

LIFE ALONG THE SHERMANS

INTRODUCTION

For decades I have viewed a grove of trees in my neighbor's field from the desk in my home office. While I knew that there were some old graves in the grove of trees, I never really took the time to investigate.

People would always ask, "Why is there a cemetery way out there in the middle of a field?" Last year my neighbor and friend revealed that there had been also a church out in the field!

The church was Sherman's Creek Presbyterian Church and was first recorded in a historical record in 1767. Oral tradition and some written records, including Hain's History of Perry County, report that the first white man to die in Perry County is buried there!

For over thirty years I had been looking at an historical site and never realized I was living in the middle of history!



Sherman's Creek Presbyterian Church may have looked very much like this modern reproduction of a log church.

In Perry County, Pennsylvania we do not have to travel to find and see history; it is literally right under our feet.

I was now presented with a whole new set of questions:

Why WAS a church in the middle of the field?

Who is buried in the cemetery?

Can we find any archeological evidence of the church?

What was life like nearly 250 years ago?

As the research and investigation of our “old church” continued many surprising and interesting facts were revealed. Each of the people represented by the numerous headstones also had a story to tell. Genealogies and family histories presented new relationships. I discovered the challenges the original settlers faced on a daily basis: survival, childbirth, obtaining food, communicating with the world, travel issues, severe weather, education, trade and currency, religion, and social interaction.

The little village of Dellville was a self-supporting community. It was a microcosm of life along every stream and in every valley of our region. Along a three or four mile stretch of Shermans Creek there were: two grist mills, two iron forges, numerous saw mills, several boarding houses, taverns, distilleries, fordings, bridges, numerous churches, cemeteries and dozens of homesteads and farms.

This third book in the Perry Heritage Collection will concentrate on the first one hundred years, approximately 1750 to 1850. While I discuss a relatively small geographical area, colonial and early American life would have been similar throughout central Pennsylvania.

Today, Dellville is probably most remembered for its picturesque covered bridge. Built by Andrew Clouser in 1889, it replaced the Billows Bridge at Billow's Crossing.



Dellville Bridge built in 1889

It is the longest and widest of the surviving covered bridges in Perry County. In 1850, Dellville was famous for having three covered bridges crossing the Shermans Creek in a two mile stretch of the great Clarks Ferry – Carlisle Road. Those three Bridges were known as the Loop Bridge in Penn Township, Fio Bridge at Fio Forge, and Billows Bridge. Billows was built in 1834 while Fio and Loop were built 1842.

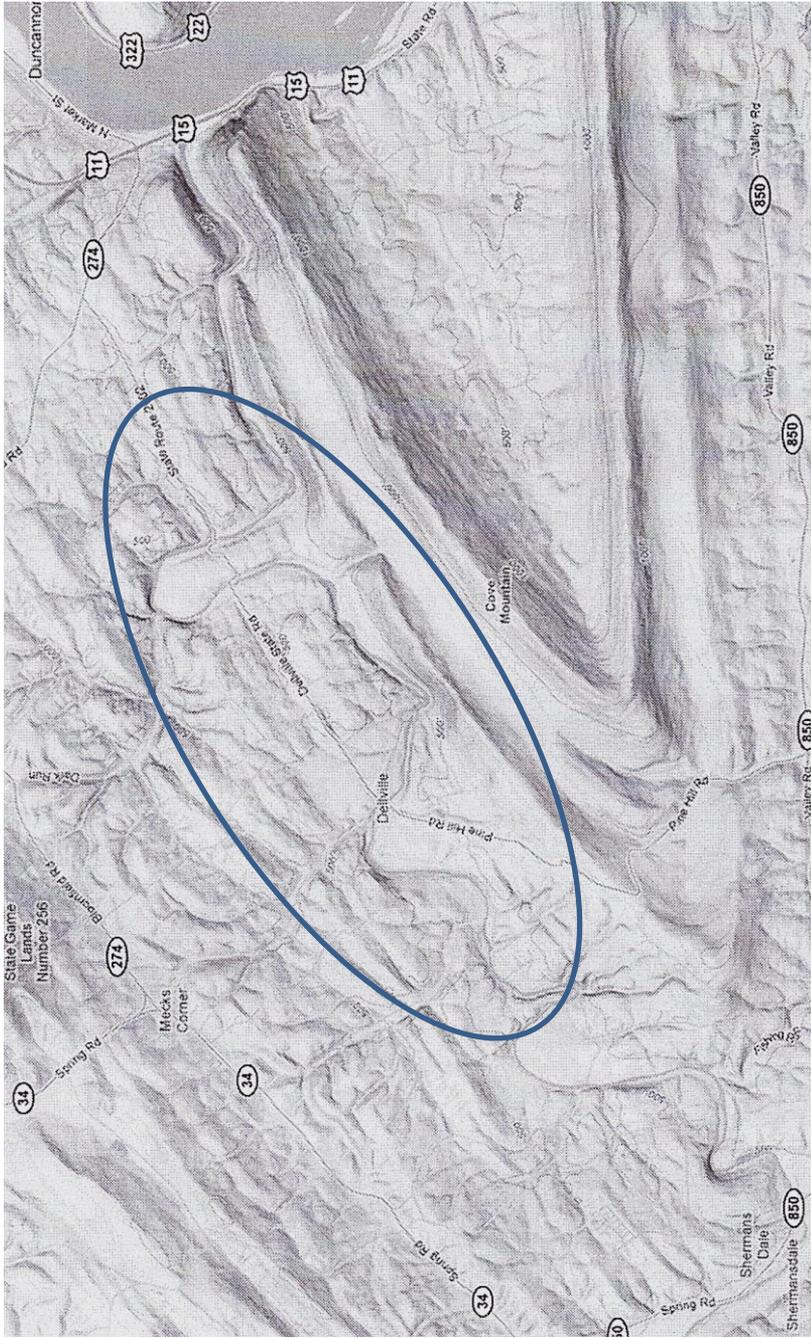
The surviving Dellville Bridge is 174 feet long, 20 feet wide and nearly 12 feet in interior height. It is a Burr arch truss design and has eave windows the length of the span.



Burr Arch seen inside the Dellville Covered Bridge.

Life Along the Shermans contains numerous never-before-seen photos and maps. It also reveals facts that have been lost to time for well over a hundred and fifty years.

Perhaps more importantly, some of the history of a tranquil little village named Dellville is preserved and can help us all understand and appreciate the lives of settlers and challenges in early America.



Topographic map of Sherman's Creek from Shermansdale to Duncannon. Dellville is midway between those two towns