Part III
Putting down Roots

As Pennsylvania's frontier gave way to settled communities, and circuit riders in each of our predecessor denominations began to minister on a regular basis, what we now think of as traditional congregations began to develop. Four of those congregations erected church buildings the locations of which are now recognized as conference historic sites.

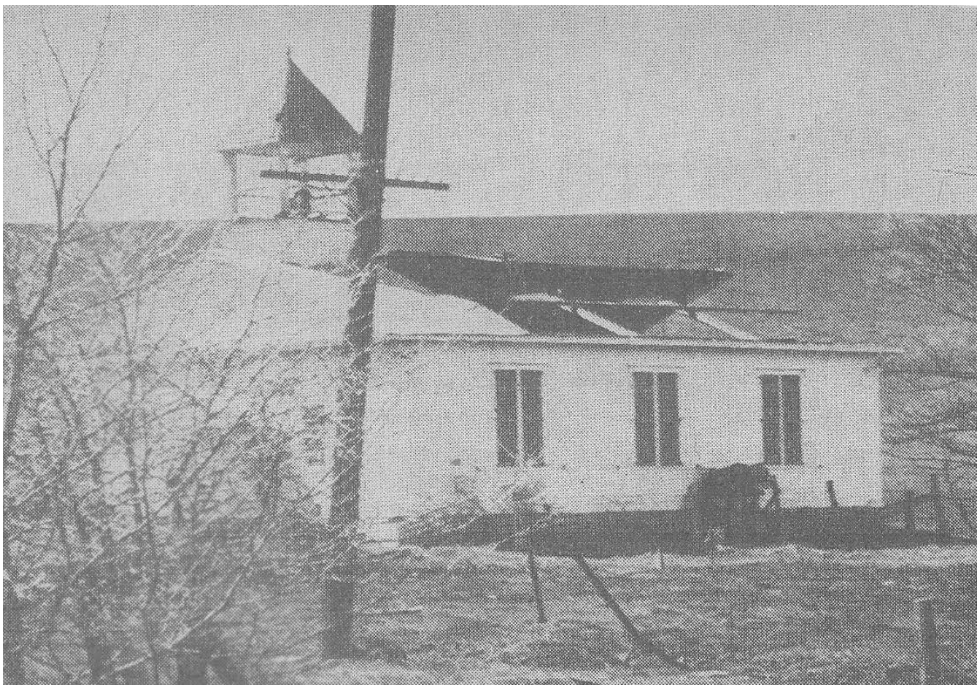
Paradise Church Site (1839) in Centre County, location of one of the earliest church buildings (1831) and most significant General Conferences (1839) of the Evangelical Association, became victim of the "putting down roots" when virtually the entire congregation decided to move west to put down roots in Illinois – but the site has been memorialized as a tribute to its role in the development of the denomination.

Lymansville Church (1842) in Susquehanna County is the oldest existing church building in the former Wyoming Conference and has been fully restored. It continues to host weddings and special services as authentically restored – that is, without power or heat. Lymansville actually no longer exists as a community and was one of those sites where persons put down roots only to see the location bypassed by later development.

Carbondale First Church (1852) in Lackawanna County was the largest and finest church building in the entire region when it was chosen to host the 1852 inaugural meeting of the Wyoming Conference. In the early nineteenth century, Carbondale was the site of the first deep vein anthracite coal mine in the United States and a major transportation center – developed by the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, and later a major terminal on the Delaware and Hudson Railroad. As people put down roots in this growing town, so did the Methodist Church.

Brick Church (1853) in Duryea, Luzerne County, is so-named for being the first of such construction in the entire region – and that original solidly-built edifice is still in use today. At the juncture of the Lackawanna and Susquehanna rivers, Duryea was a natural location for early settlers to put down roots and devlop a community. The congregation was founded by Anning Owen, visited by Francis Asbury, and became the mother congregation of all the Methodist work between Scranton and Wilkes-Barre.

Chapter 11
Paradise Church Site 1839



Paradise Church, 1963
Penn Township, Centre County

The 1839 General Conference of the Evangelical Association held at Paradise Church was arguably the most significant to date in the history of the young denomination. The actions taken at that General Conference effectively changed the loosely connected followers of Jacob Albright into an organized denomination with well-defined structure and built-in accountability.

Hitherto the *Discipline* included no statements defining or limiting the power of General Conference, so that it had in effect unlimited power to alter the doctrines and government of the denomination. This body adopted a *Constitution* defining the power of future General Conferences and stating that the articles of faith could not be altered by any future assembly.

This body also restructured the denomination physically, beginning the notion of well-defined conferences. The Evangelical Association had previously divided itself into Eastern and Western geographic areas, but now three specific conferences were defined – the East Pennsylvania Conference (which extended into New York), the West Pennsylvania Conference (which extended into Maryland and Virginia), and the Ohio Conference (which extended into Indiana, Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin) – with provisions made for additional divisions/conferences as needed.

One particularly important action involved defining the powers of a bishop and the election of John Seybert as the denomination's first episcopal leader with that title. Albright had never taken that title, and after his death oversight had fallen to the presiding elders of each district and the person elected president to preside at each General Conference. The *Discipline* had previously allowed for the re-assignment without restriction of district superintendents and preachers during the interval between annual conferences. Now it was specified that a bishop's power to re-assign applied only within that particular conference.

In addition, a delegate system was introduced for General Conference. Previously, each elder was entitled to a seat and vote at General Conference. Now each annual conference would be entitled to one delegate for every four elders in that annual conference. Other changes to the *Discipline* included adding sections entitled "Of selling and using Spirituous Liquors" and "Of Slavery."

The building pictured above, however, was erected in 1869 as the second and last church building on the site and was not the actual structure in which the 1839 General Conference met. The first building on that site was erected in 1831, and its history as one of denomination's earlies buildings – not to mention the area's direct connection to Jacob Albright – is almost enough to consider the location a conference historical site apart from the 1839 General Conference.

Penns Valley in Centre County is the valley immediately west of the Evangelical Association's stronghold in Union County. A pass through the mountains takes present route PA 45 from Union County to Woodward at the east end of Penns Valley. This was the pass used by Albright and his co-workers as they sought to spread the gospel to the German settlers to the west.

John Wise (1765-1844) in the village of Woodward was the first in Penns Valley to receive the preaching of Albright. His home became a regular preaching stop, and a great revival broke out there in 1806 that spread the Evangelical work westward throughout Penns Valley and north into Brush Valley. Converted in that revival was John Adam Hennig (1757-1839), whose home became another preaching place for Jacob Albright and whose land hosted great Evangelical camp meetings in the 1820's and in whose house was held the General Conference of 1830. The stories of both Wise and Hennig and their families are given in various Evangelical Association histories.[i]

Millheim, the largest village in Penns Valley, is situated about seven miles west of Woodward. The great revival of 1806 extended to this place, and the first official class in Penns Valley was organized at Millheim in 1806. In 1811 a second great revival occurred in Penns Valley and separate classes were formed at Woodward, Mussers (4 miles southwest), and Potters Plains (near Centre Hall). The class at Mussers became quite strong, and an Evangelical Association church building was erected there in 1831 – the first one in Penns Valley, and one of the earlier ones in the entire denomination. It was that building that hosted the General Conference of 1839.

John Sabastian Musser (1808-1887), a local preacher and farmer, gave the land for the church building had oversaw the work there for a number of years. In 1835 he became an itinerant and served in that capacity for 26 years. He is buried in the Paradise Church Cemetery. Because he gave the land and supervised the building of both the first and second church structures, the Paradise Church is also known as Mussers Church.

One ironic twist about the Paradise Church and the 1839 General Conference involves the great missionary emphasis at that gathering and that Seybert had spoken in the area a little while before the General Conference about the advantages of moving west to Illinois both for material improvement and to aid in the westward spreading of the gospel. Immediately after the General Conference, a group of 48 persons from Paradise Church migrated to Illinois. This proved to be a loss from which the rural church never recovered. The story of this migration is given in the endnotes for Part III.[ii]

While Evangelical churches in the larger nearby communities of Millheim and Coburn continued to grow, the congregation at Paradise eventually dwindled away and regular services there were discontinued about 1928. Because of the historical significance of the site, the second building was preserved and used occasionally until 1963, when a windstorm tore off much of the roof and rendered the building unsalvageable. The picture at the opening of this article was taken following that storm.

In 1974 a stone marker with a cross was erected in the midst of the existing cemetery where the church had stood, with the actual steps of the second church building used as part of the monument.

Paradise Church Site
monument dedicated in 1974

Chapter 12
Lymanville Church 1842

Lymanville Church, while being restored in 2010
Springville Township, Susquehanna County

This is the oldest remaining church building in the former Wyoming Conference, as the few such structure constructed prior to 1842 have long since been replaced or abandoned and razed. The building has been restored and is maintained by the Lynn-Lymanville Community Church.

Methodism entered Springville township, Susquehanna County, sometime before 1816. Meetings were held in private homes, barns, woods (when the season would permit), and in the schoolhouse as soon as it was built. Preaching services were irregular until 1830. About 1840 a committee was formed to supervise the erection of a church building, which was dedicated in August 1842 as "The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Springfield." The land had been given by William Harkins, and most of the members and area residents were members of the extended Lyman family.

As the population shifted, the community of Lynn developed at a crossroads 1.5 miles to the northeast. A class was organized at Lynn about 1880, and a church building was dedicated there in 1883. In the 1950's, the two congregations merged and used the Lynn building, which had power and heat, in the winter and the Lymnaville building in the summer.

By 1998, attendance had fallen to the point where the Lynn-Lymanville United Methodist congregation was declared discontinued. The remaining members were permitted to purchase the Lynn building and continue as the Lynn-

Lymanville Community Church. The Lymanville property, however, contained a reversion clause in the original deed – and the property legally belonged to the heirs of the original grantor, none of which could be located. The Wyoming Conference yielded any claims it may have had on the Lymanville building to the Lynn-Lymanville Community Church, and that congregation continued to use it for weddings and special services.

In 2007 the owners of the land surrounding the building claimed ownership, stating that the reversion clause restored the property to the original farm. The case went to trial, and in 2009 the courts ruled that the present owners of the original farm have no legal status since (1) they are not descendants of the original grantors and (2) the several subsequent sales of the original farm failed to adequately specify a continuous reversionary claim to the church property. The building has been restored and is maintained by the Lynn-Lymanville Community Church.

fully restored Lymanville Chapel, 2012

Chapter 13
Carbondale First 1852

Carbondale First ME Church, Lackawanna County
second (1850) building

While the historical importance of the Carbondale church arises from what occurred there in July 1852, the congregation dates from 1828 – when a few Methodists began holding meetings under the leadership of local pastor William Griffin from the Canaan circuit. In 1832 the society erected its first building, a one-story 36x56 frame building on a lot donated by the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company. That lot continued to be the site of the congregation's 1850, 1892 and (present) 1901 buildings.

The building pictured above was erected in 1850 at the rear of the church property, its font doors just a few feet behind the original frame building. That frame building was then sold to the Baptists and moved to their lot, which adjoined

on the south. The new building was one of the most substantial in the area, and the city of Carbondale rented the lecture hall and two classrooms for one year to hold sessions of court.

When the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was formed in 1784, there were no organized conferences – just extensive circuits to which the itinerants were assigned. When it became necessary and efficient to hold regional conferences, the area that was in 1852 to become the Wyoming Conference was served by the Baltimore Conference and was known as the Susquehanna District. In 1808 that district was transferred to the Philadelphia Conference. As new conferences were created, the Susquehanna District became an original district of the Genesee Conference in 1810 and of the Oneida Conference in 1829.

At its 1851 annual conference, the Oneida Conference voted to petition the General Conference for permission to divide in two. That permission was granted by the May 1852 General Conference meeting in Boston MA, and the Wyoming Conference met for its first session on July 7, 1852, in the new 1850 Carbondale building – that new and substantial edifice being the finest structure in the area and definitely worthy of such an honor.

In the fall of 1854, however, this building was almost lost to the denomination. In order to erase the indebtedness, pastor William Wyatt made several visits to New York City, down the Wyoming Valley, and "out West" in search of funds. He succeeded in raising $1600 in this manner, and the congregation banded together to secure the rest of the amount necessary to save the building. Rev. Wyatt's pastorate would be remembered for three specific events: the elimination of the debt, a fierce fight against the spiritualism that was then spreading across the area, and a glorious revival resulting in over 200 conversions.

In 2010, the former Wyoming Conference was dissolved and Carbondale and its other Pennsylvania congregations joined with the former Central Pennsylvania Conference – which body was then renamed the Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church. First UMC in Carbondale continues today as a strong church with a deep pride over its role in the formation of the Wyoming Conference.

Chapter 14
Brick Church 1853

Brick United Methodist Church
Duryea Borough, Luzerne County

Brick Church is so named because it was one of the first houses of worship in this section of northeastern Pennsylvania to be constructed using that material. It is also the mother congregation for all of the Methodist work between Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. The history of the congregation dates from well before their building was erected in 1853, and it may well be the first work organized by Anning Owen (after his home congregation at Ross Hill) following the 1778 Wyoming Massacre and before the arrival of the first appointed circuit rider.

The Susquehanna Land Company, under the state of Connecticut, surveyed the area in 1768, and the Lackawanna River proved to be the main route for the settlers from that state to reach the Susquehanna River. Duryea, located where the Lackawanna empties into the Susquehanna, was the logical place for the first white settlement in the area. The borough of Duryea was formed in 1901 from Marcy township (which, as a result, no longer exists), so-named for Zebulon Marcy, one of the area's first settlers – and the man credited for firing the shot that killed Queen Esther's son during the Wyoming Massacre. In fact, the cemetery by Brick Church is still named the Marcy Cemetery.

The Marcy family was instrumental in establishing both the village that is now Duryea and the Methodist congregation that is now the Brick Church. Zebulon Marcy (1744-1834) and his brother Ebenezer (1741-1790) were the first to build in Duryea. Both were involved in the Wyoming Massacre, their families fleeing back east as refugees for about five years. Ebenezer's son, also named Ebenezer, donated all the land on which the church and cemetery are situated, and at his death in 1850 there were already approximately 100 graves there – mostly unmarked. Both Ebenezer Marcy senior and junior are buried in the cemetery adjoining the

church. Mrs. Ebenezer Marcy Sr. kept a diary describing the events surrounding the Wyoming Massacre and the family's subsequent flight for their lives across the desolate Pocono mountains and back to civilization. She later shared her writings and recollections with various historians who used them in their accounts. Portions of those accounts are given in the endnotes.[iii]

The earliest history of the work here has not been preserved, but it appears that following the return of the settlers, Anning Owen began preaching in the area about 1788. It wasn't until 1791 that the Wyoming circuit was formed and the first official circuit rider visited Lackawanna[iv], as the appointment was then called. Asbury records his first visit to the area on July 7-8, 1793. It was Owen who guided that first circuit rider through the region in 1791 and who did the same for Asbury in 1793.

The congregation was formally organized in the old schoolhouse in 1815 – with Ebenezer Marcy (1780-1850), son of the pioneer settler of the same name, as one of the original members. Local church records indicate that sometimes the class met at the home of Ebenezer Marcy. In 1818 circuit rider George Peck preached at the home of Ebenzer Marcy and "subsequently made the Marcy house a regular preaching place" – and for several years the Lackawanna appointment was listed as the Marcy appointment.

After a while, the Lackawanna appointment returned to the old schoolhouse until the present building was dedicated in August 1853. The bricks were made in Wilkes-Barre and drawn to the site on roads not yet paved. The interior was quite plain with plastered walls. Behind the pulpit and over the windows were inscribed the words "Worship the Lord in the beauty of Holiness" and "God is Love." The seats had low backs with a drop leaf at the end of each pew, which could be raised to provide additional seating. There were kneeling boards in each pew.

The Brick Church, being the first of its construction in the entire region, thus became a notable tribute to the historic class founded by Anning Owen, visited by Francis Asbury, and celebrated as the mother congregation of all the work between Scranton and Wilkes-Barre.

End Notes for Part III

[i] Stapleton's 1900 *Evangelical Annals*, pages 84-86, for example, gives more detail about the Wise and Hennig families and the spread of the Evangelical Association in Penns Valley.

[ii] Challenged by Bishop Seybert at the 1839 General Conference, essentially the entire class at Musser's Church migrated as a group to seek economic betterment and establish an Evangelical colony in Stephenson County IL. They erected a church and cemetery, the site of which is now a roadside rest on Illinois route 26, 8.5 miles north of Freeport.

The site is maintained by the Illinois Highway Department and includes a plaque which reads in part:

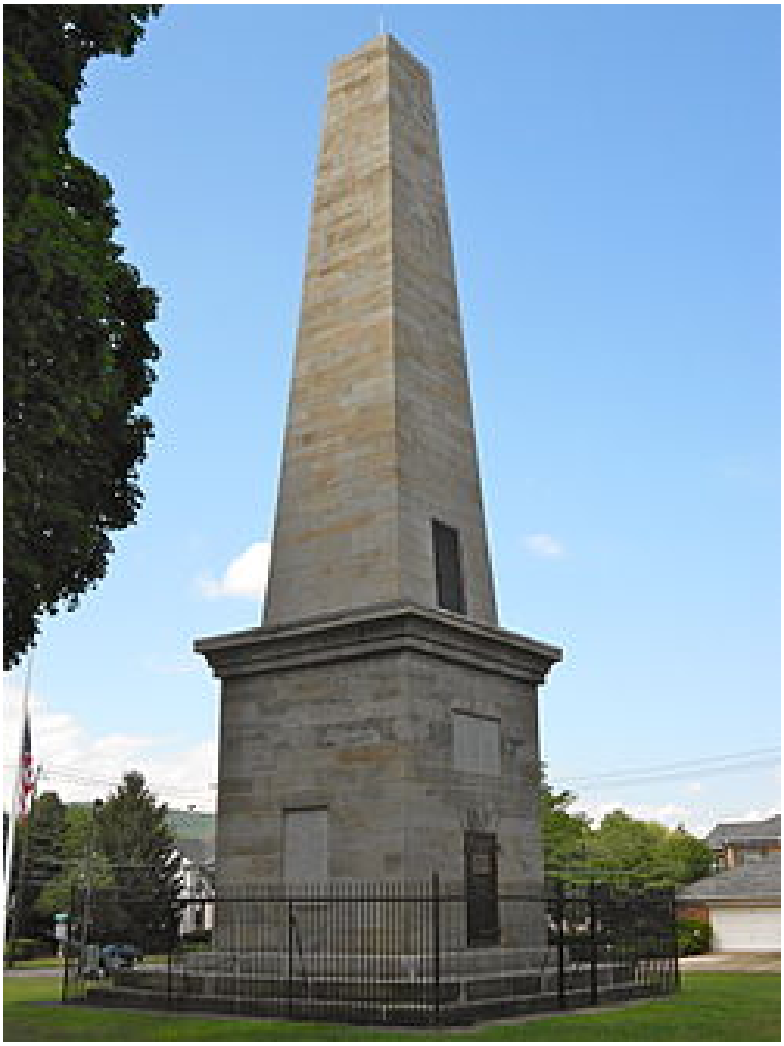
"This shelter is a replica of a church built on these grounds by and for early settlers: Zion Evangelical. In 1839 in Centre County PA, 48 adults and children were organized into a religious group by John Seybert, first bishop of the Evangelical Church, to migrate to this locality.

"In covered wagons of the Conestoga type they made their way across the mountains to Pittsburgh, boarded a river steamer to go down the Ohio and up the Mississippi to Savannah, then across country to this area. People were encouraged to 'exemplify the Christian doctrine' in their daily living, making this a notable neighborhood. In the adjacent burial grounds rest the mortal remains of many of these first settlers."

[iii] Some accounts of the aftermath of the Wyoming Massacre prepared from the diary and recollections of Mrs. Ebenezer Marcy Sr., Martha Spencer Marcy (1748-1818), are as follows – reproduced *verbatim* as they appear in a typewritten manuscript of "notes compiled by E. Johnson in the years 1910-1912" by E.C. Johnson titled *History of Pittston* and kept by the Greater Pittston Historical Society…

As darkness settled down upon the scene, fugitives began to come in to Pittston Fort on their way to the Delaware. News of the disaster spread from cabin to cabin. One man swam the river and came in to Pittston Fort, limping, wounded in the foot. We do not know his name. This man conferred with Mr. Ebenezer Marcy. Mrs. Marcy's account is that "he brought over the sad tidings of the defeat and slaughter of the little army. After a few words upon the subject, he mounted a horse which belonged to Mr.

Marcy and laid his course across the mountains. (Note:- Perhaps Mr. Marcy sent him to the old Fishkill home to ask for help. Certain it is that on the arrival of the family at the Delaware a horse and wagon from Mrs. Marcy's father had come to meet them.)



Monument for the Wyoming Massacre
marking the resting place of the gatherable remains
listing the names of the known victims

Mrs. Marcy's story continues: "All was stir, alarm and confusion in the Fort. The darkness of night came on, but not to hide from the eyes of the Lackawanna people the horrors of the scene which was being enacted on the west side of the Susquehanna. They saw the Indians making preparations for their fiendish orgies. They kindled fires and filled the air with their terrible yells. At length, two prisoners were brought up. One was tied to a tree in a sitting posture with his hands and feet bound to stakes driven in the ground and a train of pine knots laid, extending some twelve feet and terminating at his bowels. The further end of the train was fired and then the Indians commenced

dancing around the poor creature, while the flames gradually approached him and he was filled with the most indescribable horror at its progress. Splinters of pine were stuck into the flesh of the other and lighted. The poor victims of savage cruelty shrieked and called on God for help. Their wailings and the unearthly yells of the savages mingled together and were wafted by the breeze across the plains and echoed back from the hills. That was an awful night for the Lackawanna people."

There was little sleep in Pittston Fort the night of July 3rd. Horror at the sights and sounds of the bloody carnival across the river filled the minds of men and women, and apprehension for themselves and their families made rest impossible. Many planned for flight and waited only to collect sufficient food and clothing for the long journey over the mountains. They fled that night in companies and in the morning, only eighteen men [and their families] were in the fort to be made prisoners. According to Mrs. Marcy's story: "The morning came and they raised a sheet upon a pole on the river bank. The flag of truce was discovered and several British officers, attended by a posse of Indians, came over and demolished the pickets around the blockhouse. A wretched old squaw soon came over, having seventeen scalps strung on a stick. She spoke broken English: and talked of being 'dreadful tired', having, as she said, been 'out all night scalping the Yankees'."

A plan was soon set on foot still further to torture the feelings of the prisoners. An old mare belonging to Mr. Marcy was brought up and Mrs. Marcy's side saddle placed upon her back. The squaw was then seated upon the saddle, astride, a looking glass being held in one hand and the string of scalps in the other. The animal was led by one Indian and driven by another, back and forth before the fort, while the Indians hooted and laughed and otherwise insulted the prisoners.

Parties of the enemy collected the horses and cattle and turned them into the fields of grain. This saved them the necessity of destroying the crops by other and more laborious means. The officers ordered the prisoners to milk the cows and bring in the milk for their use. It was soon found that unless they resorted to some stratagem to save a portion of the milk, the children in the Fort must soon starve; so that the cows were then left half-milked and the rest was obtained under cover of the night. The prisoners were not cared for at all by the British officers and could only furnish themselves and their helpless children with food and avoid utter starvation by stealth.

Butler and his men left the valley a few days after the battle but parties of Indians kept prowling about, plundering and burning the houses of the settlers as opportunity offered, and their feelings inclined them. About two weeks after the battle, an Indian came to the fort and said: "Wild Indians come soon! Kill Yankee and eat 'em!" The settlers had gradually disappeared and few besides the family of Ebenezer Marcy were left. Mrs. Marcy was in a delicate state of health, and besides was lame in her feet from rheumatism, but there was no alternative. She must undertake the journey across the mountains on foot. (Note:- It will be remembered that Mr. Marcy had sent the messenger with the wounded foot across the trail the night after the battle and the old squaw had ridden his only other horse the morning of the surrender.

When Butler and his horde marched away, they took the Lackawanna trail up to Capouse [Scranton], thence North to Otego in New York. They drove off

the cattle of the settlers and their horses also, loaded with plunder.) Mr. Marcy's family consisted of himself, his wife, and five small children, the eldest being a girl of eleven years of age. There was but one other in the company—an old lady, still more of a cripple than Mrs. Marcy. The exigencies of the journey would necessarily require covering at night, and hence the necessity of taking along blankets. Mr. Marcy was the only individual in the party who could carry any burden. He made a large bundle, in which he had carefully stowed away a family Bible which Mr. Joseph Marcy has now in his possession and preserves as a precious relic. It contains the family records. All being ready, Mr. Marcy shouldered his burden and ordered all hands to move on.

The little company commenced their doubtful and perilous journey, probably on the 20th of July. Their course lay through Jacob's Plains, up Laurel Run by the path from Wilkes Barre to Stroudsburg. They had nearly exhausted their provisions and had to be put on short allowance. They subsisted mostly on the twigs and roots of the sassafras and on berries. Mrs. Marcy had a cane in one hand and a spikenard root in the other and would frequently take a little of the root in her mouth and chew it – making it serve, as she ever after maintained, the double purpose of food and medicine.

On the evening of the 22nd. of July, "on the Tobyhanna hill" Mrs. Marcy was taken ill. Mr. Marcy left her with the old lady, while he went forward with the children a short distance and deposited them in the bushes. He then returned and soon he was the father of another child. The newcomer was a daughter and was welcomed and provided for as well as circumstances would permit. Early in the morning, Mrs. Marcy arose and set off on her journey with good courage and, for her, at a brisk pace. The little piece of humanity that had been sent to them on the mountain had been added to Mr. Marcy's burden and that day they travelled the astonishing distance of sixteen miles, which brought them to Captain Spaulding's encampment. The Captain kindly sent on two soldiers, each having a horse, to assist Mr. Marcy and his family to the Delaware. Here they were met by a man with horse and wagon, sent by Mrs. Marcy's father, Mr. Johnathan Spencer; and then the worst of the trials of that journey were over. In eight days after the birth of the little girl, Mrs. Marcy and her family were welcomed at her father's home near Fishkill. Friends and neighbors came to her assistance in renewing the clothing of the family which had been whole when they left the valley, but was reduced to tatters by the journey through the wilderness. "The little woods girl" as she was called, was an object of great curiosity. Mrs. Marcy felt thankful to God for her strange preservation and that of her infant and for the deliverance of herself and her family from the tomahawk and scalping knife; and in accordance with her feelings, she called the little daughter "Thankful". The child lived to the age of seventeen and then died of the measles.

[iv] "Lackawanna" is a term used loosely in the diaries of the noted circuit rider William Colbert and bishop Francis Asbury. It variously refers to (1) present Duryea and the area where the Lackawanna flows into the Susquehanna (2) Lackawanna Forge and the mill/house of James Sutton (1744-1834), where Sutton's Creek enters the Susquehanna about 4 miles to the north of the Lackawanna, (3) Old Forge along the Lackawanna about 3 miles before it flows into the Susquehanna.