

Excerpts From the Allegany Almanack

Atty. W. A. Gunter has loaned the editor an interesting booklet entitled "The Allegany County Letter League" published by the Monarch Press in 1945. It was an Almanack containing much relevant history of Allegany County which was sent to the boys overseas during World War II along with a monthly mimeographed letter. Mr. Gunter supervised and edited most of the material from his law office, and was assisted by Judge Sloan and Mary C. Kelly, their Secretary. During a period of seventeen months sixty-four thousand letters were sent. Many thousands of letters were received from the boys which have been mounted in scrapbooks, and are now in the files of Mr. Gunter. Here are some excerpts pertaining to local history:

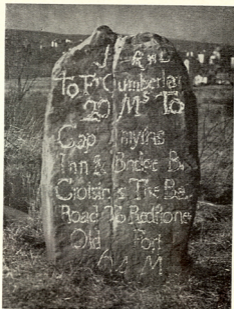
"The burning coal mine on Dan's Mountain near Vale Summit, like Mt. Vesuvius, is still burning.

"Before I forget it, Earl, put this one down about Baltimore Street (Cumberland). It was not always named Baltimore Street. If you will look at the old town map filed in the Court House in 1806, you will see that what is now known as Baltimore Street was then called Bedford Street; and what is now known as Bedford Street was then named Blocher Street; and what is now known as Centre Street, at one time had three names at the same time, viz., Mill Street, Broad Street, and Jefferson Street. Furthermore, most all of the artisans and mechanics lived on a certain street, and so it was called 'Mechanic Street.'

"Across the street from Rosenbaums still stands Old Belvedere Hall, over a hundred years old and Cumberland's first theatre. Here in 1851 Jenny Lind, the famous Swedish singer gave a concert. Here also appeared America's famous midget, Col. Thomas Thumb. The shows and concerts of the old days on the second floor of Belvedere Hall are gone, and there has been substituted another form of entertainment, commonly known as 'Bingo.' (Editor's Note: Since Mr. Gunter wrote in 1945 Belvedere Hall has been dismantled).

"Allegany High School is located on a tract of land that was used by Union soldiers during the Civil War. This tract is known as Campo Bello, which translated means 'War Camp.'

"At the time of the Civil War, Fort Hill High School was not in existence. The land on which it is located was known as 'Fort Hill.' Confederate Generals McCausland and Johnson had burned Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, had exacted a tribute from Hagerstown, had demanded \$30,000 from Hancock, and then started for Cumberland. On learning of the approach of the Confederate Army great excitement prevailed. A public meeting was held on Sunday night for the purpose of organizing a local militia to assist General Kelley and his soldiers in the defense of the city. Three companies were formed consisting of two hundred men under the command of General Charles M. Thruston, a retired army officer living in Cumberland. On Mon-



The legend on the stone: "Twelve miles to Fort Cumberland—20 miles to Captain Smyth's Inn and Bridge—Big Crossings—The Best Road to Redstone Old Fort 64 miles." It is known as the "Braddock Stone" now resting on the property of State Teachers College, Frostburg, Maryland.

Looking at it closely one will see a crack down through the middle. Mr. Llewellyn Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Schools of Allegany County, explained to the editor that the stone originally stood along the Pike in Frostburg. A stone mason by the nickname of "Mortar Johnny" looking for a stone, split the Braddock Stone. When it was discovered the citizens of Frostburg forced him to replace it and thus is explained the crack. *Photo through the courtesy of Ray McCullough, Principal of Allegany High School.*

day afternoon the rebel army was reported in the vicinity of what is now the Ali Ghan Club on the Baltimore Pike (The Old National Pike). The merchants loaded their goods and sent them to places of safety. The railroad companies moved their trains to the West. Men were rushing about the streets arming themselves with muskets, rifles, and shotguns. Thousands of residents climbed to the hill tops for the purpose of obtaining a view of the expected conflict. Meanwhile the regular army, under General Kelley took up its position at the Shrine Club in sight of the enemy. General Thruston, with his volunteers, took up his command on Fort Hill.

"Local historians report that the 'minute men' were a bit jittery and in need of stimulants. Whereupon two colored men were sent to the center of town to obtain a supply. They soon returned, carrying three two-gallon



General Lew Wallace's Camp of Indiana Zouaves in Cumberland, Maryland, during the Civil War. This Camp is now the present site of Allegany High School. The "Narrows" are seen in the background. General Wallace is best remembered for his historical novel "Ben Hur," part of which was written by him while staying at the Glades Hotel in Oakland, Maryland, where he came for rest, following his strenuous years of the war. *From Herman J. Miller Collection of historical pictures.*

demijohns of firewater on a long pole. Just as they reached camp one of them, unfortunately, stumbled. The pole broke, and so did the demijohns, much to the disappointment of the 'minute men.'

"Sometime in the late afternoon General Thruston sitting in front of his tent on Fort Hill was advised by the scouts that the rebel hordes were coming in his direction from the Williams Road. General Thruston replied: 'Damm them—let them come— everything's hunkadora.' A few hours later the scouts made a second report stating that the enemy was moving South making their way to the Potomac at Green Spring.

"Whereupon the General replied: 'Damm them—let them go—everything hunkadora!' Hence this near-battle on the site of Fort Hill was named by the townsmen of that day as the 'Battle of Hunkadora;' the land was known as 'Hunkadora Heights;' and to this day 'hunkadora' is still used as a local expression to indicate that everything is O. K.

"The real name for Vale Summit is Pompey Smash. I will tell you how Pompey Smash got its name. Over one hundred years ago there was quite a plantation located above Vale Summit, known as the Vale Farm. The produce from this plantation was brought to Cumberland for sale and shipment. The Plantation was worked by slaves. On one occasion a large covered wagon loaded with produce, drawn by four mules, and driven by an old slave named 'Pompey' suddenly collapsed as it made the turn in the road at the Clary Club. Hence this little settlement from which Pompey had come was called 'Pompey's Smash.'