



THE BRADFORD LANDMARK SOCIETY

# The Inkwell

45 East Corydon Street, Bradford, PA 16701

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April 2010

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Spring has arrived and Summer is close at hand. The Bradford Landmark Society has big plans for the coming months. First of all, our school program starts down at the Crook farm on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Several area schools will be attending this year and it promises to be one of the best school programs we've had in years. All the volunteers and Crook farm staff are eager to greet the kids for a day at the farm and in the schoolhouse. Down at the Herbig Bakery, we are getting ready to paint the building this year. A fresh new coat of white paint will really spruce up the old building, built in 1876. Volunteers are welcome to help, especially if you know a little something about painting. A few weeks ago, the McKean County Historical Society graciously offered to present their play, "A Murder Trial," based on a real 1932 murder trial, for the benefit of the Landmark Society and it was a big hit. Over 125 people turned out on a lovely spring night and everyone enjoyed themselves. The Crook Farm is coming at the end of August; we have a few new ideas this year and we can't wait to show them off. Plan on attending. And even though it's still April, we are planning a Christmas House Tour again this December, and as a special event, we will be hosting Mike Randall, chief meteorologist from WKBW in Buffalo, who will present "A Charles Dickens Christmas Carol" on December 11. (You may remember he did a great job last year as Mark Twain). And we've been busy writing, too. Our book "Welcome Home 1909 Old Home Week" will finally go to press next week – and we hope to have it on sale for Father's Day. We also hope to have our "Houses of Bradford" book done by Christmas. The Landmark gets busier and busier, but we always have time to stop and help people do research, look something up, or just talk about the old days. Come on in!



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# COMING THIS SUMMER AREA LECTURES, FAIRS & EVENTS

## LECTURES:

**The French & Indian War.** Presented by Bill Robertson. May 20<sup>th</sup>, at 7 PM in the Old Jail Lecture Hall, McKean County Historical Society, Smethport, PA. Free to the public.

**“Grandma’s House,”** May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2:30 PM. Speaker program series, Lakeview Senior Care Center, 15 West Willow Street, Smethport, PA. Free to the public.

**“Hats,”** June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2:30 PM. Speaker program series, Lakeview Senior Care Center, 15 West Willow Street, Smethport, PA. Free to the public.

**The Apollo Moon Mission,** June 24<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM. Presented by Bart Barton. Original pictures of Bill Barton will be shown. The Old Jail Lecture Hall, McKean County Historical Society, Smethport, PA. Free to the public.

**Railroads of Smethport,** June 25<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 PM. Presented by Dick Robertson. The Old Jail Lecture Hall, McKean County Historical Society, Smethport, PA. Free to the public.

**How to Get Your Book Published,** July 29<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 PM, Old Jail Lecture Hall, McKean County Historical Society, Smethport, PA. Presented by Pat Costa Viglucci. Free to the public.

**Dreams of an Author,** July 29<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 PM, Old Jail Lecture Hall, McKean County Historical Society, Smethport, PA. Presented by Pat Costa Viglucci. Free to the public.

**Guns of the Revolution,** August 5<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM, Presented by Bernard Hammond. The Old Jail Lecture Hall, McKean County Historical Society, Smethport, PA. Free to the public.



## Events:

**Bark Peelers Convention,** July 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> at the Pennsylvania Lumber Museum, US Route 6 between Galeton and Coudersport, PA. \$6.00 for adults (or 2-day combined fee of \$10), \$2.00 for children under 12. Check out the details at [www.lumbermuseum.org](http://www.lumbermuseum.org).

**The McKean County Fair,** August 15<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, Fairgrounds, Smethport, PA. The 105<sup>th</sup> annual county fair. For more information: [www.mckeancountyfair.net](http://www.mckeancountyfair.net).

**The Crook Farm Fair,** August 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>, Crook Farm, 476 Seaward Avenue, Bradford. Entrance fee. [www.bradfordlandmark.org](http://www.bradfordlandmark.org).

*Although I live in Bradford now, for the first thirty years of my life until I was married, I lived in Bingham up on “the hill,” as that area around Gifford, Cyclone, Mt. Alton, Ormsby, Lafayette, Riterville, etc. is sometimes called. Historians and old books call it The Big Level, and this edition of **The Inkwell** describes a part of history that happened on “The Big Level” over one hundred years ago.*

*Once, when I was about 5 years old, I was walking through the woods near Mt. Alton with my dad, and he pointed out a huge stump of a tree. To my little girl eyes it seemed enormous. The sides were covered with moss, and the top was splintered and jagged and green with age. It looked like it had been there for years. “This tree was burned,” he told me. “There was a big forest fire here once, a long time ago. This is all that is left.” I realize now, fifty years later, that the stump he showed me was a victim of a terrible forest fire that happened in the spring of 1900.*

*In May of that year, the woods were filled with wild flowers, but warm winds were drying out the old leaves, drying out the branches and drying out the undergrowth. Forest fires, always a danger, took hold and not just on the Big Level, but all through McKean County, completely destroying a small town, numerous oil rigs and burning hundreds of acres of forest and virgin timber. One man died trying to fight the fire and one woman proved that courage could be found in many places – even on a train in the middle of a forest fire.*

*We present to you actual excerpts from the newspapers of the day. Their words describe what we can only imagine of those terrible fires during the week of May 3-9, 1900.*

## The Big Level Fire, May 1900

Yesterday was another day of fire and smoke, stress and turmoil, in the woods. The day was warm and there was a mischievous breeze blowing. The breeze was one that had been left over from the recent March weather which we have been having in May; and it was a breeze that swept all dampness from the leaf-covered woodland. In the afternoon, the minor fires of the fore part of the day became active and extended. In all directions they continued to spread. The wind continued to blow at a lively rate and the air was soon surcharged with heavy, blinding smoke. The smoke settled in the nooks and valleys which the hills make in McKean County’s landscape, and it rose high in the sky and obscured the sun. There were fires to the west of Bradford, and many of them, but in the direction of the Big Level the smoke was the densest and it was there the most damage was done.

In that section, the fires started in to do business up the Kinzua Valley and they ran along, tree-top high, in front of the winds towards Mt. Alton and Smethport. Miles and miles of forest were in flame at one time. The gale would pick up a burning mass of leaves and brambles and throw it far ahead of the regular fire line. In an incredible short space of time the flames were working about Mt. Alton and Bond Vein. Soon they were racing through the forest beyond those places. Over toward Bingham and Newton the flames rolled on. *The Bradford Era, May 9, 1900)*

Up the West Branch, the Nusbaum Chemical Company had a close call, but succeeded in saving their immense store of wood and other property. At Bond Vein, the Mt. Alton Chemical Co., in which Mayor Greenewald is interested, was threatened with destruction, but the flames were held in check. In the town of Mt. Alton, there was great danger of fire from burning brands, but a bucket brigade prevented trouble. A number of teamsters in the woods beyond Newton were in dire peril. Twelve wood-hauling teams were caught and eight of these, by being detached from wagons, were saved. The other teams of horses were unhitched and left to shift for themselves. They may have been cremated. *(The Bradford Era, May 9, 1900)*

Last evening word reached the city that a terrible fire was raging in the vicinity of Simpson. A special train on the B.B. & K. was chartered by parties interested and a force of about 60 men was taken out to fight the fire. Word was received at 11 PM that up to that time it had been impossible to do anything more than save the town of Simpson from destruction and that many rigs, tanks, boiler houses, steam boxes, etc. had been and would be destroyed. So far as known, up to that hour, fire had destroyed 17 rigs belonging to R.J. Straight; 13 rigs for the Associated Producers Co., and 6 rigs belonging to T. J. Melvin. The fire had crossed the B.B. & K tracks and was burning towards Beartown through a section in which a large amount of oil property belonging to the South Penn Company was sure to be destroyed. The fire was made more furious by the oil which it fed upon among the wells and the flames baffled all efforts to control them. If a rain does not soon come this fire around Simpson will go farther and do worse than any of the other fires so far reported. It started along the track of the B. R. & P. at a point between Newton and Bingham some days ago and has swept across the country over a wide area. (*The Bradford Era*, May 3, 1900)

The body of the man reported lost in Tuesday's fire was found yesterday morning. It was that of a man named Ernest Green of Ormsby, a woodcutter, who was employed by the Hamilton & Hilton Chemical Company. He was 33 years old and leaves a wife and two children who reside at Ormsby. The body was charred and burnt frightfully. One leg was burned completely off. The body was recognized by Roy Green, a brother, also a woodsman, who was employed by the same company. The unfortunate man ceased his work in the woods to help George Taylor fight the fire which threatened a house. When it was seen that they could not save the house, Taylor started for Mt. Alton, and urged Green to go with him but the latter declined to go. He started for his home in Ormsby, but the fire came up from two directions, completely encircling him. The body was removed to Ormsby and will be buried today by the County Commissioners, the family being poor and unable to bear the funeral expenses. While driving to Mt. Alton, George Taylor was severely burned about the head, hands, and arms. His horse was also scorched and its tail burned off. (*The Bradford Era*, May 11, 1900.)

From Glen Hazel came this message in the evening: "A large forest fire is raging a quarter of a mile south of Glen Hazel, taking in a space about one-half a mile wide, and blazing as high as the tree tops. It has reached a point about 200 yards south of the water works here and should the wind change the pump station and village would be in grave danger. (*The Bradford Era*, May 3, 1900)

Between Kinzua and Haffey, a stretch of territory five miles long, by as many wide, has been burned over and with heavy losses to oil and lumberman. At this hour, 5 PM, the flames are on the McKeown lease and sweeping everything before them. (*The Bradford Era*, May 3, 1900)

In Mt. Jewett and Kane, the people were almost panic-stricken as a giant blaze widely spread, rushed towards the town and threatened to wipe it out. The fire fighters fought as they never had before, against the invading enemy. It was a war for home and fireside and the battles of the villagers were successfully waged. The town was saved. The trains of the lumber roads running through that section did not haul any logs or lumber yesterday. They were carrying families out of the burning regions to places of safety and assisting the forest firemen.

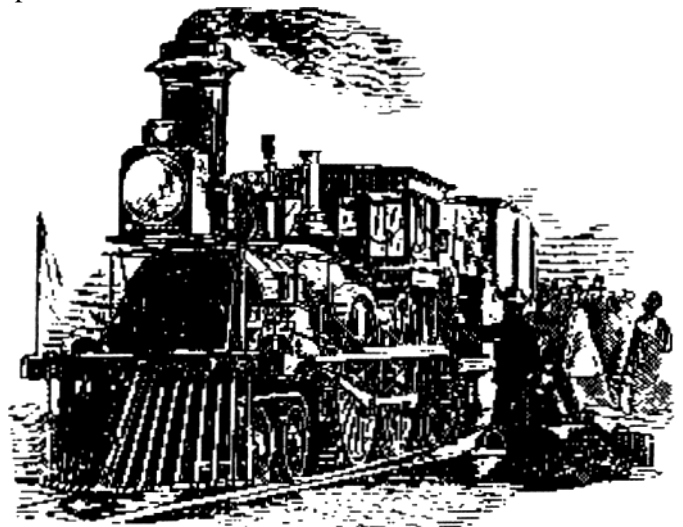
So near to the town of Mt. Jewett came the flames that a force of 200 men was required to guard the large Boyd glass plant which was threatened with destruction by the blaze that came out of the forest. A telephone message last night stated that the Boyd plant was then out of danger. Around the new town of Hazel Hurst fires raged all day and about Simpson and Ormsby a like condition of affairs prevailed. East of the city in the vicinity of Limestone, the woods were on fire as they had been for several days and up the West Branch and beyond in the Sugar Run section, there were fires, too, and bad ones. In fact, on all sides of Bradford, the situation was much the same and in the "round-up" of the consuming element many well owners have lost their rigs and many timber men their wood and logs, to say nothing of exposed lumber camps and other buildings.

(*The Bradford Era*, May 3, 1900)

## A Woman's Heroism

Presence of mind and quick action of a young woman saved 20 people who were scorching and suffocating near Newton yesterday evening, at 5:30 o'clock. While a dozen or more strong men stood inactive and confused, this woman ran a distance of a mile through fire and smoke and brought assistance which saved the train and its passengers. The name is Mrs. Allan Parks of Mt. Jewett. Train No. 9 mail and express southbound, left this city at 4:30 o'clock in charge of Conductor Michael McGannon, with Engineer P. Hannon at the throttle. While climbing the mountainside the train encountered forest fires but as the trainmen thought the worst of the fires had been subdued by the rains in the early morning no thought of real danger was in their minds. They did not think of turning back. When the train left Bingham the fires along the track made their presence felt. Flames began to dart at the cars and into the windows. Passengers began to suffer from the heat and smoke. After passing Newton one of the passengers on board, an old railroad man, became alarmed and was just reaching for the bell cord when the train came to a sudden and violent stop. Passengers were hurled forward with terrific force. The passenger train had run into a gravel train. The place where the incident occurred was in the 14 foot cut, 400 feet south of the Fernwood switch.

A gravel train, which was standing in the cut, was in charge of Conductor George Jacoby and Engineer C.J. Wolfe, both of this city. About 30 laborers had been with this train and, it is said, the trainmen had been overcome with smoke and flames and were unable to move out of danger. Some of the men had run away. Others crouched in the ditches on either side of the cars while clouds of smoke and blistering heat made them helpless. The engine of the passenger train struck the tender of the locomotive attached to the gravel train. The pilot of the passenger engine lifted up the tender before it and threw it from the track. The engineer and firemen jumped for their lives. There was a sudden scattering of workmen. In the smoke and heat the situation was indescribable. In the coaches the passengers were badly shocked and stunned by their various plunges forward. Everybody on the train was hurt more or less, but those who were bruised seriously numbered only six. After the passengers had recovered from the shock most of them got out of the train. The sight that greeted them was enough to appall the stoutest heart. They were surrounded by walls of fire. In the ditches on either side of the track the men of the work train had dammed up the water and moistened their handkerchiefs to cover their faces in an effort to keep from inhaling the fire and smoke and keep alive. Those who were the least overcome ministered to those who were in a state of collapse. Passengers took their cue from the laborers with the work train and began to soak their handkerchiefs in the water and covering their faces with the wet linen. Meanwhile the fire swept fiercely over their heads. All were very calm and they had about made up their minds that death was inevitable. "Not a soul in the party expected to get out alive" said one of the passengers.



Mrs. Allan Parks, who was a passenger, after the first shock of the accident, realized that unless help was brought immediately, all the passengers on the ill-fated train would be in great peril. Without giving a thought to the danger to be encountered, she started back to get help. She knew there was a telegraph station and an operator at Newton. During the trip she was overcome by smoke three times and fell upon the track, but each time she revived and continued her run.

## How They Were Saved

At last she reached Newton. The telegraph operator had been compelled to abandon his post on account of the fire, and she was in despair for a moment, but her heroic effort was still to be crowned with success. At the station she found Trainmaster Moulton of the Kushequa railroad. On the siding was a locomotive with steam up. Quickly explaining the situation to Moulton, she urged him to make all possible haste to help the sufferers in the cut. The locomotive was switched onto the BR & P track and after a lively run to the scene of the wreck, the engine was hitched to the passenger coaches and pulled the 20 passengers and others back to Newton.

When the train with the rescued passengers arrived at the station at Newton, Mrs. Parks was standing on the platform, laughing and crying alternately. The first inclination the passengers had of the little woman's heroism was when she asked for her hat. "I've lost my hat!" she said. "Were you on the train?" asked several in chorus. "Yes, I ran back here to get help" was the reply. In an instant all wanted to know her name, all thanked and blessed her. In the midst of the congratulations, Mrs. Parks said "Oh, I've lost my pocketbook, too." Instantly a hat came off, 20 hands went into as many pockets, and a shower of silver was the result. Every passenger took the young woman's name and address and she was the heroine of the day. Mrs. Parks is the daughter of James Doyle of Kushequa.

Mr. C.O. Lyman of Brockwayville, described the accident to *The Era*. "It was a perfect hell. The wreck occurred in a 14 foot cut three quarters of a mile beyond Newton. Just before the crash came the flames playing in through the window where I sat. I closed the window and we all began to suffer from the smoke. The men on the gravel train were fighting for their lives. They were in the ditches. I suppose the gravel train had been caught in the cut. They could not go south on account of the fire and dared not go north for fear of meeting our train. Not a soul expected to get out alive".

C. H. Bigelow said "None but the brave woman thought of going for help....All of us owe our lives to Mrs. Parks. I heard one of the trainman say that he would not have gone through the fire which she did if he were given the entire BR & P system. It looked like certain death. How she ever succeeded in getting through is a wonder." (*The Bradford Era*, May 9, 1900)

As a slight token of its appreciation of her actions, *The Bradford Era* presented her with a new hat and the lady was most grateful. (*The Bradford Era*, May 10, 1900)

One of the railroad men who had been sent to Newton was nearly exhausted at the end of his run. He was bleeding at the nose from the effects of inhaling the suffocating smoke. Mrs. Allan Parks is at the Bradford hospital suffering from nervous exhaustion and from bruises received on Tuesday during her thrilling experience near Newton. While in the train that collided with the work cars, she was hurled with much force against one of the seats and her subsequent run through the smoke and superheated air had a bad effect upon her. On returning to her home in Mt. Jewett, her nervous force gave out and she became quite feeble. Dr. Gibson, the attending physician, advised that she be taken to the hospital and kept there for a few weeks as quietly as possible. (*The Bradford Era*, May 14, 1900) (Note: She remained in the hospital until the middle of June.)

All told, 450 men were fighting fire in the Davis/Ormsby district Tuesday. (*The Bradford Era*, May 10, 1900)

A dance will be held at the Butts house in Mt. Alton for the benefit of the people of Newton. (*The Bradford Era*, June 12, 1900)



# Newton in Ashes

## The Forests in All Parts of the County Ablaze

### Loss of Property and Hundreds of Homeless People

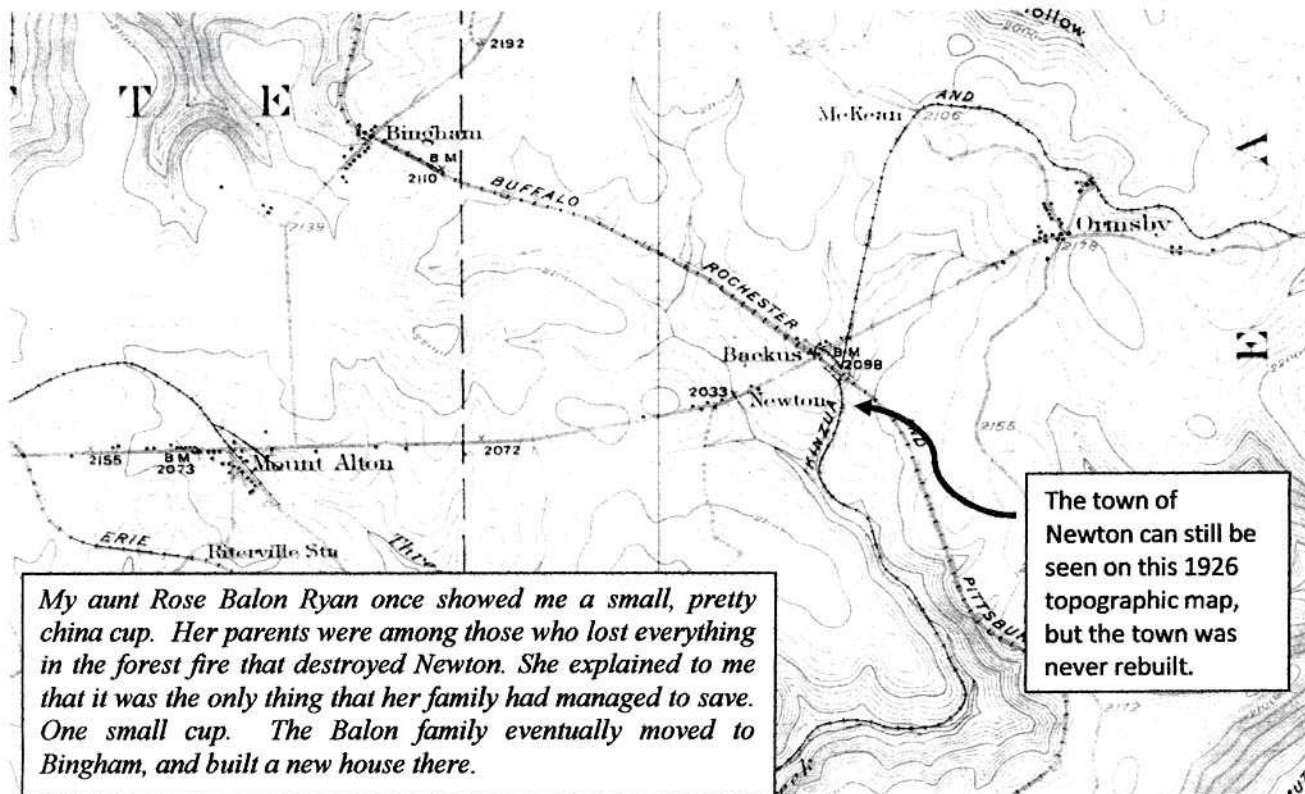
### Rain Checked the Flames

Shortly after noon, a boy rode a horse into the town from the direction of Mt. Alton and reported that the woods a short distance to the west of the hamlet to be ablaze. Realizing at once the awful danger that existed, a number of the inhabitants equipped with barrels of water and buckets, rushed towards the fire.

The great wave of fire swept them back and foreseeing the doom of the town, everyone prepared to save what they could. The intense force of the roaring flames, backed by a wind with a velocity of sixty miles an hour, left them scant time to save even their most prized possessions. With a terrorizing roar, the wind swept flames rolled out of the forest.

With the exception of three small houses in the western end of the town, every building in Newton is in ashes. The loss includes several buildings, the chemical works, the store, the school house, and about twenty dwelling houses, besides thousands of cords of charcoal wood, live stock, etc.

People were unable to save money, jewelry, and other valuables from their homes. Whole families are left with nothing in the world but the scant clothing which covers them. Following is a partial list of those that lost their homes: S.W. Hubbard, D. G. Marsh, Mrs. N. McGregor, F. L. Johnson, Clyde Sheldon, J. L. Wertz, Thomas Barber, John Maney, M. P. Hesley. W. W. Brewer lost seven horses, six of the 8 rigs on his lease, household goods, livestock, and other property. A number of foreigners were also burned out. Their names could not be learned. (*The McKean Miner*, May 8, 1900)



## History of the Census

Its Census time again, but before you grumble about your right to privacy being invaded and complain that the government has no right to ask personal questions - well, yes, it does. Have the right, that is. The first census began more than a year after the inauguration of President Washington and shortly before the second session of the first Congress ended. Congress assigned responsibility for the 1790 Census to the marshals of the U.S. judicial districts. The pay allowed for the 1790 "enumerators" was very small, and did not exceed \$1 for 50 people properly recorded on the rolls.

The First Federal Congress established a special committee to prepare the questions to be included in the first census. The suggestions were likely debated in the House, and according to a report in a Boston newspaper, Virginia Representative James Madison recommended at least five of the initial six questions.

The six inquiries in 1790 called for questions on gender, race, relationship to the head of household, name of the head of household, and the number of slaves, if any. Marshals in some states went beyond these questions and collected data on occupation and the number of dwellings in a city or town.

[illegible]

The 2010 questionnaire is one of the shortest in history, and comes very close to the length and scope of inquiries asked in 1790. Everyone in the household answers seven questions: name, gender, race, ethnicity, and whether they sometimes live somewhere else. The head of household answers how many people live in the residence, whether it is a house, apartment, or mobile home, and provides a telephone number for Census workers to follow up if any information is incomplete or missing.

The first census in 1790 was managed under the direction of Thomas Jefferson, the Secretary of State. Marshals took the census in the original 13 states plus the districts of Kentucky, Maine, and Vermont, and the Southwest Territory (Tennessee). Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson was nominal supervisor of the census on Census Day, August 2, 1790.



## Ever wonder what was asked on previous years?

**The 1840 census asked the same questions as the 1830 census. Each head of family was listed and asked:**

- The number of free White males and females, respectively:
- The number of slaves and free colored persons of each sex, respectively:
- The number of White persons and of "slaves and colored persons" who were deaf and dumb aged:
- and "slaves or colored persons" who were blind; respectively
- The number of White persons who were foreigners not naturalized

### Questions Asked on the 1900 Census

- House number and street name for city dwellers.
- Name and sex of every person in the household.
- Relationship of each person to the head of household.
- Color or race of each person.
- Month and year of birth of each person and their age on their last birthday.
- Is the person single, married, widowed or divorced.
- How long has the person been married.
- How many children born to females and how many are still living.
- Place of birth of each person
- Mother's place of birth.
- Father's place of birth.
- If an immigrant, the year of immigration to the United States.
- How long an immigrant has been in the United States.
- Is the person naturalized?
- Profession, occupation or trade of each person over age 10.
- Number of months a person was unemployed in the year.
- Did the person attend school within the year.
- Can the person read and write.
- Can the person speak English.
- Does the family own or rent the home, is it mortgaged, is it a farm or a house.

**For the 1930 census, the population questionnaire was basically the same as it had been in 1910 and 1920.**

The biggest change was in racial classification. Enumerators were instructed to no longer use the "Mulatto" classification. Instead, they were given special instructions for reporting the race of interracial persons.

A person with both White and Black lineage was to be recorded as Black, no matter fraction of that lineage. A person of mixed Black and American Indian lineage was also to be recorded as Black, unless he was considered to be "predominantly" American Indian and accepted as such within the community.

A person with both White and American Indian lineage was to be recorded as an Indian, unless his American Indian lineage was very small and he was accepted as white within the community. In fact, in all situations in which a person had White and some other racial lineage, he was to be reported as that other race. Persons who had minority interracial lineages were to be reported as the race of their father.

For the first and only time, "Mexican" was listed as a race. Enumerators were to record all persons who had been born in Mexico or whose parents had been born in Mexico and who did not fall into another racial category as "Mexican."

# The 1890 Census

For 1890, the Census Office changed the design of the population questionnaire. Residents were still listed individually, but a new questionnaire sheet was used for each family. Additionally, this was the first year that the census distinguished between different East Asian races.

The following questions, listed by row number, were asked of each individual resident:

1. Christian name in full, and initial of middle name
2. Surname
3. Was this person a soldier, sailor, or marine during the Civil War (U.S.A. or C.S.A.), or the widow of such a person?
4. Relationship to the head of the family
5. Race - Enumerators were instructed to write "White," "Black," "Mulatto," "Quadroon," "Octoroon," "Chinese," "Japanese," or "Indian."
6. Sex
7. Age
8. Was the person single, married, widowed, or divorced?
9. Was the person married within the last year?
10. How many children was the person a mother of? How many of those children were living?
11. Person's place of birth
12. Place of birth of person's father
13. Place of birth of person's mother
14. How many years has the person been in the United States?
15. Is the person naturalized?
16. Has the person taken naturalization papers out?
17. Profession, trade, or occupation
18. Number of months unemployed in the past year
19. How many months did the person attend school in the past year?
20. Can the person read?
21. Can the person write?
22. Can the person speak English? If not, what language does he speak?
23. Is the person suffering from an acute chronic disease? If so, what is the name of that disease and the length of time affected?
24. Is the person defective of mind, sight, hearing, or speech? Is the person crippled, maimed, or deformed? If yes, what was the name of his defect?
25. Is the person a prisoner, convict, homeless child, or pauper?
26. Depending on the person's status in the questions in rows 22, 23, or 24, the enumerator would indicate on this line whether additional information was recorded about him on a special schedule.

But this information doesn't really matter, now, for this census was destroyed in a fire in Washington DC in 1921. This information would have been incredibly useful to family genealogists and historians, but except for a few random listings from a handful of states, nothing remains.



## **But What *Really* Happened to the 1890 Census?**

Of the decennial population census schedules, perhaps none might have been more critical to studies of immigration, industrialization, westward migration, and characteristics of the general population than the Eleventh Census of the United States, taken in June 1890. United States residents completed millions of detailed questionnaires, yet only a fragment of the general population schedules and an incomplete set of special schedules enumerating Union veterans and widows are available today. Reference sources routinely dismiss the 1890 census records as "destroyed by fire" in 1921. Examination of the records of the Bureau of Census and other federal agencies, however, reveals a far more complex tale. This is a genuine tragedy of records--played out before Congress fully established a National Archives--and eternally anguishing to researchers.

As there was not a permanent Census Bureau until 1902, the Department of the Interior administered the Eleventh Census. Political patronage was "the most common order for appointment" of the nearly 47,000 enumerators; no examination was required.

This was the first U.S. census to use Herman Hollerith's electrical tabulation system, a method by which data representing certain population characteristics were punched into cards and tabulated and the original (and presumably only) copies of the schedules were forwarded to Washington.

Enumerators generally completed their counting by July 1 of 1890, but complaints about accuracy and undercounting poured into the census office, as did demands for recounts. New York State officials were accused of bolstering census numbers and the intense competition between Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, resulted in no fewer than nineteen indictments against Minneapolis businessmen for allegedly "fixing" the census, by adding more than 1,100 phony names to the census.

Despite repeated ongoing requests by the secretary of commerce and others for an archives building where all census schedules could be safely stored, by January 10, 1921, the schedules could be found piled in an orderly manner on closely placed pine shelves in an unlocked file room in the basement of the Commerce Building.

At about five o'clock on that afternoon, building fireman James Foster noticed smoke coming through openings around pipes that ran from the boiler room into the file room. Foster saw no fire but immediately reported the smoke to the desk watchman, who called the fire department. Minutes later, on the fifth floor, a watchman noticed smoke in the men's bathroom, took the elevator to the basement, and was forced back by the dense smoke. A total of three alarms and a general local call were turned in.

While a crowd of ten thousand watched, firemen poured twenty streams of water into the building and flooded the cellar through holes cut into the concrete floor. With the blaze extinguished, despite the obvious damage and need for immediate salvage efforts, the chief clerk opened windows to let out the smoke, and except for watchmen on patrol, everyone went home.

Speculation and rumors about the cause of the blaze ran rampant. Some newspapers claimed, and many suspected, it was caused by a cigarette or a lighted match. Employees were keenly questioned about their smoking habits. Others believed the fire started among shavings in the carpenter shop or was the result of spontaneous combustion. At least one woman from Ohio felt certain the fire was part of a conspiracy to defraud her family of their rightful estate.

The census records, badly burned or water soaked, were considered unsalvageable and no attempts were made to copy or repair them. The surviving records were put into storage, only to be authorized to be destroyed by Congress on Feb. 21, 1933. Years later, some remaining scraps of the 1890 census were found - all told, only 6160 names are accounted for. In 1934, the National Archive - fireproof - was built.



Bradford, Bordell & Kinzua, 1895

## ***A Murder Trial***

On March 25, at the First Presbyterian Church of Bradford, the Bradford Landmark Society and the McKean County Historical Society Players joined together to present "***A Murder Trial***" a play based on a real trial that took place in the County Courthouse in 1932.

Beatrice Sullivan of Kane was put on trial for the shooting death of her husband, Neil Sullivan. In a sensational trial that rocked the county, prominent Bradford attorney Regis Mutzabaugh defended the woman on the charge of murder.

Using local talent, the play was a huge success. We had over 125 people join us as the play opened. One neat twist was choosing the all male jury from the actual audience in the auditorium. The players played their parts, the audience was enthralled, and the whole night was a great success. Thank you so much, McKean County Historical Society for offering your thespian talents over here in Bradford, and we hope that in the future, we can collaborate once more.

