by Reuben and Calista Miller in 1928.[40] The joint ownership didn't last long; the couple divorced in 1933, and Calista became the sole owner. Calista, better known as Sis, returned to using her maiden name, Mathias, and operated the Bowers

[40] Deed Books, vol. 672, p. 331. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

Hotel for nearly 50 years until her death in 1979. She also owned the Jonas Bower House across the street and lived there during her proprietorship[41] (Fig. 17).

Figure 17: The barroom of the Bowers Hotel in the 1940s. Calista "Sis" Mathias is at the left. Courtesy of the Bowers Hotel.

Among Catherine Knoske's land holdings at the time of her death were the store, her father's house, a small creamery, and a large brick house occupied by her daughter Louisa and son-in-law Milton DeLong. She bequeathed the house to Louisa and the store was sold to its long time clerk William F. Seidel.[42] The creamery was willed to her eldest son J. Charles[43], and it was in this building that a local industrial movement began

[41] Estate papers of Calista Mathias, 1979. Estate Papers, Register of Wills, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[42] Deed Books, vol. 625, p. 246. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[43] Will of Catherine Knoske, 1886. Will Books, vol. 26, p. 82. Register of Wills, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

in the 1940's. In 1946 Delight Breidegam and his business partner began producing batteries in the small creamery building. [44]

Today Bowers is a stable community with many of the properties remaining in the possession of descendants of early settlers until quite recently. Edwin DeLong's grand farmhouse was occupied by his grandson, William DeLong and his wife Jane, until her death in 1996. George Grim's auto dealership, built on his father's farm, is still owned by George's son. Other properties like the large mansions along Old Bowers Road did not remain in family ownership over time, but their occupants were distinguished in other ways. It is interesting to not that one of these mansions was the childhood home of the famed artist Keith Haring in the 1960s. A small housing development, built in the 1960s, stands on the edge of the village core and houses nearly half of the village's present population but is not a significant visual disruption in the landscape.

[44] Alfred Grim, interview by author, unrecorded, Bowers, Pa. December 2002.

Figure 18: Young Pennsylvania German girls picking strawberries on a Berks County farm during the summer. Reprinted from H. Winslow Fegley, *Farming, Always Farming*. Vol. 20, *Publications of the Pennsylvania German Society*. Birdsboro, Pa.: Pennsylvania German Society, 1986, 200.

Humans satisfy their social and economic needs through the adaptation of the physical environment in ways that are consistent with their cultural values. Culture, in its simplest terms, is defined as the values, beliefs, language, and customs shared by members of a group. Culture influences all parts of life and plays an integral role in how humans create places to live their lives. Culture is by definition intangible and so its influences must be inferred from the tangible patterns, objects, and buildings upon the landscape. Cultural values affected nearly every decision about the built environment in Bowers, and as such the physical remnants of the past reflect how the residents responded to changing political, social, and economic forces over time. The built environment of

Bowers reflects the cultural values of its residents through land use patterns, the spatial relationships of buildings, and the evolution of social institutions over time.

Historically, the dominant cultural group in Bowers was the Pennsylvania Germans. Berks County was overwhelmingly Germanic from the arrival of the first European settlers through the mid twentieth century. This was especially true of the more rural parts of the county, such as Maxatawny Township. German immigrants began arriving in Philadelphia by the thousands in the early eighteenth century and enjoyed almost exclusive presence in the areas more than a day's journey from Philadelphia for more than a century.[45] These settlers brought with them from the Old World a common language, similar customs, and shared religious beliefs all of which influenced how they shaped their New World surroundings.

German emigrants began leaving the Fatherland for the New World in the late seventeenth century. Lured to Pennsylvania by William Penn's promise of religious tolerance and an abundance of inexpensive land, a small contingent of German pietists under the leadership of Daniel Francis Pastorius arrived in Philadelphia in 1683.[46] The land they left behind had been ravaged by the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and their livelihood and lifestyle were destroyed.[47] Many of the wars that plagued northern Europe throughout the seventeenth century were waged by political leaders who sought control of land for religious reasons. The Thirty Years' War was a war fought largely between Catholic and Protestant rulers seeking to usurp power and territory from the fading Holy

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[45] Mark Allen Hornberger, "The Spatial Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Selected Counties in Pennsylvania 1800-1880: A Geographic Interpretation" (Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1974), 39.
[46] William T. Parsons, *The Pennsylvania Dutch: A Persistent Minority* (Boston: Twayne, 1976), 33.
[47] Ibid., 26.

Roman Empire.[48] The result was instability, poverty and, for many Protestant Germans, religious persecution. Many Protestant regions of Germany came under the rule of Catholic officials after the war, leaving peasants of both faiths in a state of political limbo. Land ownership under such conditions was nearly impossible and many peasants found themselves in possession of a few tools, some personal effects, and little else.[49] Having no property and virtually no financial wherewithal, many peasants viewed their religion as their only means of salvation.[50]

Political strife in the German provinces continued throughout the seventeenth century and its effects lasted well into the eighteenth century. So too did the persecution of dissident faiths that conflicted with that of the ruler's. The dire circumstances under which so many of the German peasantry had lived for so long made them especially eager for any means of escape. The promise of economic opportunity and freedom from religious persecution in the American colonies prompted many Germans to gather their belongings and set sail for the New World at any opportunity.[51]

Only a relatively small number of emigrants had the financial resources to leave Germany in the seventeenth century. Most peasants were destitute and could not afford the passage. Pastorius' group was lucky in that their journey was made under the auspices of William Penn and the skillful direction of an able leader. Countless others remained in the Fatherland, left to listen to the stories sent back by their more blessed countrymen. Tales of life in the New World were grand, and Pennsylvania was regarded

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[48] Ibid., 25.
[49] Ibid., 26.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 28.

as the ideal place to begin life anew.[52] These accounts were surely exaggerated, but no matter what Pennsylvania was really like, it had to be better than Germany. These lofty tales of grandeur prompted many peasants to save their money and make the tempestuous journey down the Rhine to Holland where ships would carry them to England and ultimately Pennsylvania.[53]

The journey from Germany to Pennsylvania was a long and dangerous one. It involved months of preparation and a great deal of risk. Many did not survive the entire trip, either dying en route to England or on the long trans-Atlantic crossing.[54] Still others were left stranded in Holland or England, not having enough money to make the final legs of the trip, or being forced to sell themselves into servitude upon their arrival in Philadelphia.[55] The journey was so torturous that Gottlieb Mittelberger, himself an emigrant in 1750, returned to Germany after four years in Pennsylvania and published a work urging his countrymen to resist the temptations of the New World and remain in Germany.[56]

It is difficult to know exactly how many Germans made the journey to Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century, but Ralph Beaver Strassburger's tome "Pennsylvania German Pioneers" provides a good basis for estimation. The book includes passenger lists from 324 ships that arrived in Philadelphia between 1727 and 1776. He calculates that on the 178 ships for which passenger counts could accurately be

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[52] Oscar Handlin and John Clive, eds., *Journey to Pennsylvania by Gottlieb Mittelberger* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1960), xi.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 14-15.
[55] Parsons, *The Pennsylvania Dutch: A Persistent Minority*, 54.
[56] Handlin and Clive, eds., *Journey to Pennsylvania by Gottlieb Mittelberger.*

determined, there were a total of 65,040 individuals.[57] Taking into account that figure includes roughly half of the total number of ships entering Philadelphia during the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century and supposing that there were more ships that were not included in Strassburger's study, it is reasonable to estimate that over 130,000 Germans arrived in Pennsylvania in a 50-year span of time.

Those that made the journey safely and managed to retain their freedom typically found the Pennsylvania countryside a more desirable place to settle than the urban center of Philadelphia. Scarred by years of political oppression and having virtually no access to land or capital, these settlers found the relative isolation of the Philadelphia hinterlands to be quite welcome. The isolation was more than simply physical, however. Pennsylvania was among the most diverse of the American colonies, but it was still primarily English, especially during the first decades of the eighteenth century. The language barrier that existed between the German-speakers and the English speakers of the colony resulted in anxiety for both groups and an increased political and spatial alienation of the Germans.[58]

Isolation was not necessarily a bad thing for the Germans, however. Many had felt the effects of feudalism in Germany and relished the freedom that the vastness of the wilderness afforded them. They valued their independence and the ability to carve out a place that was distinctly theirs, even if it was in direct conflict to the proprietors' plans for the land.[59] By and large, Pennsylvania Germans were farmers. They brought with

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[57] Ralph Beaver Strassburger, *Pennsylvania German Pioneers*, Second ed., 2 vols., vol. 1 (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1980), xxxi.
[58] Parsons, *The Pennsylvania Dutch: A Persistent Minority*, 56.
[59] Ibid., 61.

them Old World agricultural traditions that they adapted to the new environment they found themselves in. Numerous examples of this can be seen in the architecture that composed the farmstead. Robert Ensminger's work on the "Pennsylvania Barn" attempts to show how Old World forms were adapted to the New World.[60] While not pure expressions of values or beliefs, land use and architecture evidence the transferal of traditional forms and methods to a new setting.

In addition to building form, the arrangement of structures upon the land was shaped by certain cultural values. Religion was of great significance to Pennsylvania Germans and this importance is evidenced in both the location of the church building and its influence in attracting settlers to an area. Both of these topics will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Three, but suffice it to say that churches were often among the first buildings to be erected after initial settlement and were usually in prominent locations within a settled area.

The value placed upon freedom and religion jointly affected the ways in which children were educated in Pennsylvania German communities. Most Reformed and Lutherans believed that the church should be responsible for teaching children basic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic.[61] These were the only skills required for the major activities of life, namely farmwork and Bible study. The connection between education and religion can be seen on the landscape of Bowers in the proximity of the school to the church. The land granted for the establishment of DeLong's Church in

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[60] Robert Ensminger, *The Pennsylvania Barn: Its Origin, Evolution and Distribution in North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
[61] Ralph Wood, ed., *The Pennsylvania Germans* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1942), 105.

1759 expressly stated that it was intended for a church and school building.[62] When it came time for a larger school, a new building was constructed on the lot immediately to the west of the church. The construction of the new schoolhouse in 1874 marked the end of church control of the education system and marked as well the transition from German to English as the primary language in education.[63] This happened relatively late, however, considering the numerous attempts made by the state to usurp this power of language dominance from the churches throughout the nineteenth century. This resistance is evidence of the residents' value of religion and religious instruction in German and disdain for authoritarian government control.

The pervasiveness of cultural values and beliefs into every aspect of the physical environment is so extensive that it would take dozens of pages to fully explore them all in the framework of this paper. Other chapters in this study include discussions of landscape elements in social and/or economic terms, but each of the chapters is infused with a discussion of how cultural values affected or were integral to those elements. For this reason the discussion of culture in this chapter has been limited, as to avoid unnecessary repetition, but the values of the Pennsylvania Germans, particularly of Bowers, will continue to be discussed throughout.

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[62] Kutztown Centennial Association, *The Centennial History of Kutztown, Pennsylvania 1815-1915*, 79.
[63] Wood, ed., *The Pennsylvania Germans*, 105.

CHAPTER 3: Society

Figure 19: The Weiser family posing in front of their barn just outside of Bowers around 1900. Author's collection.

The creation of cultural landscapes and how they function depends largely upon the influence of societal relationships among the inhabitants of a place. The relationships between individuals and other individuals, individuals and groups, and between groups and other groups create a social structure that influences how land is settled, divided, developed and used. Such influences include, among others, kinship structures, religious values, church going, education, and entertainment. All of these factors left their mark upon the landscape, but is appears that kinship structures and church going were particularly strong and remain evident on the landscape of Bowers today.

Kinship

Perhaps the most pervasive societal influence in Bowers was that of family and kinship. The relationships between parents and children, brothers and sisters, in-laws, aunts, uncles, and cousins, all had a dramatic effect on how land was transferred, utilized, and developed. Kinship also affected how business relationships were formed and how services were provided to the community. The population was small, close-knit, and seemingly everyone was related to their neighbor in some fashion. Individuals were linked by an intricate web that pervaded every aspect of their daily life and has left a significant impact upon the land.

The agricultural nature of Bowers and its surroundings was responsible for the importance of family, as all members of the family were necessary for a farm to function properly. Pennsylvania German families were typically large and patriarchal, with all members having clearly defined roles and expectations. Amos Long, a Pennsylvania German schoolteacher from Lebanon County, detailed the social structure of Pennsylvania German farm families in his 1972 book of the same name. The book draws heavily upon Long's own experiences, and thus he tends to wax nostalgic about his childhood and bygone eras. Additionally the work would have benefited from the inclusion of a greater number of sources, yet Long's work provides an interesting first hand look at the internal social workings of places like Bowers.

Pennsylvania German families were typically male dominated with women playing a secondary though equally important role in the execution of daily chores. Within a farm family the father served as the primary laborer clearing, planting, and

harvesting the land, caring for the livestock, and maintaining all buildings and structures on the farmstead. Women were responsible for domestic tasks such as laundry, food processing, childcare, planting and caring for the garden, as well as cooking and cleaning. Women also seasonally assisted their husbands in caring for the fields, especially in haying and harvesting. Children, who often numbered five or more, assisted with the daily tasks and were expected to work on the farm until their marriage and departure from home. Male and female children were assigned tasks that mimicked those of their parents, with boys working in the fields, while young girls assisted their mother with household tasks and in the garden.[64]

These tasks and divisions of labor on a farm were influenced by the nature of the relationships between males and females within families and the patriarchal nature of the society at large. Jonas Bower was a farmer of German descent, and a typical member of his community. Court papers filed after his death provide insight into the personal dynamics that existed within his family. Jonas dominated the household as was typical amongst Pennsylvania German families. Following Bower's death in 1882, his son Aaron filed a court claim against his estate asking for a sum of money promised to him by his mother before her death. Aaron had been cut out of his father's will for what Jonas believed were Aaron's irresponsible financial habits. Jonas Bower's entire estate, valued at over $20,000, was divided amongst his two daughters Elizabeth and Catherine. The only mention of Aaron was in reference to debts he owed his father. Several years earlier Elizabeth, Jonas' wife, had inherited five hundred dollars from her father, a

[64] Amos W. Long, *The Pennsylvania German Family Farm*, vol. 6, *Publications of the Pennsylvania German Society* (Breinigsville, Pa.: Pennsylvania German Society, 1972), 3.

portion of which she promised to her son Aaron. Elizabeth apparently did not approve of Jonas' stern attitude towards their son, but she had turned all of the money over to Jonas and relinquished control over its division soon after receiving it. Elizabeth died before Jonas, and Aaron received nothing from either of his parents. Aaron took the matter before the Court of Common Pleas to find out why and when the money had left Elizabeth's control.[65]

Jonas Bower's estate papers include transcriptions of testimony offered by those close to the Bower family and this documentation provides a great deal of insight into how the family worked internally. Jeremiah Wingert, one of Bower's former employees and business associates, testified that Elizabeth was afraid to discuss sensitive matters like Aaron's situation because "if she did he (Jonas) would begin scolding. If one would do as he wanted it everything would be alright."[66] While the circumstances surrounding the Bowers' situation are a bit extreme, the Bowers' appear to be typical amongst families in the area. Jonas was the third generation of his family to live in Maxatawny, having purchased his farm from his father, who had purchased it from his father before him. Bower's grandfather, Michael, was a German immigrant who fathered at least four children.[67] Frederick, Jonas' father, was also a farmer working the same land as his father and siring no less than seven children himself.[68] Elizabeth Bower's family was no different. She was one of ten children born to George Sell, a miller who lived about one

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[65] Estate Papers of Jonas Bower, 1882.
[66] Ibid.
[67] "Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790," (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1908).
[68] Ibid.

mile south of the Bower farm.[69] The depiction of Jonas Bower as stern and controlling appears to be consistent with Long's description of a typical household and with the author's own experiences growing up in a Pennsylvania German family.

Beyond the immediate family there existed a strong bond between extended family members and neighbors, who many times were related to each other in some fashion. Bowers was dominated by a small number of families and lineages from the arrival of the earliest non-native settlers in the 1730's, including the Bowers, Grims, DeLongs, Seiberts, and Sharadins. Each of these families was a typical example of a Pennsylvania German farm family and influenced the development of the landscape tremendously. Members of each of these families intermarried, sometimes multiple times over several generations, with many of these new families remaining in Bowers or its immediate surroundings.

While many of the families remained in the area for several generations, owning and controlling the land their forefathers had owned decades earlier, new lineages were introduced to the community over time, usually through marriage to a member of an established family. Other families moved into Bowers in the mid-nineteenth century as the population and need for specialized services increased. The Hamsher family moved to Bowers in the 1860s and operated a stone cutting business in the village for several generations. The same was true of the Barto family, who worked as blacksmiths in Bowers for nearly five decades from the 1890s through the 1940s.

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[69] Population Schedules, *Second Census of the United States*, 1800. Maxatawny Township, Pa.

Land transfer patterns are the most obvious physical manifestations of kinship structures in Bowers. Until the development boom in the 1860's the land in and around Bowers was controlled primarily by members of the five families mentioned above. Members of each of these families had purchased large tracts of land in the mid eighteenth century, either through patents from the Proprietary Governors or from the patentees. As many of these early settlers had arrived in Pennsylvania as young men and women, it is likely that they did not begin their families until establishing themselves upon the land. Gottlieb Mittleberger's account of his journey to Pennsylvania in 1750 describes in dramatic terms the traveling conditions upon ships bringing these settlers to Pennsylvania and notes that it was unlikely for young children to survive the trans-Atlantic journey.[70] For these immigrants, their Pennsylvania land was the place to start their family and to reestablish their lives. As the children of this first generation matured and themselves began to marry, it became necessary for them to establish their own farms and families.

Settling children into their own households and providing them with enough land and capital to sustain them was considered to be a primary responsibility of parents in early Pennsylvania.[71] Real estate was usually purchased with the intent of passing it on to one's family, thus accounting for the large unimproved portions of most farms.[72] Land was usually distributed amongst male children, and the eldest son usually received the

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[70] Handlin and Clive, eds., *Journey to Pennsylvania by Gottlieb Mittelberger*, 50.
It should be noted that Mittleberger wrote this book to discourage emigration from Germany to Pennsylvania.
[71] Mary M. Schweitzer, *Custom and Contract: Household, Government, and the Economy in Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 33.
[72] Ibid., 30.

improved part of the real estate. Woodlands and unimproved fields were distributed amongst younger male siblings.[73]

Land distribution in Bowers followed these patterns very closely. By the third quarter of the eighteenth century there was virtually no unsettled land available in the area immediately surrounding Bowers. Consequently, many second and third generation residents purchased a portion of their parent's farms when their parent's entered the final stage of their lives.[74] Frederick Bower purchased the entirety of his father's farm, a total of 197 acres from his estate in 1802.[75] In 1825 Jonas Bower purchased 76 acres of this same tract from Frederick, his father.[76] A similar situation occurred among the Grim family, who for over a century operated a gristmill adjacent to the Bower's farm. Henry Grim, the grandson of a German immigrant, purchased Philip Scholl's gristmill along the Saucony Creek in 1786.[77] Grim operated the mill for over fifty years before selling it to his eldest son Daniel in 1840. Daniel learned the milling trade at his father's side and continued to operate the mill for three decades after his father's death. Grim sold off most of his land in the 1860s and 70s, but upon his death left the remaining land, including the mill, in the hands of his wife and daughter Leanda. Daniel's wife, Judith, operated the mill for a number of years until her own death. Eventually, Leanda became the proprietor of the mill and hired a tenant miller to see to the daily operations rather than sell the property out of the family.[78] This was a pattern repeated often, with the

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[73] Ibid., 31.
[74] Ibid., 33.
[75] Deed Books, vol. 19, p. 200. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[76] Deed Books, vol. 48, p. 168, Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[77] Deed Books, vol. A12, p. 278. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[78] Population Schedules, *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880. Maxatawny Township, Pa.

farms gradually decreasing in size, and younger children being left to establish a life elsewhere or by different means.

Religion

The dominant religious denominations among the German settlers to Pennsylvania were the Reformed Church and the Lutheran Church. The large number of church buildings erected by these two congregations and the relative absence of other sectarian meetinghouses in the vicinity of Bowers suggests that many of the settlers in Maxatawny and Rockland Townships were Church Germans.[79] Church was an important part of the social life of Pennsylvania Germans and was a place to share news, and socialize with neighbors and relatives. For many rural Pennsylvania Germans "The soil made him a farmer, the church made him a member of the community."[80] Yet it needs to be kept in mind that religion also represented a deeply significant cultural value (See Chapter Two). The importance of religion to the settlement of Bowers can be seen through the desire of early residents for an ordained minister, the central location of the church building, and the memorialization of prominent residents in church decoration.

The Reformed Church has its ecclesiastical roots in Germany and was brought to North America in the first decade of the eighteenth century by German immigrants. The first Reformed congregations in the colonies were established just outside Philadelphia in

[79] The term "Church Germans" refers to members of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, as contrasted with sectarian groups such as the Amish, Mennonites, or Moravians.
[80] Wood, ed., *The Pennsylvania Germans*, 87.

the areas being settled by Germans.[81] The Church held its headquarters, or Synod, in Holland where members were free from persecution by the Catholic rulers of Germany, but established Philadelphia as the administrative center for its North American missions in the 1720s. The administrative body, called the Coetus, met regularly to discuss the size and conditions of established congregations and plans for attending to the spiritual needs of the thousands of immigrants who arrived every year. The large waves of German immigrants arriving in Philadelphia in the 1730s and 1740s quickly made the Reformed Church one of the largest congregations in the religiously tolerant colony.[82]

The growth of the Reformed Church in Pennsylvania appears to have followed the migration of German immigrants from their arrival point in Philadelphia into the hinterlands north and west of the city. In 1734 John Philip Boehm, a German missionary and the founder of many Reformed congregations in Pennsylvania reported to the Coetus that,

> *a fourth minister would greatly be needed at Goshenhoppen, about thirty-six miles from Philadelphia. He might conduct services there every three weeks, and use the rest of his time to feed the poor sheep at the end of the wilderness, in the above mentioned, Saucon, Macungie, Maxatawny, and Great Swamp who thirst for the hearing of God's word as the dry earth for water.*[83]

Boehm's plea indicates that less than a decade after the church's founding in the colonies, the areas within a day's journey from Philadelphia had been settled to the point that they were in dire need of spiritual guidance and their numbers could support a minister on a somewhat regular basis. It appears that the areas beyond Goshenhoppen

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[81] Joseph Henry Dubbs, *The Reformed Church in Pennsylvania* (Lancaster, Pa.: Pennsylvania German Society, 1902), 72.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Reformed Church of the United States, *Minutes and Letters of the Coetus of the German Reformed Congregations in Pennsylvania, 1747-1792*, 2.

such as Saucon (Kutztown), Macungie, Maxatawny and Great Swamp (Longswamp), were settled to the point that the church was aware of their existence but not inclined to provide them with a regular minister. Each of these pockets of settlement lie between twenty and thirty miles from Goshenhoppen (East Greenville) and five to ten miles from each other, so the minister would spend several weeks riding the circuit feeding "the poor sheep".

Boehm's initial report to the Coetus indicates that the population of eastern Berks County, while small and widely dispersed, was eager for spiritual guidance. His report five years later suggests that the congregations continued to grow, but their economic conditions were poor. None of the congregations were able to support their own minister, and he even doubted that there were enough financial resources to support a circuit rider whose salary would be distributed amongst several congregations. He compared the situation at Oley, about ten miles southwest of Bowers, and a very early German settlement, to that of Tulpehocken on the western edge of Berks County:

> *Tulpehocken, where probably a place could be found in the center, which would be most convenient for all. The neighboring places here are Quittopehilla and Swatara, both as I hear, seven or eight miles or more above. They are reported to be pretty strong congregations, but mostly of poor people, who cannot help themselves at all.*
>
> *Oley. There the same condition prevails, and perhaps a suitable place may still be found from which Cacusi and Maxatawny may be served.*[84]

Despite the reports to the Coetus that the population and desire for a minister were growing, Michael Schlatter, Boehm's successor, told the Coetus in 1747 that "Oley, Manatawny, Maxatawny, Macungie, Allemaengel, Lehigh, etc. are not yet ripe enough.

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[84] Ibid., 16.

They should be let alone until their desire for true and regular ministers becomes greater."[85] Schlatter scoffed at the ability of these congregations to sustain regular clergy, and appeared to be content with not providing even circuit riders to the area. Yet, their constant presence on the ecumenical radar and frequent mention continues to illustrate that these were indeed viable and growing population centers.

The congregation in Maxatawny and the continued importance of religion to its inhabitants reached a critical turning point in the 1750's and early 1760's. In May of 1764, Philip Jacob Michael, a German immigrant farmer, traveled to Philadelphia to testify before the Coetus. His testimony included

> *an earnest petition that he might be admitted as a member of Coetus. His credentials, from far and near, show that according to the rules of our Reformed Church, he has been faithful in doctrine, life and conduct for fourteen years, and constantly served the same congregations in Maxatawny, and therefore he does not deserve the name of an adventurer, or Moravian.*[86]

Michael's claim that he had been serving the Maxatawny congregation for fourteen years conflicts with Schlatter's report in 1747 that the church was not ready for a permanent minister. Their willingness to accept an unordained farmer as their spiritual leader indicates that Maxatawny had a healthy congregation desirous of guidance. The following year the Coetus received a report that the Goshenhoppen congregation had taken "an old, ordinary man, a shoemaker [Jacob Reiss] for its minister, because we

[85] Ibid., 37.
[86] Ibid., 225-26.

could not at once provide the members with some one to their satisfaction; and thus did Maxatawny with Michael, and Carlisle with another."[87]

Through its tone and actions the Coetus appears to have been displeased with the adoption of laymen as spiritual leaders. Following Philip Jacob Michael's petition for ordination in 1764 the Coetus invited him to join the clergy, but only if he traveled to Holland and appeared before the General Synod. For a man of Michael's means and social position, such travel was likely impossible. In 1771 the Coetus considered the problem of insufficient leadership amongst these congregations at length. Lamenting the lack of a steady minister in the area, the Coetus reported,

> *The congregation at Maxatawny, which was formerly served by Do. Michael, but has been for quite a time without any minister, requested the Reverend Coetus to help it as much as possible. The congregation has suffered very much, partly through bad ministers, partly because for a long time they had no minister at all. There are only a few who really profess the true doctrine of our religion; the majority of this congregation profess no religion at all. Yet it seems that many souls could yet be saved and led to the true way of life if a good minister could be placed over this congregation, as is its desire. Some of our brethren have served the congregation by request, and have noticed that most of the people are very desirous and attentive to hear the Word of God. They also asked for a continuation of these services, which were held until the present time. To this end they appeared this year before the Reverend Coetus and asked us not to abandon them, but rather to seek the lost among them. It was therefore, resolved by the Reverend Coetus, in regard to this congregation, that in future it shall be served, from time to time, by the neighboring ministers, until we may better able later on to supply it with a minister of its own.*[88]

It is important to note at this point that the Maxatawny congregation referred to by Boehm, Schlatter, and Michael is not the congregation presently located in Bowers. The first Maxatawny congregation was located approximately two miles north of Bowers in

[87] Ibid., 235.
[88] Ibid., 309.

Kutztown and is today St. John's United Church of Christ. In 1759, under the direction of Philip Michael, about half of the congregation left the Maxatawny Church and established their own congregation in Bowers, which they also called the Maxatawny Church. Church officials referred to the new congregation as DeLong's Church because Peter and Elizabeth DeLong donated two acres of land for the construction of a new building.[89] The words of their deed were poetic reading:

> *We the undersigned Peter DeLong and Eva Elizabeth DeLong, acknowledge hereby, by virtue of our signatures that we present and relinquish two acres of ground (to the Maxatawny Reformed Congregation) upon which is to be erected an Evangelical Reformed church and school house. This tract of land adjoins our plantation, where we now reside in Maxatawny Township in Berks County, and is bounded on one side by the lands of Andreas Hack [sic] and on the other by our own land. And this ground shall not only be relinquished and given for a short period, but as long as the sun and moon shine in the heavens and the rivers flow in their courses; that neither we nor our heirs, or any other member of the congregation shall have the right to make or seek claim to it...*[90]

The first reference to DeLong's Church by the Coetus was in 1773, but baptism and burial records for the church begin in 1759, and burials in the adjacent cemetery date from 1765.[91] Peter DeLong, Andreas Haak, and Abraham Kieffer, three early settlers, each donated small parcels of land at the intersection of the three tracts. Here the congregation erected a small church building and platted a cemetery (Fig. 20). The presence of a cemetery is significant in and of itself. Montgomery's history of the county includes a chapter on the manners and customs of Pennsylvania Germans, including burial rites. During the eighteenth century many people were buried in family

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[89] Kutztown Centennial Association, *The Centennial History of Kutztown, Pennsylvania 1815-1915*, 79.
[90] Ibid.
[91] *Records from Christ (Delong's) Reformed Church*, vol. 9 (Pennsylvania German Society, n.d.).

cemeteries located on their farm or on that of a relative.[92] There are dozens of family burial grounds in Berks County, including some close to Kutztown, but none in the immediate vicinity of Bowers. Perhaps the relatively short period of time that elapsed between settlement and the establishment of the church coupled with the availability of land for collective burial prompted residents to establish a communal cemetery rather than their own private plots.

Figure 20: View of the Bowers Union Cemetery looking west. The burials pictured here date from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The first church building was constructed of log, but no evidence of this early structure remains.[93] The materials of the early church and its precise founding date are less important than its location, however. The parcel of land selected for the church was

[92] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 390.
[93] Ibid., 1044.

located in the center of a ring of established farms and less than an eighth of a mile from the road leading from Kutztown to Dryville. Its central location and accessibility to established transportation routes meant that it was easily reached by the congregants. Despite this central location, it is curious that the church was not located closer or immediately adjacent to the road. Henry Richards' map of Berks County from 1816 clearly shows that a number of other churches in the area were sited closer to major transportation routes than DeLong's Church (Fig. 48). One possible explanation for this could relate to the ownership of the land adjacent to the road.

The Bowers/Dryville Road ran through land owned by Henry Grim at the time of the church's founding in the 1750's. While Grim's religious affiliation is not entirely clear, many earlier and later generations of his family were active members of the Lutheran Church. The closest Lutheran congregation was located approximately two miles south of Grim's farm, in present day Dryville,[94] but no sizable Lutheran congregations were in the vicinity of Bowers until the 1870's when a union church was established on the site of the first DeLong's Church. Peter DeLong and his descendants, on the other hand, were long time followers of the Reformed Church.

DeLong's influence extended far beyond his name and land. In 1900 the church burned to the ground in a devastating fire reportedly started by embers from a nearby barn blaze. The charred building was the third on the site and had been built only 29 years prior in 1871 as a Union church shared by both Lutheran and Reformed

[94] A number of people worshipping with that congregation left in 1759 and joined the founding members of DeLong's Church. It is not clear whether they were professed Lutherans who were displeased with their church, or whether they were Reformed and took advantage of a more centrally located Reformed Church. *Source*: Kutztown Centennial Association, *The Centennial History of Kutztown, Pennsylvania 1815-1915*, 79.

congregations. The rebuilding began immediately, and the present building was dedicated in 1901 (Fig 21). Incorporated into the foundation was the date stone from the first permanent church building, constructed in 1808, and presumably salvaged from the remains of the 1871 building.

The new sanctuary was a testament to the village's wealth and size at the dawn of the twentieth century. Large, colorful stained and painted glass windows illuminated the sanctuary (Fig. 23). These windows were dedicated as memorials to prominent citizens and families, including Peter DeLong. The text at the bottom of a window close to the pipe organ reads "In memory of Peter DeLong. Arrived in this country 1732. Donated by his descendants 1902." (Fig 24) The two largest and most lavish windows are dedicated to William and George Sharadin, two wealthy local farmers and close associates of the DeLong family. The desire to memorialize family members in such a public setting demonstrates the importance of the church to the social life of the community. Just as the location and size of pews in eighteenth century churches signified wealth and social position, so too did the memorialization of family in the windows of the new church building in Bowers.

Figure 21: Christ (DeLong's) Reformed Church, circa 1909. Private collection.

Figure 22: Christ (DeLong's) United Church of Christ as it appears today.

Figure 23: This elaborate window in Christ (DeLong's) Reformed Church was dedicated to William Sharadin by his wife and children in 1902.

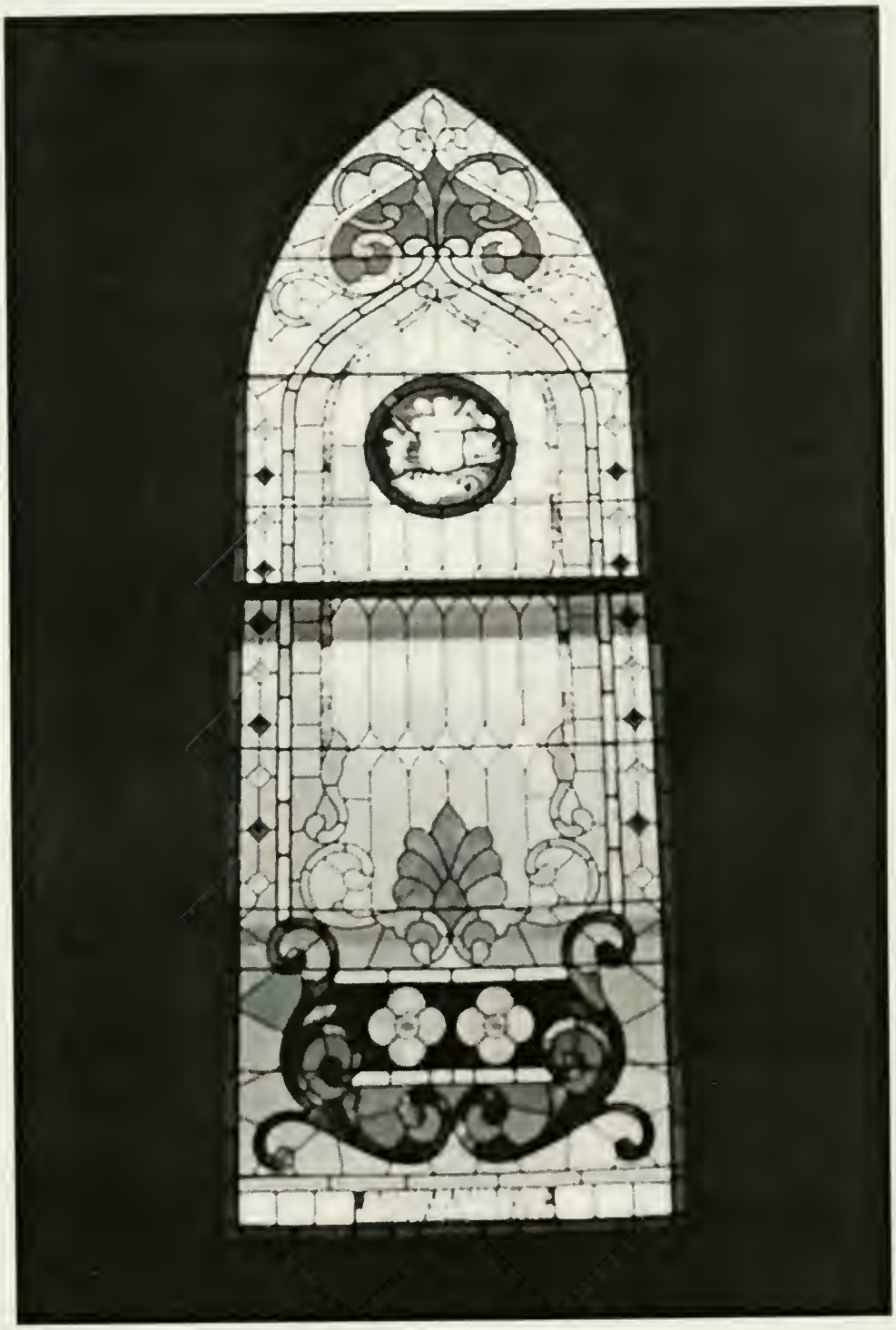

Figure 24: The DeLong family dedicated this window to their immigrant ancestor, Peter DeLong, in 1902.

Education

A critical service initially provided by the church and later by the local government was the education of the community's children. Schoolhouses served an important role in the community and so did the men and women who operated them. Schoolmasters and mistresses were amongst the most educated and well-respected members of the community.[95] The importance of the schoolhouse to the community was not because of the value placed on education by Pennsylvania Germans, but rather because of the close association of schools with churches. Education in early rural Pennsylvania was the responsibility of the church,[96] and thus construction of a schoolhouse usually coincided with the construction of a sanctuary.

The earliest schoolhouse in Bowers was constructed, or at least planned, at the same time as the first sanctuary of DeLong's Church. Peter and Elizabeth DeLong expressly stated that their donation of prime farmland was to contain not only the church, but a schoolhouse also.[97] Seeing as this original church building has long disappeared from the landscape, it is impossible to know whether a separate school building was ever constructed or if the church simply served dual purposes. The second schoolhouse, built presumably to replace the first, was built in 1838 and doubled as the parsonage and Sunday School meeting house for many years. The building was the joint effort of three local men: Casper Schmick, Jacob Sharadin, and Andrew Ziegler. A sign bearing the

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[95] Carl Oblinger, *Interviewing the People of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1978), 60.
[96] Wood, ed., *The Pennsylvania Germans*, 107.
[97] Kutztown Centennial Association, *The Centennial History of Kutztown, Pennsylvania 1815-1915*, 79.

names of the building's sponsors and its construction date is embedded into the wall just below the eave (Fig. 25 and 26).

Despite the prominent location of the schoolhouse within the community, education was not high on the list of priorities for most Pennsylvania German farmers.[98] The subsistence farming that formed the economic backbone of the Philadelphia hinterlands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries depended heavily on the contribution of all family members for the completion of farm tasks, including children.[99] That meant that little time could be spared for children to go to school, an amount that usually amounted to only a few months a year. Furthermore, most children attended school for only a few years, usually from the ages of eight to fourteen.[100] Schoolhouses were primarily one room, meaning that the same teacher instructed all children, regardless of age or ability, in the same place. In Maxatawny Township in 1850 that meant an average of fifty students and one teacher per school.[101]

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[98] Long, *The Pennsylvania German Family Farm*, 5.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Non Population Schedules, *Seventh Census of the United States*, 1850. Maxatawny Township, Pa.

Figure 25: The parsonage and schoolhouse adjacent to the church, 1905. Pennsylvania State Archives, Arthur Bransky Collection.

Figure 26: The parsonage and schoolhouse today.

Occasionally a schoolhouse would have two rooms, one on the first and one on the second floor. Such was the case with Bowers' third schoolhouse, built in 1874. Jonas Bower sold a piece of property along Bowers Road to the School District of Maxatawny in 1874.[102] The parcel was located in the center of the new village he was designing, and the District authorities wasted no time erecting a building upon it. The building was large and clearly had two floors, but it is unclear whether classes were held on the second floor as well. The building is still standing but its façade has been significantly altered, providing few clues about the original configuration (Fig. 27). The only glimpse of the building prior to the modifications comes from a group photograph taken in front of the building circa 1908 (Fig. 28). The few visual clues that are present reveal a building very similar to others constructed in the area during the late nineteenth century. The new building also represents the shift in control over education from the church to a government entity. Pennsylvania legislators attempted to gain control over schooling during the waning years of the eighteenth and the early years of the nineteenth centuries[103] but the school in Bowers remained firmly in the hands of the church until the late 1800s.

[102] Deed Books, vol .130, p. 186. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[103] Wood, ed., *The Pennsylvania Germans*, 112.

Figure 27: The 1874 schoolhouse as it appears today.

Figure 28: Group photo in front of Bowers schoolhouse, circa 1908. Author's collection.

The Tavern

At the center of the village's social life was Jonas Bower's tavern, the "Washington House." Taverns were well-documented parts of the roadside landscape throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Usually located alongside major roads, taverns provided the services that made overland travel possible. Lodging, food, and drink were available at all country inns and taverns, and thus they served as social centers for both travelers and locals.[104] Early Pennsylvania taverns were typically large, stone structures with a porch and numerous dining and sleeping rooms for both the innkeeper and his guests.[105] A Philadelphia lawyer traveling in western Pennsylvania in 1835 described one tavern near Bedford, saying, "there are generally, besides the dining room, one or two apartments furnished and used as parlours, but common to all the boarders, who use them as members of the same family."[106]

The tavern described by that traveler was likely constructed in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, prior to the supposed construction date of the "Washington House." Both Montgomery and local lore maintain that the stone portion of the building was constructed around 1820 and was Jonas Bower's home until the coming of the railroad.[107] The size and scale of the stone building in comparison with known eighteenth-century taverns in the area seems to support this later construction date and initial use. The 1820 construction date is not firm, but it is well documented that the

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[104] William H. Shank, *Three Hundred Years with the Pennsylvania Traveler* (York, Pa.: American Canal and Transportation Center, 1976), 37.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 1047.

tavern was fully functioning by 1860, just in time for the opening of the East Penn Railroad. Documentation for a tavern in Bowers begins with the 1860 Census and evidences that the "Washington House" was the geographic and social center of the village.

Aaron Bower was the first innkeeper, doing double duty as a farmer at the time of the 1860 Census. Jonas Bower owned the property, and either rented it to Aaron, or employed him as the innkeeper. Aaron lived there with his wife and infant son and ten men and women of all ages. Four of the men were Irish immigrants and were listed as laborers. It is likely that Aaron employed at least one, maybe more, of the tenants as farm laborers. Both he and his wife were quite young (32 and 26 respectively) and had no adolescent children to assist them with their farm duties. A common practice among Pennsylvania farmers in need of laborers was to employ local young men and women, and often children. [108] Whether or not these laborers were bound or "indentured" as they would have been in the eighteenth century is unclear, but many households had servants of both sexes until the turn of the twentieth century.

The role of the tavern as a boarding house during the first few decades of its operation is extremely significant to Bowers, both socially and economically. In 1870 Jacob Hill was the proprietor and shared the building with his wife, five children, two servants, and four boarders, one of whom was a live-in bartender.[109] The village and its housing stock were in the process of being or were recently constructed around this time,

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[108] Schweitzer, *Custom and Contract: Household, Government, and the Economy in Colonial Pennsylvania*, 34-48.
[109] Population Schedules, *Ninth Census of the United States*, 1870. Maxatawny Township, Pa.

so it is possible that the tavern served as a makeshift hotel for later permanent residents. Its role in housing laborers for local industries is also significant.

During the period from 1880-1900, the hotel's resident population had diminished, but still had a few regular tenants. Sometime between 1860 and 1905 the building underwent a massive expansion. The original stone farmhouse was enveloped on two sides by a two-story brick addition that added nine bedrooms and four additional dining rooms. In 1905 the enlarged building was photographed by St. Louis photographer Charles Ross on his honeymoon trip through southeastern Pennsylvania (Fig. 29). Along with the expansion came the construction of a handsomely carved bar in one of the first floor parlors. The other original first floor room was a barbershop at the time of Ross' visit (Fig. 30). Both of these spaces were important parts of the Bowers social scene.

Jonas Bower retained ownership of the hotel throughout his lifetime, willing it to his daughter Elizabeth upon his death in 1882. She hired several landlords throughout her ownership, which ended with her death in 1911. The property passed through several owners during the 1910s and 1920s before coming to rest with Calista "Sis" Mathias. She was a stern woman, and operated the tavern, now called the "Bowers Hotel," for nearly fifty years. It was under her ownership that the one time boarding house became a watering hole for many of the men working in nearby industries and for railroad passengers.[110]

[110] Alfred Grim, interview by author, unrecorded. Bowers, Pa., December 2002.

Figure 29: The Washington House, later Bowers Hotel, circa 1905. Courtesy of the Bowers Hotel.

Figure 30: Interior of the Bowers Hotel showing the barroom and barbershop, 1905. Pennsylvania State Archives, Arthur Bransky Collection.

The evolution of Bowers as a clustered settlement was influenced heavily by the relationships that existed between individuals and groups within the local population. The nature of these relationships depended on the cultural values and economic needs of the residents and influenced how land was divided, where buildings were built, and how the population socialized.

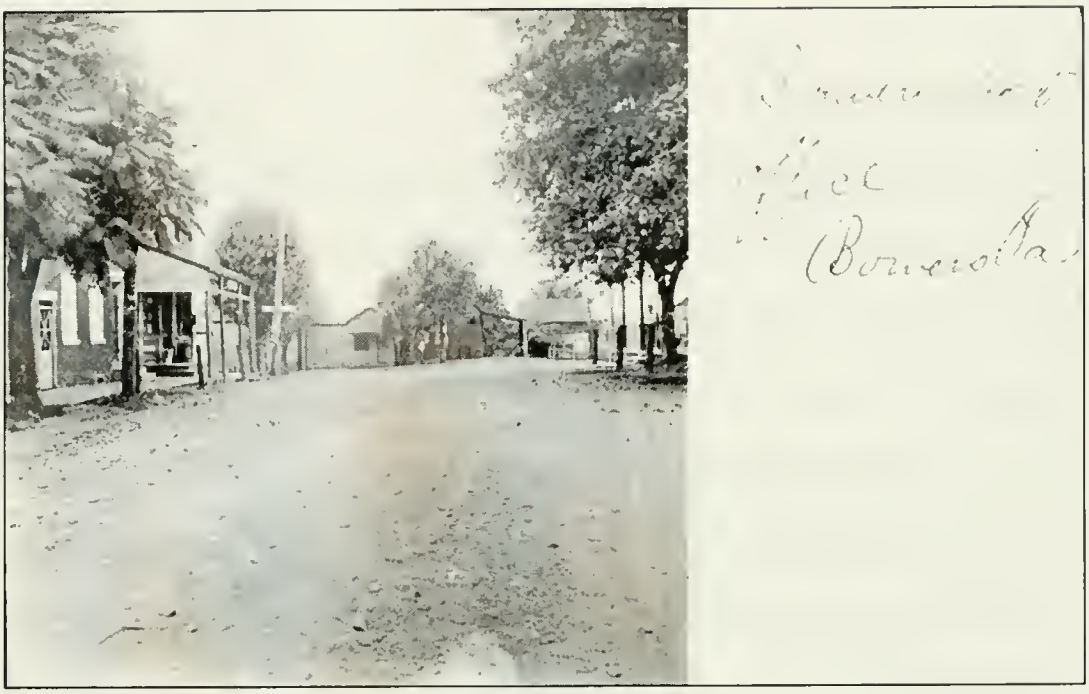

Figure 31: View of Old Bowers Road looking west. At the end is the creamery built by Jonas Bower during the late nineteenth century. Private collection.

If culture dictates how ethnicity and values shape the landscape and society determines how the landscape is adapted to meet the social needs of the family and community, economy then provides for the use of material resources and the financial means necessary to make these adaptations possible. This chapter will explore how agriculture, crafts and manufactures, commerce, and services were provided by and for the residents of Bowers and how the people, in turn, adapted the landscape to meet their economic needs.

Agriculture

The economic base of Bowers rested upon agriculture and the production of crops and livestock for personal consumption and trade until the mid twentieth century. German peasants emigrating from the Rhine Valley brought their Old World agricultural practices to North America and adapted them to the new environment. These adaptations helped to make Pennsylvania German farmers some of the most productive agriculturalists in North America throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The importance of kinship as discussed in Chapter Three of this study suggests that traditional methods with some New World adaptations were perpetuated across many generations as fathers instructed their sons in the ways they had learned from their own fathers. James Lemon's book *The Best Poor Man's Country* provides a detailed social scientific account of how early colonists, including German, English, and others of mixed European descent, adapted the landscape of their adopted home to meet their economic needs. The heavily Germanic population of Berks County suggests that Lemon's studies on Lancaster County, immediately to the west of Berks, are the most enlightening when one attempts to understand the agricultural practices of eighteenth-century Berks County.[111]

[111] Lemon, *Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania*, 150-84.

According to Lemon, the average farm size in Lancaster County was approximately 125 acres, including the house, barn, outbuildings, and a woodlot.[112] Farms in the Maxatawny region were larger, but were managed in similar ways. Three of the principal farms surrounding Bowers (Bower's, Seibert's, and Sharadin's) varied in acreage over time, but generally fell within the range of 140-200 acres. None of the farms exceeded 200 acres. In fact, Andreas Haak had patented 225 acres in 1743, but parceled off 184 acres for sale to his son in 1763. This transaction is not in itself significant, as the property changed hands two more times in three years, but the result of these transactions was a 147 acre farm acquired by Michael Bower in 1766.[113] The remainder of the land was reserved for use as a gristmill by various owners. Christian Seibert's farm contained 183 acres when his son George purchased it from his estate in 1811.[114] William Sharadin owned approximately 185 acres of farmland in 1904 when his property passed to his estate.[115]

Farming in the German regions of Pennsylvania centered primarily on the production of wheat and other grains.[116] Wheat was a staple crop from the very earliest years of settlement, and Germanic farmers appear to have been masters of its production. James Logan, Benjamin Rush, and other colonial writers all commented on the prevalence of wheat production in the Philadelphia hinterlands and on the adeptness of the German immigrants in their agricultural practices.[117] Lemon estimates that on the

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[112] Ibid., 156.
[113] Deed Books, vol. 1B, p. 494. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[114] Deed Books, vol. 27, p. 445. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[115] Deed Books, vol. 308, p. 671. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[116] Lemon, *Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania*, 154.
[117] Ibid.

average 125 acre farm in Lancaster County perhaps up to 26 acres would have been planted in one grain crop or another.[118] Despite the slightly larger farms around Bowers, it does not appear that the percentage of land devoted to crop production was higher than on the Lancaster County farms. Jacob Sharadin had cleared only 50 acres of his 150 farm when he was assessed by the tax collector in 1768, and twelve of those acres were planted in Indian corn.[119]

This land use pattern, small fields dotted with woodlots and pastures, seems to have continued well into the nineteenth century.[120] William Sharadin, Jacob's grandson, had cleared only slightly more land than his grandfather, reporting 67 improved acres out of a total 154 in 1850.[121] He also reported that he produced 650 bushels of wheat and 100 bushels of buckwheat that year. Not all of the cleared land was devoted to wheat, or even crop production, however. Sharadin also reported owning 12 milch [sic] cows, 7 head of cattle, 6 sheep, and 25 swine, all requiring pasture space of some type[122] (Fig. 32). Mixed use of land was common practice amongst early Pennsylvanians which resulted in a wide array of agricultural products all requiring storage, processing, and transportation facilities to be financially fruitful.[123]

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[118] Ibid., 167.
[119] Tax Assessments for Maxatawny Township, 1768. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.
[120] More reliable and complete agricultural data is available for the period between 1850 and 1880, as census takers began enumerating farm statistics as well as population statistics in 1850.
[121] Agricultural Schedules, *Seventh Census of the United States*, 1850. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Lemon, *Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania*, 150-84..

Figure 32: View of the Sharadin farm looking north.

Gristmills

The need to store, process and transport crops necessitated the construction of specialized buildings such as mills, granaries, and creameries. Gristmills were especially important facilities in farm communities, particularly those that produced large quantities of wheat and buckwheat. Mills ground the perishable grain into flour that could be used at home to supply the family with bread and other baked goods, or could be transported to markets such as those located in Reading, Allentown, or Philadelphia for export to foreign markets. The millers themselves were equally important in the community and often enjoyed high social esteem amongst their neighbors. These men typically served as makeshift bankers and relayers of political news because of their frequent dealings with merchants in larger cities. Gristmills were also important because millers frequently ran

sawmills and cider presses off the same power source. Sawmills turned felled trees into lumber for building, furniture, carriages, coffins, and other essential elements of daily life.

Mills generally operated in one of two ways, as a "custom" mill or as a merchant mill. Custom millers would reserve part of their customer's finished product, generally 10%, as payment for their services.[124] Merchant millers would purchase a substantial portion of the unprocessed grain outright and then resell it themselves. Merchant mills were typically larger than custom mills and were far more common than custom mills during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[125] Both types, however, relied on water as their power supply. Streams would be channeled into races and the water directed toward a waterwheel used to turn the grindstones. In many instances the streams would be dammed, creating millponds that allowed the miller to control the rate of seasonal water flow and, ultimately, the production speed of the mill.

As should be expected, gristmills were an important early feature on the Bowers landscape. Philip Scholl had constructed a gristmill along the Saucony Creek as early as 1766. When he sold a substantial portion of his land holdings to Michael Bower in that same year, he reserved the rights to the creek "for the use of his mill and watering his meadows to be conveyed through the race without waste which is now used to the mill..."[126] Scholl appears to have dug a race that diverted a portion of the water in the Saucony into a narrow channel that flowed closer to the location that he desired for the

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[124] David Larkin, *Mill: The Past and Future of Naturally Powered Buildings* (New York: Universe, 2000), 248.
[125] Carl Lounsbury, *An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture* (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 230.
[126] Deed Books, vol. 1B, p. 494. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

mill. While it is uncertain whether Scholl ever constructed a dam for the race, one was certainly in place by 1825 (Fig. 33).[127] Scholl's mill changed hands several times during the 1770s and 1780s before finally coming under the ownership of Henry Grim in 1786.[128] Grim operated the mill for five decades before passing it to his son, Daniel, in 1840. Daniel Grim continued the operation of his father's mill until his death in 1872, when his wife and only daughter, Leanda, took over, eventually renting the mill to a local miller[129] (Fig. 34).

[127] Deed Books, vol. 48, p. 268. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[128] Deed Books, vol A12, p. 278. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[129] Population Schedules, *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880. Maxatawny Township, Pa.

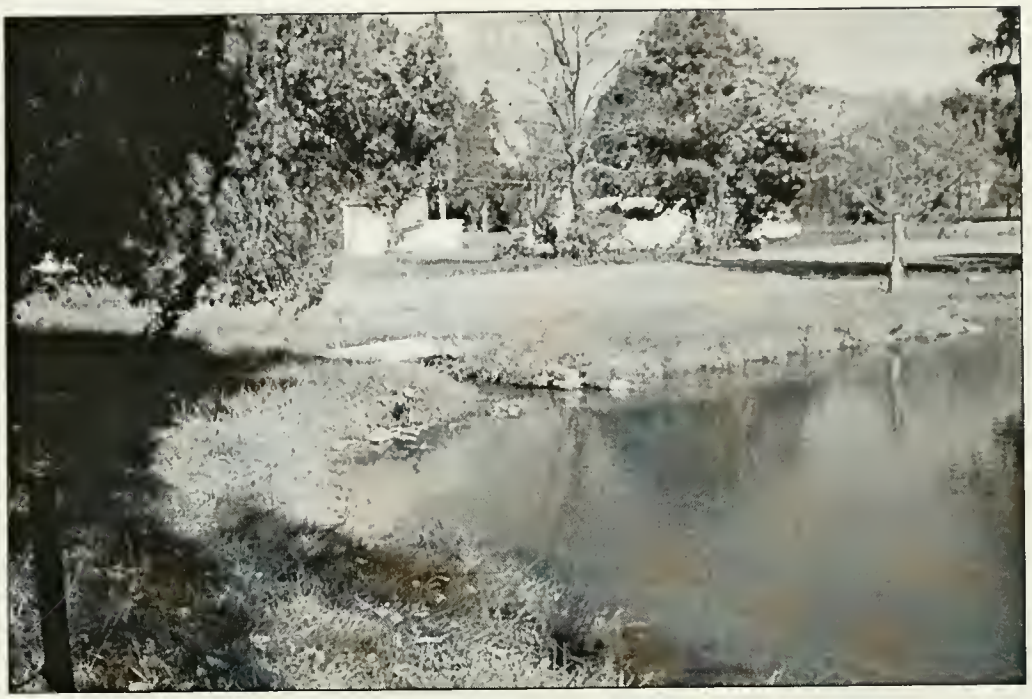

Figure 33: The millpond and dam looking northeast.

Figure 34: View of Scholl's and Grim's mill complex. The mill is visible through the trees in the center of the frame.

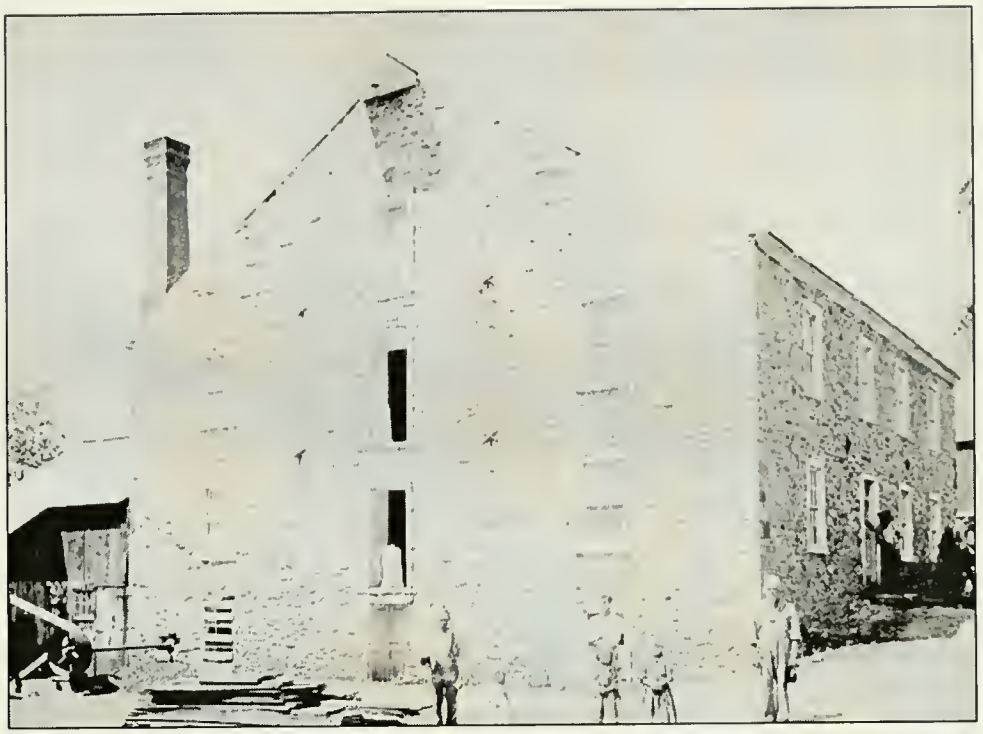

Figure 35: Zwoyer's gristmill southeast of Bowers, circa 1905. Simon Jonas Zwoyer is in the right foreground. Notice the sawmill belts visible at left. Author's collection.

Grim's mill was not the only mill in the area, however. In 1905 Jonas Zwoyer purchased a large merchant mill, complete with a sawmill, about one mile from Grim's facility. A firm construction date for this structure has been difficult to ascertain, but it is clear from Zwoyer's deed that the mill, sawmill, house, and outbuildings were existing when he purchased the land.[130] The building was three stories tall and situated near the house and other support buildings, all nestled close to the creek (Fig. 35). Zwoyer's mill is no longer standing, having been demolished for road construction in the mid-twentieth century, but many of the landscape features including the race and house do survive.

[130] Deed Books, vol. 302, p. 626, Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

Ironworks

Gristmills were only one type of industrial complex common to the landscape of early Pennsylvania. Furnaces where iron ore, limestone, and charcoal would be smelted together to create bar iron for domestic and international consumption were among the largest and most significant of these complexes. The Sally Ann Furnace, located approximately five miles from Bowers, was one of these large early industrial facilities. The furnace was located outside of the defined boundaries of Bowers and its periphery, as marked in this study (Fig. 4), and thus a lengthy discussion of its history is beyond the scope of this work. Nevertheless, the importance of furnaces to the local economy of a place and their impact upon the regional landscape do warrant the brief mention of Sally Ann Furnace.

Sally Ann Furnace began production around 1791, and ceased operation around 1869.[131] The exact founding date of the furnace is not entirely clear, but a tract of 94 acres upon which the furnace buildings are located came under the ownership of Nicholas Hunter, the longtime ironmaster, in 1811.[132] Documentary evidence for this operation is scant, but Montgomery's account of the Sally Ann Furnace gives every indication that it was typical amongst eighteenth and nineteenth century ironworks.

Furnaces were highly complex early industrial landscapes that included a masonry furnace stack, ironmaster's house, support buildings, agricultural facilities, worker housing, as well as the natural resources used in iron production, and numerous streams,

[131] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 94.
[132] Ibid.

races, and charcoal pits.[133] They required a large workforce drawn from the local population that had to be supported by foodstuffs produced on site and from local farmers. In 1830 Sally Ann employed 150 people, but had a larger community of nearly 750 persons dependent upon it.[134] These nearly 900 people consumed more than 11,000 bushels of wheat, rye, and corn and 36,000 pounds of beef and pork that year.[135] The sheer volume of consumed goods must have had an enormous economic impact upon the predominantly agricultural economy of the Bowers area. But the workers at the furnace complex were only part of the network necessary to run such an operation.

Iron smelting required the extraction of iron ore and limestone from the earth and the production of charcoal from hardwood forests. Iron mines and limestone pits were typically located within a few miles of the furnace, and were occasionally operated as independent businesses. The prevalence of iron and limestone as well as large stands of trees and a harnessable water source determined the location of furnace complexes and dictated the success and longevity of the operation.[136] Rockland Township, where Sally Ann was located, had a significant amount of iron ore located within a few miles of the furnace.[137] Both Maxatawny and Rockland Townships are situated over a large limestone formation that not only lent itself to quarrying, but also contributed to the extremely fertile nature of the soils in the area.[138] Mineral and stone extraction

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[133] Arthur Cecil Bining, *Pennsylvania Iron Manufacture in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 4, *Publications of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1938), 30.
[134] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 98.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Bining, *Pennsylvania Iron Manufacture in the Eighteenth Century*, 49.
[137] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 30-31.
[138] Benjamin LeRoy Miller, *Limestones of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1934), 213.

operations were clearly a part of the economy of Bowers, but the lack of information regarding the Sally Ann Furnace makes it difficult to make definite connections.

Quarrying and Mining

A small stone quarry located adjacent to the railroad in Bowers employed a number of Bowers residents for at least the period between 1860 and 1880.[139] Among these were three Irish immigrants living in the Bowers Hotel in 1870.[140] So far it has been impossible to place the ownership of this quarry historically since the property was sold by the Berks County Tax Claim Bureau in 1983 as the property of Frederick Bieber.[141] Attempts to trace Frederick Bieber's ownership history have proved unsuccessful, but one possible source of information comes from industrial census records taken in 1880. Nine limestone quarries were operating in Maxatawny in that year, one of them under the supervision of a William Bieber.[142] Knowing that kinship was an important factor in land transfer patterns in Bowers, and supposing that the two men sharing the same surname also shared a familial connection, it seems reasonable to assume that William Bieber's quarry was the one near Bowers. Bieber reported that nearly 15,000 cubic yards of earth had been excavated since the operation began in 1845, but it is likely that the enumerator transposed this figure from the entry above it, making

[139] Population Schedules, *Eighth Census of the United States*, 1860. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[140] Population Schedules, *Ninth Census of the United States*, 1870. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[141] Deed Books, vol. 1841, p. 169. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[142] Manufactures Schedules 11 and 12, *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880. Maxatawny Township, Pa.

Bieber's actual excavated land approximately 3,750 cubic yards.[143] Bieber employed a maximum of six men throughout the year, but was only in full operation for two months out of the year. The quarry was completely idle for three months, with the remaining seven months spent on a three quarter or half time schedule. However, Bieber's quarry was the only operation in Maxatawny that dressed the stone at the quarry, perhaps making the stone more valuable and more expensive.[144]

Iron extraction was also a major component of the Bowers economy and was a source of employment and wealth for a number of individuals. The 1870 Census makes no mention of any ironworkers or contractors, but in 1880 five individuals in the town were employed at a nearby ore bank.[145] It is not clear where this ore bank was located, but its exploitation played a large role in the assemblage of Edwin DeLong's fortune and the construction of his substantial mansion. DeLong was distinguished from his fellow iron workers in the 1880 census, as he was listed as an ore contractor, rather than a worker in the ore bank as the other four workers were.[146] His role as the supervisor, if not the owner of this operation may have provided him with the capital necessary to improve his newly purchased home in the early 1880s. DeLong had purchased George

[143] The entry above reports that 3,750 cubic yards had been excavated, but that 13,290 cubic yards of marketed product were produced during the previous year. Bieber's quarry, as entered, had 15,000 cubic yards excavated, but had yielded only 1,000 yards during 1879. It therefore seems probable that these two entries had certain pieces of information misrecorded.
[144] Manufactures Schedules 11 and 12, *Tenth Census of the United States,* 1880. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[145] Population Schedules, *Ninth Census of the United States*,1870, and *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[146] Population Schedules, *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880. Maxatawny Township, Pa.

Siebert's simple stone farmhouse in 1876, but by the early 1880s he had added a large Second Empire façade facing the village[147] (Fig. 36).

Figure 36: View of the Edwin DeLong house looking south. The Second Empire portion of the home was added to George Seibert's stone farmhouse visible behind the brick portion.

Stonecutting

More significant to the economy of Bowers than both the limestone and iron industries was the importation and processing of marble in Bowers. Daniel H. Schweyer began importing marble, granite, and other stone via the railroad in 1863, shortly after the rail line's construction. Levi W. Leiss, a local merchant, partnered with Schweyer in 1865, and three years later the pair entered into an agreement with the Easton Marble

[147] Deed Books, vol. 198, p. 590. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

Company. In 1882 Schweyer and Leiss acquired an interest in the extensive blue marble quarries at King of Prussia in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.[148] Montgomery indicated that it was the "only active industry" in Bowers in 1886 and that it pumped an estimated $25,000 per year into the local economy.[149] The stone was unloaded at a small facility, referred to as a "shipping wharf"[150] adjacent to the rail line and loaded onto wagons for transport to a nearby sawmill.

From the shipping facility at Bowers the stone was transported approximately one mile uphill to a converted gristmill near Sally Ann Furnace.[151] The exact configuration of the sawing facilities during these early years is difficult to ascertain, but a detailed description of the facilities was published when the properties were offered for sale in 1914. The facility was located on approximately 4.5 acres and contained "2 gang saws, 3 rippers, and turning lathes, and is operated by water power from a large dam upon the premises, which will develop 20-horsepower for 24 hours for 10 months of the year."[152] The processing capabilities of this facility is not indicated, but given Montgomery's estimates in 1886, it appears to have been quite significant. More important, however, is the conversion of a gristmill for this purpose. It represents the adaptive reuse of structures and landscape features made possible by improved transportation lines and a changing economic climate.

Schweyer's personal wealth from this enterprise seems quite evident as his home in Bowers, immediately in front of the shipping wharf, is among the largest and most

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[148] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 1047.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Deed Books, vol. 605, p. 274. Recorder of Deeds, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.
[151] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 1012.
[152] Estate papers of Daniel H. Schweyer, 1914. Register of Wills, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

elaborate structures in the village (Fig 37). It was offered for sale along with his marble facilities in 1914 and included a

> *Three story brick dwelling house and lot of ground 80 feet in width by 236 feet deep situated in the village of Bowers aforesaid, adjoining the public road leading from Bowers to Topton, lands of Esther DeLong, H.P. Schoedler, and tract no. 5. The house contains all the modern improvements, hot and cold water in bath room and kitchen, steam heat, piazzas on three sides, marble steps and walks. There is a large garden and a variety of fruit trees, two good sized caves and cemented cellars. Also a large frame stable, carriage house, corn crib shed, and poultry house.*[153]

Figure 37: Daniel Schweyer's mansion along Old Bowers Road. The foundation and windowsills are lined with marble.

Schweyer's house was certainly among the most well appointed buildings in the immediate area in 1914, and he died owning seventeen parcels of land including his home, as well as farms, mills, and woodlots in Maxatawny, Rockland, and Longswamp

[153] Estate papers of Daniel Schweyer, 1914.

Townships, and the former Sally Ann Furnace.[154] This wealth afforded Schweyer a high level of esteem among the community as well. In addition to working in the marble yard in 1880, he was also serving as a Justice of the Peace.[155]

Schweyer and Leiss' stone yard processed material not only for export, but also for local consumption. By 1870 Henry Hamsher, a new arrival to Bowers, had established a marble cutting shop in the center of the growing village.[156] The shop was small and operated until at least 1905 when photographer Charles Ross captured Hamsher proudly displaying his work in front of his shop (Fig 38). Visible in the photo are cemetery monuments similar to those found in the village's cemetery, the largest of these belonging to the DeLong family (Fig 39).

Figure 38: Henry Hamsher poses in front of his stonecutting shop, 1905. Pennsylvania State Archives, Arthur Bransky Collection.

[154] Ibid.
[155] Population Schedules, *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[156] F. A. Davis, *Historical Atlas of Berks County, Pennsylvania* (Reading, Pa.: Reading Publishing House, 1876; reprint, Reading Pa.: Javon, 1978).

Figure 39: One of the DeLong monuments in the Bowers Union Cemetery probably carved by Henry Hamsher.

The monuments are carved from granite, so if these objects are to be attributed to Hamsher, we can assert that Hamsher was certainly purchasing his materials from Schweyer and Leiss. Schweyer's estate papers include several invoices from granite and marble quarries in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts[157], and marble chips can still be found on the ground surrounding the site of the former shipping wharf.

The activity created by both the milling and stone industries was both predicated and dependent upon the presence of a local market and labor force. This population required specialized goods and services, and craftsman and merchants were interspersed with their farming neighbors. The presence of specialized tradesmen such as carpenters, masons, shoemakers, harness and carriage makers, and blacksmiths was small during the first few decades following settlement. The tax list for Maxatawny Township in 1761 includes only a handful of specialized tradesmen in the entire township serving a total of 99 households.[158] It is likely that most of these tradesmen were located closer to Kutztown, which was laid out as a formal settlement in 1779.[159] Aside from helping drive the development of nucleated communities and providing services to farmers, the impact of tradesmen upon the landscape was manifest in parcel size. The craftsmen listed in the 1761 tax list owned substantially smaller parcels of land, if any at all.[160] The proportion of tradesmen to general farmers in Maxatawny Township remained fairly consistent throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Diversification and

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[157] Estate Papers of Daniel Schweyer, 1914.
[158] There were 3 tailors, 4 shoemakers, 4 weavers, 2 masons, 2 joiners, 2 hatters, 5 blacksmiths, 3 carpenters, 1 turner, and 1 shopkeeper listed in Maxatawny Township in 1761. *Source*: *Tax Assessment Lists for Maxatawny Township*, 1768. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.
[159] Kutztown Centennial Association, *The Centennial History of Kutztown, Pennsylvania 1815-1915*, iii.
[160] *Tax Assessment Lists for Maxatawny Township,* 1761. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.

proliferation of trades did not occur in Bowers until the construction of the railroad in 1859.[161]

Figure 40: The Bowers blacksmith shop, 1905. Pennsylvania State Archives, Arthur Bransky Collection.

Blacksmithing

One of the most important tradesmen to both transportation and building was the local blacksmith. Blacksmiths not only shod horses, but also made nails, hinges, locks, and all manner of iron goods used in the home and on the farm. The smith was an integral part of the local economic structure because he made many of the trade and transportation activities possible. The 1790 U.S. Census indicates that there was a

[161] Manufactures Schedules, *Eighth Census of the United States*, 1860. Maxatawny Township, Pa.

blacksmith living near Bowers in that year, but given the size of the population in the area in the 1760s and 1770s it is likely that one of the smiths listed on the tax lists for those decades was near Bowers.[162] The present blacksmith shop was likely constructed in the 1880s when James Barto became the blacksmith[163] (Fig. 40). Sometime between 1880 and 1900, he purchased one of the small rowhouses adjacent to the shop along Bowers Road.[164] Barto and his son were the blacksmiths in Bowers until the 1940s.[165]

Commerce and Trade

Jonas Bower and Daniel Grim began making building lots available in the 1860s and 1870s, and new trades were introduced into the emerging village. The merchants listed in the 1860 Census were Edward Knoske, Bower's son-in-law, and Henry Boyer.[166] Knoske, with the assistance of Bower, constructed a new store building at the intersection of Bowers Road and Old Bowers Road in 1859, with Boyer joining him as his business partner.[167] The store became the first home of the first post office in the village and Knoske assumed the duties of postmaster.[168] Knoske turned his attention to other enterprises soon after opening the store, which was later operated by Levi Leiss, and

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[162] "Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790," 37.
[163] The blacksmith shop does not appear on the 1876 map of Bowers published in the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Berks County*. This assessment is also based on field investigations conducted by the author.
[164] Population Schedules, *Tenth Census of the United States,* 1880, and *Twelfth Census of the United States*, 1900, Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[165] Alfred Grim, interview by author, unrecorded. Bowers, Pa., December 2002
[166] Population Schedules, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[167] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 1047.
[168] Ibid.

William F. Seidel.[169] Seidel was the long time proprietor, providing dry goods, groceries, shoes, and paint until circa 1920 (Fig. 41).

Figure 41: William Seidel's General Store, 1905. Pennsylvania State Archives, Arthur Bransky Collection.

The construction of the East Penn Railroad brought about a great number of economic opportunities for the area, but those opportunities could be seized only if the community built a depot for passengers and freight. Montgomery reports that the depot was built by Knoske as a passenger station and warehouse in 1860 on land owned by Jonas Bower.[170] The influence of the railroad upon the development of Bowers was so great that it will be treated at more length in a separate chapter devoted to transportation. Suffice it to say here that the depot provided both employment and economic

[169] Ibid.
[170] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 1047.

opportunities, especially Knoske's coal and grain warehouse. Knoske brought the first carload of coal to Bowers in 1860.[171]

Edward Knoske's grain warehouse allowed for the easier export of locally grown crops, such as wheat and rye, to larger markets like Philadelphia and Reading on a much wider scale than previously possible. Waves of immigrants arriving from eastern and southern Europe into Philadelphia created an enormous market for the kinds of agricultural products grown in places like Bowers. The profit potential created by increased access to Philadelphia and other domestic markets made it possible for farmers to express their new wealth in architectural terms. Elijah Weiser constructed the first major residence in Bowers adjacent to the Washington House. Weiser was a farmer and grew a variety of crops and raised cows, cattle, sheep, and pigs[172] probably according to the agricultural traditions passed down to him by his father. In 1850 Weiser owned a 130 acre farm with 100 cleared acres, valued at $7,500. In 1849 his farm yielded 300 bushels each of wheat, Indian corn, and oats, and an additional 200 bushels of rye.[173] By 1870 Weiser was farming only 87 acres with 35 acres unimproved, but the value had nearly doubled, now $13,500 for the entire parcel.[174] His outputs that year had remained nearly the same, 300 bushels of wheat, Indian corn, and oats, and only 100 bushels of rye.[175] Land values increased steadily throughout the 1850's,[176] but Weiser did not liquidate any of his land during this period to obtain the capital necessary to build his polite new home.

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[171] Ibid.
[172] Agricultural Schedules, *Seventh Census of the United States*, 1850. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Agricultural Schedules, *Ninth Census of the United States*, 1870. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Paul W. Gates, *The Farmer's Age: Agriculture*, vol. 3, *The Economic History of the United States* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960).

His money must have come from other sources and one reasonable conclusion is that increased trade capabilities provided a higher return on his farm products.

Figure 42: These concrete piers once supported a railroad siding used to import and export goods in Bowers.

Brickmaking

Knoske's other business ventures sought to capitalize on the emerging market by providing goods not previously widely available such as bricks, coal, and large scale grain export services (Fig. 42). At the same time that he and Boyer were opening their general store, they were also establishing a brickyard to supply building materials for the village. The brickyard appears to have been the principal venture of Jacob G. Kline, with Knoske and Boyer providing additional capital rather than labor. In 1860 the facility

produced 250,000 bricks and employed eight local men on a steady basis.[177] There was only one brickmaker in Maxatawny Township in 1850, probably some distance from Bowers, and one additional brick kiln in Kutztown.[178] By 1870 Aaron Bower was listed as the only brickmaker in Bowers[179] but had quit the business by 1874 to travel to Nebraska.[180] The slow population growth of the region in the decades leading up to the Civil War, coupled with the lack of brick production facilities explains the use of stone as a building material in the Bowers region during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is with a great deal of confidence that one can assume that the brick which composes the houses of Bowers, the expansions of the Bowers Hotel, and the church were produced within the community by local brickmakers.

Other Industries

Other industries and businesses within Bowers included a horse dentist (Fig. 43), a hide tannery (Fig. 44), and a creamery (Fig. 45), all signifying the importance of livestock to agriculture and transportation. The dentist, George P. Schoedler, had his office in an outbuilding rented from Jonas Bower behind the creamery. The creamery was located adjacent to the house Bower occupied in his later life across from the Bowers Hotel. The tannery was located just outside the village along the railroad tracks. This

[177] Manufactures Schedules, *Eighth Census of the United States*, 1860. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[178] Manufactures Schedules, *Seventh Census of the United States*, 1850. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[179] Manufactures Schedules, *Ninth Census of the United States*, 1870. Maxatawny Township, Pa.
[180] Estate papers of Jonas Bower, 1882. Register of Wills, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.

location was probably due to the need for transportation and the foul odors created by rendering hides (Fig. 46).

The farming practices and traditions brought to the Pennsylvania countryside by German immigrants shaped the land and created an economy based upon the production of grain, corn, and livestock. Farmers required mills to process these crops into products suitable for trade and transport. Mills, like iron furnaces, were sited in specific locations to enable them to harness waterpower to operate their facilities. The population served by and working in these facilities required the services of specialized craftsmen that used the land in different ways from their farming neighbors. Improvements in transportation enabled farmers and industrialists to take advantage of previously inaccessible markets and opportunities increasing the prosperity of the place, spurring building, and drawing a more diverse group of specialized trades and businesses. This pattern was undoubtedly repeated across Berks, Lehigh, Lebanon, and Lancaster Counties.

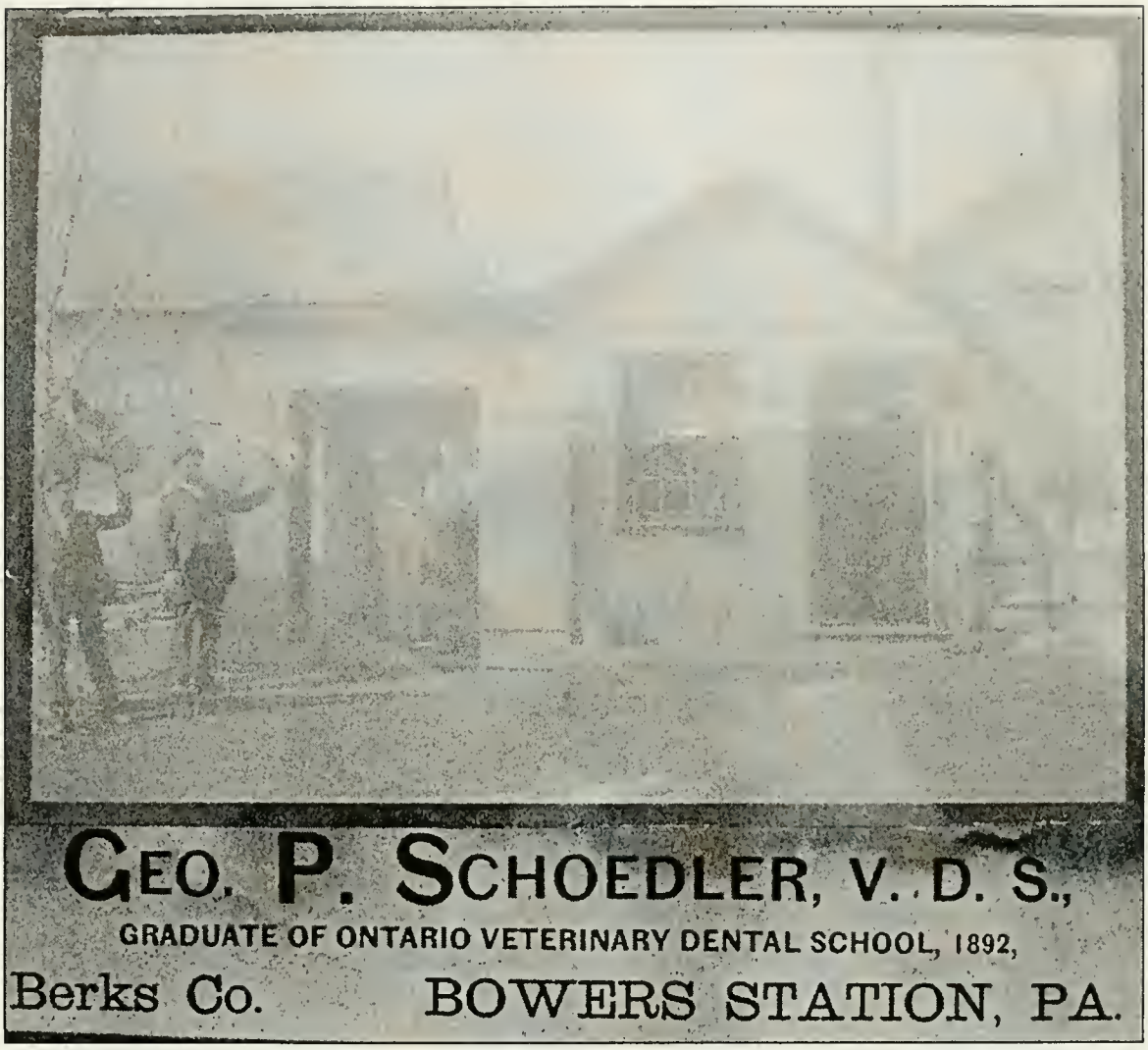

Figure 43: Trade card for George Schoedler's horse dentist office located adjacent to the creamery. Author's Collection.

Figure 44: The Bowers Creamery at the intersection of Bowers Road and Old Bowers Road.

Figure 45: The hide tannery on the edge of the village adjacent to the railroad tracks.

Figure 46: An advertisement for Stanley Staudt's hide tannery, date unknown. Private collection.

Figure 47: Old postcard showing views both north (left) and south (right) on Bowers Road probably from the 1930s. Notice the truck in the photograph at right. Private collection.

Transportation and circulation networks are essential parts of human land occupation. Paths, roads, canals, railroads connect people to each other and their livelihood. They make possible participation in all parts of life, whether it is church-going, visiting family, or transporting goods to the market, these networks represent man's need to traverse the land and his ability to negotiate landforms to satisfy his needs. In Bowers, access to transportation both shaped and was shaped by topography, access to goods and services, and proximity to population centers.

Roads in early America meandered across the countryside connecting farmers to mills, mills to markets, and markets to ports. Often deeply rutted and poorly constructed,

these country roads were the first link in a long economic and social chain that made rural living possible. Two principal roads run through Bowers, Bower Road and Old Bowers Road. Bowers Road was laid out during very early settlement in the 1740's and served as the principal artery through the area. In 1759 a small path, later Old Bowers Road, was constructed to access the newly constructed church and burial ground (Fig. 48). A few years later Philip Scholl constructed his gristmill adjacent to Bowers Road near the confluence of two branches of the Saucony Creek.

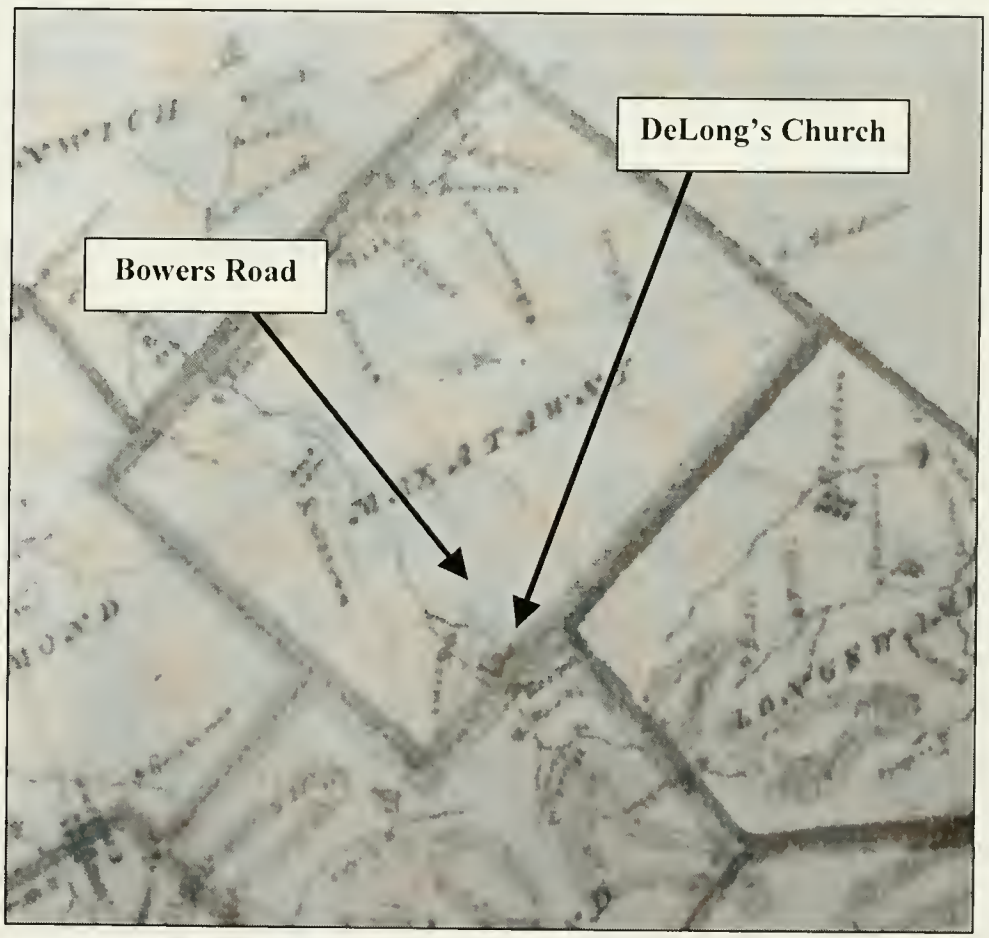

Figure 48: Henry Richard's map of Berks County from 1816. Notice that only a few major roads exist in the vicinity of Bowers. Kutztown was a dense settlement along the Easton Road by this point. Free Library of Philadelphia, Map Collection.

It is difficult to accurately assess the origins of the roads in Bowers or answer the question of 'which came first, the people or the road?' but some answers may lie in the cultural, social, and economic systems in which the area's residents participated. In addition to providing access to Scholl's mill and the church, Bowers Road connected the area with several other small settlements, as well as with larger communities like Reading, the county seat. A careful look at Henry Richards' map of Berks County from 1816 reveals that Bowers Road was serving as a connector between the Easton Road[181] to the north and the Pricetown Road to the south. At the northern intersection was Kemp's Inn, an important stopping point on the post road from Reading to Easton.[182] Today, assessing the traffic rates precisely on Bowers Road is nearly impossible, but the road appears to have served as an integral part of the main route between Kemp's and Reading, via the Pricetown Road.[183]

While Bowers Road linked the county seat with a major post road, the section near Grim's mill may have been of little importance to anyone but those farmers living nearby and the congregation of the Reformed Church a few yards away from the road. Close to the intersection of Bowers Road and the Easton Road, another road heading south and east through Longswamp, Hereford, and eventually Philadelphia joined Bowers Road. For those traveling south to Philadelphia, or those heading north to Kutztown, this road provided the most direct access and similar amenities as those found on the Bowers

[181] The Easton Road connected Easton, a trading community on the northern Delaware River, and Reading.
[182] Kutztown Centennial Association, *The Centennial History of Kutztown, Pennsylvania 1815-1915*, 41.
[183] Reading was platted in 1748, and Kemp's Tavern was constructed in the mid 1740's, further corroborating the presence of Bowers Road early in the areas' settlement.

Road. For those traveling between Kutztown and Reading via the Pricetown Road, a connector road between the two split off near the village of Stony Point (Dryville).

Bowers Road was the dominant transportation corridor for the area in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and additional roads were constructed and improved in the mid-nineteenth century to provide access to newly developed areas. Old Bowers Road was improved and expanded sometime between 1818 and 1854 and connected Bowers Road with the village of Mertztown via Longswamp. This was a major change from the previous decades, as prior to the road's construction the only way to reach Mertztown was via the Easton Road or Hereford and then north or south on the Sumney Town Pike. This direct means of access allowed for further development of the rolling farmland in between the two settlements. During the same period the Hereford Road was truncated at the division between Rockland and Longswamp Townships and was replaced by a road leading to Hunter's Furnace (Sally Ann Furnace). An additional road leading from DeLong's Church and heading south toward Stony Point allowed for more direct access to Hunter's Furnace, previously only accessible via the Hereford Road.

The road from Mertztown (Old Bowers Road) ended in a dead end with Bowers Road. At the intersection of Bowers Road and Old Bowers Road, Jonas Bower built a large stone building that later became a tavern. Taverns and inns lined roadsides in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly at intersections. Locating a tavern at an intersection meant that traffic heading in multiple directions could make use of its services. The first documented mention of Jonas Bower's tavern, however, is not made

until 1860 one year after the opening of the East Penn Railroad.[184] The construction of the East Penn Railroad in 1859 brought sweeping changes to Bowers and spurred the creation of a nucleated village from a hamlet of scattered farms and mills (Fig. 49).

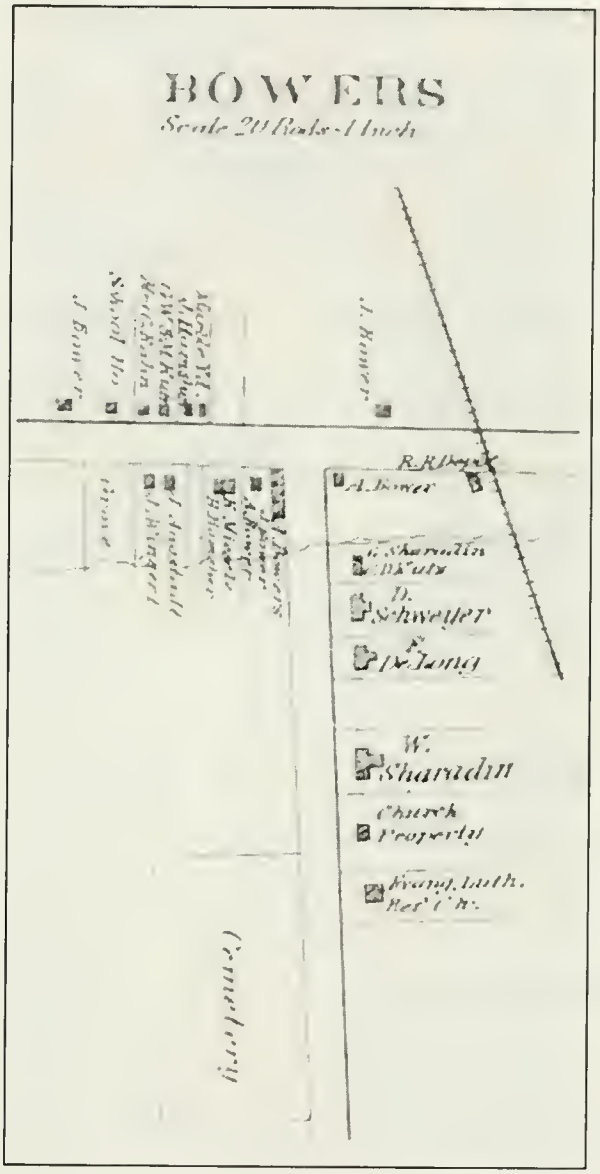

Figure 49: The Village of Bowers and its buildings in 1876. Reprinted from Kutztown Centennial Association, Centennial Atlas of Kutztown, 34.

[184] See pages 64-68 for a more complete discussion of the role of taverns in Bowers

The East Penn was a short line railroad that connected Reading with Allentown, both growing economic centers in the mid nineteenth century. Reading was the seat of Berks County and was the intermediate stopping point for anthracite coal shipments on their way from Schuylkill County to Philadelphia.[185] The "main line" of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad (P&R) connecting Philadelphia with its smaller counterpart was opened during the early 1840s.[186] Reading was home to the principal freight yards and machine shops for the line and an important control point and hub for the Philadelphia bound shipments.[187] Allentown was more closely allied with New York, and consequently Philadelphia legislators blocked the construction of a rail line between Reading and Allentown for years, fearing that such a connection would mean the diversion of capital away from Philadelphia in favor of New York.[188] It was not until another scheme threatened to bypass Reading altogether that the men of Reading took action.[189]

In 1855 Reading attorney Edward M. Clymer called a group of local businessmen together to discuss the impending financial threats of the proposed Dauphin and Susquehanna Railroad (D&S). The D&S planned to build a line from Harrisburg to Allentown across northern Berks and Lehigh Counties bypassing Reading. This would have meant that coal and other commodities being produced in central Pennsylvania would head directly for New York via the New Jersey Central, crippling Philadelphia's

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[185] Holton, *Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Aged Empire.*
One of the major focuses of Holt's work is to show how coal influenced Reading, and vice-versa.
[186] Ibid., 28.
[187] Ibid., 60.
[188] Ibid., 261.
[189] Ibid.

control over the region. Clymer proposed the construction of a short stretch between Reading and Allentown that, while forsaking Philadelphia, would still allow Reading to benefit from coal shipments. The East Penn Railroad was incorporated in 1856 and began land acquisition and rail construction shortly thereafter.[190]

Figure 50: The former East Penn Railroad tracks and adjacent farmland looking north. The land in the background was once part of Daniel Grim's farm.

Clymer's railroad cut a thirty-six mile swath across the rolling farmland of the East Penn Valley (Fig. 50). The corporation purchased a narrow piece of land from both Jonas Bower and Daniel Grim in early 1859 and completed the connection to Allentown on May 11 of the same year.[191] The railroad ran through the middle of both men's farms, cutting their fields into small pieces and inhibiting access to portions of their land. Both responded like true businessmen, capitalizing on the division and putting their former

[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.

fields to new uses. Jonas Bower was first, enlisting his son-in-law Edward G. Knoske to construct a depot at the point where Bowers Road crossed the tracks around 1860.[192] This new facility allowed for increased grain shipping, the importation of coal, marble, and other commodities (Fig. 51). In the ensuing decade, these investments in commercial enterprises prompted Jonas Bower to divide his land along the existing roads into small rowhouse lots, and encouraged at least one of his neighbors to do the same.

Daniel Grim developed his land in slightly different ways than Jonas Bower had. He divided his severed land entirely into house lots rather than constructing industrial and commercial facilities. Approximately ten acres of Grim's irregularly shaped parcel lay across the tracks from his mill and house. Too small to farm effectively and too difficult

Figure 51: The Bowers Train Station looking south toward the Bowers Hotel, date unknown. Courtesy of the Bowers Hotel.

[192] Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, 1047.

to access, Grim divided this piece into nine long, narrow lots facing Old Bowers Road, nestled between Bower's tavern, Elijah Weiser's 1860 house, and the church and schoolhouse. Presumably Grim had been hoping to create a series of rowhouses like those that were being constructed on Jonas Bower's land along Bowers Road. Instead, nouveau riche farmers and industrialists like Daniel Schweyer purchased two contiguous lots and constructed large fashionable mansions that shadowed their neighbor's modest dwellings.

The East Penn Railroad did not last long, however. The P&R had become the dominant railroad in the United States within a few decades of its founding and leased many of its competitor's lines in short order in an attempt to tighten its control on the Pennsylvania coal industry.[193] The company acquired the lease to the East Penn in 1869. The line continued to function, however, providing passenger and freight service to many of the communities along its path until well into the 1940s.[194] The rail lines still run through Bowers and are now operated by Conrail, but with no depot, the railroad no longer plays a major part in the economy of the village.

The final chapter in the development of the transportation system in Bowers came in the 1950's when Old Bowers Road was bypassed as the major thoroughfare through the village by a short connector road. The connector began at a point east of the village close to where the former Hereford Road crossed the Topton Road. It cut to the south across fields and connected to a piece of road running parallel to the bypassed road, now relegated to be "Old" Bower Road. This connector diverted traffic away from the center

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[193] Holton, *Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Aged Empire*.
[194] Alfred Grim, Interview with author, unrecorded. Bowers, Pa., December 2002.

of the village and allowed for increased speed as it eliminated stop signs and sharp turns. It is this bypassing of the historic core of Bowers that has allowed it to remain largely intact from the time of initial construction.

The roads around Bowers evolved as population increased and travel needs changed over time. In the early settlement periods, the alignment of roads around Bowers was dictated by agricultural and commercial needs as farmers sought to move their goods to mills and markets. These early roads continued to connect people and places throughout the nineteenth century, but were now dictating how and why people built buildings along previously established routes. Technological innovation in the form of railroads brought rapid and dramatic change to the area and resulted in a rash of building in the mid nineteenth century. The coming of the automobile helped to both better connect Bowers residents with their region and pull them farther apart. Cars made it easier to travel to and from Reading, Philadelphia, and Allentown, drastically reducing the need for local shops, milk, etc. While Bowers residents continued to build new homes in their community throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s their sources for goods and services ceased to be based in the village during the age of the auto.

Figure 52: Street sign on the outskirts of Bowers.

The way in which people shaped their environment to meet their cultural, social, and economic needs varied from region to region across North America resulting in the creation of distinct cultural landscapes over space and time. The settlement of land in Pennsylvania by European immigrants occurred in distinct ways when compared to New England and the South. In New England, Puritans seeking refuge from religious oppression constructed tightly settled villages with buildings clustered around a communal green space and fields and pastures radiating out in concentric circles.[195] When one settlement became too dense, another one, perhaps with slight modifications, was created a few miles away. In the South the more moderate climate and fertile soil gave English entrepreneurs the opportunity to create vast self sufficient plantations that

[195] John R. Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America, 1580 to 1845* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 43-44.

produced all of the goods and services found in the villages of their New England counterparts. Non-plantation settlements were located primarily around the county courthouses in tiny crossroads communities, or along the coast near navigable harbors.[196] The Middle Atlantic had its own pattern, and developed differently from both New England and the South.

Influenced heavily by William Penn's political and social principles, the landscape of Pennsylvania developed in ways that were unlike its northern and southern neighbors. Penn was perhaps one of the most influential Quakers of his day (and arguably of all time) and as such experienced persecution and intolerance firsthand. He had been imprisoned, ridiculed, and ostracized for his beliefs and desired his colony to be a place where pious men and women could be free from such persecution.[197] Pennsylvania was to be a "society where people of different beliefs could dwell together in peace."[198] His hospitality was extended to all those who followed the Christian faith, regardless of denomination. But Penn's tolerance is often overstated. Atheists, pagans, and the "wicked" had no place in Pennsylvania.[199]

Despite William Penn's tolerance for self-expression, Pennsylvania was not intended to be a free for all where settlers had carte blanche. Penn was the proprietor, lawgiver, planner, and absolute authority in Pennsylvania and had lofty ideals for how settlement was to occur. His was to be an industrious colony with "a due balance

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[196] Conzen, ed., *The Making of the American Landscape*, 115-18.
[197] David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 455-62.
[198] Ibid., 461.
[199] Ibid., 459.

between trade and husbandry."[200] Commerce and manufacturing would balance out the economic equation creating a rich and prosperous settlement. More importantly, he desired a population composed of members of all classes and social condition.[201]

To meet all of these goals, as well as provide himself with a sufficient annual income, Penn drafted an orderly plan of occupation for the land.[202] Philadelphia was to be the capital, a genteel "greene country towne" that exemplified his social and economic ideals. Beyond that, the land was to be divided into a series of townships organized in tiers radiating out from Philadelphia.[203] Penn intended for townships to be the major political units of the colony with people settled in small agricultural villages.[204]

Following Penn's death in 1718 William's sons, Thomas and Richard, assumed control of the colony and attempted to impose their own system of organization upon the land. Their influence is evident largely in the founding of backcountry towns such as York, Reading, Carlisle, and Easton to serve as trading and government centers.[205] These towns were strategically placed to allow easy access to courts and commercial activities.[206] They were planned communities intended to emulate the founder's plans for Philadelphia and fulfill his vision of an orderly, evenly dispersed population.

None of the settlement plans conceived for Pennsylvania ever came to fruition exactly the way the Penn proprietors envisioned them, however. Pennsylvania's open door immigration policy, coupled with the lack of adequate enforcement of the laws and

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[200] Ibid., 461.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Lemon, *Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania*, 50.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid., 130.
[205] Ibid., 132.
[206] Ibid., 133.

economic policies of the colony led many settlers to shape the landscape to suit their own needs, rather than follow the desires of the absentee proprietors.[207] As a result, many new immigrants to Pennsylvania arrived in Philadelphia and headed immediately for the Pennsylvania countryside. Here they carved out small family farms on the fertile soil and away from the watchful eye of the proprietary government. Occasionally they settled in nucleated villages, but these settlements were quite different from what Penn had envisioned.[208]

Landscape historian John Stilgoe has characterized the typical settlement of the Pennsylvania countryside as a hamlet. In his words a hamlet is "an unincorporated, haphazardly arranged collection of houses, a store or two, perhaps a blacksmith shop or the shop of some other craftsman, and a church building."[209] Stilgoe's definition applies primarily to places established during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and is in fact an accurate description of many settlements in the vicinity of Bowers, most notably Dryville and Kutztown. But these hamlets, and the forces that led to their creation are different from what occurred in Bowers later in the nineteenth century.

Still, Bowers fits Stilgoe's definition in some very important aspects. Even at its peak in the 1880s, Bowers only had one general store, a few craftsmen, and a single church. It shared many social, cultural, and economic characteristics with its eighteenth century counterparts. What is different, however, is Stilgoe's implication that these places were arranged "haphazardly" with no particular mind given to village planning.

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[207] Schweitzer, *Custom and Contract: Household, Government, and the Economy in Colonial Pennsylvania.*
[208] Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America, 1580 to 1845*, 80.
[209] Ibid.

The early hamlets in the Bowers area that retain their haphazard arrangement today were not affected by the rapid industrialization of the second two quarters of the nineteenth century (1825-1875) dramatically enough to alter their landscape in significant ways. Rather, Bowers is an example of a new type of hamlet, planned and shaped by the influx of new economies and new technology.

It seems, then that the cultural landscape of Bowers may be viewed as the logical extension of Stilgoe's hamlets. The founders and the residents held many of the same cultural and social beliefs as their eighteenth century counterparts, but adapted them to meet new economic needs and opportunities. These factors came together to create a distinctive type of settlement in eastern Berks County in the late nineteenth century. Similar landscape features and organizational patterns can be seen in other villages, boroughs and towns along the former East Penn Railroad such as Topton, Lyons, Alburtis, and Mertztown. Bowers serves as a good model for understanding these other places because of its small size and the relatively good state of preservation.

Figure 53: Looking south along Bowers Road.

Armed with a solid understanding of the historical evolution of the landscape and the importance of the cultural system in that evolution process, it is possible to determine what resources remain today that evidence these processes. A detailed survey has not been conducted as of yet, but several general observations are possible at this juncture.

1. The land surrounding the core remains primarily agricultural and is in keeping with historic land use patterns.
2. Spatial organization patterns including field size, location of industrial facilities, and building orientation are intact.

3. Historic circulation networks including roads and railroads remain in their historic courses.
4. Water features including the Saucony Creek, and millpond remain intact.
5. Boundary demarcations such as fencerows, and iron and wooden fences remain clearly visible and well preserved.
6. The spatial arrangement of the buildings has not been significantly altered. There have been no relocations or demolitions since the early twentieth century, with the exception of the railroad depot (demolished ?) and Henry Hamsher's marble shop (replaced by his home in the 1920s). One additional exception should be noted in the case of the Seibert barn. Unfortunately, a tornado destroyed the handsome 1802 structure in 1998, but its ruins remain.
7. The buildings are in relatively good condition. Some buildings have been clad with modern materials such as aluminum siding and cast stone, but the basic form remains intact. A few properties have lost decorative elements such as roof brackets and window moldings, but sufficient evidence exists for their proper restoration.

Figure 54: A typical farmstead on the edge of Bowers. Without sufficient preservation mechanisms in place, farms like these become prime targets for real estate development.

Identifying a resource and evaluating its historic significance as this work has done is only the beginning of the preservation process. Preserving rural historic landscapes requires the creative combination of quality research, community engagement, effective planning, and government regulation. Relying on precedent and good intentions as means powerful enough to preserve buildings and land clearly is not sufficient. Citizens must be willing take the steps necessary to protect and maintain the character and history of a place. They must be presented with opportunities to learn about the significance of their homes and how to properly care for them. Lastly, government agencies at all levels must provide legal, financial and political support to aid preservation efforts.

Rural landscapes across the United States continue to be threatened by numerous forces including suburban sprawl and insensitive development. The alarming rate at which the non-urban parts of our country have disappeared during the last few decades prompted the National Trust for Historic Preservation to publish a "how to manual" for rural conservation in 1989. "Saving America's Countryside" provides information about basic planning tools, innovative advocacy efforts, and case studies of successful preservation efforts. But the book accomplished more than simply providing grassroots groups with suggestions on their efforts. It raised the level of awareness about rural historic and environmental resources and showed how preservation goals could be met in a variety of innovative ways.[210] Many of the strategies included in the book could be employed in a place like Bowers.

"Saving America's Countryside" includes a number of case studies of successful rural preservation efforts from a variety of places around the United States. One case study comes from Oley, Pennsylvania, just ten miles away from Bowers. Oley was similar in many ways to Bowers. It is a small nineteenth century village in the center of a large agricultural area known as the Oley Valley. Settled by German immigrants in the early 1700s, the Oley Valley contains dozens of historic farms and landscape features with a small crossroads village in the center. The circumstances surrounding the development of each village were slightly different, but there are strong historical and contemporary connections between Bowers and Oley that make Oley a good model to draw from. In the late 1970s residents of Oley became conscious of and concerned about

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[210] Samuel N. Stokes and A Elizabeth Watson, *Saving America's Countryside: A Guide to Rural Conservation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

the vulnerability of the farmland in the township to development. Nearly all of the township's 8,000 acres were in use as farmland, and the area's proximity to Reading made this land susceptible to sprawling housing development. Oley was also faced with development pressures from limestone quarries that destroyed farmland and water supplies and held an obvious disregard for historic buildings.[211]

Oley Township's Board of Supervisors acknowledged the cultural and agricultural significance of the area in the early 1970s when they made retention of the "rural-like identity" of the Oley Valley a priority in their comprehensive plan. The plan did not define how that goal was to be realized, however.[212] The historic preservation movement was still in its infancy at the time, with the National Historic Preservation Act having been passed only five years earlier. The preservation of historic sites and buildings for their associations with the past had been occurring in the United States for over a century, but the formal protection mechanisms were still very new. More importantly, attention tended to be focused on individual buildings. Large-scale landscape preservation would not become a priority until the 1990s. Instead, Oley used land conservation measures to raise awareness and prompt the citizenry and local government into action.[213] Nevertheless, the citizens of Oley themselves were proud of their heritage and received their first bit of assistance from the historic preservation community in 1979. Enter the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

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[211] For the full case study see Stokes 51-57.
[212] Stokes and Watson, *Saving America's Countryside: A Guide to Rural Conservation*, 52.
[213] Ibid., 53.

The National Trust was in the process of formulating a series of test cases for rural preservation strategies and selected Oley as one of its subjects. The Trust worked with citizens and local government officials to develop an action plan that included resource identification, analysis, and protection measures.[214] The plan eventually led to the listing of the township's entire 8,000 acres on the National Register of Historic Places, one of the largest districts ever listed, and the establishment of a non-profit organization to oversee preservation efforts.[215]

Conservation efforts also focused on the protection of agricultural land and maintaining the farming lifestyle that had built the community over the previous 250 years. This included surveys of both the population and land use, in addition to water surveys that illustrated the negative impact quarries were having on the groundwater in the valley. One of the most alarming conclusions drawn from the survey was that the average age of Oley's farmers was above the national average. Planners feared that as the population continued to age, farms would be placed up for sale and developers would begin to descend on the area. In response, the entire township was designated an agricultural district, ensuring a level of state protection for the open land. [216]

The last step in the initial preservation planning process for Oley resulted in articulation of preservation and conservation goals in all levels of township policy, and the establishment of the Oley Valley Heritage Association. The Board of Supervisors appointed a special task force to revise the comprehensive plan for the township that

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[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid., 54-55.

included representatives of all major utility commissions, the planning commission, and members of the new non-profit organization. The Heritage Association was charged with raising preservation awareness and furthering documentation efforts for historic resources in the Oley Valley.[217]

The process undertaken in Oley provides many useful insights into how similar goals can be achieved in other Berks County communities. Historic buildings and open spaces are common features of the Berks County landscape. Many parts of the county have retained their historic houses, barns, fencerows, taverns, and industrial spaces, resulting in places in which the past is a very visible part of the present. In Bowers, eighteenth-century farmhouses stand in plain sight of nineteenth-century mansions, and water is still channeled through a 250 year old millrace. The landscape has changed little since the early twentieth century, save a small subdivision created in the 1960's outside the historic core of the hamlet.

Like Oley, many of Bowers' current residents have lived in the village their entire lives and a handful are descended from the area's earliest immigrant settlers. The buildings have changed slightly over time, being modified to accommodate the needs of citizens of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, but the land and the events it witnessed have remained within the living memory of the people. This is sure to change over coming years as the population continues to age and new homeowners who may not share the same intimate knowledge of the village's past replace the long time residents.[218]

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[217] Ibid., 55-56.

[218] Accurate statistical data is difficult to obtain for such a small area, as Bowers is included in aggregate Berks County census data reports for the year 2000. These observations are based on the author's long time familiarity with the area and informal interviews.

As the older population fades away, the risk of large farm parcels falling into the hands of housing developers escalates. One field on the periphery of Bowers has already been developed into suburban style housing, and the possibility of more is an imminent threat (Fig 55).

The importance of agriculture and historic resources to the character of Berks County has not gone unnoticed by government officials. The 1994 Master Plan for Berks County includes sections on agricultural land conservation and historic preservation, though the latter enjoys only a slight mention.[219] The emphasis on land conservation makes sense, however. The Berks County Conservancy, a non-profit conservation and preservation organization estimates that over 40% of the county's land area is in

Figure 55: New housing developments such as this one have begun to appear on the edge of Bowers.

[219] Berks County Planning Commission, "Berks County Comprehensive Plan Revision," (Reading, Pa.: 1991), 227-36, 308.

agricultural use.[220] Given this overwhelming statistic and the success Oley had in establishing a connection between past and present land use patterns, it is entirely appropriate to use existing land conservation policy as a basis for achieving preservation goals.

Obviously, risk and threat to historic resources should not be the only impetus for preservation efforts. Proactive planning can help minimize exposure to real or perceived threats and provide effective avenues for responding to development pressures and resource loss when they arise. Motivating the community to take and support such planning efforts without a threat to their personal property or way of life can be challenging, however. In Bowers, and other communities like it, the time for preservation discussions to occur is *now*. A large number of historic resources remain on the land and their history remains part of the oral tradition of the residents. Nevertheless, like in most places these discussions are unlikely to occur in Bowers unprompted. Preservation professionals and historians must be at the forefront raising awareness, gathering support, and affecting planning efforts to make preservation a reality. Below are a series of preliminary recommendations that hopefully will lead to the long-term survival of this historic place.

- **Institutional Assistance and Cooperation** – Very few small communities are able to undertake large-scale preservation and planning efforts without

[220] Berks County Conservancy, *Berks Conservancy: Productive and Scenic Farmland* [website] (Berks County Conservancy, [cited April 10 2003]); available from http://www.berks-conservancy.org/productive.htm.

support from established historical societies or conservation groups. Partnering with local civic associations such as the Bowers Lions Club or various groups at Christ DeLong's UCC, heritage organizations like the Kutztown Area Historical Society and the Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center could support preservation efforts through financial assistance, advocacy, and fundraising.

- **Community Education and Outreach** – The ultimate success of preservation rests with individual property owners. Residents must be educated about the significance of their resources and their preservation merits. More importantly, it must be demonstrated that preservation is not a financial burden, but rather a tool for increasing property values and taking pride in their community. Technical assistance is an equally important component of an outreach program. Homeowners must be advised on how to care for, preserve, and possibly restore their homes in a manner that is sensitive to the building's significance. Lectures, workshops, and printed material will contribute to the level of awareness of all of these topics. Organizations such as those listed above are well suited to sponsor these types of programs.
- **Resource Survey** – Undertaking a comprehensive survey of existing buildings, landscape features, and land use patterns will help to better understand the condition and significance of existing features. This study has identified areas of significance and defined geographic boundaries based on

the cultural, social, and economic history of Bowers. A survey of resources within these broad areas will help planners draw more precise boundaries for potential historic districts or other zoning considerations at the local, county and state level. Agricultural studies to better understand how the land is used and what the economic and social conditions of the area's farmers truly are, similar to those undertaken in Oley, will bring to light endangerments and threats and set priorities for conservation planning. Financial assistance may be available from the Pennsylvania Historical Commission for such surveys, and technical assistance may be available from the Berks County Conservancy.

- **Continued Historical Research** – This work has attempted to draw together information not previously researched or synthesized, but the task is far from finished. Continued research by citizens, heritage organizations, and scholars will contribute to the understanding of the significance of the area. This research coupled with a detailed resource survey will help determine the eligibility of the resource for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. National Register Bulletin 30, "Researching and Evaluating Rural Historic Landscapes" clearly defines methods for making such determinations and includes suggested research procedures.[221]
- **Local Government Planning** – The long-term preservation of a place depends heavily on the level of commitment expressed and implemented by

[221] National Park Service, "National Register Bulletin 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes," (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service).

government officials. Through amendments to existing zoning codes and comprehensive plans, Maxatawny Township can help ensure that growth occurs in responsible ways. Encouraging property owners, particularly farmers, to maintain their land as open space and resist subdivision through financial incentives and smart growth tools is as important as regulating land use through zoning. Making preservation a stated planning priority and adopting policies to that end will help require developers to consider cultural and environmental concerns during project development. "Saving America's Countryside" details a variety of zoning tools available to municipal governments such as sliding scale development, overlays, and conservation and preservation ordinances. A more detailed assessment of the resources within Maxatawny Township is required before any or all of these tools are adopted. What does not require more research, however, is the embracing of resource preservation as a guiding principle for future planning efforts. It is imperative that the Master Plan for Berks County be updated and that all planning documents at the municipal, county, and state levels complement each other.

- **Increased use of land conservation incentives** – Farmers in Pennsylvania have a great number of financial incentives for farmland preservation available to them. According to the American Farmland Trust (AFT),

Pennsylvania leads the nation in farm and farmland preservation.[222] The success of this effort is due entirely to state-wide initiatives such as the Clean and Green Program and the Easement Purchase Program. Clean and Green provides tax incentives by assessing land for its use value rather than prevailing market value. The Easement Purchase Program allows state, county, and local governments to purchase development rights from farmers whose land meets certain criteria.[223] These programs ease the pressure to subdivide for financial reasons and in the case of easements provide legal protection. Efforts in Berks County have been extremely successful thus far. In a press release on February 24, 2003, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture reported that of the 36 farms that received some level of protection that month, fifteen of them were in Berks County. Three were situated in Maxatawny Township.[224] Protecting the rural character of a place, however, requires that a critical mass of those eligible participate and that large expanses are protected, not simply scattered parcels. Additionally, preserving open space will contribute to the preservation of historic buildings in their historic contexts.

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[222] American Farmland Trust, *American Farmland Trust* [website] (2003 [cited April 10 2003]); available from http://www.farmland.org/news/020501.htm.
[223] Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, *Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture* [website] (2003 [cited April 10 2003]); available from http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us.
[224] Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, *Agriculture: Rendell Administration Announces $40 Million Commitment to Pennsylvania's Nation-Leading Preservation Program* [website] (2003 [cited April 10 2003]); available from http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us/agriculture/cwp/view.asp?Q=125345&A=11.

Figure 56: Longtime Bowers resident John Boone and his younger brother, 1940s. Private Collection.

Preserving rural landscapes can be a difficult and complex task, but it is one of growing national importance. The AFT estimates that between 1992 and 1997 the United States lost over six million acres of farmland to development; 134,000 acres in Pennsylvania.[225] Thankfully the situation is not as dire in the vicinity of Bowers as of yet. A map released as part of AFT's 2001 report "Farming on the Edge" shows that while farmland in Maxatawny Township is not currently threatened by high development pressures, the alarming rate of sprawl does not bode well for the area (Fig 57).[226]

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[225] American Farmland Trust, *American Farmland: Farming on the Edge: Contact Information* [website] (2003 [cited April 10 2003]); available from http://www.farmland.org/farmingontheedge/major_findings.htm.

[226] American Farmland Trust, *Untitled* [website] (2003 [cited April 10 2003]); available from http://www.farmland.org/farmingontheedge/map_pennsylvania.htm.

Preserving Bowers and other Berks County villages and hamlets, however, is about more than ensuring the long term protection of farmland. It is about fostering a sense of community pride and encouraging the responsible stewardship of a collective cultural inheritance. A commitment to preserving historic resources is often a great rallying point for communities; particularly in areas where the current population still maintains an active and intimate connection with the place. In Oley, listing on the National Register of Historic Places gave the citizens a reason to organize festivals and fairs, publish books, and convince their local government to make preservation a priority.[227]

The preservation of historic sites as manifestations of past people and events also contributes to a sense of identity for many present-day communities. In western Berks County, museums and heritage societies have helped several small towns reaffirm their distinctiveness and local identity.[228] As society has become increasingly globalized, more and more places have begun to look increasingly similar and people have become part of a larger, popular culture characterized by impersonal relationships and lack of individual identity.[229] Local history organizations can help people and places "re-embed" local identity by bringing to light places, objects, people, and events familiar to local residents and reasserting the distinctiveness of place.[230]

A museum or historical society in every town and village might foster a greater sense of local identity and community pride, but many would find themselves with

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[227] Stokes and Watson, *Saving America's Countryside: A Guide to Rural Conservation*, 55-56.
[228] William W. Donner, "Assimilation and Localism: Some Very Small Towns in Mass Society," *Sociological Inquiry* 68, no. 1 (1998): 77.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.: 74.

duplicative missions and in competition for resources. Approaching preservation on a small-scale regional level seems to be an effective way to affect a great number of resources in a consistent manner while concentrating financial resources in the hands of the most effective organizations. Several cultural preservation and educational events and organizations exist in the vicinity of Bowers and have clear connections to its past. The Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center at Kutztown University sponsors several annual programs that focus on the preservation of cultural traditions from the Pennsylvania German culture region such as foodways, music, language, and crafts. Their educational facility includes a nineteenth-century farmstead and relocated schoolhouse and these facilities are used to interpret the lifestyle of rural Pennsylvania German farm families in the 1800s. By broadening the scope of some of its programming to include preservation of the built environment as a topic, the Heritage Center would not only be preserving culture, but the ways it manifested itself on the land as well.

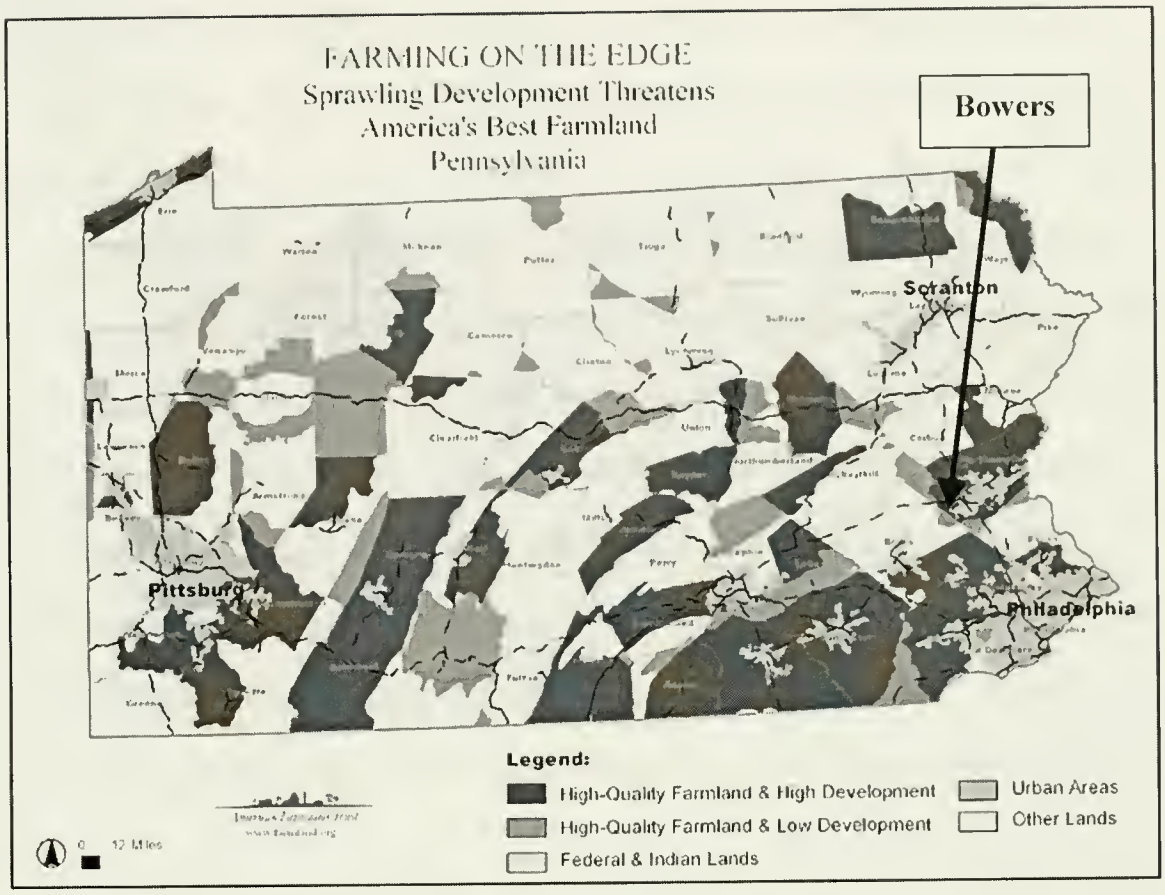
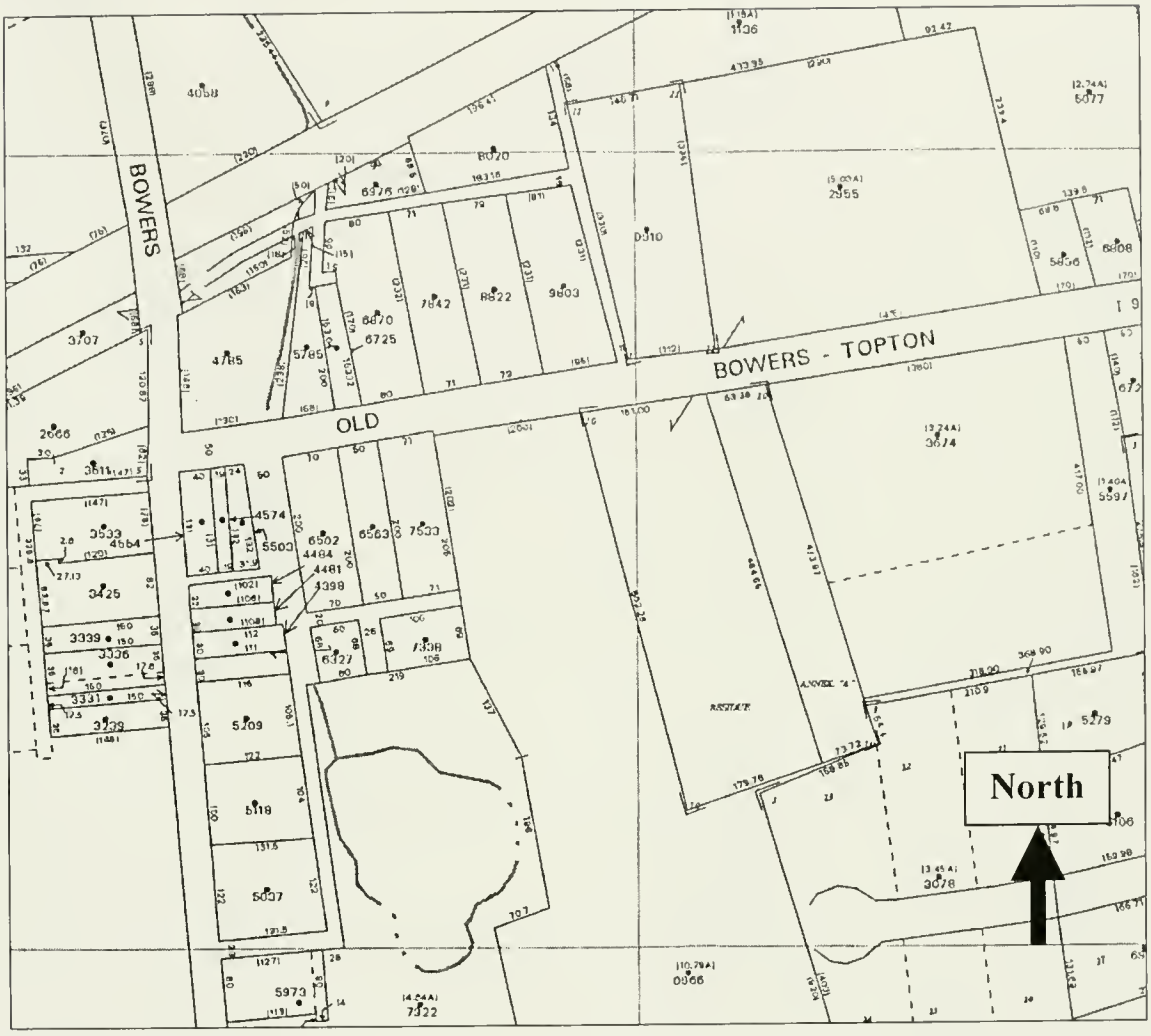


Figure 57: Endangered Farmland map produced by American Farmland Trust, 2001. Bowers is located in the green region in the northeastern portion of Berks County. Source: http://www.farmland.org/farmingontheedge/map_pennsylvania.htm.

The Kutztown Area Historical Society has the opportunity to play a similar role for the East Penn Valley specifically. Its geographic limitations include the geographic areas of three school districts surrounding Bowers. The Society is quite active and serves as a repository for artifacts and archival material significant to the history of the places within their geographic area. Recognizing that historic buildings and landscapes are also artifacts from the past, the Society should encourage preservation and protection for these artifacts through the promotion of research, advocacy, and education. There are many other institutions and organizations that share similar goals and objectives and which would be well suited to promote preservation in the area. The scope of this study did not allow for the full investigation of all these organizations, but regardless of the number participating it seems imperative that all organizations work together to meet common goals.

The cultural landscape of Bowers show the coming together of cultural, social, and economic factors in a way that was typical of many rural Pennsylvania German communities. The particular set of circumstances in Bowers resulted in the evolution of a distinctive place that retains many of the physical features that link the present with the past. Current residents value their heritage and the time is right for them to take action to preserve their physical environment. Through creative planning, long-term commitment to preservation, and guidance from preservation organizations, Bowers and its surroundings can be protected for the future.

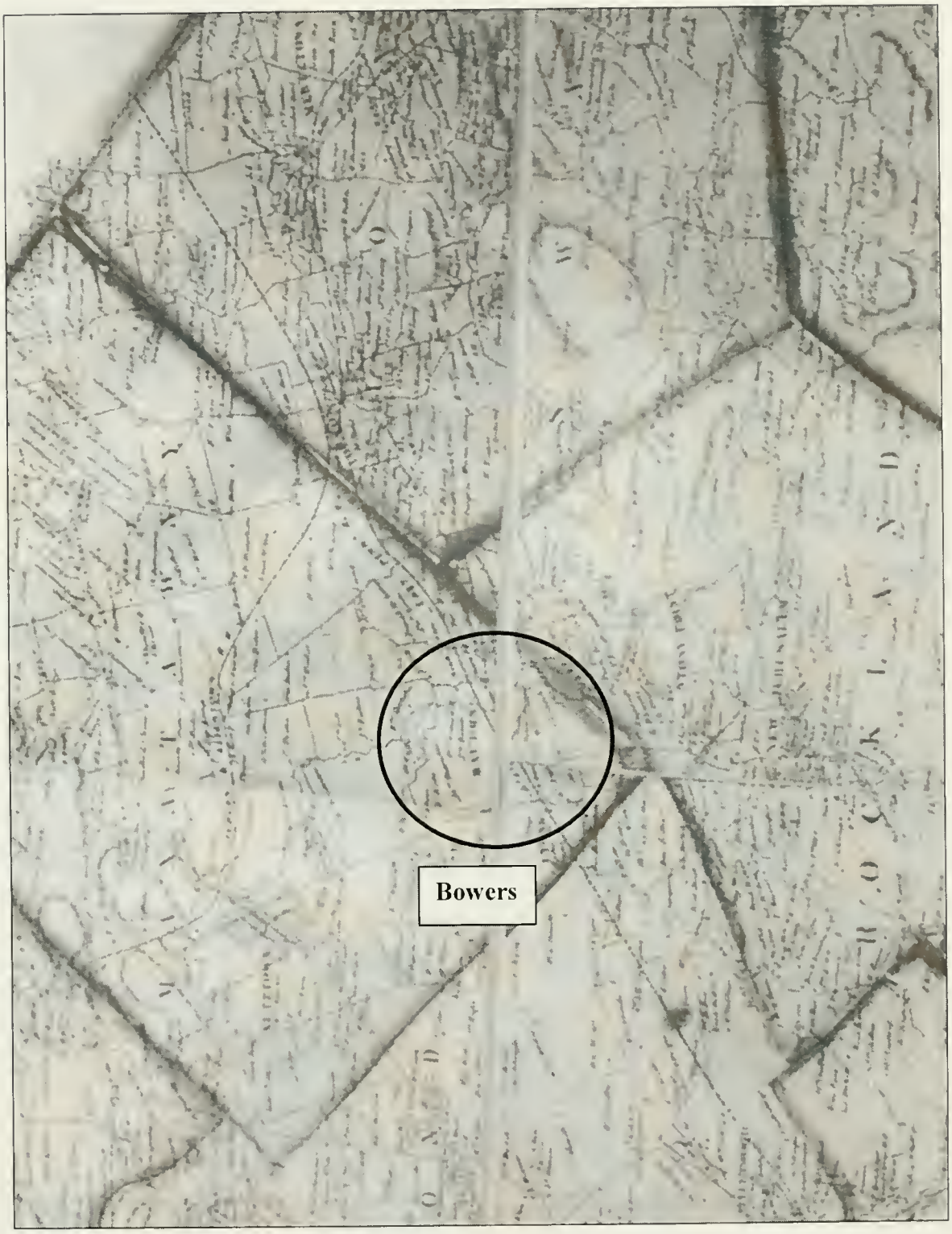
APPENDIX A: Maps



Map 1: 2002 Parcel of Bowers village core. See the table on the adjoingin page for parcel identification.

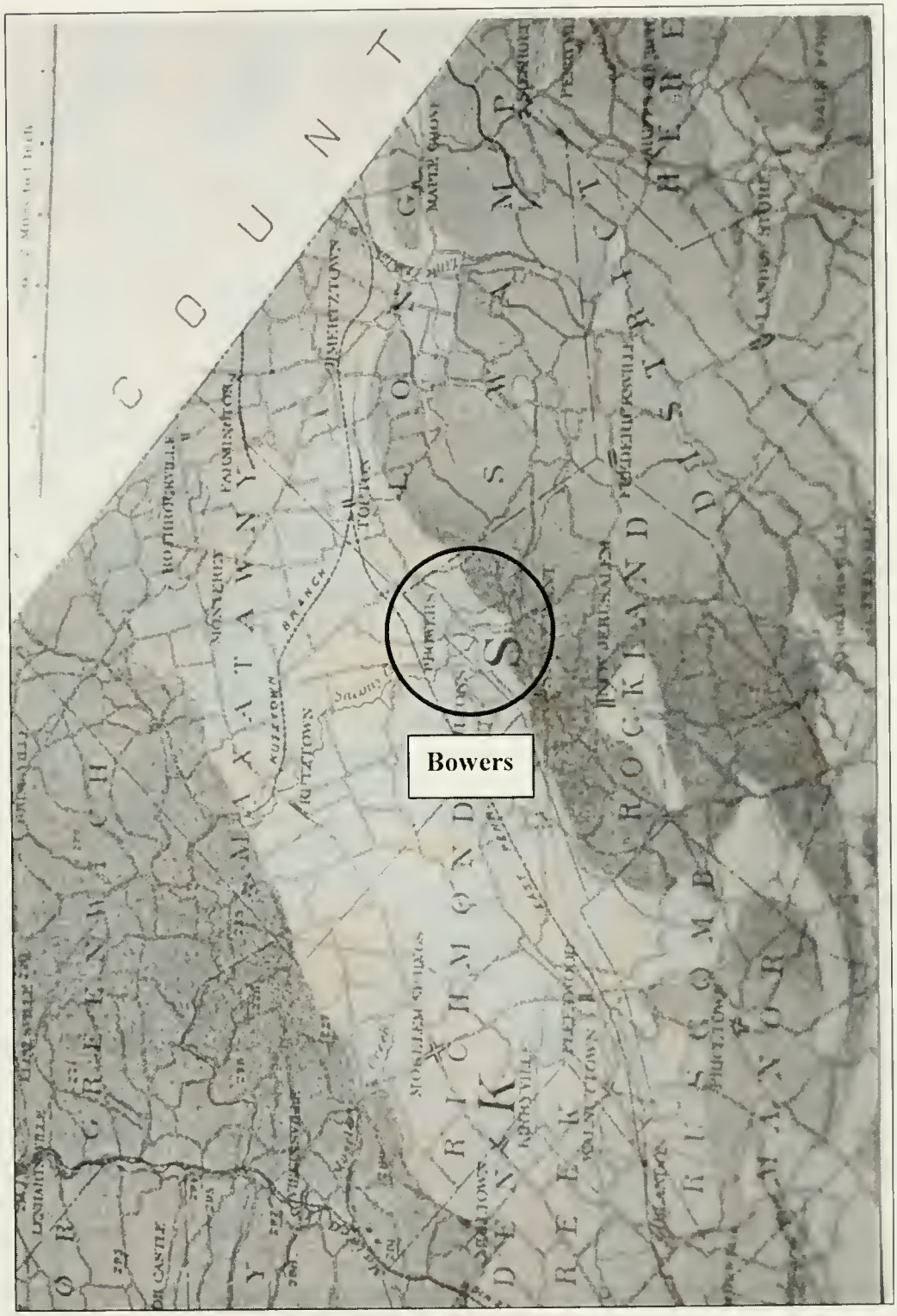
Legend for 2002 Parcel map

Parcel Number	Building/Site name
0910	Parsonage/schoolhouse
2666	Jonas Bower House
2955	Christ (DeLong's) United Church of Christ
3239	1874 Schoolhouse
3611	Creamery
3674	Bowers Union Cemetery
4484	Priscilla Seibert house
4785	Bowers Hotel
5118	Blacksmith shop
5785	Elijah Weiser house
6870	Daniel Schweyer house
7533	Aaron Bower house
7922	Millpond
9803	William Sharadin house



Map 2 : 1854 Map of Berks County by M.S. Henry and M.K. Boyer. Free Library of Philadelphia, Map Collection

Map 3: 1860 Map of Berks County by L. Fagan. Free Library of Philadelphia, Map Collection.



Map 4: 1884 Geological Map of Berks County from the Second Geological Survey of Pennsylvania. Free Library of Philadelphia, Map Collection.

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