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COLUMBIA COUNTY / MONTOUR COUNTY

Looking Back, Looking Forward

Early Settlers of Sugarloaf Township

By Meg Geffken

Johannes (John) Goddard (Godhard, Gothard, Gottard), reputed to be one of the founders of St. Gabriel in the Pines Church and the pioneer patriarch of Sugarloaf Township, is interred, according to Daughters of the American Revolution records, in St. Gabriel Cemetery in an unmarked grave. His service during the Revolution was not specified. Due to his age at the time of the Revolution (Goddard was born in 1712 so he would have been in his 60s during the war), it is assumed that he helped supply the troops with food and horses and was considered a patriot.

After the Revolutionary War, Goddard was living in Northampton. J.H. Battle's "The History of Columbia and Montour Counties, Pennsylvania," written in 1897, notes: "Revered John Goddard, his son-in-law, William Hess, and several of their neighbors became dissatisfied with their farms in Northampton County. Intrigued by reports of potentially great farmland, verdant forests, and bountiful creeks from Ezekiel Cole, a former Revolutionary War Ranger, Goddard, William Hess, and his grandson, together with William Coleman, Mattias Rhone, and Benjamin Coleman, all neighbors, came to that section, explored the land thoroughly, and decided to buy it. The price they paid made the average \$2 per acre. The following year, 1792, the actual migration occurred. The large party came by way of the Susquehanna and Lehigh Road to Berwick, thence along the river to Bloomsburg and up Fishing Creek to their destination. Tracts of land were later divided into 250-acre farms."

It is rather unique that annals report the contribution of the women – Goddard's granddaughters were essential to the establishing of the new community. Imagine the fortitude required to leave a comfortable, established home, travel Indian trails to a "new land," build homes, forage for food, create gardens, and birth and raise children. Just to survive would be a challenge. The original settlers of northern Columbia County must have been strong, determined individuals.

After the death of his wife Sophia in 1784, Goddard, then

72, moved to the home of his oldest daughter, Anna Maria Godhard Frietrich. Unfortunately, she died in 1785, one year after her mother. Goddard then moved to the home of his granddaughter Anna Maria Frietrich Laubach, the wife of Christian Laubach. At the time of his death in 1797 at the age of 85, Goddard was still living with the Laubachs in Sugarloaf. His last will and testament proclaimed him to be "of sound mind and feeble body."

St. Gabriel Church records list Goddard as one of the original members. All records note Goddard's affiliation with the Church of England, the Episcopal Church. Most authorities agree that Goddard was a member of the Established Church of England, and his family were attendants of their "Delaware home" of the Episcopal Church. As early settlers of northern Columbia County, the Goddard family probably continued the practice of holding religious services in their homes in their new community. An early history of St. Gabriel states, "Services were held in the homes of established community members like Ezekiel Cole and also outdoors in the Pine groves." A plaque on the door of the church states it was established in 1793. However, construction on the original "log church" did not start until 1810. The church was completed in 1812 and dedicated in 1828.

Since Goddard died in 1797, it seems logical to assume that he presided over services in the homes of his sons-in-law, grandchildren, friends and neighbors during his lifetime, but never officiated at a service in the church which was built on land donated by his sons-in-law William Hess and Ezekiel Cole.

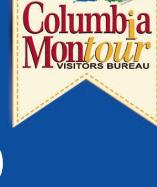
Although the location of Goddard's original home in Harrison (original name of Sugarloaf Township) cannot be ascertained, several accounts mention him as one of the original settlers. Goddard – the man and the myth – was a patriot, pioneer and patriarch. His leadership and the spiritual and financial support he meted to his children and grandchildren earned him the respect of his family, friends, neighbors and community.

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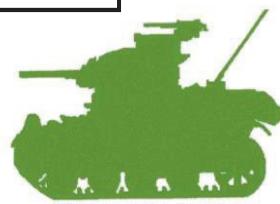
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