

# Shannock Landmark Razed After 100 Years—

# Its Walls Enveloped History

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Staff Representative

**RURAL VALLEY** A truly historical landmark was razed recently — a property boasting its birth before the time of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War. The building, located on Main St. next door to the Presbyterian Church, held the very first store in Rural Valley, the original name of Rural Valley.

It was owned and operated by George Gourley and, typical of the era, its inventory embraced products of every description.

This month, a ledger owned by Mr. Gourley, was found by his granddaughter, Mrs. Ethel Miller of Whittier, California. Mrs. Miller, who has been visiting with friends in Rural Valley this summer, is the last survivor of the Gourley family and found the ledger while going through some effects which have been stored here.

The first entry, written in a strong, legible hand, was dated December 10, 1857 and was the account of Thomas Grimes, who had purchased a pair of shoes for \$1.50. It is evident from the entries, that people bought only the bare necessities and ready made articles were almost unheard of. They were also the most expensive. For instance, on December 10, 1857, C. W. Hamilton had on his account "one fine hat — \$2.00" and on December 22, 1857, a pair of shoes were sold to Thomas McCauslin for 1.75. Other shoes throughout the ledger ranged from 37 cents to \$2.00 a pair.

Household goods sold slightly cheaper than today's counterpart. On Dec. 6, 1858, Joseph Rhea bought 16 yards of carpet at 35 cents a yard — total \$5.60. William Sell might have been setting up housekeeping in April of 1858 for his account read: 1/2 doz. tin cups, 37 cents; 1 coffee pot, 38 cents; 1 set of knives and forks, \$1.25; one wood bucket, 25 cents. Another entry read: 1 fine lamp, 40 cents and 2 window blinds, 30 cents.

Mr. Gourley was also druggist for the area and dispensed medicines and pills for humans and animals. Many accounts carried the notation "1 box worm candy, 25 cents."

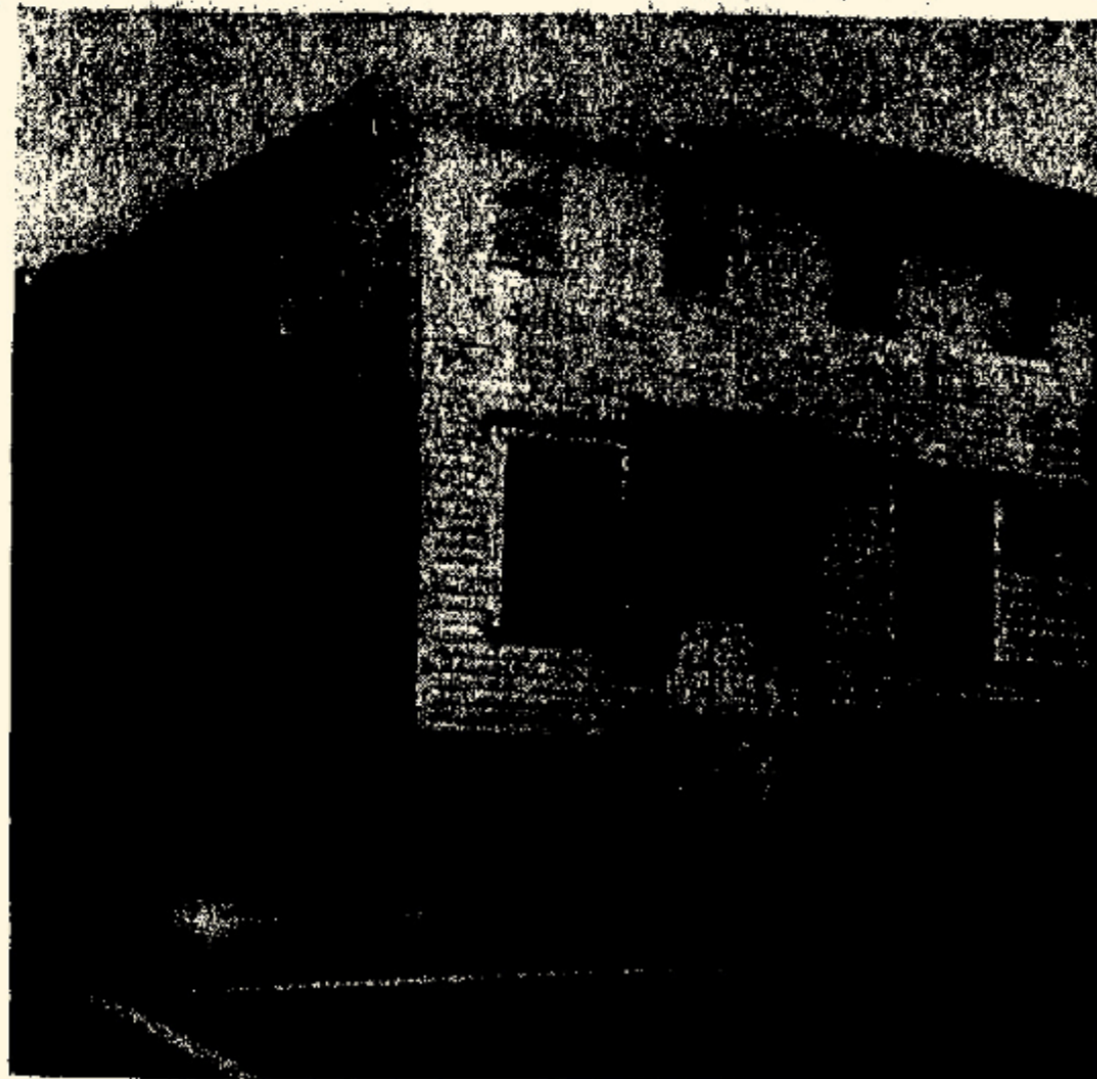
In 1858, Hugh Williamson bought a bottle of castor oil for 12 cents and James S. Peters invested in a bottle of liniment for 25 cents. The ledger doesn't say whether it was for man or beast. Several entries simply state one box pills 25 cents. One oz. of camphor cost 6 cents and a bottle of vermifuge was a quarter.

Evidently education was not completely forgotten for on Dec. 3, 1858 John McFarland ordered three Osgood spellers, total cost 38 cents. One Osgood first grade reader sold for 12 cents and an Arithmetic for 25 cents. Paper was bought one, two or three sheets at a time for 1 cent a sheet. Ink was 6 cents a bottle.

Dry goods moved well according to Mr. Gourley's account book and the ladies plied their talents toward creating the latest fashions. On January 9, 1958 Robert McMeans' family were probably going to do some sewing for his account read: 7 yds. muslin, 56 cents; 2 yds. gingham, 56 cents; 3 yds. lace, 30 cents; 1 1/2 yds. ribbon, 18 cents; 1 yd. black silk, \$1.00; 3 yds. velvet trim, 19 cents; 1 pr. puff combs, 8 cents.

Mr. McMeans had sold the storekeeper 51 pounds of lard and received 10 cents a pound for it. This amount was deducted from his bill.

In most cases, very little cash changed hands, for whenever an order was bought, some kind of



OLD LANDMARK . . . century-old building

farm product was sold and the amount very carefully noted in the ledger. Besides lard, meat, and grain, feathers and rags brought additional revenue. Samuel Casady received \$2.40 for feathers — how many is not shown.

On May 28, 1858, Anthony Galaher was paid \$14.00 for 50 pounds of wool. Rags sold for 3 cents a pound.

The most sought after items were tools and supplies that would be found in today's hardware store. A plow point cost 50c, a whet stone 10c, a grass scythe \$1.00. James Peters purchased three rakes at 20c each while a day later, Mr. Henry Yount paid 63c for a snath.

James Cristy in 1858, paid 12c for a Barlow knife and in the same year, John Stoops paid 50c a pound for gunpowder. Mr. Gourley also had plenty of supplies for the care and maintenance of farm animals — halters, bridles, horse collars, milking buckets, stools, etc. were common purchases.

Sometimes items quite rare appeared in the ledger. On May 19, 1858 Harmon Rearick purchased one dozen herring for 25c and on August 26 of the same year, 3 mackerel were sold to S. K. Shaw for 25c. There is only one entry in the entire book for spirits and it read — 2 gall. whiskey — \$1.00.

At the beginning of the fall of 1858, butchering season was in full swing and many accounts carried credits at this time. Mrs. McKelvey sold the store 49 1/2 pounds of bacon and received 8c a pound for it. Samuel Marshall got 4c a pound for 66 pounds of beef, Alex Mc-

Intyre, 8c lb. for a calf side, and William McGaughey was apid 5c a pound for 132 lbs. of pork. Many customers received credit for hauling items to and from Kittanning.

Twenty-five cents was paid to Y. Schrockengost on August 10, 1858 for hauling 11 barrels of eggs to Kittanning — an all day journey! Thomas Grimes earned 62c for 25 bu. of coal and whatever he used for his hauling must have only held 25 bu. for this is the only amount which appears.

It is interesting to note that the most significant price differences occurred in lumber, which the first store sold in addition to every other conceivable item. Samuel Hamilton, in 1858, made the following purchases:

- 54 studding — 18 ft. long — \$9.72
- 27 joint — 16 ft. long — \$4.32
- 30 rafters — 10 ft. long — \$3.00
- 600 ft. lath — \$1.50
- 12 pieces timber — 276 ft. long — \$11.50

The Rural Valley Lumber Company gave us comparative prices for today:

- studding — \$90.72
- joists — \$40.32
- rafters — \$28.00
- lath — \$6.00
- timber — \$44.16
- Total — \$209.20

This would have put up a two story building 16 x 30. J. L. McKelvey of the lumber company had a special interest in the ledger as the Mrs. McKelvey mentioned earlier was his great grandmother.

Talking to various persons in Rural Valley, we have learned that

in addition to running the store, George Gourley was also postmaster in 1861. He married Anna Earhart of Smicksburg on September 27, 1860, and died in 1894. He is buried in the Rural Valley Cemetery.

It is not known what transpired immediately after his death, but part of the building was moved across the street to the lot where Charles Schall now lives. Later on another section was moved, leaving the part that was razed this month.

The Rural Valley Presbyterian Church is the present owner of the lots. Many people can remember when a dance hall was in place of the store; others when it was a hotel and a hardware.

The parents, grandparents, and great grandparents of many present day residents are listed as customers of the first store. Some of them were: Barney Huber, Elizabeth Rarick, James Peters, Robert McMeans, Rev. W. Morgan, a Presbyterian minister; Josua Hall, S. H. Kenley, Jacob Espy, William McIntosh, Alexander Dixon, John Neal, John Templeton, Adam Beer, Reuben Brown, and John Moore.

Another unusual item was dated March 29, 1858. Mrs. S. H. Kenley had paid state and county taxes in the amount of \$6.75 and school tax \$7.97. The school was located on the lot where Joe Pinazotta now lives and was later moved up on the hill, the present site of the Rural Valley Cemetery. Mrs. Kenley had sold the storekeeper 184 lb. of bacon for 6 1/2 cents a pound, so only \$2.76 was exchanged.

The ledger now belongs to T.C. Templeton, one of the oldest barbers in Armstrong County. Last month marked his fiftieth year as barber in Rural Valley. Perhaps the most amazing feature of the book is the extremely fine shape it is in — the pages are barely yellowed and except for a few pages in the rear of the account, the ink is clear and legible. Mr. Gourley was the possessor of a fine hand and kept an exceptional set of records.

The two pictures show the original building and as it was just before being torn down.

## Seek To Ease TB Admissions

HARRISBURG (AP) — Admission restrictions for tubercular patients at the Pittsburgh State Hospital would be eased under a plan submitted in the Senate by Sen. Joseph D. Ripp (D-Allegheny).

The hospital now is restricted to care of needy persons actually afflicted with tuberculosis.

Ripp introduced a bill Monday night proposing that the hospital threat all persons, indigent or not, and including suspected cases of TB.

## Parkway Fatality

PITTSBURGH (AP) — A sports car crashed into the Edgewood Bridge abutment on the Penn-Lincoln Parkway Monday night, killing the driver, Alexander Mylonas, a member of the Carnegie Tech faculty.

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