CHAPTER II.

FRONTIER SETTLEMENTS—ADVENT OF THE BEESONS—FOUNDED OF UNIONTOWN—ERECTION OF FAYETTE COUNTY—INCORPORATION OF THE BOROUGH—LIST OF BURGESSES.

During the time the proprietories of Pennsylvania were contending for their rights with Cecilius Calvert and the province of Virginia there were other important matters transpiring west of the mountains. What is now the territory of Fayette county became the home of the first white settlers in the Monongahela valley. Wendell Brown and his two sons, Maunus and Adam, who settled here in 1751 or '52, and Christopher Gist who followed a year later, were the pioneer settlers west of the Allegheny mountains. From this time forward immigration began to flow into the Monongahela valley, and by 1768, some one hundred and fifty families, comprising some eight hundred souls, had found new homes in the Redstone settlement. This caused the proprietories some anxiety lest it cause an uprising on the part of the Indians whose claims to this part of the commonwealth had not as yet been extinguished. Commissioners were sent to warn the settlers off, and threatened those who refused to obey the warning with dire punishment, even death. Some removed but soon returned, not fearing an uprising of the Indians.

At a council held at Fort Stanwix, N. Y., in the fall of 1768, between the proprietories of Pennsylvania and the Six Nations the Indian claims to all the southwestern portion of the province was purchased, thus giving rise to the name “The New Purchase” to this section of the state. The title from the Indians being thus secured, a land office was opened in Philadelphia on April 3, 1769, and titles were entered on the terms of five pounds sterling per hundred acres, and one penny per acre, per annum, quit rent. This quit rent was soon abolished by law. At the same time Virginia was issuing titles in the same territory, but principally west of the Monongahela, at ten shillings per hundred acres. These titles, however, were considered valid by Pennsylvania, and within the first year after the opening of the land office 3,200 applications for land were filed, and for four or five years the tide of immigration was more or less steady.
Advent of the Beesons and the Founding of Uniontown.

When the prow of the good ship Kent, bearing her precious burden of 230 souls, plowed the waters of the Delaware in 1677, she bore to the shores of America some of the ancestry of the founders of Uniontown. Later, three brothers, Richard, Edward and William Beeson, emigrated from Lancashire, England, and landed at Baltimore in the year 1682, and vested lands in New Castle county, Delaware, now a part of the city of Wilmington. William soon returned to England. Richard, a grandson of the emigrant Richard, settled near the site of Martinsburg, Virginia, and erected a mill on Tuscarora creek, and here he was surrounded with the comforts of a refined home. His wife was Ann Brown and they were the parents of nine children, two of whom, Henry and Jacob, became the founders of Uniontown.

Henry Beeson was born near the present site of Martinsburg, Virginia, May 19, 1743, and in 1765 he was married to Mary Martin, a daughter of William Martin. He followed the occupation of farming until he concluded to cast his lot in the new settlement west of the mountains.

In the spring of 1768 a small family might have been seen silently wending their way along the Braddock road with a few pack horses loaded with blacksmith tools, bar iron, salt; dry goods, etc., together with a few articles of household goods as were essential to housekeeping in a new settlement. The leader of this little company, whose elastic step indicated the vigor of early manhood, could readily be distinguished by his garb as one of whose Christian faith was that of the Quaker belief. In the rear rode his faithful companion in whose bosom slept a babe of but a few months. Every step of this historic route bore reminders of the terrible disaster that had befallen the little army which had but a few years before traversed it. The rude bridges that had been thrown across the mountain streams were yet in place. The embankments forming the first battlefield of George Washington were still undisturbed. The heavy wheel-tracks were yet plainly visible. The dark sediment still remained in the beautiful spring where Colonel Dunbar had thrown his powder, and destroyed his ammunition after the defeat of General Braddock, and the whole route lay strewn with military trappings lost or cast away by the retreating army. The echo of the terrible war whoop of the savage and the crack
of the deadly rifle have scarcely died away where now reigns
the stillness of death. Upon reaching the crest of the mountains
overlooking the beautiful Monongahela valley, a panoramic view
of surpassing beauty lies before these delighted travelers. A short
distance to the north is seen the little column of blue smoke
floating above the Gist settlement. Away in the distance lies
the settlement of Colonel William Crawford, a former neighbor,
while still more to the west, shut out by the descending sky,
floats the flag of protection over the little garrison at Redstone
Old Fort or Fort Burd. More to the south lies the settlement
of the Browns, while here and there the curling smoke locates
the humble cabin of a frontier settler. This beautiful valley,
so recently the scene of carnage and bloodshed, and overrun by
scalping parties of savages marking their way with death and
devastation, now lies as calm as the sleeping infant. A hasty
glance over this grand view is all that time will allow. His
heart bounds with delight as he knows that his journey will soon
be at an end, and the eyes of the weary wife fill with tears of
joy as she contemplates spending the night under the sheltering
roof of the hospitable Gists, where before the sparkling backlog
they expect to relate the incidents of their journey.

If ever any one received a hearty welcome, Henry Beeson
and his family were the recipients of such the day they arrived
at the Gist settlement, and doubtless here they made their home
until a location should be made on which to establish their
home, which in those days consumed but little time. He soon
selected a tract of 255 acres of land lying immediately west of
what is now Morgantown street, and extending westward as
far as the residence of the late John Gilmore. He selected as
the site of his log house the beautiful location of the present
residence of Mrs. Lenora T. Niccolls on West Main street. On
this he erected a one-and-a-half story log building, and in a
short time after leaving the dear old home in Virginia he was
snugly settled in his new location. He set to work with com-
mandable zeal to clear a place for his spring planting, and his
wife, with no less prudence, traded her side saddle, for which
she had now little need, to a German woman for a cow for which
she had immediate use.

Simple indeed were the wants of these first settlers. Their
diet was principally hog and hominy. Johnny cake and pone
were the bread for breakfast and dinner, mush and milk was a
staple dish for supper. Butter was an article almost unknown, as bear's oil and gravy of fried meat supplied its place. Coffee was an unknown article in the frontier cabin. The green corn was rasped for cakes and the dried corn was beaten to hominy in a stump that had been hollowed by burning out the center. Fires were lighted by means of a flint and a scorched rag as tinder. All articles of clothing from cap to moccasin were manufactured within the household.

Henry Beeson soon determined to purchase also a tract of 333 acres lying contiguous on the east for which Thomas Douthet had made application June 4, 1769, but on February 17, following, had conveyed the same to Van Swearingen and he in turn, by indorsement March 15, 1770, conveyed the same to Henry Beeson. Soon after the purchase of the Douthet tract Mr. Beeson purchased another containing 275 acres lying contiguous on the east of the Douthet tract upon which Thomas Hatfield had already settled. This last tract was patented to Mr. Beeson on March 27, 1786, under the name of Beesontown.

The first tract taken up by Henry Beeson and on which he located his home, was entered by Henry Beeson the 14th of June, 1769, under the name of Mount Vernon. Of this tract he sold to his brother, Jacob, February 13, 1784, 251 acres, including his improvements made in 1768, and a patent bearing date of March 28, 1786, was issued direct to Jacob Beeson. Henry sold the residue of this tract, 104 acres, on the south, to William Campbell, February 13, 1788. This included the present site of the Continental No. 1 coke works.

The second tract, known as the Douthet tract, was patented to Henry Beeson under the name of Mill Seat, on account of the fact that Great Redstone creek traverses it in a northwesterly direction and afforded a most excellent site for a mill. Few of the pioneer settlers had the means even if they had the site, to build a mill, hence they were few and at great distances apart. Henry Beeson decided to erect a mill and selected as the site what is now the roadway of North Gallatin avenue between Peter and Penn streets, and the court records of April sessions 1774 show that this mill was patronized for twenty miles around. A full history of this mill is given elsewhere.

The establishment of a mill was a great incentive for settlements in the neighborhood and Mr. Beeson soon conceived the propriety of laying off a town. With this object in view, a plat
was laid off extending from Redstone creek on the east to the western limit of Mr. Beeson’s tract, now Morgantown street on the west. This plat comprised two streets and fifty-four lots. Owing to an angle in the principal street, caused by the contour of the ground, it was named Elbow street, and comprised forty-seven lots, nearly all of which had a frontage of seventy-two and a half feet and ran back one hundred and fifty feet; those on the north side from the creek to and including the Central Public grounds ran back to the creek.

The other street was named Peter street, in honor of a very worthy friendly Indian who then lived in the neighborhood. This latter street ran parallel with Elbow street, on the north, and comprised seven lots, all of which were on the north side of the street.

To announce the fact that Mr. Beeson had laid off a plat for a town for the accommodation of settlers who wished to locate in this neighborhood, on the 4th day of July, 1776, a day most memorable to every true American, the following notices were posted at the mill and other public places:

"**Beeson’s Town Lottery.**"

"Will be drawn on the 20th of this instant, July, at the mill of said Beeson between the hours of 10 in the forenoon and 4 o’clock in the afternoon.

The purchaser is to pay forty shillings for each Lott that contains one-quarter of an acre, and so in proportion for those that fall short or exceed, within six months from the day the lottery is drawn, also be subjugated to a ground rent of half a Dollar per annum per Lott, & to build thereon an house Twenty feet square with a Shingle Roof and a Stone or Brick Chimney, within the space of three Years from said Lottery. Also to show due order in Building and other necessary Regulations for the ease and Convenience of the Inhabitants. The subscriber Obliges himself to make the Adventurer a Title in due form as soon as Circumstances will with propriety admit, or any degree of Regulation ensue so as to Yield assurance to purchasers.

A plan of the whole will be seen on the drawing day, and Tickets given out if any remain on hand, otherwise those that choose to apply may be furnished with Tickets immediately."

July 4th, 1776.

Henry Beeson.
This mode of disposing of town lots by lottery was quite prevalent in the early settlement of the country. Instead of exposing them at public outcry to the highest bidder, tickets were numbered to correspond with the number of the lots and any one drawing a number would have the first opportunity to purchase that lot at a fixed price.

An original plat still in existence, shows that the lots were numbered consecutively on the south side of Elbow street from the eastern limit to Meadow alley, opposite the court house, and comprised ten lots. Returning to the eastern limit on the north side, beginning with No. 11 and including No. 20, comprising ten lots. Beginning at Meadow alley, on the south side of Elbow street, and running westward to now Morgantown street, included lots 21 to 34. Returning to the present site of the court house, on the north side of Elbow street, running west, included lots 35 to 47. The triangular lot between lots Nos. 20 and 35, caused by the angle in the street, with the addition of lot No. 35 was generously donated by Mr. Beeson for public purposes and was known as the Central Public Grounds, and it is on these the present court house stands. Peter street comprised lots 48 to 54 inclusive, all on the north side of the street. This original plat gives the names of the first purchasers or drawers of lots with the corresponding number of the lot, but from some cause very few ever received deeds for the same. Deeds for lots 23, 40 and 42 are recorded to John Collins in Westmoreland county, bearing date of March 7, 1780, and the consideration as 40 shillings; two of these, however, were subsequently conveyed by Mr. Beeson to other parties and the deeds recorded in Fayette county.

Henry Beeson subsequently laid off two additions to the original town in order, as he states, to accommodate the growing demands for lots. One of these additions comprised the lots on the east side of Morgantown street, south of Fayette street and including the old Baptist burying-ground, and those on the west side down to Foundry alley. The other comprised a number of lots on both sides of East Main street, east of Redstone creek. These with the original plan comprised the town as Henry Beeson founded it, under the name of "The Town of Union," to distinguish it from the township of Union. Mr. Beeson never recognized the name as that of Beesontown, but
on account of his being proprietor of the mill and the founder of the town it was popularly known as Beesontown.

As previously stated, few of the original purchasers or drawers of lots received deeds for the same, and Mr. Beeson changed his manner of disposing of them. The Revolutionary war and Indian invasions caused a lull in settlements west of the mountains for some time, and Mr. Beeson concluded to put the fixed price of five pounds, Pennsylvania money, on each lot with the following requirements. Each lot purchaser was to build, within two years from the date of purchase, one good substantial dwelling house of the dimensions of at least twenty feet square, with a good chimney of brick or stone, and to keep the same in good repair from time to time, otherwise the lot would revert to Henry Beeson. The purchasers were also obligated to pay to Henry Beeson, his heirs or assigns forever a yearly rental of half a Spanish milled dollar or the value thereof. The purchasers of lots were released from the ground rent by the payment of the sum of eight dollars in addition to the price of the lot.

It is important to note that upon gaining their independence, the American colonies established their own denomination of money, and that the Pennsylvania pound mentioned in the purchase of the lots in Uniontown was equal to two dollars and sixty-six and two-thirds cents, and the Spanish milled dollar took the place of the English coin.

**Jacob Beeson.**

Jacob Beeson, a brother of Henry Beeson and one of the founders of Uniontown, was born near Martinsburg, Virginia, on June 1, 1741, and was a tanner by trade. His wife was Elizabeth Hedges, a member of a distinguished family. It is related that he refused to accompany his brother, Henry, at the time of his migration to this section, but came out a year or two later and located on a tract of 251 acres which was patented to him under the name of "Pointer," April 1, 1786, adjoining that of Henry on the north, and here erected his log house just one mile west of town. Jacob soon purchased from his brother Henry, 251 acres of his Mount Vernon tract, including his improvements made in 1768, at the price of one dollar per acre, and moved into the house built by Henry, and established a tannery at a fine spring a short distance east of his house. This
tannery he conducted for many years; and the business was quite remunerative. He then built the present Gilmore mansion on the knoll overlooking the town and affording a fine view of the mountains in the distance. Into this Mr. Beeson moved his family and here resided until his death.

Jacob Beeson finding a demand for lots in the town of Union, concluded to lay off what he termed Jacob’s Addition. This consisted in extending the streets already laid off by Henry as far west as Jacob’s run, at the west end of the town, and comprised nine lots on the south side of Elbow street, west of Morgantown street and eight lots on the north side, and six lots on the north side of Peter street. These were of the same size and sold on the same conditions as those of the original town.

Jacob Beeson subsequently concluded to lay off what he called Jacob’s Second Addition, which comprised a row of lots on the west side of Cheat street, now known as Morgantown street, extending from South street to Foundry alley, from the present John T. Robinson building to the late residence of Dr. F. C. Robinson, inclusive, and also comprised four lots on the west side and nine lots on the east side of Mill street. Mr. Beeson very generously deeded to the inhabitants of Jacob’s Second Addition the piece of ground included between Jacob’s alley, now Arch street, South street and Strawberry alley to be devoted to any public useful purpose they may elect. On this piece of ground was erected the market house, and is now occupied by the City Hall, and is mentioned elsewhere.

The Erection of Fayette County.

The original counties of Pennsylvania were Philadelphia, Chester and Bucks, of which the western boundaries were indefinite. On May 10, 1729, the county of Lancaster was formed from a part of Chester, and on January 27, 1750, Cumberland county was formed from the western part of Lancaster, and on March 9, 1771, Bedford county was formed from the western part of Cumberland, and on February 26, 1773, Westmoreland county was formed from the western part of Bedford: each extending to the western boundary of the province, wherever that might be.

The project of forming the county of Fayette from the southern part of Westmoreland was agitated as early as 1781.
Washington county had already been formed from a part of Westmoreland, and to be shorn of more of her territory met with bitter opposition on the part of many of her inhabitants.

The burning of Hannastown by the Indians on Saturday, July 13, 1782, gave renewed impetus to the formation of a new county, and by an act passed by the General Assembly, September 26, 1783, Fayette county was erected from that part of Westmoreland bounded as follows: Beginning at the Monongahela river where Mason and Dixon's line intersects the same, thence down said river to the mouth of Speers' run, thence by a straight line to the mouth of Jacob's creek, thence by the Youghiogheny river to the forks of the same, thence up the southwest branch of said river, by a part of Bedford county, to the Mason and Dixon line, thence by said line to the Monongahela river aforesaid.

On February 17, 1784, an act was passed by which another portion of Westmoreland, which lay east and northeast of the Youghiogheny river, was added to Fayette territory, viz., all that part of Westmoreland county beginning at the mouth of Jacob's creek, thence up the main branch of said creek to Cherry's mill, thence along the road leading to Jones' mill until the same shall intersect the line of Bedford county, thence southwestwardly by the line of Bedford county aforesaid until the same intersects the Youghiogheny river, thence down the said river to the place of beginning.

The area of Fayette county is 830 square miles, or 531,200 acres, the population is given as 167,449, and the valuation as $94,000,000.

INcorporation of the Town.

Uniontown was incorporated as a borough by an act of the legislature of Pennsylvania, April 4, 1796, and was comprised within the following boundaries, to wit: Beginning at a willow bush, on the lower end of a small island in Jacob's run; thence south forty-three degrees and three quarters east, sixty-seven perches, to a white oak; thence south seventy-nine degrees and one quarter east, one hundred and five perches and six-tenths to a post; thence north twenty-nine degrees east, sixty-eight perches and five-tenths, to a wild cherry tree; thence north, eighty-seven degrees east, two hundred and thirty-four perches, to a white oak; thence north, three degrees west, sixty-two perches, to a white oak; thence north forty-nine de-
HENRY BEESON,
Founder of Uniontown.
degrees and a half west, one hundred and twenty-eight perches, to a stone; thence north, eighty-seven degrees west, one hundred and thirteen perches, to a white walnut on the east side of Redstone creek; thence up the same to a post opposite the mouth of Jacob’s run; thence up the same, with the several courses and meanders thereof, to the place of beginning.

In giving the course and distances in the above limits of the borough an error was made in the second course by stating the distance to be one hundred and five and six-tenths perches, when it should have read forty-four and seventy-six hundredths perches. In the re-incorporation of the borough in 1858, the same error was repeated.

The boundaries of the borough were extended by an act of the legislature of March 31, 1869, by which were taken in a portion of land on the south which included the old Henry Beeson mansion; and on the north, including what was known as Westburg; and on the west including a part of Union cemetery. Many additions have since been made to the borough, as mentioned elsewhere.

At an early day the borough was divided into two wards, known as the East and West wards, and subsequently into four wards, and on May 31, 1911, it was divided into eight wards.

**List of Burgesses of the Town.**

Upon the incorporation of Uniontown as a borough, April 4, 1796, General Ephraim Douglass was appointed as the first burgess, with Joseph Huston and Thomas Collins as assistants, and it is reasonably certain that from what is known of the character of General Douglass, he discharged the duties of this office “without fear or favor.”

From the fact that the borough records previous to May 16, 1842, were destroyed by fire at the time the old city hall was burned, the list of the burgesses of the town is necessarily very incomplete.

John McCleary was burgess in 1833, and carried on his occupation of repairing clocks and watches in connection with the duties of this office, which at this early date would not likely to have been onerous.

Peter Uriah Hook was elected burgess May 2, 1842. He was well known as a merchant, hotel proprietor and auctioneer. The salary of the office was ten dollars a year besides
the costs as allowed to justices of the peace. The salary was paid at the close of the official year.

Samuel McDonald, receiving 78 votes, was declared elected May 1, 1843. He was the proprietor of a book store, and was also the editor and proprietor of the Pennsylvania Democrat.

John H. Deford succeeded McDonald on May 6, 1844. He was a member of the Fayette county bar.

William Baily succeeded Deford May 5, 1845. He was a silversmith by trade and also a member of the bar.

Jonathan D. Springer succeeded Baily May 4, 1846. He was a merchant and also a justice of the peace.

Daniel Smith succeeded Springer May 3, 1847. He kept an iron store and served one term as postmaster and several years as a justice of the peace.

William Stumph succeeded Smith May 1, 1848. He was a tailor by trade and also filled the office of a justice of the peace. He was re-elected May 7, 1849.

Matthew W. Irwin succeeded Stumph May 6, 1850. He was a merchant of the town and served one term as postmaster.

William P. Wells succeeded Irwin May 5, 1851. He was a member of the bar. The amount of the fines for the year of his incumbency was $18.50. He received the usual salary of $10 for his year's services, besides his share of the costs collected at his office.

S. D. Oliphant succeeded Wells May 3, 1852; receiving 206 votes to J. H. Deford 2 votes. He was a member of the bar.

Daniel Smith was again elected May 2, 1853, and re-elected May 1, 1854.

E. P. Oliphant succeeded Smith May 7, 1855. He was a member of the bar.

Benjamin Franklin Hellen succeeded Oliphant May 5, 1856. His competitor was William Stumph, who received but one vote. Of this election the newspapers stated—"There were but seventy votes polled—all by Know-Nothings. The Democrats made no nominations, and no Democrats voted. The Know-Nothing ticket was nominated secretly last Saturday. Of the eight persons elected seven were formerly Whigs and the other was for a time, a Democrat. Of the candidates for town council Rice G. Hopwood, Amzi S. Fuller and S. D. Oliphant each re-
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received one vote. The papers failed to mention who cast these single votes.

C. E. Swearingen succeeded Hellen May 4, 1857. He was a merchant.

Jesse B. Ramsey succeeded Swearingen May 3, 1858, apparently without opposition, and was re-elected May 2, 1859, and again May 7, 1860, and apparently without opposition each time.

James G. Johnston succeeded Ramsey May 6, 1861. He was elected over two competitors. All three of the candidates were members of the bar. Mr. Johnston was also editor of the American Standard.

Armstrong Hadden succeeded Johnston May 5, 1862, receiving 122 votes to his competitor, James McKean, 121 votes. Mr. Hadden casting his vote for his competitor. Mr. Hadden had served three terms as postmaster.

Thomas A. Haldeman succeeded Hadden May 4, 1863. He was a blacksmith by trade and also served as a justice of the peace.

G. W. K. Minor succeeded Haldeman May 2, 1864, and was re-elected May 1, 1865. He was a member of the bar.

J. Duncan Ramsey succeeded Minor May 7, 1866. He was a member of the bar.

Marshall N. Lewis succeeded Ramsey May 6, 1867, and it appears that he held the office until 1873, when he was succeeded by John Holmes. Mr. Lewis was a saddle and harness maker by trade, and filled the office of a justice of the peace for several years.

Eli Hewitt succeeded John Holmes February 16, 1875. He was a member of the bar, and was re-elected February 15, 1876. He was also a telegraph operator.

George W. Foulke succeeded Hewitt February 20, 1877, and held the office three terms. He was a miller by trade, and filled the office of borough weighmaster for several years.

Alexander McClean succeeded Foulke February 17, 1880, and was re-elected February 15, 1881. He was a harness maker and buggy trimmer by trade.

Harry F. Detwiler succeeded McClean February 21, 1882, re-elected February 20, 1883, and again February 19, 1884. He was a member of the bar.
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John Bierer succeeded Detwiler February 17, 1885. He was a member of the bar.

Jesse Reed succeeded Bierer February 16, 1886, and served ten terms continuously, when the law was changed, not allowing a re-election. He was a miller by occupation.

Edgar Boyle succeeded Reed February 16, 1897 and filled the office for a term of three years.

Frank Rutter succeeded Boyle February 20, 1900.

Henry O. Francis succeeded Rutter February 17, 1903.

R. D. Warman succeeded Francis February 20, 1906. He was a member of the bar.