

# BUFFENMEYER'S BULLETS

by Stephen L. Longenecker

June 30, 1863, was a day when it seemed as though the temperature and humidity were contesting each other to reach unbearable heights. Under the hot sun the Pennsylvania German farmers in the Middle Creek Valley of northern Lancaster County worked in their fields as the corn crept knee-high and ripening top-heavy grains bent their stalks.

Wars breed rumors at a pace faster than rabbits reproduce, and the latest word in Lancaster County was that General Robert E. Lee had marched his Confederate Army of Northern Virginia north to threaten Pennsylvania. The June 30 edition of the *Lancaster Daily Evening Express* sounded a moderately optimistic tone with reports of Confederate retreats from York and Harrisburg,<sup>1</sup> but readers of *The Lancaster Intelligencer*, a weekly paper, gained a report lacking in optimism. On June 30, the *Intel* reported excited conditions in Lancaster on Sunday, June 28, as jittery citizens crowded the streets trying to get news of the latest Confederate movements. At 7:30 p.m. on Sunday Lancaster received word that Union troops had withdrawn from Wrightsville, and the fire that consumed the Columbia-Wrightsville bridge could be seen in the Red Rose city. Pessimism continued in the *Intelligencer* as it told of residents fleeing from Columbia, rebels within three miles of Harrisburg, and an editorial call to arms entitled "Men of Lancaster County Arouse!"<sup>2</sup>

Jesse Pannabecker, a proprietor of one of the many mills along the Middle Creek, heard these menacing accounts of the rebel invasion. Perhaps his anxieties were reinforced by speculation that his mill might become a casualty of war captured by invaders or destroyed to avoid capture. On the evening of the thirtieth he went down the road from his home in Hopeland and visited with his friend in Clay, Peter Buffenmeyer. The two flustered "Dutchmen" talked and speculated until midnight and concluded that after the rebels took Harrisburg, they

would march down the Horse Shoe Turnpike<sup>3</sup> to Philadelphia, a route that would take the Confederates past Buffenmeyer's doorstep. When the two had completed their conversation, Pannabecker returned home.

After the miller had gone, the excited Buffenmeyer decided that he must prepare to meet the advancing hordes. He brought out his moulds, and staying awake till dawn, he cast lead bullets and measured out the proper amounts of gunpowder.

As the sun rose on the morning of July 1, Buffenmeyer with his new bullets was ready for the Stars and Bars of Dixie that he expected to see descending the hill from Brickerville. But, unknown to him, Lee's army was gathering at Gettysburg, where their invasion was stopped, and Buffenmeyer's bullets were never used.

When Buffenmeyer died, his bullets were sold to Adam Mellinger, who was Clay's blacksmith for many years. Mellinger gave all but one of the bullets to Hanner Landis in the 1940's, and they became part of the Landis Valley Farm Museum.<sup>4</sup>

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## NOTES

1. *Lancaster Daily Evening Express*, June 30, 1863, p. 2.

2. *The Lancaster Intelligencer*, June 30, 1863, p. 2.

3. The Twenty-eighth Division Highway or route 322.

4. Confirmed in a conversation on May 30, 1966, with John Eshleman, a guide at the Landis Valley Farm Museum.