

# BUFFALOES IN PENNSYLVANIA

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The following brief article on the Buffalo in Pennsylvania is Chapter IX of a book published in Philadelphia under the title of "Progressive Pennsylvania." The author is Mr. James M. Swank, who for thirty-five years has been the general manager of the American Iron and Steel Association, and editor of its publications. He is our highest authority on matters pertaining to the iron and steel industry in the United States:

It is a curious fact that the existence of the buffalo in Pennsylvania in colonial times or at any time before the coming of the white settlers can not be proved by any evidence based on the preservation of buffalo skulls or whole skeletons which have been found within the borders of the State. They are not to be seen anywhere. Prof. Spencer F. Bard has mentioned the existence of fossil remains found near Carlisle, which, he says, may have been buffalo bones. Other authorities definitely record the finding of bones in Pennsylvania. In Rhoads' "Mammals of Pennsylvania and New Jersey" (1903) he mentions buffalo bones which have been found in Pennsylvania and are preserved at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. Other proofs that the buffalo once existed in this State are abundant.

Early French explorers in the region south of the Great Lakes mention the presence of "wild bulls," "wild beeves" and "vast herds of wild

cattle" in the territory they visited, and some of these buffaloes were seen on the southern shore of Lake Erie, which would include Pennsylvania. Vaudreuil, describing this lake in 1718, says: "There is no need of fasting on either side of this lake; deer are to be found there in great abundance; buffaloes are found on the south but not on the north side." Col. James Smith was captured by the Indians in Pennsylvania in 1755, when a boy, and taken to Ohio, where he remained a captive until 1759. Forty years after his release he published a circumstantial account of his captivity, which is an American classic. In this account Col. Smith frequently mentions buffaloes as forming part of the staple diet of the Indians with whom he lived in the eastern part of Ohio. He killed one himself. In 1770 Washington visited what is now known as West Virginia, and in the journal of his trip he speaks of receiving from "an old acquaintance," Kyashuta, "a quarter of very fine buffalo." He also mentions a buffalo path, "the tracks of which we saw." On November 2, recording his exploration of the Great Kanawha river, he writes: "Killed five buffaloes and wounded some others, three deer, &c. This country abounds in buffaloes." He says of a creek near which he encamped that "on this creek are many buffaloes, according to the Indians' account." In 1784 Washington paid a visit to Western Maryland, Western Pennsylvania, and what is now West Virginia, and in his diary of that journey he refers to buffalo paths and salt licks frequented by buffaloes in the vicinity of Morgantown, which is only a few miles south of the Pennsylvania line.

When a young man, soon after the close of the Revolution, Albert Gal-

latin was engaged in land explorations in the western part of Virginia. In an article on the Indians and their means of subsistence, contributed by Mr. Gallatin in 1848 to the Transactions of the American Ethnological Society, that eminent man, referring to buffaloes, says: "The name of Buffalo creek, between Pittsburg and Wheeling, proves that they had spread thus far eastwardly when that country was first visited by the Anglo-American. In my time (1784-1785) they were abundant on the southern side of the Ohio, between the Great and the Little Kanawha. I have during eight months lived principally on their flesh." He also says of the buffaloes that "they had at a former period penetrated east of the Allegheny Mountains."

Dr. Bausman, in his "History of Beaver County, Pennsylvania," quotes Colonel Brodhead as writing to Washington in 1780 that he is "sending hunters to the Little Kenawha to kill buffaloes," and in Craig's "History of Pittsburgh" we read that Col. Brodhead, in a letter to Rev. D. Zeisberger, under date of December 2, 1780, "proposes that he should send fifteen or twenty best hunters to Little Kenawha to kill buffalo, elks and bears, to be salted down in canoes made for that purpose." Dr. Bausman also quotes this passage from Schoolcraft: "There was added for all the region west of the Alleghenies the bison of the West (*Bos Americanus*), the prominent object and glory of the chase for the tribes of these latitudes." The common name of the bison is buffalo.

In General Peter Muhlenberg's journal of his trip to the Falls of Ohio in 1784 he writes, under date of April 5, that the boat on which he had taken passage on the Ohio river "came to

shore on the Indian side," the Ohio side, where "a hunting party turned out and killed one buffalo and one deer, but both very poor." On the 6th the General writes that his boat again landed "on the Indian shore" and adds that "we killed three buffaloes, but found them too poor to eat, so that we determined to kill no more." He further says that "the winter must have been very severe here and hard for the game, as we have this day found several deer, one bear, and four buffaloes dead in the woods, which seem to have perished through want." This is the latest reference to the presence of buffaloes in Ohio that we have seen.

The foregoing quotations justify beyond all doubt the inference that the buffalo was an inhabitant at least of Western Pennsylvania. It is not to be presumed that it would frequent the territory immediately west and south of Pennsylvania and not cross over the boundary lines.

That buffaloes frequented the salt springs in Northwestern Pennsylvania is shown in the following extract from a letter written by the English traveler, Thomas Ashe, at Erie, in April, 1806. He says: "An old man, one of the first settlers of this country, built his log house on the borders of a salt spring. He informed me that for the first several seasons the buffaloes paid him their visits regularly; they traveled in single file, following at equal distances from each other, forming droves on their arrival of 300." He supposed that there were no less than 10,000 in the neighborhood of the spring. And he further says that in the first and second years this old man, with some companions, killed 600 or 700 of these noble creatures for the sake of their skins. He also

says that buffalo bones had been found in large quantities on Buffalo creek, but he does not locate the creek. Fort Le Boeuf, in Erie county, built in 1753, meant Buffalo Fort.

In his valuable monograph on the "Extermination of the American Bison," William T. Hornaday says that in the region between the Allegheny river and the west branch of the Susquehanna "there were at one time thousands of buffaloes." In support of this opinion he quotes from Professor J. A. Allen's "American Bison," and from other monographs by the same author.

Prof. Allen refers to Buffalo creek, "which empties into the eastern end of Lake Erie," and to other evidences that buffaloes "once existed in Western New York." Hornaday adds that "from the eastern end of Lake Erie the boundary of the bison's habitat extends south in Western Pennsylvania to a marsh called Buffalo swamp on a map published by Peter Kalm in 1771." He quotes Allen as saying of this swamp that it "is indicated as situated. . . . near the heads of the Licking and Toby's creeks, apparently the streams now called Oil creek and Clarion creek." It was in this locality that "there were at one time thousands of buffaloes."

It is a reasonable inference that many places in Pennsylvania were not given buffalo names merely through caprice. Buffalo Mills and mountain in Bedford county, Buffalo Mountain and Valley in Union county, Buffalo creeks in Washington, Perry, Union, and other counties, and Buffalo townships in several counties in Central and Western Pennsylvania are prima facie evidence that buffaloes had once frequented the localities to which their

name has been given. There is a tradition that the last buffalo in Bedford county was killed at Buffalo Mills. Rhoads says that there are sure proofs of the existence of the buffalo along the Casselman river in Somerset county. The last buffalo in Pennsylvania was probably killed in Union county about 1790, as will presently be shown.

Some of the buffalo localities referred to above are in Central Pennsylvania, east of the Alleghenies. In Prof. Hornaday's map illustrating his monograph he indicates that the range of the buffalo in Pennsylvania extended as far east as Harrisburg. Neither William Penn nor any other early writer mentions the buffalo in Eastern Pennsylvania, though Gabriel Thomas in 1698 says that the buffalo was found in that province. Hulbert often mentions buffalo paths in Central and Western Pennsylvania.

Professor Allen carries farther eastward his investigations of the presence of the buffalo in Pennsylvania, and finds proofs of its existence in Union county in the Susquehanna Valley. He quotes from a letter written on March 14, 1876, by Prof. Hamlin, in which letter Loomis copies as follows from a letter received by him from J. Wolfe: "Since seeing you this morning I have had a conversation with Dr. Beck, and he informs me that buffaloes, at an early day, were very abundant in this valley, and that the valley received its name from that circumstance. The doctor received his information from Col. John Kelly, who was a prominent and early settler in this valley. Kelly told the Doctor that he had shot the last one that was seen in the valley. Kelly received his information of the abundance of buffaloes from an old Indian

named Logan, friendly to the whites, and who remained among the whites after the Indians were driven away."

On March 30, 1876, Prof. Loomis wrote again to Prof. Hamlin, from which letter Allen quotes as follows: "I sought an interview with Dr. Beck. The Col. Kelly referred to was a soldier and an officer in the Revolutionary war.....(He died in 1832, aged eighty-eight years). He owned a farm about five miles from Lewisburg, in Kelly township, which was named after him. About 1790-1800 Colonel Kelly was out with his gun on the McClister farm (which joined that of Col. Kelly), and just at evening saw and shot a buffalo. His dog was young, and at so late an hour he did not allow it to pursue. The next morning he went to hunt his game, but did not find it. Nearly a week later word was brought him that it had been found dead, some mile or two away. He found the information correct, but the animal had been considerably torn and eaten by wolves. He regarded the animal as a stray one and had never heard of any in the valley at a later day. Dr. Beck had the account from Col. Kelly about three months before his death. The Colonel repeated the statement of the friendly Indian, Logan, who said that buffaloes had been very abundant. He, Dr. Beck, had the same statement from Michael Grove, also one of the first settlers in the valley.....I was more particular than I should ordinarily have been, because this is about the last stage when reliable tradition can be had." Allen says: "This, of course, affords satisfactory proof of the former existence of the buffalo in the region of Lewisburg, which forms the most easterly point to which the buffalo has been positively traced."

The valley referred to by Dr. Beck near the top of the preceding page was Buffalo valley, in Union county.

In Watson's "Annals," published in 1857, it is stated that "the latest notice of buffaloes nearest to our region of country is mentioned in 1730, when a gentleman from the Shenandoah, Va., saw there a buffalo killed of 1,000 pounds, and several others came in a drove at the same time." As the Shenandoah Valley is an extension of the Cumberland Valley in Pennsylvania, it is easily to be inferred that if buffaloes would come into one valley they would naturally invade the other. Hence it is altogether probable that the bones found by Professor Baird, near Carlisle, were what he supposed them to be, Carlisle being in the Cumberland Valley.

The foregoing summary of facts relating to the buffalo abundantly proves its existence in Central Pennsylvania as well as in Western Pennsylvania, down to a period contemporaneous with the close of the Revolutionary War.



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