

The Latta Genealogy Newsletter

Issue 11

Autumn 1999

Branch 3

Fire engine inventors feared for their lives

By Virginia Latta Curulla (br #22)

What if you were inventing a machine that a bunch of ruffian's thought would take away their greatest entertainment? That's is exactly what happened to branch #3 Latta ancestors in Cincinnati, Ohio, around 1850. These Latta's were in fear of their lives, and working in secret, because the Cincinnati volunteer firemen didn't want a mechanical steam powered pumper to take away

their fun.

Volunteer firefighters of that era in many cities of the U.S. were regarded as rowdies and troublemakers.

Robert Holzman, in *The Romance of Firefighting*, termed their behavior as reflecting "the sheer joy of fighting each

other". Perhaps many of these ruffians were our Scots-Irish ancestors, engaging in the "rough and tumble"—"no holds barred" fighting that was so much approved in their culture, according to David Hackett Fischer.

Volunteer fire companies raced to be the first at a fire, either for the premium offered, or for the prestige of being superior to the other volunteer companies. Sometimes, when volunteer companies met while racing to the fire, they stopped to fight each other—letting the building burn to the ground! In 1851, a planing mill was completely destroyed while Cincinnati and Covington, KY firefighters battled each other on the streets of Cincinnati. Respectable townspeople were understandably upset.

Cincinnati's chief engineer engaged one or several of the Latta family to build a steam pumper that would replace the hand-powered machines that required many volunteer firemen to keep them pumping. Holzman notes that several Latta's were known for developing locomotives, planing machines, and other heavy equipment.

Many sources attribute the invention of the steam pumper to Alexander Bonner Latta, branch 3. Robert Latta said that Alexander was helped by his "lame" brother, Edmiston. Perhaps this explains the "A.B. & E. Latta" markings on the steam fire engine that is seen in pictures.

Erven and Holzman attribute the invention of the steam pumper to Moses Latta, who was said to be a local manufacturer. Morris lists three "brothers", Moses, Alexander and Finlay Latta, as being the inventors. The only problem with inclusion of Moses Latta is that Alexander and Finlay were not known to have a brother named Moses. However, these brothers did have two uncles, each named Moses Latta, because their parents were first cousins.

The steam engine was built in the "Buckeye" Works of Miles Greenwood. Greenwood, who is said to have contributed

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Editorial**He's back!**

George Latta has resurfaced! Thanks to some diligent detective work on the part of Cousin Marquita Latta we found that he had despaired of last winter's snow-up-to-his-armpits and scouted out a new home in warmer climes.

George and Theresa are now settled(?) into their new location in Boiling Springs SC (see masthead for address). That's the good news.

The bad news is that many months of fixing up, selling, packing, buying, moving, unpacking, etc., have limited George's time to work on the Latta Branches. So, once again, we'll ask your indulgence and patience while we catch up on the updates.

We are pleased to know that George is alive and well (and warm) as another autumn and winter inevitably roll around.

Please enjoy this issue as much as we enjoy bringing it to you. *

Branch 3 Connection

The fire engine story and the ghost story are connected in this way:

Brothers John (?-1799) and Moses Latta (1741-1810) jointly patented a 300-acre farm in Unity Township, Westmoreland Co, PA, in 1783. Their wives were Mary Story and Elizabeth Shaw, respectively.

John Latta's daughter Rebecca (1787-1863) married her first cousin, Moses Latta's son John (ca 1781-1826). They skedaddled to Ohio and became the parents of Thomas, Eliza, Edminston, Alexander Bonner, and Finley Latta.

Meanwhile, back on the farm, Moses Latta's eldest son William (ca 1779-1829) married Elizabeth Chambers and died childless. Moses's remaining three offspring, who inherited the farm, were Moses (ca 1790-ca 1850), Elizabeth (1783-1873) and Jane (ca 1780-1857) of the treasure hunt story, all unmarried and childless. Moses appears not to be buried in the Middle Church graveyard with his sisters, presumably because he was a suicide. *

The Latta Genealogy Newsletter

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Dedicated to research among the fifty-one branches of the Latta family in America, and of our family's origins in the Old World.

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Please send your family group sheets, pedigree charts, photos, documents and/or gedcom files to:

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We're on the World Wide Web! Visit our web site at
<http://www.latta.org>

Try our new message boards

Since they haven't seen a lot of use so far, I thought I'd remind everyone about the GenConnect Message Boards that are now available for our use.

The first is for posting BIOGRAPHIES of Latta ancestors. The URL is <http://cgi.rootsweb.com/~genbs/genbs.cgi/FamilyAssoc/LattaBios>

The second board is for posting copies of DEEDS involving Lattas. The URL is <http://cgi.rootsweb.com/~genbs/genbs.cgi/FamilyAssoc/LattaDeed>

The third board is for posting QUERIES as well as threaded REPLIES to those queries. The URL is <http://cgi.rootsweb.com/~genbs/genbs.cgi/FamilyAssoc/Latta>

The final board is for posting copies of Latta WILLS. Its URL is <http://cgi.rootsweb.com/~genbs/genbs.cgi/FamilyAssoc/LattaWill>

Why not surf by this weekend and check these boards out?

From the mail bag

Thomas Latta from I believe branch #6 came into western KY, (Hickman Co.) early. He and wife Mary are buried in Pleasant Hill Cemetery located near the Graves/Hickman County line. They have many descendants in the area of Graves, Fulton and Hickman Counties in the purchase area.

We have done a history of *Pleasant Hill Cemetery, a History of Many Early Jackson Purchase Families*. We have documented Thomas and Mary's descendants in the area with available public records as well as family remembrances and data. This is about 300 pages including index and pictures, soft cover.

This cemetery is one of the oldest established burying grounds in this area of the Jackson Purchase. It is a very historic place since the first marked grave in 1835. (The purchase of the area came about in 1818) An effort is underway to restore the cemetery and provide for maintenance in years to come.

The profits from this history will go toward the cemetery effort. The book is a \$35.00 donation to the cemetery. We have sold this on a prepublication basis. The book is now at the binders and should be out soon. We have a limited amount of extra copies available. They won't last long.

Everyone is so far removed from these settlers, we cannot generate enough interest locally to take care of this. We don't want to lose this. Many of you have family in this place. We need your help. For more information you may contact me by e-mail at:

opolla2apex.net or write to: Pleasant Hill Cemetery, c/o Oleen Pollard, 2957 Pea Ridge Road, Water Valley, KY 42085.

The ears have it

Alex. Latta

My next project might appear to have a humorous approach, but I was dead serious in my intent.

Some time ago, after reading the RHL documents of the 49 Latta branches, I recalled having read a description of a Latta, whose branch I cannot recall, who was known for his very large ears. I thought perhaps there could be a trait handed down for many years, that might connect families genetically. Indeed, there are several members of my own family that meet this description.

I have asked for help from several sources, and had excellent results. Several pictures have been sent to me from Australia, North America, and Ireland. I am still expecting more, but will complete my preliminary work, and after getting the necessary permission, will send copies to the participants, and the Newsletter.

Anyone wishing to help with this project is welcome to send his or her pictures. Needed are names, branch numbers, dates and locations. The best pictures are 8-1/2" X 11", produced by Laser print. They usually cost about \$1.00 each at Office Depot, or Staples.

Please give your permission to share with other participants. If you are going to send something, please reply by e-mail:

allatta@gambit.ab.ca

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CANADA

Branch 17 reunion

Sue Lattea Cox

Over 200 Branch 17 Lattea's attended the 15th annual Lattea Reunion held at the Doddridge County Park, Doddridge County, WV on Sunday, July 25, 1999. A covered dish dinner was held at 1:00 p.m., followed by children's games, horseshoe pitching, music and visiting.

Kathleen Lattea Burns again brought her family picture albums which contained many pictures of the Lattea clan. Each year more information is gathered to put into the family history (deaths, births, marriages, etc.).

Kathleen's daughter, Judy, has been busy putting the Lattea history on the Morman church computer.

Everyone was reminded that the next reunion will be held on the last Sunday in July next year at the same location. ❀

From the archives of The Latta Family Newsletter

LATTA FAMILY NEWSLETTER

VOL. 1 WINTER 1979 NO. 4

JAMES LATTA, D. D.
1732 -- 1801

From the Rev. Robert P. Du Bois*

New London, Pa., May 9, 1850

Dear Sir: You have requested me to prepare a sketch of the life of the late Rev. James Latta, D. D., for insertion in your forthcoming work. In this request his only surviving son has joined. However incompetent for such a task, yet thus solicited, I feel encouraged to make the attempt. For the sake of your readers, who will naturally inquire how far they may confide in my statements, it seems necessary to observe concerning myself, that I am married to the eldest daughter of one of his sons,--the late Rev. John E. Latta, and that my father, the late Rev. Uriah Du Bois, was his successor for twenty-three years in his first charge. As Stated Clerk, I have access to the Records of the Newcastle Presbytery, of which he was a member for thirty years. I have also examined the printed Records of Synod. I have received communications from his son and daughter, his daughter-in-law, his successor in his second charge, and Mr. David Scott, a venerable elder in that church, who remembers him well. In addition to these, I have in my possession a copy of the "Christian's Magazine" for July 1810, which contains a memoir of him, in seven octavo pages, supposed, by his family, to have been written by an eminent divine, once his pupil, and afterwards his friend and so presbyter, the late Rev. Samuel Martin, of Chambersburg, Pa. Still, with all these sources of information before me, I have been surprised to find how few things connected with the life of this good man, so long prominent in the church, and in society, relentless time has spared.

JAMES LATTA, was born in Ireland, in the winter of 1732. His family was Protestant, of the Scotch Irish Presbyterian stock. His mother's maiden name was Allison; and she was related to the Rev. Dr. Francis Allison. Nothing more is known of the family. His parents migrated to this country, when he was about six or seven years of age, bringing him with them. The vessel in which they sailed from Ireland was wrecked upon the American coast, and the family records being then lost, the exact date of his birth is not known. They settled near Elkton, Md., and are believed to have been connected with the Elk River Congregation,--now called "the Rock". He once, in riding by a graveyard adjoining to that church, pointed it out to a daughter who was with him, as the place where his parents were buried.

The time of his spiritual birth is also uncertain. He appears to have been one of those few whose hearts are renewed in early childhood, if not from the beginning of their lives. When a mere child, he discovered a very serious and thoughtful turn of mind, and a pious gravity far beyond his years. Two illustrations of this are preserved in the family. One occurred at the time of the shipwreck referred to. During the three days and nights that he remained with others on

*Source: Sprague, William B., D.D. ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN PULPIT: OR COMMEMORATIVE NOTICES OF DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN CLERGYMEN. Volume III. New York: Robert Carter & Brothers. 1866. (Abstracted by John W. Latta, Jr.)

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The Congregation of Deep Run, Bucks County, Pa., having presented to him a call, it was accepted by him, and he was installed there in the year 1761 at that time. Deep Run was a Presbyterian settlement, and the church flourishing. In after times, the Germans took possession of that region, and the congregation became very small. During the pastorate of Mr. Latta, the lot of ground on which the church stands, and the parsonage house and farm, were deeded, by the Hon. William Allen of Philadelphia, to him and his successors in the ministry, for the use of the congregation.

On the 28th day of May, 1762, the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia was set off by the Synod from the Presbytery of Philadelphia. This consisted of five ministers, of whom Mr. Latta was one; and they were all strenuous advocates of what was called the Old Side. It appears from certain dissents and protests, in 1765, when an ineffectual attempt was made in Synod to reunite the two Presbyteries, that this Second Presbytery had been formed on the elective affinity principle, as its members professed to be conscientiously opposed to the practice of examining candidates for the ministry on their experimental acquaintance with religion, which the Synod had approved of; and had declared that sooner than remain in a Presbytery which pursued that practice, they would break off from all connection with the Synod.

In the year 1770, Mr. Latta resigned the charge of Deep Run. About that time, he was called to the pastoral care of the Congregation of Chestnut Level, in Lancaster County, Pa.--which belonged to the Presbytery of Newcastle. This call was accepted, and he was received as a member by that Presbytery on the 16th of May, 1771, and on the second Tuesday of November following, was installed in the pastoral office by Messrs. Alexander McDowell and William Foster. The congregation, at that time, was widely scattered and very weak. The salary promised in the call was only one hundred pounds, Pennsylvania currency, which, "says Mr. Scott, (the elder above referred to) was never increased, and rarely all paid." Through the importunity of some friends, who wished to educate their sons, he was prevailed on (though not without great reluctance, lest it should interfere with his pastoral duties, to which he desired wholly to devote himself) to take a few pupils under his care. This led the way to numerous applications of the same kind, so that he was induced to employ an usher, that he might have more time to attend to his ministry. This school was continued under his direction for several years, and was acquiring celebrity; but the Revolutionary war breaking up, arrested its progress. The usher and several of the older scholars joined the army, and he being unwilling to have the sole charge of it, it was closed. After the war, as soon as learning became again an object of pursuit, a Latin School was established at Chestnut Level by Mr. Sampson Smith; but Mr. Smith having been suddenly killed, by a stroke of lightning, his pupils were left without an instructor. He again, Mr. Latta was constrained to take up a charge which, in his own mind, he had resolved never to resume. The eyes of these young men were directed towards him, and their affecting solicitations to take them under his care, in their desolate situation, were irresistible. He continued having charge of the school for several years, but gave it up some time before his death. Several distinguished men were educated at this school. The income derived from it, added to his meagre salary, enabled him to purchase a farm, build a house upon it, and support his large family with decency and comfort.

Mr. Latta took a deep interest in the cause of American liberty, and firmly and zealously espoused that cause both by word and deed. He stimulated his people to defend their rights, and once, in the course

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board the foundering vessel, before they could be relieved,--so remarkable was his attachment to his Bible, that he kept it continually under his arm. He seemed to think that the most precious of his treasures, and if he should go down, that he must carry with him. The other was about seven years later, when, from home at school. So much was he esteemed for his piety by those who knew him, that families with whom he resided looked up to him to lead their worship, although but fourteen years of age; and he did it with an understanding that charmed and astonished all who heard him.

This pious turn of mind, together with his promising talents, his thirst for knowledge, and the advice of judicious friends, prompted his parents to give him a liberal education. He was, accordingly, placed under the care of the Rev. Dr. Francis Allison, at that time Pastor of the Church of New London, in Chester County, Pa., and also the Principal of a classical school at the same place. This was the school, which the Synod of Philadelphia, in 1744, adopted as their own, paying the salaries of the Master and Tutor by yearly contributions from their churches, and offering "gratuitous instruction in the languages, philosophy, and divinity, to all persons who may please to send their children." Here were trained up, under this deservedly famous teacher and scholar, many youth, who, in their turn, became eminent in the Church or the State. Amongst these the subject of this sketch made rapid improvement in useful knowledge, and in religious experience.

In the year 1752, Dr. Allison, having been chosen a Professor and Vice Provost of the College of Philadelphia, then being established, and now styled the University of Pennsylvania, removed thither. His young pupil soon followed him and having there completed his collegiate education, he received his degree at the first Commencement that took place in this new seminary. As a proof of his high standing there, he had assigned to him on that occasion, the Salutatory Oration in Latin,--an exercise allotted to the member of the class reported to be the best scholar. I have before me his diploma, as Master of Arts, bearing date May 1, 1760, and stating on its face that he had received his first degree of A.B. on the 17th of May, 1757.

The Trustees of the College, being favourably impressed with his character and attainments, offered him a situation as Tutor. This place he accepted and held for a few years, still pursuing his favourite study,--Divinity, under the same instructor, who had so long guided him in the pursuit of knowledge. Having put himself under the care of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and passed his trials with much approbation, he was licensed by it to preach the Gospel on the 15th of February, 1758. He still remained, however, in the College as Tutor, pursuing his studies under Dr. Allison, and enjoying the advantage of submitting his sermons to the inspection of that venerable theologian. He acquired in this way, that accuracy in the style and structure of his sermons, for which he was ever after remarkable.

The Synod, at its meeting in May, 1759, directed him to "visit the Indians" in the summer of that year, and in November following, to go with several others on a mission to the then dependent settlements of Virginia and Carolina. The former of these appointments he did not fulfil, for reasons which were sustained by the Synod; but the latter he faithfully discharged, spending some time in those Southern parts.

Mr. Latta was ordained by the Presbytery of Philadelphia in October, 1759,--it would appear as an evangelist, and very probably in reference to the mission to the South, on which he was to go in the following month.

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of the war, when an unusual number of them were drafted to serve in the militia with a view to encourage them, he took his blanket and knapsack, like a soldier, and actually accompanied them on their campaign. At another time, he served for a while in the army as a Chaplain.

About the year 1785, many congregations in this region were agitated upon the subject of procuring Acts of Incorporation from the State. Some of the people were in favour of this measure, whilst others vehemently opposed it, on the ground that if they were members of chartered bodies, their estates would be encumbered, as by a mortgage for arrears of salary. This controversy became very earnest at Chestnut Level. A petition was sent to the Legislature for a charter, in which, it would appear, the pastor concurred. This gave rise to a remonstrance against the petition, which was signed by a part of the congregation, and which had even the appearance of reflecting on the moral character of their minister. At least, it was so understood by him. The consequences were, great distress to his own mind, much strife and discord among the people of his charge, and the excluding from church privileges of some of the members. In this painful state of things, Mr. Latta called a special meeting of the Presbytery. It appears, from their Records, that they laboured in the matter, part of two days, patiently heard both parties, and, at length, found (to use their own language) "that the evil complained of had taken their rise from mistaken apprehensions and injurious representations of the nature and design of the petition before mentioned; and that the persons complained of, whatever their paper might imply, disavowed all intention of impeaching Mr. Latta's character, or preventing his usefulness. The Presbytery, therefore, being desirous to adopt the most lenient and peaceable mode of settling the matter, and to give satisfaction to that purpose, as being a full justification of Mr. Latta's character and conduct. Accordingly, all the persons complained of, who were present, declared, one by one, in the most solemn manner, that they did not intend, by any means, to injure the character, interest, or usefulness, of Mr. Latta, as a minister of the Gospel. The Presbytery then, having restored them to their former standing, exhorted all parties to unity, and to the cultivation of peace and brotherly love, and to the manifestation of a due respect to Mr. Latta. Thus was closed a breach that, at one time, threatened wide spread evil. This, so far as I can ascertain, was the only serious disagreement that Mr. Latta ever had with any of his people; and the result of it was certainly very creditable and honourable to him, and proved that, however some of them might, for a season, be led away by passion, he had in reality the confidence and heartfelt attachment of them all.

A few years afterward, some of the neighbouring churches began to introduce the Psalms and Hymns of Dr. Watts into their public worship. This was also an exciting subject in its day. Mr. Latta warmly advocated the new Psalms, and laboured hard to have it brought into use among his people, but so earnest was the opposition, on the part of some of his leading members, that it never was accomplished in his day, and not until all these persons had been removed by death. At that time, the Rev. John Anderson, a minister of the Associate Church, wrote a Treatise on Psalmody, strongly reprobating the use of Watts, and challenging its friends to a vindication of it. This gave Mr. Latta an opportunity of publishing his views at large on the subject. He accepted the challenge, and sent forth a pamphlet of a hundred and eight octavo pages, the object of which was to show that the principal subjects of Psalmody should be taken from the Gospel. The pamphlet was never answered; and the high estimation in which it was held, at that time, is evident from the fact that it passed through four editions. This is the only work he ever published.

The articles on this page are reprinted exactly as they appeared in The Latta Family Newsletter.

Our thanks to Danny R. Latta and the late John W. Latta, Jr.

Lattas meet in New Zealand

Marie Richardson

One hundred and fifty-one descendants of Robert Latta and Jean Linn from throughout New Zealand and Australia met in reunion the weekend of 2/3 January 1999 [*summer in the southern hemisphere—ed.*].

The reunion was held at Owaka, NZ, (which is a township servicing the Catlins area) because the family had been sawmillers in the area from 1893 until 1944 when their last mill closed. In 1893 three of Robert and Jean's sons (Thomas, Matthew and Charles) started a sawmilling business at Owaka. This was to be the first Latta Bros. Sawmillers. They had worked at sawmills in South Otago and Southland. They owned 5 different mills and worked these until they retired.

In 1920 three of Thomas's sons (Sydney, Tom [always known as TV] and Bert) then formed the next partnership of Latta Bros. Sydney died in 1923 and his brothers carried on the business until 1945 when they retired.

The reunion started with a get-together held at the Owaka Community Centre on 2nd January with many people meeting relatives they had heard of but never met. Photographs were taken of all those attending the reunion and then group photos were taken of the various branches. A family tree had been put up around the wall of the Centre and relatives were asked to update or correct information. Each person who had enrolled was presented with a glass and pen engraved with the Latta coat of arms. A dinner was held in the evening.

The cutting of the Reunion cake was by the oldest and youngest members attending. Zita Jackman, second daughter of TV Latta and Matthew Latta youngest great-grandchild of TV did the honours. John Latta as spokesman for the Committee thanked all those who had helped organise the weekend and Marie Latta was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

On the Sunday morning 3 buses did a trip around the Catlins to visit the old sawmill sites. This was the first visit for many relatives who thoroughly enjoyed the scenery and also the beautiful weather. On the return of the buses all descendants congregated at the cemetery where a tree was planted and a plaque placed to commemorate this reunion.

Everyone then went to the Owaka Football grounds to partake of a barbecue and a final catch-up before dispersing to their homes in Australia and New Zealand. ❀

The family of Robert Latta and Sarah Gibson

Thomas and Sarah Latta left Alloa in Scotland in 1839. They sailed aboard the barque *John* leaving London on Sept. 12th 1839 and arrived in South Australia on 8th Feb. 1840. They had 9 children but the youngest Charles never arrived in Australia so perhaps died as an infant (this is yet to be confirmed). Thomas died on Sept. 28th 1855 and his wife Sarah died 21 April 1883. Their family was: (1) Jane born 23 Dec. 1819 married Alexander Broadfoot. They lived in Adelaide. (2) Mary born 15 Nov. 1821 married Robert Birrell. They lived in Adelaide. (3) John born 9 May 1823 who died not long after arriving in Australia. (4) Sarah born 17 Sept. 1823 married James Dawson and moved to New Zealand to live. (5) Thomas born 26 May 1826 and died 1867 in Adelaide. Understood not to have married. (6) Elizabeth born 16 April 1828 and is understood to have married --?-- Coote and lived in Melbourne. (7) Robert born 6 June 1830 who married Jean Linn and came to NZ—the start of our branch of the Latta family. (8) William born 13 May 1831 who married Amelia Nicol and lived in Australia. (9) Charles born 12 April 1833 Alloa Scotland - no further record.

Robert and Jean Linn were married on July 22nd 1858 at her parents' home at Macclesfield, Adelaide. Jean Linn was born Kirkliston, Scotland on 11 Aug. 1836. They emigrated to New Zealand arriving in Dunedin on 8 June 1863 with 3 children. Robert had various jobs being a brewer in Balclutha, saw-miller in the Catlins and also Jettykeeper at Owaka. They had a further 5 children in New Zealand. Their family was: (1) Thomas born 28 May 1859 at Adelaide and married Agnes Wilhelmina Young on 21 March 1882 at Owaka and died 24 May 1917. Buried at Owaka. (2) Agnes was born 16 Sept. 1856 at Warepa and died 18 Aug. 1912. They had 9 children. My husband is a great-grandson. (3) Matthew was born 15 Oct. 1860 at Adelaide and married Ellen James. Matthew died 7 May 1931. Ellen James was born in England and died 9 Sept. 1942. They had 7 children. (4) Margaret was born in Adelaide on 1 June 1866 and died 21 June 1863 aged 1 year. (5) Sarah was born 3 Aug. 1864 and died 18 Aug. 1953 - she never married. (6) Robert was born 18 April 1866 and married Helen Paterson on 10 Nov. 1896 and he died at Invercargill on 23 July 1950. They had 13 children. (7) Charles was born 17 April 1868 and married Mary Emma Cole Jackman and they had 6 children. After the death of his first wife (she died 23 Sept. 1914) he remarried to Mildred Iline Borland and they had 1 son. Charles died in Dunedin on 2 May 1946. (8) Jane was born 22 Oct 1871 and married Adam McCallum. They had 7 children and she died in 1955 at Invercargill. (9) Henry James was born in 1873 and married Mary Ann Paterson (a sister of Helen). They had 7 children. Henry died 18 Jan. 1851. ❀

Branch 3

[Eighteen]

Hunt for Hidden Treasure Stirred District in ^Fifties

The following article appeared in *The Mount Pleasant (Westmoreland County PA) Journal* on 4 June 1943. It was extracted and transcribed by the late John M. Kelley of Connellsville PA.

No section of Western Pennsylvania is more abundant in historic lore than the Mount Pleasant district and there are many almost-forgotten incidents which rival fiction in interest. Some of these happenings have grown almost legendary with the passage of the years, and among these the tale of the hidden Latta treasure is especially memorable.

The Latta farm in Mount Pleasant Township, near Mammoth, was the scene of a search for buried treasure 90 years ago which stirred the entire countryside and attracted attention in even more distant communities.

On the farm resided Moses Latta, a bachelor, and his two spinster sisters, Elizabeth and Jane. The three by virtue of industry and thrift developed a substantial family inheritance into what in those days was regarded as a fortune.

Their farm was one of the most productive in the section and they worked it wisely and well. Besides raising agricultural products, they carried on an extensive cattle business which added to their wealth.

Their accumulation of money was aided by the fact that the farm produced practically everything required for the household. Meat, vegetables, grain for flour and meal, hides, flax which was spun into cloth, maple sugar, butter and eggs, fruit—all these things were ready at hand and there was very little necessity for paying out any of the money received from the sale of farm products.

By the year 1850 the two sisters and their brother were well along in years and were extremely wealthy. The brother, Moses Latta, was recognized throughout Westmoreland County as an industrious farmer and shrewd bargainer, although he was considered somewhat eccentric.

Although banking facilities were available in Greensburg and Mount Pleasant, the elderly bachelor distrusted them and pre-

ferred to keep his cash at home where he could watch over it. He guarded carefully a large metal box in which his sisters on various occasions had observed a huge quantity of gold and silver coin, most of which appeared to be of large denominations. A glimpse of this box now and then obtained by such hired help as were employed at the farm from time to time, and cattle buyers and others who transacted business with Latta at the farm also reported seeing the hoard.

One evening in the late spring of 1851, Latta left the house carrying with him the heavy metal box supposedly filled with coin. He did not return home that night, and the next morning a search was begun.

The searchers had been out only a few minutes when they discovered the lifeless body of Moses Latta suspended by a rope from an apple tree in the orchard, some distance from the farmhouse. The box was nowhere in sight and a hasty inspection failed to reveal it in the vicinity.

Following a proper interval of mourning, Elizabeth and Jane Latta made a systematic search to locate the box, but without success. While each of these sisters had money of her own and they were co-owners of the farm, the bulk of the family fortune had been possessed by the brother.

It was generally believed that the aged man had buried the treasure somewhere on the property, but although a large part of the ground was dug up in the search, the box was not found.

The suggestion was then advanced that Latta might have been murdered and the box stolen, but this theory was abandoned in view of the fact that all evidence clearly indicated suicide.

There were a few in the community, too, who hinted that someone among the searchers might have found the box and made off with it and the contents without informing the Latta sisters of the find. This theory also was discounted in most quarters, however, because the sisters used great discretion in selecting helpers for digging and maintained so close a watch that for anyone to spirit even a part of the treasure off the premises would have been next to

Moses Latta was recognized throughout Westmoreland County as an industrious farmer and shrewd bargainer, although he was considered somewhat eccentric.

impossible.

At various times during the next few years new attempts to locate the treasure were made, but still without success.

After every likely spot on the farm acreage had been dug up, the Latta sisters and the other residents of the community as well, became convinced that the gold and silver was buried somewhere in the cellar of the farmhouse. Spurred by the belief that at least they were on the right track, the sisters made a thorough search of the cellar, even to the extent of dislodging some of the foundation stones, but the attempt was no more successful than those which had preceded.

The legend then became current that the ghost of Moses Latta hovered about the farm at night. Many persons claimed to have seen the figure of the old man, with cloak and broad-brimmed felt hat, moving about the farm. The sisters and hired hands, according to report, became so accustomed to the presence that they thought little of it. The story goes on that on several occasions the figure was watched and followed in the hope that it might lead the way to the treasure, but each time it would suddenly and unaccountably disappear.

Later the two sisters died and their deaths were followed by renewed efforts by other persons to uncover the treasure, but all to no avail.

As the years went by the tale of the buried treasure and the unsuccessful searches continued to be told, and was embellished by accounts of weird happenings related by later seekers of the box of coin.

Persons who went down into the farmhouse cellar carrying candles reported that the light was invariably blown out by a gentle but chill breath of air before they could look about. Later a few bolder spirits went down into the cellar with lanterns, but again the light was mysteriously blown out before any kind of search could be made.

As long as 25 years after the death of Moses Latta, occasional attempts were made to locate the treasure. Digging was resumed on the farm grounds, especially in the orchard. Almost every-

one who knew anything of the story at all, however, was firmly convinced that in the cellar lay the solution to the mystery. How this belief became so widespread has never been reasonably explained, in view of the fact that on the night the old man's death occurred his sisters saw him leaving the house while carrying the treasure box. Even the sisters, however, while still active in the search for some reason or other had fixed upon the cellar as being the most likely hiding place.

The reports of lights being blown out in the cellar served to discourage the would-be treasure hunters to a great extent, and after a time all the efforts gradually came to an end. As the years wore on the story of the treasure was forgotten by all except a few of the older people of the community.

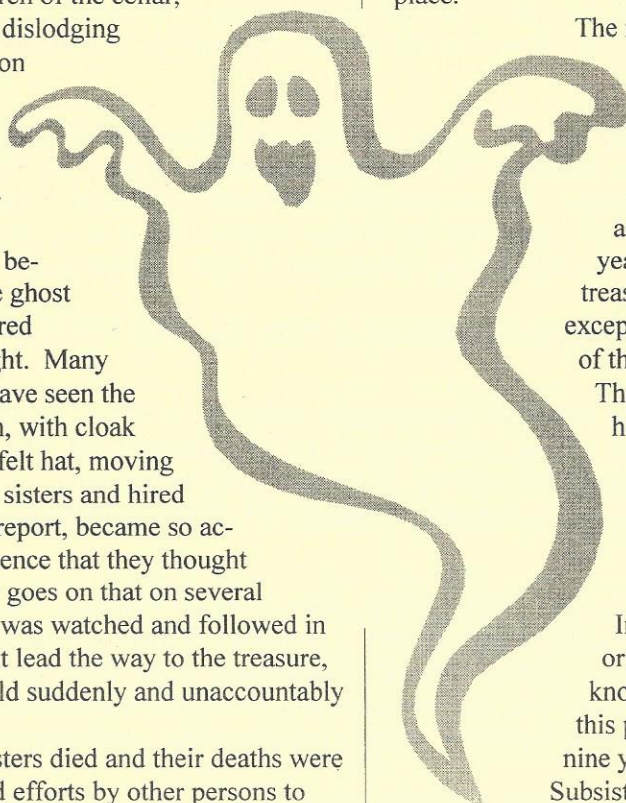
The farm passed into new hands and later a portion of it became the site of the Mammoth mining plant, the shaft for which was sunk on what had been the Latta meadow.

In later years a portion of the original Latta tract became known as the Moore farm, and this part was purchased about nine years ago by the Federal Subsistence Homesteads Corporation at the time of the acquisition of farming lands as a site for the Westmoreland Homesteads, now the community of Norvelt.

At the time of the sale there were only a few persons living who remembered the history of the old lands and the curious story of the buried treasure, and possibly they might have wondered if by any chance the improvement work scheduled would accomplish what everyone else had failed at—the unearthing of the treasure.

But the secret still rests in the land and the mystery remains unsolved. So far as is known, the metal box and its precious contents supposedly buried by Moses Latta more than 90 years ago have never been found, and those who are familiar with the story believe that the box and its contents still rest somewhere beneath the surface of what was once the farm land. ❀

*the ghost of
Moses Latta
hovered
about the
farm at
night*



Queries

Send your queries to the editor, Paul H. Calhoun, 736 Grant St, Port Clinton OH 43452-2149 (paul@latta.org)

LATTA Br 20 SMITH STARRETT	James LATTA, native of Westmoreland Co, Penn., settled in Mifflin Twp, Franklin, Ohio, 1818, later bringing wife Elizabeth [Smith—ed.] and children: Martha, Sarah, Mary, William, Hannah, John, James, and Elizabeth. Did Mary marry John STARRETT? Would like more info on this family and connect to later generations. —C. Susan Cox, 2360 Sunset Strip, Mountain Home ID 83647, coxinc@micron.net
LATTA Br 27 SPEER	Looking for information on Elizabeth LATTA born 8/11/1772 and died abt 1806. She married Robert SPEER and lived in Gettysburg, PA and possibly OH. She had three children: Jane, Deborah, and a son. I would like to find out the name of her son and his birthdate [Branch 27 #9—ed]. —Marsha Van Slyke, 250A Hone Ave, Oil City PA 16301-1816, qball@csonline.net
BROWN LATTO ROSS VALENTINE	Interested in the surname LATTO. I have a William LATTO married to Barbara ROSS (Kinglassie, Scotland) - 6 children. One, James LATTO b 1828 married Mary BROWN - 5 children. They later moved from Fife to New Zealand. One of their children, David LATTO b1859 later moved from NZ to Australia and married Anne VALENTINE. One of their children, James, is my grandfather. I would like to go further back than William and Barbara who married in 1821. Any information would be appreciated. —Rochelle Bradley, 8 Eleventh Ave, Inglewood, Perth WA 6052, Australia, rbradley@wantree.com.au
LATTA Br 40 JUST	Looking for information on Branch #40. Margaret Jane JUST m. P.A. LATTA, September 28, 1863. In Saranac, MI. I would like to have a picture of P.A. LATTA and Margaret. I have some pictures of family members with no names and would like to verify. Thanks for any help. —Daniel G. Just Jr., 967 S. Confederate Dr., Macon GA 31220, djmri@aol.com
FINCHER GOODEN LATTA	My great grandfather was Earl Cisero LATTA, born ca 1864 in Alabama. He had a brother, William, born ca 1856 and a sister Mary born ca 1866. I think both of them were born in AL. Their mother's name was Laura born ca 1840. I found this information in the 1880 Tallapoosa Co. AL census. William married Mary Ann ? and Earl married Emma FINCHER who was living with John H and Martha GOODEN at the time of the census. William had a daughter named Mary V and a son named William J C. I am looking for the branch of the family I belong to. I am currently searching the Latta.org branches and haven't found a clue yet. I do not have the first name of my I have been told that my g-g-grandfather's name was Cristobel, but I cannot verify that.. Any help would be appreciated. —Janet Prickett, 305 Chandler Springs Road, Talladega AL 35160, laddie@gateway.net
BAKER CARLISLE LATTA LATTY	My grandpa, Poley LATTA (pronounced "Latty"), born 1/15/78 at Wauhilla, OK. Father, James Madison and mother, Vilsie BAKER. He married Ada CARLISLE, had 3 sons, Henry, Bennie Hubbard, and my father, Jess Raymond. Henry took the LATTY spelling. Poley lived in the Tahlequah, Cherokee Co., OK area most of his life and had 3 brothers, Andy, Henry and Levi and a sister, Rosa. Grandpa said that James M. came into Indian Territory with several brothers, and they went separate ways at that time. I would like any info on the brothers. —Leona Marie Latta, 172 Dutchman Rd, Watsonville CA 95076-1205, elmere1@aol.com
LATTA PERKINS	My great grandmother's maiden name was Johnnie Pearl LATTA. She was called Pearl. She was born in 1892 in AR (I think) and died in 1918 in Webster Co. KY. Her birth father died and her mother remarried a man that didn't want the children. She was sent to live in western KY with her uncle. I don't know dates for any of this activity. She married Ed PERKINS in KY and had three children before she died. I would love to find out more if anyone out there knows anything. —Linda C. Tassie, 237 Clifton Ave., Pittsburgh PA 15215, jtassie@aol.com

BOLING COOK DOUGHERTY LATTY TROUT	Alexander LATTY m. Mary CLIFTON, children Davis, Matthew, Peggy, James, John and Rebecca. Descend from Davis who m. (1st) Maria BOLING, (2nd) Martha COOK, 1828 March 1, Oldham Co. KY. Davis had three children that I know of: James W., Rebecca and Nancy LATTY. James W. LATTY (my ancestor) m. Margaret TROUT and had three children: Sophia Evaline, Dolly Rebecca and Christadora LATTY. My ggrandmother Sophia Evaline LATTY m. John Henry DOUGHERTY in Trimble Co., KY. Do not know my Branch #, but interested in any information about this branch. Tradition has my family remained in KY and others moved west to MO. —Sharon K. Weaver, 2033 Skyhawk Drive, Fort Wayne, IN 46815-7756, skstookey@aol.com
LATTA	Looking for an ex-neighbor Susanne LATTA. We all lived in Parkway Terrace Apt. in Suitland, MD from 1958 through 1964. I would like to hear from her. When I moved from Maryland I lost all contact. She was probably 7-10 years old at that time. —Shirley Buckler, 1835 North Olivia Dr, Avon Park FL 33825-8159 shirley.buckler@avonpark.macdill.af.mil
DYER LATTA Br 7	Thomas LATTA, b. 23 Feb 1851, mar 29 Dec 1875 Judith Ann DYER. They resided in Smith Mills KY. They had a daughter, Lucy, b. 13 Sep 1882, d. 17 Sep 1882. Thomas died 28 Mar 1885 and is buried at Smith Mills Cemetery. Any information about the death of Thomas or Lucy is greatly appreciated! —Judith Brumm, 405 Birchwood Dr, Garland TX 75043, brumm2@home.com
LATTA	Seeking information about my father, Robert James LATTA (1920-1966) and his father, Eugene LATTA (dates unknown to me). I believe the family lived in Syracuse, NY. Robert LATTA served as a Corporal in the Marines in WWII and moved to New York City after the war. Any information appreciated. —Geoffrey Keith Latta, 520 East 20th St. #10G, New York NY 10009, geofflatta@att.net
LATTA, etc. (Indian blood or connections)	My interest primarily, due to clients I have, work I do—is data on the LATTA family in NC, environs, attached to names such as: LINDSAY, DURHAM, CHEEK, CATES, PERRY, WATTS, BARNES, etc.—especially if they have any tradition of Indian blood/connections —Firehair, FirehairSS@aol.com
DAUGHERTY LATTA NALLEY	Sarah Jane LATTA married Marion Francis NALLEY in the 1800's. They had at least one child, Mary Jane born 16 Sep 1867(?). Mary Jane married Simon DAUGHERTY. I'm very sure that the family lived in Monroe Co, OH or nearby. I'd like to find what country this family was from and any information is appreciated. [Branch 17, family 2—ed.] —Theresa Minosky, 961-41 Hwy 11 So, Social Circle, GA 30025, theresamin@ivillage.com
LATTA Br 16	Is anyone doing any research on Branch 16, the LATTA's of Whitemouth, Manitoba? I would be most interested, and perhaps I could add something.; —Colin Robert Latta, 4335 Ridgewood Ave., Winnipeg Man. R3R 2Z5, CANADA, col-latta@videon.wave.ca
LATTA STEPHEN/S	Hugh LATTA born ca 1820, in PA, possibly Perry County. Married Elizabeth STEPHENS born ca 1820, Perry County, Pennsylvania. Their children are Thornton born ca 1841, Sarah, Andrew, Jenne, Kate, James Linton, Loren, and William. I found Hugh on a hand drawn family tree of the STEPHEN Family, descendants of Alexander Stephen, father of Alexander Hamilton STEPHEN/S who was the vice president of the Confederacy during the Civil War. Any information on the LATTA descendants appreciated. [Branch 29, family 15—ed.] —Theresa D. Peters, 125 South 13th, Box 313 Ft. Calhoun, NE 68023, t.peters@genesinet.net
LATTA (Br 7)	Still seeking info on Thomas LATTA Sr (Br 7, fam 1), such as who he married and where and when he died. I would guess he was born ca 1760. —Douglas K. Latta, PO Box 464, Grafton WV 26354
LATTA	I am looking for a picture of Thomas LATTA, a Scottish GP in the 1830's for a talk on intravenous fluid therapy. Preferably already computerised for insertion into a powerpoint presentation. —Vanessa Skelton, vanessa@addis.demon.co.uk

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You mean the world to us!

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(Continued on page 11)

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Financial report

from 1 May through 31 August 1999

PREVIOUS BALANCE	\$418.07
Receipts	
Subscription contributions	\$990.00
Reprints	<u>15.00</u>
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$1005.00
Expenditures	
Postage	\$334.90
Printing	\$329.00
Supplies	\$205.88
Web Services	<u>\$ 79.80</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$949.58
BALANCE ON HAND	<u>\$473.49</u>

Estimated cost to print and mail Issue 11: \$696.00

Irish Research Project (TRAIL)

Things are coming together for our Irish Research Project (Taskforce Researching the Ancestry of Irish Latta's).

Subscribers have pledged nearly seven hundred dollars to support the project.

Alex Latta of Edmonton, Alberta, has gone to Northern Ireland earlier this month and will personally check on some availability of records and interview potential researchers-for-hire.

Our hope is that we will eventually identify a common ancestor to those Lattas who came to America in the eighteenth century.

Please contact Virginia Curulla if you'd like to help with a financial contribution: vcurulla@aa.net ❖

Whose Lattas are these?

Can anyone identify these Lattas in the 1850 Georgia census?

1850 Census, Dade County, Ga.
page 13A, dwelling/family 173

John LATTY, 26, male, farmer, born in Tenn.

Francis LATTY, 22, female, born in Tenn.

John LATTY, 4, male, born in Ga.

Thomas LATTY, 3, male, born in Ga.

William LATTY (3/12 -- difficult to read), born in Ga.

Also:

page 13 B, dwelling/family 175

Fleming LATTY, 21, male, born in Tenn.

Serena (?) (difficult to read), born in Tenn.

Tennessee, 5, female, born in Tenn.

John LATTY, 2, male, born in Tenn.

If you have a clue, please contact me at:

Glenna Kinard

3540 Gleneagles Ct.

Lithonia, Ga. 30058

(770) 929-3594 gkinard@aol.com

'J'ever wonder...?

Why is the word "abbreviation" so long?

Why do they sterilize needles for lethal injections?

Why are there interstate highways in Hawaii?

Fire engine inventors feared for their lives

(Continued from page 1)

some ideas, was a mechanical engineer who had been a volunteer fire fighter for many years. The Cincinnati city council chose him as chief of the first paid fire department in that city.

Abel Shawk was a partner in this enterprise, according to many accounts of the invention. Some credit Shawk with the entire development, others say that Alexander Latta built upon Abel's work, but that the real invention was Latta's. Their partnership lasted only as long as the completion of the first engine. Shawk produced his own fire engine in 1855.

The proud inventors did not "hide their light under a bushel". Holzman quotes an 1860 Latta statement as "We claim to be the original and first projectors of the first successful Steam Fire Engine in the world's history", which possibly was true for the United States. The title of "world's first steam fire engine" generally is given to George Braithwaite and Captain John Ericsson, who built their machine in London in 1829, where it was used for many years.

The building of the steam pumper was only part of the task. While they were working on it, Alexander Latta is quoted as saying "I sometimes fear that I shall never live to see this grand idea brought into the service of the world, ... The recent riots here show what a mob can do in our city. My steps are dogged. Spies are continually on my track. I am worried with all sorts of anonymous communications threatening me with all sorts of ills and evils unless I drop work on this engine and pronounce it a failure. I'll never give up! I'll build it, and there are men enough in this city to see that it has a fair trial. When it is finished, it will be heard from at the first fire, and woe to those who stand in its way." Perhaps Latta and his supporters had plans, even at that point, to handle protesters when the engine was first used.

A warehouse fire in 1853 provided the "trial by fire" of the Latta steam engine. Chief Greenwood anticipated trouble from the volunteers, who were far from reconciled to the city council's decision to buy the Latta pumper. With good foresight Greenwood arranged for 250 "Irishmen" to be on hand to subdue the volunteers as soon as they showed themselves by cutting the fire hoses. One observer described the battle as "fierce, bloody and brief". The paid fire department, with its Latta steam pumper, was firmly es-

tablished. Other steam pumps were supplied to many cities throughout the east and mid-west.

After selling the business to Lane & Bodley in 1862, Alexander moved to Ludlow, KY. Tours of his octagonal home there might be available through the Ludlow Historical Society, as they have been in the past. Alexander was the first president of the Ludlow City Council.

For many years, fire pumpers were modeled after the Latta machine. Peckham's book contains multiple illustrations of Latta engines, including one from 1860. Most interesting about this particular photo are the three men who are shown. Might they be the Latta brothers? Original photos from Peckham's book are found in the Jerome DeFreest Scrapbook at the Rensselaer County Historical Society, in Troy, New York. The Society has a web page. If you wish to explore it, the address is: <http://www.rchsonline.org/>

The Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. has a model of the A.B. & E. Latta steam pumper, which was in the Hall of Industry in 1988, when I saw it. The model was not exhibited in 1994, but perhaps could be seen by making a request to the Smithsonian. The Cincinnati Fire museum probably also has exhibits about the Latta pumper.

If you want to read more about the Latta steam fire engine and its development, look for some of the books listed below. ✱

- Burgess-Wise, D. (?). *Fire Engines and Fire Fighting*.
- Erven, L.W. (?). *Fire Fighting Apparatus and Procedures*, 3rd Edition. Encino, CA: Glencoe Publishing Co., Inc.
- Fischer, D. H. (1989). *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Holzman, R.S. (1956). *The Romance of Firefighting*. New York: Bonanza Books.
- Morris, J.V. (1955). *Fires & Firefighters*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.
- Smoke, C. (May 1987). *Fire Command*, pp 41-43. Cincinnati's Fire Department.

The following are in Morris's bibliography, and possibly have additional information:

- Asbury, H. (1930). *Ye Olde Fire Laddies*. New York
- Dana, D.D. (1850). *The Fireman*. Boston
- Dunshee, K. H. (1939) *Enjine!Enjine!*
- Gillingham, H.E. (1936). *The first Fire Engines Used in America*. New York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin, July.
- Kenlon, J. (1913) *Fires and Fire Fighters*. New York.
- King, W.T. (1896). *History of the American Steam Fire Engine*. Boston
- Miller, Et. al. (1873) *Fighting Fire* (collected stories). Hartford.