

# The History of Cedar Hill Seminary.

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To recall the active days of old "Cedar Hill," as a Seminary, these are indeed very rapidly fading away, in the memory of even the oldest inhabitants of Mount Joy and vicinity; and the desolate evidences of decay at this one-time seat of local learning, are but mute reminders of a by-gone era. The history of this institution has been perhaps meager, yet of interest withal; and the writer now gladly gives his portion, with other data, for the present paper, prepared in part, also, by him, for a new history of Mount Joy and its surroundings, issued by the Centennial Publishing Company of that place.

After the time of Pennsylvania's Legislative Act of 1822, providing for the education of children at public expense in the city and incorporated boroughs of Lancaster county, there were also established a number of academies. These private schools gave opportunity for a more general education than could be secured by moderate State aid. "Mount Joy, by vote, accepted the terms of the school law of 1834 in the year of 1842."

## The First Location.

Prior to the later location of Cedar Hill, a school was evidently conducted by Rev. Dodge and held in a long, low, stone building on what is at present the Christian Seitz farm. No part of the original structure is now standing, according to information available.

This school was in existence about 1836-7.

The building for Cedar Hill Seminary was commenced in 1837, at the extreme eastern end of Mount Joy, near the south side of Little Chiques creek, at what is now known as "The Dell," between the Pennsylvania Railroad and Mount Joy trolley tracks. The place was occupied at the beginning of 1839, by its principal, Rev. Nehemiah Dodge, A.M., who became known as a very active character and able teacher. The seminary succeeded well in its educational advantages, and was attended during its best periods "by young ladies from eleven different States."

### **Early Printed History.**

From among the different Lancaster county histories, Rupp makes this mention: "'The Young Ladies' Lyceum Institute'—Rev. N. Dodge, A.M., principal—located on the banks of the Chiquesalunga creek, near the village of Mountjoy—is, perhaps, as regards accommodations—kind attention to the wants of the pupils—facility for acquiring a competent and thorough knowledge of all the various branches and accomplishments taught at similar institutions, if not superior to, at least surpassed by none other in the country." Rupp's book of 1844 refers to the Cedar Hill Seminary; and in terming it an "Institute," that astute historian had somewhat in mind another private school (for boys), called the Mount Joy Institute, established about the same time, 1838, by J. H. Brown as principal, which "was not long in operation."

### **A Seminary For Females.**

Rev. Dodge conducted Cedar Hill as a female seminary until about the middle sixties, when the school was

closed on account of the drawn-out Civil War. Southern parents in particular kept their daughters away, and the previously prosperous institution went down, owing somewhat to the prevailing prejudices incident to that stirring period.

A writer in the Mount Joy Herald of the early eighties gave this description of Cedar Hill at that time: "It is surrounded by a grove of cedar and forest trees, making a most delightful and beautiful place. In antebellum days a flourishing female seminary existed here, which had a national reputation, and for many years it was a fountain from which issued many streams to make glad hundreds of happy households, North and South. Many noted persons from the South used to visit the place. I remember when Senator Berrian and family, from South Carolina, spent their summer vacation here." A further description of the near-by Chiqua-Salunga creek at Cedar Hill was published with the above, in the Landisville Vigil of 1883.

Rev. Professor Dodge, founder of the Female Seminary, was born in Londonderry, N. H., September 10, 1794, and died at Cedar Hill, July 25, 1876. His body was buried at Old Donegal Church Cemetery, this county, and his monument bears this appropriate quotation: "He opened his mouth with wisdom; and on his tongue was the law of kindness."

### **A Change in Management.**

For some years the Seminary building was idle for school purposes. In 1874 Prof. David Denlinger, an educator of celebrity and reputation, who had previously gone through some similar experiences in keeping an institution on its feet during the war

(having also had considerable patronage from the South), came to Mount Joy from New Berlin, Union county, this State, where he had taught females only, and reopened the Dodge school under the last name of Cedar Hill Seminary, admitting both sexes from thence forward. Professor Denlinger had charge of the changed institution for some years, while the property belonged to the estate of the founder.

### **Some Reflections.**

After a time Cedar Hill was again closed. The building met the fate of a fire and stood spectral like in its ruins; while the surroundings thickened with growing trees and wild weeds. The young folks of Mount Joy borough, in late years, often jaunted to its environs to pass away love's young dreams, while other folks picnicked there. In yet more recent seasons many a "hobo" has rested his weary bones in the shade of the seminary surroundings. Green young cedar trees are now striving for mastery, quite close to the walls of the once classic halls, by the tall trees which are now overtopping the scenes where Professors Dodge and Denlinger did their personal share for the education of noble daughters and sons, of a fair portion of this country.

Professor Denlinger removed to and lived at Manchester, Carroll county, Md., where he successfully continued the Irving Institute for probably ten years. He died about eighteen years since, and his remains are interred in the Henry Eberle Cemetery at Mount Joy. His son, J. W. Denlinger, Esq., practices law in Lancaster city at the present time.

## A Romantic Tradition.

A correspondent of a Mount Joy paper in 1883, under the initials of "J. E. C.," gave a very graphic sketch of Cedar Hill's romantic Indian tradition, in which a young brave by the name of Chiqua courted a handsome maiden called Salunga. The story, in detail, winds up by a most tragic termination of their young lives at Chiques Rock, on the Susquehanna, close by the mouth of the Little Chiques creek.

This tradition has been printed in modified form on different occasions since then in the Landisville Vigil, Ellis & Evans' Lancaster County History, and in earlier proceedings of our own Historical Society.

Briefly commenting on the first flowery sketch of this tradition, I would state that the Susquehanna is not "nearly two miles wide" at Chiques Rock, where the Herald author also stated the river was "nearly two hundred feet below" the top of its most prominent rocky point. Similar romantic stories have been handed down from generation to generation, based on the natural wonders bordering at other winding, rock-ribbed streams of this county; and, as time goes on, we shall not lack for artistic, sentimental backgrounds to our printed sketches of local prose and poetry.

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