Excerpted from Vol. 56 No. 3 of the *Tredyffrin Easttown History Quarterly*



Another discovery provided by Jim Brazel, this illustration from the May 6, 1854 issue of *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* shows an artist's rendering of the Valley Forge meadow and village area. Several recognizable features are identified: ❶ – Washington's Headquarters (Isaac Potts house); ❷ – Grist Mill; ❸ – Bake House / Washington Inn; ❹ – Worker housing along Creek Road (now Route 252); ❺ – Cotton Mill; ❻ – Valley Forge meadow. This image was also included in in a recent issue of *The King of Prussia Gazette*, Volume XI, Number Three, Fall 2022, published by the King of Prussia Historical Society and accompanied by an informative article about the vicinity depicted. *Courtesy of James Brazel.*

To be sold at a private sale,
The Valley Mill and Farm

Situated at the junction of Valley Creek and Schuylkill. The buildings are a large stone merchant and grist mill, house and kitchen adjoining, barn, smoke-house, and other out buildings, all in good repair. Wheat can be brought down Schuylkill in boats, which can come up to the mill door to unload—flour can be sent to Philadelphia by the same conveyance.

The farm contains 115 acres, about one third is woodland, the remainder has been lately limed, and fences mostly new.

The purchaser may have the stock of cattle, horses, hogs, and all the farming utensils—Also the furniture of a well furnished house.

The terms will be accommodating, and made known on the premises by

JOSEPH PAUL.

September 28th, 1825

N.B. If the above property is not sold in one month, it will be rented to a good tenant, and immediate possession given.

Village Record September 28,1825

When David Potts died in 1799, his estate was divided among his five heirs, and over the next few years his son Joseph Potts acquired several of those shares from his siblings, leading to the sale by Joseph and wife Sarah Potts of 400 acres in 1806 on the Chester County side of Valley Creek to Samuel P. Broome (excluding the core forge area of 113 acres). This parcel was subsequently purchased by Joseph Barnes in 1812.

Joseph Barnes subdivided the tract, selling off the pieces between 1812 and 1816 (see **http://charlestown.tehistory.org/ManorofBilton/JosephBarnes.html** for details). This shaped the present village of Valley Forge.

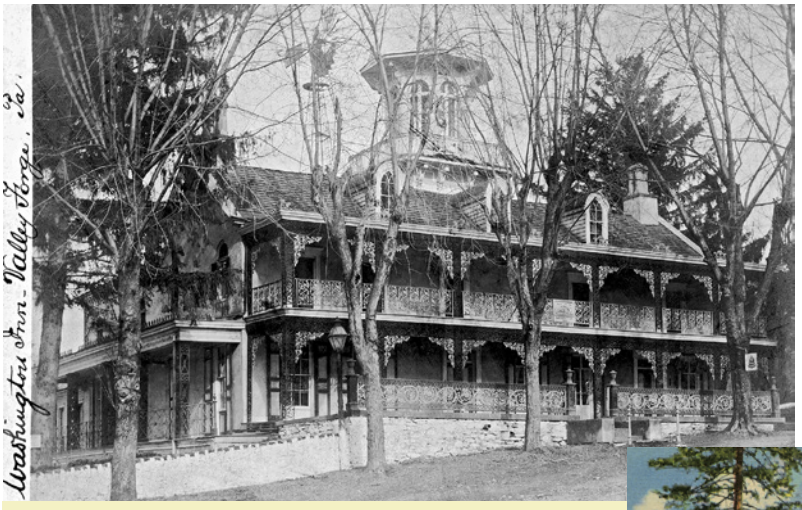
In 1812 John Rogers and Julius Malin purchased the Old Forge at Valley Forge and its associated property of 113 acres, and in 1816 John Rogers became the sole owner when Julius Malin sold off his half share of the property.

Over the next couple of decades John Rogers developed and operated the first woolen and cotton mill at Valley Forge, with its large building becoming a prominent local landmark. In 1836 he sold off the business and died soon afterwards. His son, Charles H. Rogers, purchased the mill in 1844 and appointed a series of managers to run the mill.

Isaac Smith, who managed and leased the mill for 20 years, built a new mill—presumably coal powered—in Bridgeport in 1882, and transferred his business to the new site. The loss of the mill operation in Valley Forge had a significant impact on the local economy and community.

Charles H. Rogers died in 1886, at which time the mill was no longer operational (see the photograph of the mill in its later years on page 29)

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ABOVE: Postcard photograph from the Robert Cohen collection, probably by Lucy Sampson, showing the ornate Washington Inn c.1900. RIGHT: Colorized postcard image showing the restored "Bake House / Iron Masters Mansion" from Francis Ligget's notebooks. *Both courtesy of TEHS Archives.*

Before discussing the stores at Valley Forge in more detail, it is worth mentioning another large building that was not captured in the 1878 photographs, but which was quite prominent.

The Washington Inn was located on the northeast corner of the old road junction of Valley Forge Road (Route 23) and the old Creek Road (now Route 252). The adjacent photograph shows the building in its ornate 19th century glory before it was 'restored' to what was presumed to be its 18th-century appearance. A building at that location is believed to have served as the Bake House during the encampment, and the "Iron Masters Mansion" before and after. Please look for a more complete history in a future issue.



This drawing of the Bake House was one of the illustrations of local historic scenes that long-time member Sue Andrews created for her series of Christmas cards sent to family and friends. *Courtesy of Sue Andrews, her daughter Liz Willow, and the TEHS Archives.*

The first stores in the Valley Forge area were probably part of merchant mills where farmers brought their grain to be milled into flour. The mill at the mouth of Valley Creek was probably one of those mills. By the time of the Revolutionary War, some stand-alone stores were in existence. For example, in Tredyffrin, Samuel Davis had a store mentioned in the 1782 post-war reparation returns—his lost goods and the cost of damage to the store by the British Army were valued to be £600.

The development of the woolen and cotton mill at Valley Forge in the 1820s attracted workers to the village and a store was set up to cater to their needs. The date when this store came into existence is not known but it appears on a map from 1848, labeled as "Rogers Store."

Photograph 2 from 1878 (see page 26) shows what may well be the former Rogers Store building to the left of the chimney.

This store was replaced by a new one on the west side of Valley Creek. Photograph 3 from 1878 (on page 28) shows the building that became the "new" Rowan Store.

Special thanks to Lee Kirts for sharing the remarkable old Valley Forge Village photographs and his collaborative efforts with Mike Bertram on interpreting them and documenting the Rowan family history.



Extract from Montgomery County Atlas of 1848

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John Rowan (aka "Rowen") first appears as a freeman (over 21 and unmarried) in the Tredyffrin tax list of 1796. He married Mary after 1799. John appears as a mason in the Septennial Census returns for Tredyffrin from 1807 to 1828. In 1835 he is listed as a resident in Easttown. He appears to have been the only mason residing in Tredyffrin for a considerable length of time. There is a good chance he was the mason for any stone houses built in Tredyffrin during the first quarter of the 19th century.

John and Mary Rowan are buried at Great Valley Baptist Church, Devon, PA. He died December 22, 1843 at age 72, which places his birth around 1771. Mary died July 11, 1847 at age 73, indicating her birth around 1774.

John's epitaph:
Side by side two parents sleep
Beneath this silent sod
Faith bids us hope their souls united
Beyond this grave with God

Mary's Epitaph:
Best parents rest in peace
In happiness in heaven
Where all men find a home
And sins are forgiven

It seems that John and Mary had a son Joseph. He first appears in the Septennial Census of 1821 as a master boot and shoemaker in Tredyffrin and then in 1828 in Schuylkill township.

Joseph Rowan was born around the year 1800, and died on May 11, 1873. He is listed as being age 73 on his tombstone. He married Anna Howard on February 6, 1823. She was born on May 22, 1797 and died January 2, 1857. They are buried at the Radnor Friends Cemetery, Radnor Township, Delaware County. At some point Joseph moved to Radnor township, but his son John Howard Rowan either stayed in Schuylkill township or moved back there.

On June 16, 1863 Joseph enrolled in the 28th Infantry, Mil 63, Company C in Radnor. On June 23, 1863 he was mustered as a private in Harrisburg, PA. He listed his age as 55 but was probably closer to 63. According to the 1850 and 1860 census records he is listed as being 49 and 59 respectively. Joseph's burial site was marked by a small standard at his grave indicating he was in the Grand old Army. He had been hospitalized. Judging from the dates he may have been involved in the battle of Gettysburg.

Joseph and Anna are listed as the parents of John Howard in his Bible, which is still held by the family. John Howard Rowan was born on December 22, 1825, and died December 6, 1890. He and his wife are buried at the Morris City Cemetery in Phoenixville, PA.

In the 1850 census for Upper Merion, Joseph was living with an English merchant, John Ogden, and his occupation was listed as "clerk." He later owned a general store in Valley Forge. He married Eliza Ann Coffee on April 7, 1853. She was a regular customer at his store. In the 1880 census John Howard Rowan is listed as a "Grocer for Dry Goods."

John and Eliza Rowan had four children, with the third being daughter Anna May, born November 29, 1865 and died October 19, 1933. Anna May's first husband was Nicolas J. Bean, son of Henry and Mary J. Bean, grandson of Nicolas Bean and Mary Ann Vanderslice. Her second husband was Winfield Scott Jarrett, who unfortunately died in 1910 from complications of hydrophobia after being bitten by a rabid dog. Anna May wrote a letter, or letters, in which she stated that her mother's mother's name was Sarah Vanderslice—who died when Eliza was quite young—and "that her mother was raised by her aunt Eliza and uncle Jacob Knous, who lived in a little brick home at Cross Roads" [possibly the intersection of Ferry and Valley Forge Roads] and would walk to the general store owned by John Howard Rowan. Despite the challenges faced when the cotton mill ceased operations in 1882, the store business persisted.

> Valley Forge – The shutting down of Isaac Smith's mill at Valley Forge has almost prostrated business in that place. Mr. John Rowan, who kept the store in the village is going to shut up and move away. He has no business since the mills stopped.
> — *from a West Chester newspaper in 1883*

Anna May and her second husband took over the operation of the store following the death of her father in 1890, and it was then known as Jarrett's store. In 1918 the store was sold to David Midgley who ran it until the store was condemned in the 1920s by the Commonwealth for the expansion of Valley Forge State Park and demolished.



Four generations of the Rowan family outside the store at Valley Forge on Labor Day, September 2, 1912. (L–R) Minnie (Rowan) Davis Loutey (Ada's daughter, age 32), Minerva Davis Loutey (Minnie's daughter, age 9), Eliza Ann Rowan, (age 78), Sarah Ada Rowan Davis (Eliza's daughter, age 56) . *Courtesy of Lee Kirts.*

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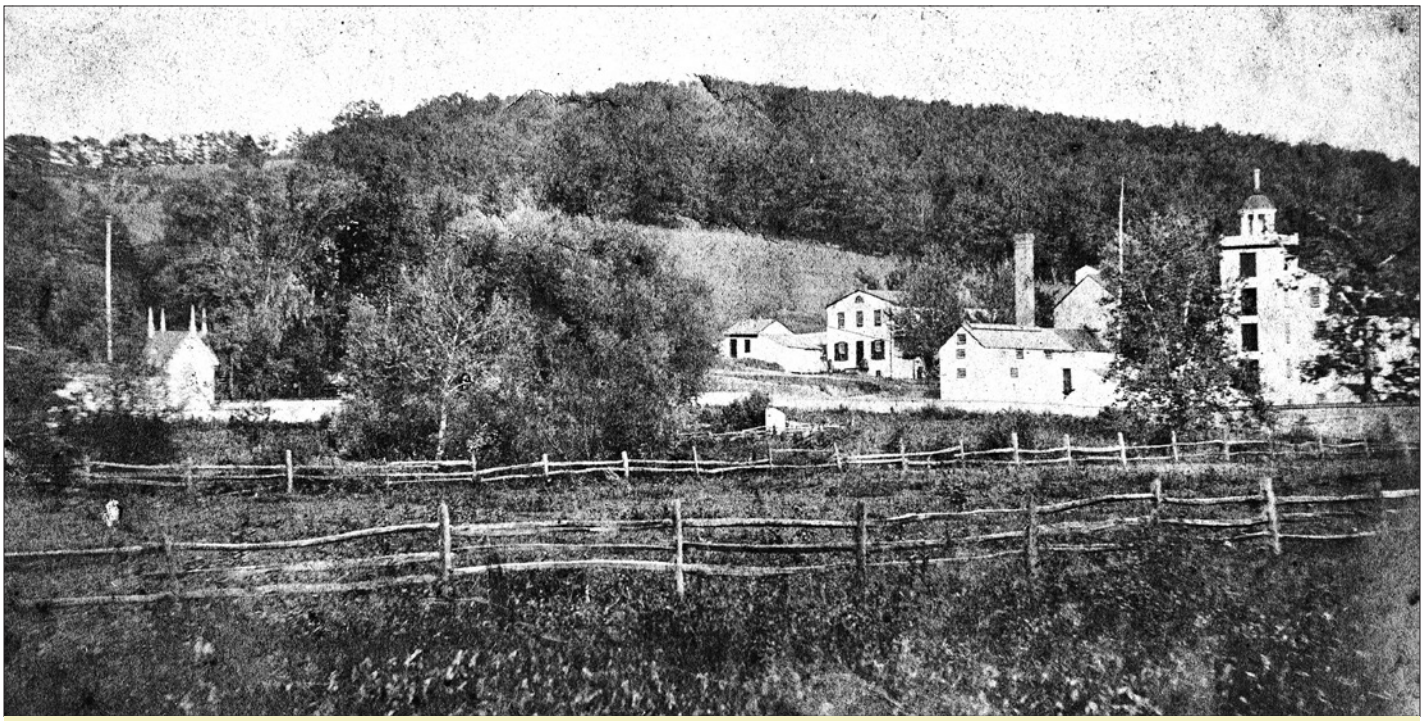


Porch at the Rowan Store, 1890, from the west. Standing (from left to right): Franklin Hall Rowan (grandfather of Lee Kirts), his sister Anna May Rowan, and his mother Eliza Ann Rowan (nee Coffee). Identifications provided by Lee Kirts. Note the sign above the porch that reads "J.H. Rowan. Dry Goods, Notions & Groceries." *Courtesy of Lee Kirts*.



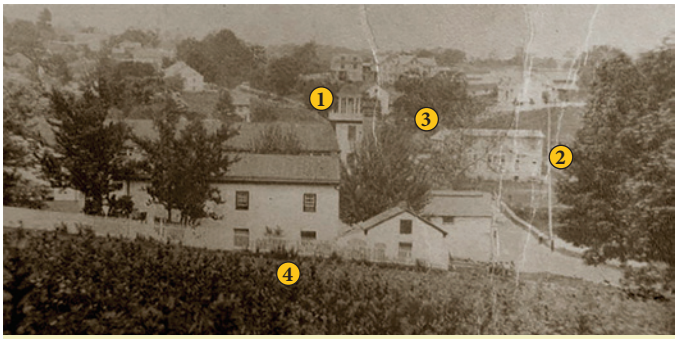
The Midgley Store (previously the Rowan Store). This house once stood on the north side of Route 23, in the flood plain. The building was condemned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1918, and demolished in 1920. [Note: In this view of the other (east) side of the store, the formerly adjacent POSA building is no longer standing at the time of this photo.] *Courtesy of TEHS Archives*.

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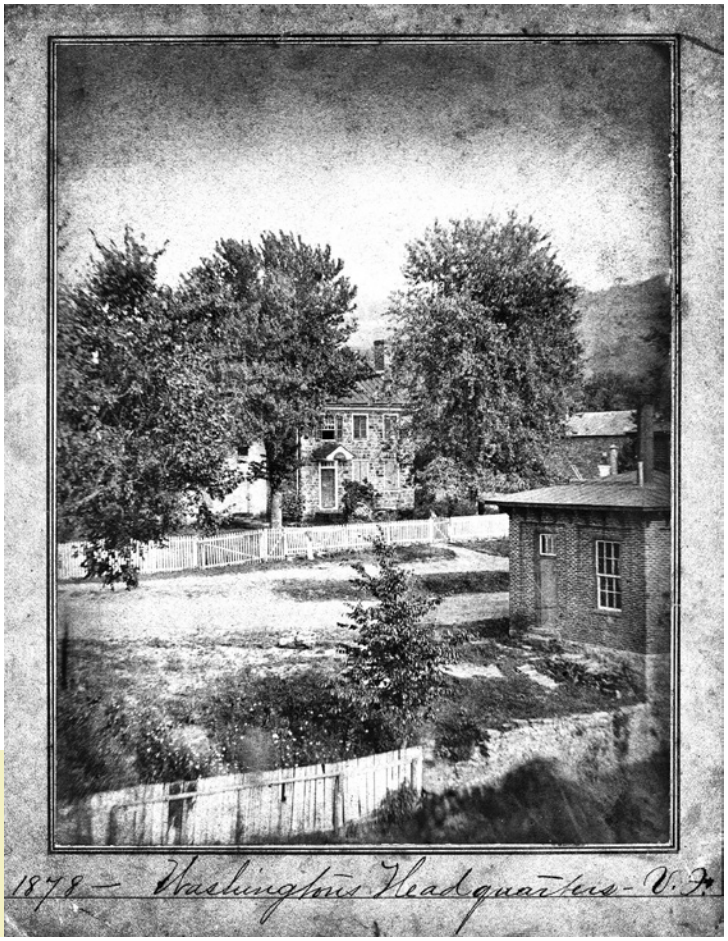


PHOTOGRAPH 2 — This image is an excerpt from an 1878 photograph taken from the west side of Valley Creek, looking southeast towards Mount Joy. Starting on the right and scanning left, the first building is the bell tower that was part of the cotton mill. To the left of the tower is a chimney, possibly from a steam engine used to power the mill (originally it used water power). To the left of the chimney (and possible engine building) is a structure located at the road junction (now the intersection of Routes 23 and 252) that may be the former Rogers Store. On the left side of the photograph is a building with four spires on its roof. This building is a mystery at this time. *Courtesy of Lee Kirts*.

In 2015, Lee Kirts provided the Society with digital copies of three 1878 photographs of Valley Forge village (possibly taken as part of the centennial celebrations of the encampment). These photographs together, with another previously obtained, give a detailed, though not complete, view of Valley Forge village.



An excerpt from another 1878 photograph taken from the slopes of Mount Joy, looking west. Prominently visible are: ❶ the bell tower of the cotton mill; and to its right in the distance ❷ the first POSA building. The adjacent ❸ "new" store is just visible. The ❹ building in the foreground may be the former Rogers Store. *Courtesy of Valley Forge National Historical Park*.



PHOTOGRAPH 3 — This 1878 image of Washington's Headquarters (a.k.a. the Isaac Potts house) was taken looking east. The building on the right hand side is a pumping station, owned by the Reading Railroad, that was used to pump water up the hill to a reservoir behind the Headquarters. The steam-powered railroad engines in use at the time were watered from this reservoir. *Courtesy of Lee Kirts*.

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The village changed considerably when the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania decided to use its powers of eminent domain to condemn and acquire various adjacent parcels for incorporation into the new and growing Valley Forge State Park. Many of the structures located on those parcels were subsequently demolished, particularly if they did not evoke the historic 18th-century character of the area.

The details of the many land acqusitions involved in aggregating the totality that we know today as Valley Forge National Historical Park may be found in deed records held by Montgomery and Chester Counties, and spanning Upper Merion, Tredyffrin, Schuylkill, and Charlestown Townships.

While today's geographical boundaries would not seem to directly connect Charlestown with Valley Forge, when first constituted in 1722, Charlestown consisted of what is now the townships of Charlestown and Schuylkill, and the borough of Phoenixville. Schuylkill township split from the rest of Charlestown in 1826, and was further substantially reduced in area with the creation of the borough of Phoenixville in 1849. Nonetheless, some of the earlier deeds of properties in the Valley Forge area do date back to origins in Charlestown.

A long-term research project is underway to better understand this complex puzzle. Results of this research may be found in the online resource "Valley Forge Park Deed Histories in Tredyffrin, Upper Merion, and Schuylkill townships" **http://documents.tehistory.org/docs/doc644.html**

Notes

1. David Midgley purchased the store in 1918 for $4000 (Chester County deed H15-186).

2. POSA purchased the land and built a hall in 1874 (Chester County deed Q8-150).

Additionally, Chester County deed history records show that:

- Francis M. & Augusta R. Bean, Michael & Ella Hackett, The Phoenixville, Valley Forge and Strafford Electric Railway Company received $4800 from the Commonwealth on 27 February 1919 (deed H15-480). Note that the Railway Company had taken an option on this Valley Forge Meadow tract and were therefore included in this deed;
- D. W. Conway, William H. Davis, and E. E. Highley, trustees of Washington Camp 150, Patriotic Order, Sons of America, received $7100 from the Commonwealth on 24 May 1920 (deed U15-126);
- David & Olive Midgley received $8500 from the Commonwealth on 9 November 1923 (deed R17-391).

For a much more detailed view of the transaction history, refer to the Valley Creek Meadow section of the "Forge Tracts" Deed History available online at **http://charlestown.tehistory.org/ManorofBilton/Table2ForgeTracts.html#E.2**

Properties Condemned

Jury of View Makes Two Awards for Valley Forge Park Commission.

Special to the Inquirer

VALLEY FORGE, PA., Feb. 23 [1919]. - A jury of view consisting of W. E. Bushong, W. B. Cox and Harry Hause, have made the following awards of damages for land taken at the instance of the Valley Forge Park Commission for park purposes.

Francis M. Bean, who conducts the Valley Forge Silica, Sand and Ore Company plant, was awarded $8550 for his homestead property, comprising more than an acre of land and buildings thereon and a water right through the property. He had presented a claim of $18,000. David Midgley. Jr., station agent at the local depot, who also owns and conducts the local store and coal scales, was awarded $7500 for his home and store building and scales.[1] He claimed $23,000 by reason of the necessity of a forced sale of his grocery stock, the loss of use of his scales and loss of a residence convenient to his work.

A hearing of the testimony with reference to the building occupied by the Patriotic Order Sons of America as a home and hall, another of the local properties being acquired by the State, has been fixed for Monday, March 3.[2]

Philadelphia Inquirer Monday Feb. 24, 1919

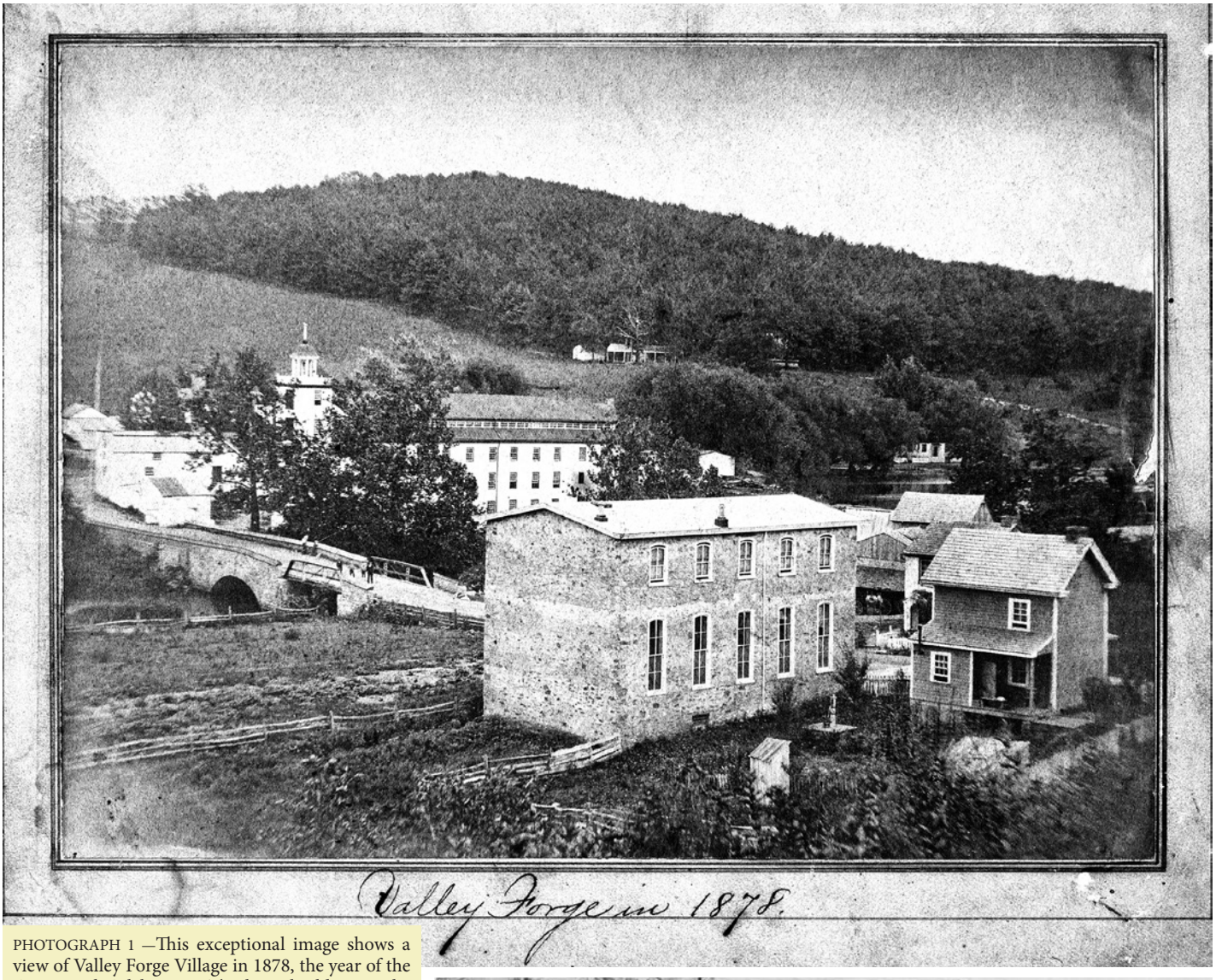




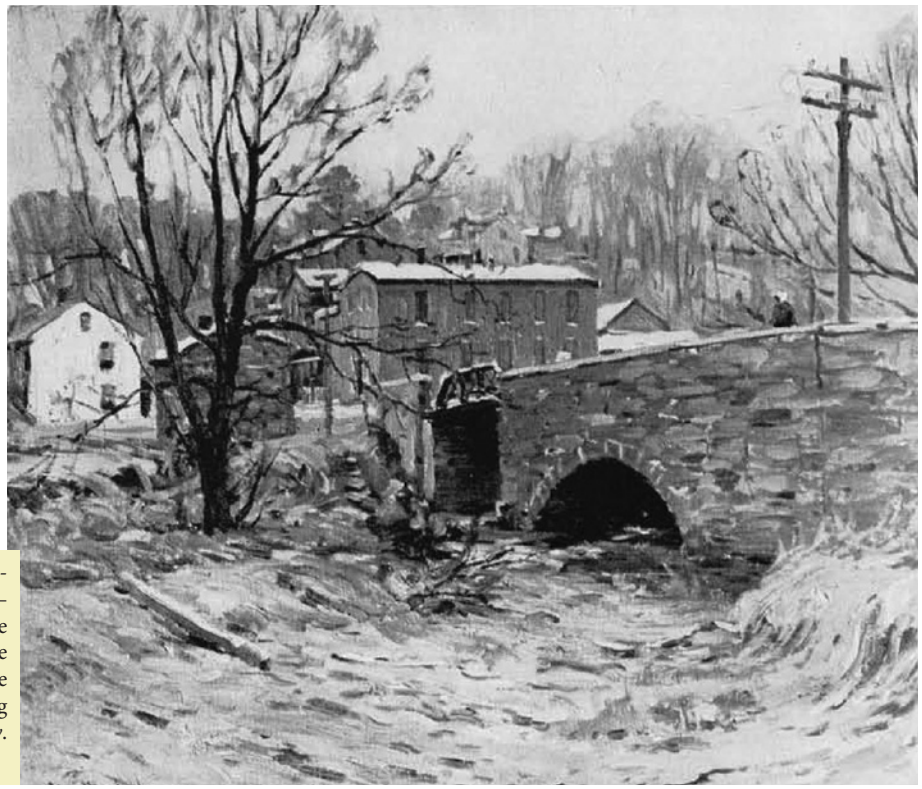
ABOVE (L–R): Rowan/Midgley store, Patriotic Order, Sons of America (POSA) first meeting hall, and imported forge. LEFT: Front façade of the first POSA building. *Courtesy of Patriotic Order, Sons of America.*

More historic photographs of the Valley Forge village area may be seen in "Early Photographs of Valley Forge" by Joyce A. Post, *Tredyffrin Easttown History Club Quarterly* (Summer 2004) Vol. 41 No. 3, pp. 87–90. **https://www.tehistory.org/hqda/html/v41/v41n3p087.html**

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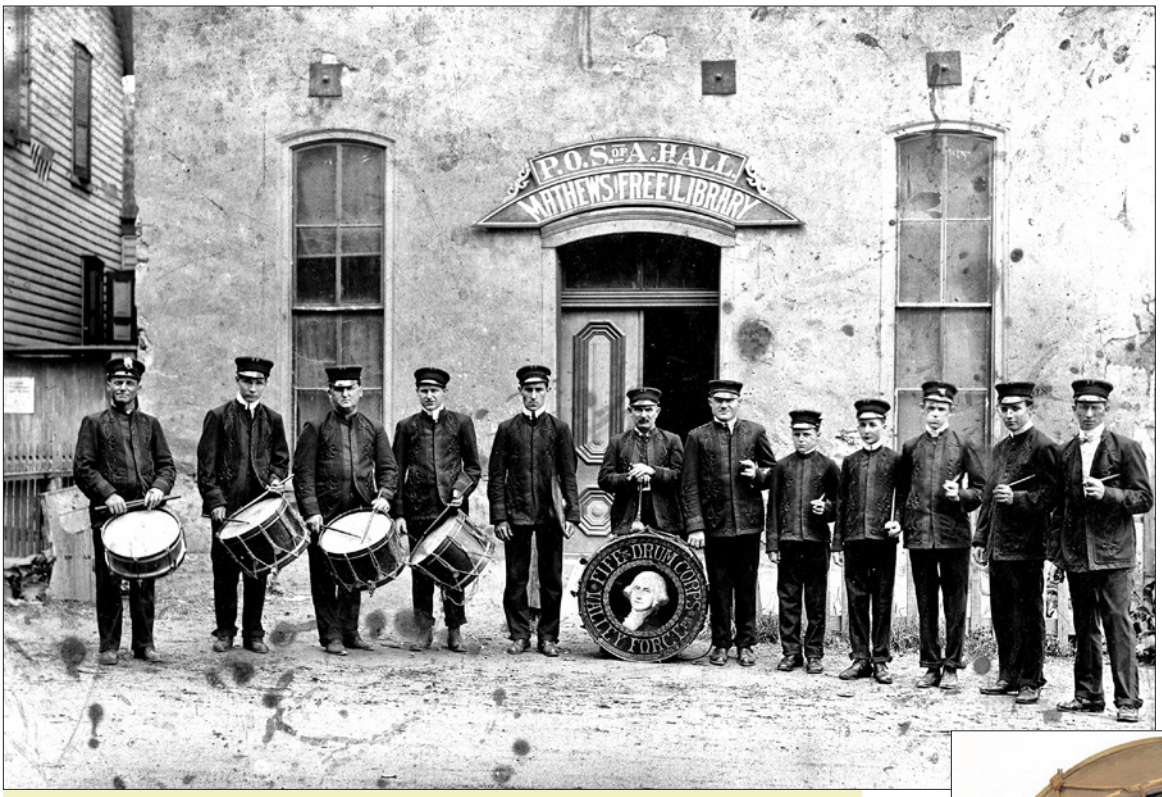


PHOTOGRAPH 1 —This exceptional image shows a view of Valley Forge Village in 1878, the year of the Centennial Celebration. The large building in the lower central foreground is the original Patriotic Order, Sons of America (POSA) Hall, and to its right is the original store building whose later owners included John Howard Rowan & family, his daughter Anna May and her second husband Winfield Scott Jarrett, and finally David Midgley. Portions of the large Cotton Mill building with its prominent bell tower, can be seen in the background on the left. Just visible behind the store is the Workers' Cottages that still stands on the south side of Route 23. Partially eclipsed by the roof of the POSA building is the waterfall over the 1790s dam. The buildings between the waterfall and the Workers' Cottages are very interesting in that they are not shown on any other photograph, map or plan. They could well be the Rifle Factory described by Scott Houting in his article, "The Evans Family of Valley Forge: The U.S. Model 1816 Flintlock Musket" in *History Quarterly* Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 2003). *Courtesy of Lee Kirts*.



This 1911 painting by early-20th-century Philadelphia-area landscape painter Charles Morris Young (1869–1964) titled "Valley Forge" depicts the stone bridge over Valley Creek, and the first POSA building in the central background. This black and white image of the original color painting was published in the Spring 1957 issue of *The Bulletin of Radnor Historical Society*. *Courtesy of Radnor Historical Society*.

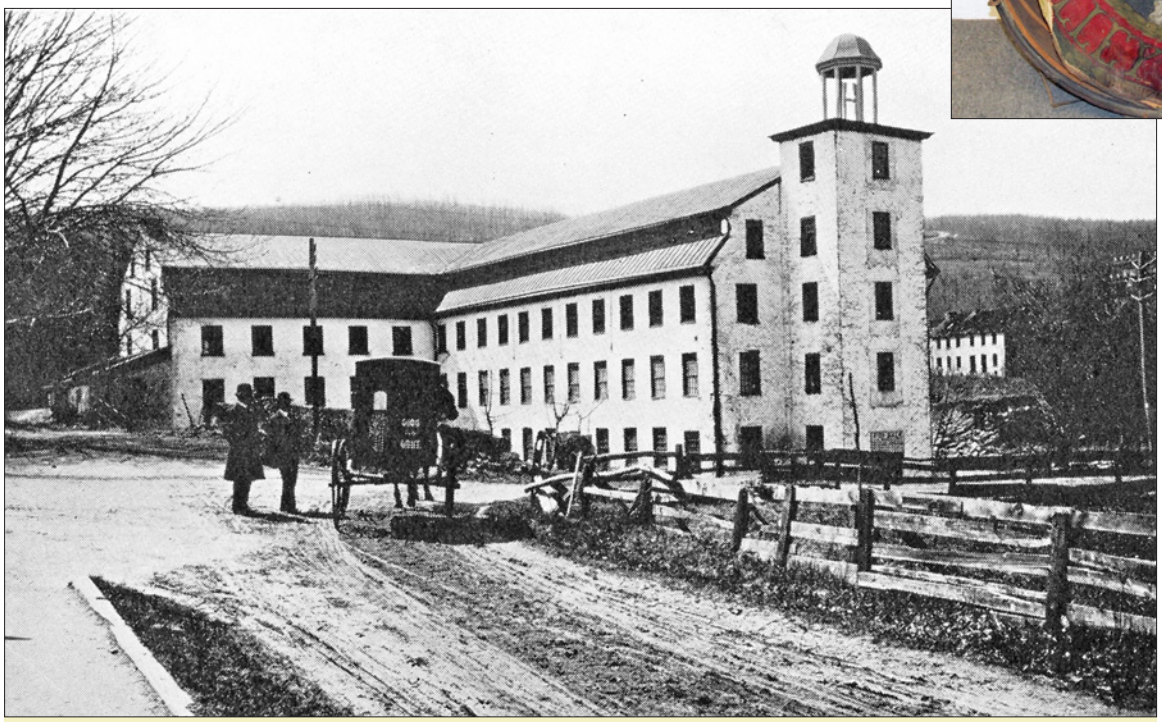
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The Valley Forge Fife & Drum Corps marching band at POSA Meeting Hall, early 1900s[1]. Bandsmen (LEFT TO RIGHT): Dave Conway, Edward Brittain, Frank Rowan, "Quinn," Jack Hartshaw, Robert Wood Sr., "Quinn," Harry Jarrett, Joe Orner, Robert Wood Jr., John Brittain, Levering Conway (as identified by Lee Kirts). Note "Mathews Free Library" displayed on the "P.O.S. of A. Hall" sign above the door. *Courtesy of Lee Kirts.*

In a remarkable coincidence, it appears that the "Vintage Antique Rare Valley Forge Fife & Drum Corps Painted Drum by J.W. Pepper" seen in an eBay auction on 26 December 2022, and listed for $12,500, is very probably the same bass drum seen in the adjacent old photo.





This photograph, possibly taken by noted local photographer Lucy Sampson, was found on page 75 in *Valley Forge: A Chronicle of American Heroism* by Frank Taylor (1905), and shows the then-inactive Cotton Mill, and beyond it on the right in the distance, the ruins of the demolished dam and the former Workers" Cottages building later to become the second home of POSA. This view is looking south, with the road that would become Route 252 to the left of the mill, and the road that would become Route 23 crossing from left to right where the men are standing with the carriage. *Courtesy of TEHS Archives.*

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