

A Kinsman Researches The Past

EDITOR'S NOTE: A weekend of activities for Bushy Run Days at the historical site near Harrison City continues today with a French and Indian War living history encampment and battles.

By MARYANN G. DEDO
For The Tribune-Review

It's a long way from Bushy Run in Penn Township to St. Petersburg, Fla., but the ties of ancestry have for years linked those distant areas through the avocation of Dr. Charles R. Freeble Jr. Originally from Westmoreland County, the doctor of internal medicine has a passionate curiosity about his heritage and a desire to record it for future generations.

His main interest centers around the life of Andrew Byerly, who for the past 224 years has been regarded as a local hero.

It was Byerly — a baker and farmer by trade, and friend of Col. Henry Bouquet — who carried water to the parched British troops who'd been ambushed by the Indians. Hence, the name of "Byerley's Spring" at the Bushy Run battlefield.

"A hero?" Freeble mused. "I don't think he was necessarily any spectacular hero. He was just a good example of the kind of people who'd taken hold of that frontier."

Still, Freeble recalls that his mother, born Ruth Malone in Derry, would often tell her children, "Remember, you have Andy Byerly's blood in you, and you know what he went through."

Back in the 1930s, she and her father, Logan Malone, would take the youngsters on outings to look for their ancestors around Waltz Mills, where he was born.

"He'd tell my mother to drive up this little lane, up on a knoll, and then he'd tell her, 'Go up there and you'll find so and so buried there,'" Freeble said. "We'd take a sickle and a box camera, and clear away the brush, and sure enough, we'd find the place. My grandfather knew where all the family was buried."

Mrs. Freeble spent years researching the family tree. Her curiosity rubbed off on Freeble and his brother Jerry, who lives in Leetsdale. Last summer, the latter read an article in the *Tribune-Review* about the Battle of Bushy Run, and accepted a reporter's invitation to visit the site during a living history re-enactment.

That was the first time Jerry Freeble got to see where his ancestor made his legendary dash to the spring. According to historical writing, Byerly had carried water back to the troops in his woolen hat.

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Byerly first took his family to Fort Pitt where a census on July 22, 1760, included "Andrew Biarly, Phebe Byarly, Philip Byarty, and Jacob Byerly." A census the following April showed that while the family remained behind, Byerly was at Bushy Run where he was having problems with "Sergt Tomlong." According to a letter sent by Capt. Thomas Barnsley to Bouquet concerning trouble "betwixt" the two, "Byerly is in the wrong." The captain further wrote that Byerly had "not cut one bit of wood towards building his house." But the house was eventually constructed, and the family moved to what is now the Harrison City area.

There were other complaints against Byerly. One charged that he'd been involved in a liquor smuggling incident. Another was when William Eives claimed that he'd left his mare, gunshot pouch, powder horn and ammunition with Byerly, who refused to produce them when asked to do so. On this note, Bouquet wrote, "Court Martial," but there's no record of the trial.

Byerly's life is well documented through bills of sales, letters and journals written by troops and travelers. Among them were tales of his hospitality, and at least one complaint of his inhospitality when he refused to lodge several late visitors to the inn. Undoubtedly, his most celebrated incident took place at the Battle of Bushy Run.

Although he and his family were on good terms with the local Indians, trouble was erupting as Pontiac attempted to unite the tribes in order to push back the white men. On May 29, 1763, Capt. Simeon Ecuyer wrote that the Indians had murdered a settler named Clapham, and his entire family. While it's generally believed that Byerly went to help a detail of three armed men bury the victims, this allegedly was not documented.

One night while he was away from home, a friendly Indian came to see Mrs. Byerly, who'd often given him bread and milk. He warned her that unless they fled by daybreak, they would be slain by the "bad Indians from down the Ohio."

She wasted no time. Even though she'd just given birth to Andrew Jr., she quickly gathered her children, wrote "Gone to Ligonier" on the door, and fled. Michael, the oldest son, saddled a horse for her. Two-year-old Francis was strapped to her back, and she held the baby, Andrew Jr., in her arms. Michael walked

latives while going to school.

"Cort says that he died in 1775," Freeble said. "But he didn't actually die until 1781. I found the corrected figure in the Pennsylvania State Library."

While Freeble is now heavily involved in tracing the family tree, he didn't take genealogy seriously until the 1960s when he found himself bored while recuperating from a heart attack. "What did you ever do with all those family records?" he asked his mother, who turned them over to him. Although she'd already done most of the research, he had access to documents that hadn't been available to her.

"Money was tight during the Depression," Freeble said. "And the copy machine hadn't been invented yet."

His research took him to Greensburg, southcentral Pennsylvania and Switzerland, and he's also been in touch with numerous Byerly descendants around the country.

"I want to get it all compiled," he said, "and hopefully, someone in my family will take an interest in preserving it."

What concerns him is that so much has already been lost, such as the memories of Dr. Adolphus Byerly from Gulph, Ontario. He'd done consider-

able research on the family but apparently died without recording it. Freeble's mother had corresponded with him, but years later, Freeble was unable to locate him, or his family.

"If people who are still living don't record what they know, it will die with them," he said.

Freeble has found the search for his ancestry a challenging and rewarding one. It is, he said, like fitting together pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. "When I find a piece that fits, it's like a real kick," he said. It also makes him feel more responsible. "That is," he added, "knowing that someday I'll be someone else's ancestor has given me a sense of responsibility."

Florida is far away from Bushy Run, but this weekend as the historical site marks the Aug. 6 anniversary of the battle, Freeble's thoughts will turn north to the little spring where 224 years ago, his ancestor braved the threat of death to fetch water for wounded and dying men.

"I don't think Andrew was any different from anybody else then who had to put up with so many hardships," Freeble said. "But you have to admit it—the man did have guts."

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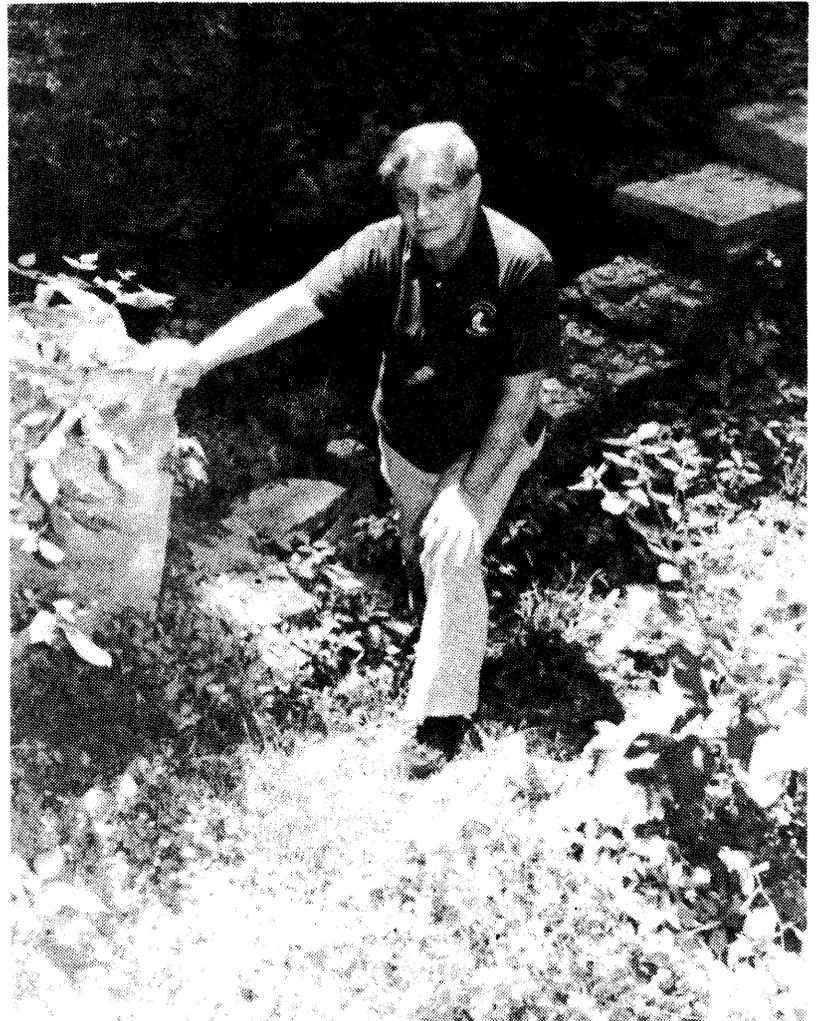
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Maryann Dedo Photo

Andrew Byerly Homesite

Jerry Freeble of Leetsdale at the site of what is believed to be the re-
...mains of Andrew Byerly's house at Bushy Run.

CRUISING CLASSICS

AND MORE

writing, Byerly had carried water back to the troops in his woolen hat.

"But that doesn't make any sense," said Jack Leighow, who was site director last year. "Why should he carry water in a hat when they had so many canteens?"

It's a question that remains unanswered, but that's part of the mystique of the man who immigrated to the colonies from Switzerland, and when he arrived in Philadelphia, signed his name "Andres Baerle."

"I think this was significant because most of the others just made a mark," Freeble said. "In that day when very few people could read and write, it showed that he had an education."

On Oct. 25, 1745, Byerly purchased a lot on Queen Street in Lancaster. There are records in the First Reformed Church indicating that he and his wife had sponsored several children in baptism.

Many of those details of Byerly's life were recorded by his great-great-grandson, the Rev. Cyrus Cort, a Reformed preacher. He was fortunate to get many first-hand details from Byerly's son Jacob, who died at the age of 99.

"His first wife was Anna Catherina, but we weren't able to find out what her maiden name was," Freeble said. "His second wife was Beatrice Kuhl, and his third wife was Pheobe Gulden, who was from Bern, Switzerland. There were no children from his first marriage, but by his second wife, he had Maria, Catherine, Michael and Francis. By Phoebe, he had Andrew Jr., Jacob, Benjamin, Susannah and Joseph."

Since Byerly operated an inn in Lancaster, he had occasion to meet many military men, and soon became a favorite among them. He later became a baker for Gen. Edward Braddock's army at Fort Cumberland. It was there that a Catawba warrior boasted about being fleet of foot, and Byerly challenged him to a race. The wager of 30 shillings was backed by Maj. George Washington of Virginia, and Byerly won.

In 1759, he was listed as a sergeant in Bouquet's company, Second Division, Royal American Regiment at Fort Bedford. The colonel set up Stoney Creek (Stoystown) as a relay between there and Fort Ligonier, and a small stockade at Bushy Run between Fort Ligonier and Fort Pitt. Bouquet offered Byerly a land grant if he would agree to take his family to Bushy Run, build a cabin and operate a farm to provide food for the soldiers and their livestock.

Francis was strapped to her back, and she held the baby, Andrew Jr., in her arms. Michael walked with them, sometimes carrying little Jacob or holding his hand. Though Jacob was just 3 then, he never forgot their hurried flight, and told the story many times in later years.

Byerly caught up with his family, and that evening they stayed inside the outer shelter of the fort. The next morning, they barely made it into the main fort amid a shower of bullets and arrows.

"It was a pretty close call," Freeble said. "Had it been any different, I would not be here because I'm descended from that little baby) Andrew Jr. — that she was carrying in her arms."

The battles raged on. Fort Ligonier was under attack, and Ecuyer at Fort Pitt sent word to Bouquet that he desperately needed reinforcements. Bouquet set off from Fort Bedford with 30 Highlanders and experienced guides and traveled by night over a circuitous route. When they reached Fort Ligonier, there was still no word from Fort Pitt.

According to Bouquet's eloquent and detailed letters, he was forced to leave the wagons, including powder and many provisions, at Fort Ligonier. They proceeded with additional troops and 340 horses loaded with the flour for the starving troops at Fort Pitt. Byerly and his son Michael headed west with them, but after a few miles, Byerly sent the lad back.

At 1 p.m. Aug. 5, the Indians ambushed them.

Byerly was with an advanced detachment that was approaching the hill above Bushy Run. Sudden firing left 12 of the 18 dead. The attack extended along the flanks, and by the end of the day, 60 men lay dead or wounded. In the morning, the troops built a makeshift fort out of the bags of flour. Thus protected, the wounded had yet another misery to deal with: thirst. It was then that Byerly made his acclaimed run to the spring for water.

Bouquet and his men won the battle by tricking the Indians into believing they were retreating. When the Indians attacked, the British opened fire on them from the right flank while the "retreating" troops turned on them.

After the battle, Bouquet continued to Fort Pitt with his battered troops. There were numerous casualties, and the men who were left took four days to travel the 26 miles to Fort Pitt. Byerly returned to Ligonier, then moved his family to Fort Bedford.

Freeble has noted some discrepancies in the recording of Byerly's death. It's known that he died in Strasburg after he'd taken Andrew Jr. there to stay with re-

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