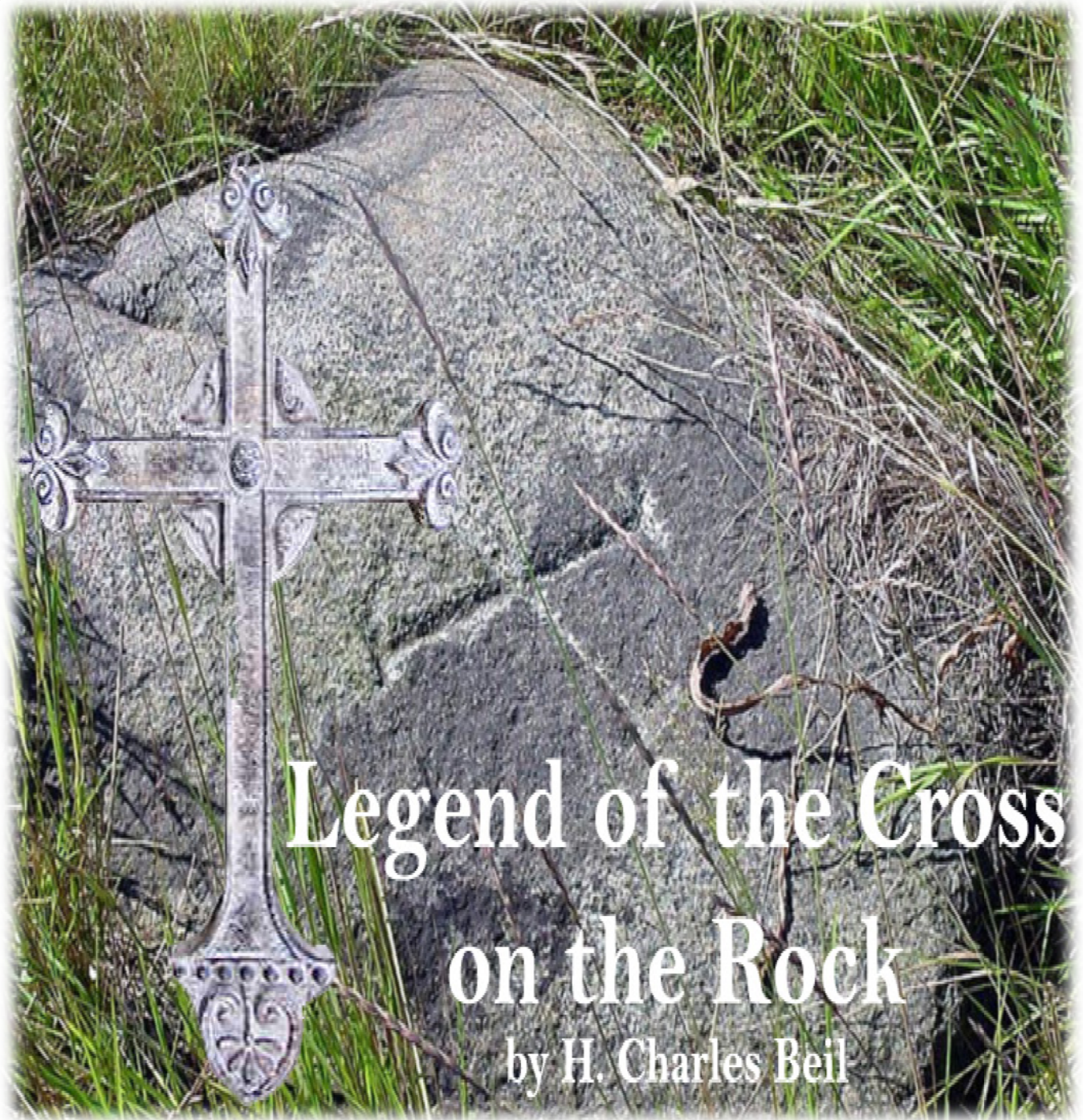


Treasure Hunting Riches



Legend of the Cross on the Rock

by H. Charles Beil

An H.Charles Beil Treasure Hunting Adventure©2012

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THE LOST TREASURE OF THE CROSS ON THE ROCK

By H. Charles Beil

The *LEGEND* speaks of how it is valued at over \$350,000 or probably more given the recent spike in the price of gold and it mentions how Native Americans knew of the tale of the “Cross on the Rock” as handed down by their elders. Also known as the lost treasure of Borie it is conjectured to be one of the little known caches of hidden wealth yet to be found in America in the center of a woodland paradise known as God’s Country, Potter County, USA.

Could this treasure still exist?

Intrigued by the legend I embarked upon a journey of discovery searching for the source of tale; determined that if it existed it was to be mine.

When this treasure was hidden, America was yet a vast wilderness in the 1600’s. Few other than the hardest explorers and fur trappers had ventured further inland than the coastal colonies. However when Louis Frontenac arrived in 1672 Canada was no longer the infant colony it had been when Richelieu founded the Company of One Hundred Associates. Through the efforts of Louis XIV and Colbert it had assumed the form of an organized province and Frontenac as the new governor sought to create regulated parishes and trade opportunities from Montreal to New Orleans in “New France”.

Lois Frontenac was quick to claim these new lands for France. At his direction in 1673, Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet set off on a journey from the Great Lakes with just two canoes and a crew of five men. The two explorers – Marquette, a Jesuit priest, and Jolliet, a fur trader – wanted to find out if the Mississippi River flowed into the Pacific Ocean, which would make it useful in trade with the Far East. As Marquette and Jolliet discovered and we now know, the Mississippi instead flows south into the Gulf of Mexico. The pair was not able to open up a new trade route to the East, but they did travel down the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers, making them the first Europeans to explore and map out the northern portions of the great rivers. Marquette and Jolliet and their entourage made it all the way to Arkansas before returning to the area of present-day Chicago in 1674, this time by going up the Illinois River.

Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet were two very different figures in history. Their contrasting backgrounds shaped not only their goals for the expedition, but how they acted towards the Indians and how they wrote about the native peoples in their journals. Marquette was a Jesuit priest born in France. He moved to Canada in 1666 to create missions

for the Native Americans, and set up several of them along the Great Lakes in both Canada and what is now Wisconsin. Marquette interacted heavily with some tribes through his missionary work and preaching and he became proficient in several of the native languages before the expedition began in 1673.

Louis Jolliet, on the other hand, was a trader. Born in Canada and several years younger than Marquette, he had actually begun training to become a Jesuit as well before changing his mind in his early twenties. At that point he set up a trading post and became a proficient fur trader and mapmaker. Like Marquette, he spoke several Indian languages, primarily Algonquin dialects. He was asked by the French Colonial Governor, Louis de Frontenac, to explore the Mississippi River, and so in 1673 he joined Marquette and the expedition set out. Their journey opened the door for white settlements in the Midwestern part of the continent and trade with numerous Indian villages exchanging European goods for the highly prized and fashionable furs that would be shipped back to France.

Louis Jolliet, records in a letter on October 10, 1674...

"I noticed on our route more than 80 villages of Indians, each of 60 to 100 houses, and even one of 300; we estimated that there must have been ten thousand among them all." According to Marquette's journal entries and Jolliet's interview, the vast majority of American Indians the expedition met were friendly and helpful. Of the Indians in general, Jolliet said "all of the savages seem to have a gentle nature; they are affable and obliging. The generally hospitable nature of the Native Americans created an opportunity for the French Fur Traders who followed to amass great wealth.

Through armed conflict Frontenac expelled English Colonists and subdued the Native Americans claiming a vast territory for France which was later marked by lead plates buried in the ground as identified by Celoron de Beinville and mapped by Father Pierre Bonnecamps, a "Jesuit Mathematician. The fur trade in particular flourished creating the wealth that Frontenac sought and the expansion of "New France" was progressing rapidly.

My research yielded that mid in the 1680's, almost a full century before white settlers began to permanently occupy what is now Potter County, a small party of French Canadians from the fur trading establishment that belonged to Louis Frontenac and Robert Cavelier left New Orleans by boat, for the return trip to Montreal. I quickly discovered errors in the legend as recorded by others. I had been deceived in the details of the trip; most deliberately by someone desirous of keeping the secret of this treasure cache to themselves.

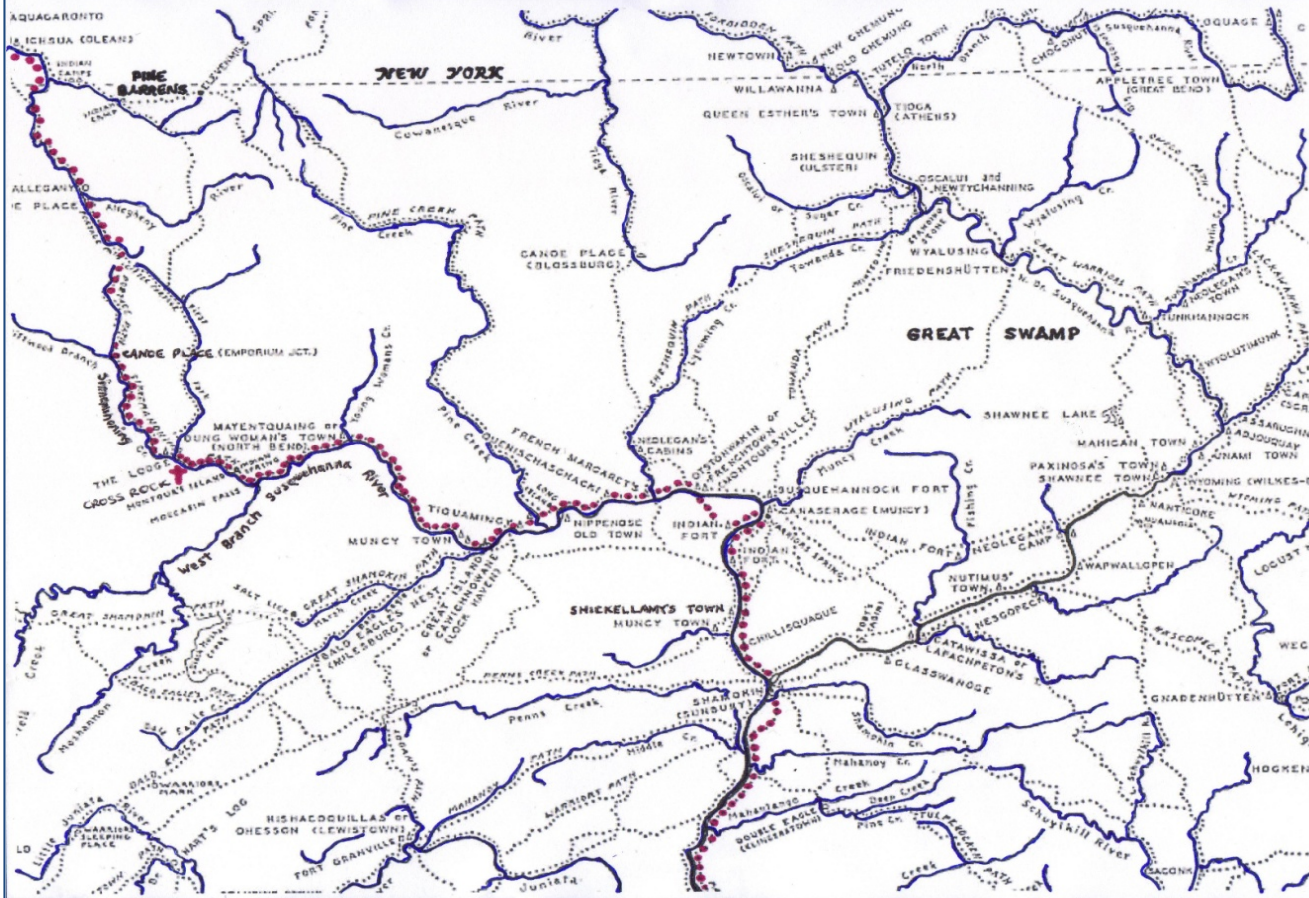
The original tale states *[The planned route was up the Mississippi to the junction of the Ohio and then up the Beautiful River, as the Indians call it, to the Allegheny and then northward to the mouth of the Conewango near present day Warren. From that point, a short run would*

bring the expedition to Chautauqua Lake near the present day Jamestown, New York. From this point, the party could practically roll down hill by the way of Prendergrast Creek and then home free by the way of Lake Erie into Lake Ontario and Northward to Montreal. Nearly the entire trip would be made by water, without the danger of long overland, backbreaking portages.]

I soon came to learn that a trip down the Mississippi was a one way ticket in the late 1600's. A folly to think that one could pull rafts or paddle canoes counter current for over 3000 miles back to Montreal in an expeditious manner through a hostile and unsettled wilderness! The return trips were always accomplished by means of sailing ships from the port of New Orleans to the port of Baltimore and then by ascending the Susquehanna River in canoe to the West Branch and Sinnemahonning Rivers and onward to Jamestown N.Y., up the Great Lakes to Montreal. The rivers were the highways of the 1600-1700's with the only trails being those of the Native Americans; roads had yet to be created in any of the interior colonies.

[And so the courier de bois left New Orleans on rafts loaded with provisions and a number of small kegs, each of which were loaded with gold coins covered with a thin film of gunpowder, and anchored securely to the crude log transports by means of ropes and iron nails. The gold was to be delivered to His Most Gracious Majesty's Royal Governor in Montreal, (Gov. Frontenac) and the party was instructed to guard the valuable cargo with their lives. Under no circumstances was it to fall into the hands of the English, the Americans nor the hated Seneca, who were always at war with the French.]

The party made the uneventful trip around the tip of Florida and up the East Coast of America to the Chesapeake Bay and began the second leg and more arduous portion of their journey. The Susquehanna River a relatively shallow body of water snakes languidly through Pennsylvania interspersed with white water and rapids that are known to wreak havoc on Northward voyages depending upon the season. The hazards of ascending rapids, portaging small waterfalls and evading hostile Indians through Pennsylvania's Wyoming area were well documented. As the rivers narrowed avoiding Indians became increasingly impossible. Greatly outnumbered and pursued through the wilderness the Frenchmen became increasingly wary realizing that they had become the prey in much more than a cat and mouse game along the West Branch River.



With position fixed and mapped by the Jesuits the exasperated Frenchmen buried their treasure for safe keeping near the confluence of two rivers deciding that it was safer to secret it temporarily and return for it with a larger expeditionary force than to risk losing their lives and the treasure to the Seneca war party. The exact spot of the treasure was marked by the Jesuits by chiseling a large cross into the rock beneath which it lay.

The Jesuits led by Étienne de Carheil, well educated as a mathematician, religious scholar and cartographer and Father Ernest Laborde determined to stay behind to decoy and convert the savages to Christianity as the voyagers proceeded under cover of darkness up the Sinnemahoning River and onto New York eluding their enemies and escaping to Montreal.



FRONTENAC ANSWERING PHIPS'S MESSENGER, 1690

From a colour drawing by C. W. Jefferys

A power struggle for the Governorship of New France had developed and shortly after his fur trading party arrived in Montreal Louis Frontenac was recalled back to France; and Cavalier died in 1687 at one of the trading outposts that he had helped to establish. Unable to retrieve his money the gold coins, at least for now, were to remain in the ground.

Frontenac returned to Quebec in the autumn of 1689 no doubt with his buried fortune on his mind, just after the Iroquois massacred the people of Lachine and just before they descended upon those of La Chesnaye. The universal mood was one of terror and despair. Quelling the warring redmen and securing his outposts from English squatters led Frontenac on a military campaign that lasted several years. Upon his victory he immediately sent soldiers to the Pennsylvania wilds to get his gold. With his health declining Louis Frontenac was unable to accompany his men and on the 28th of November 1698 Frontenac died at the Château St Louis. His fortune now destined to remain buried.

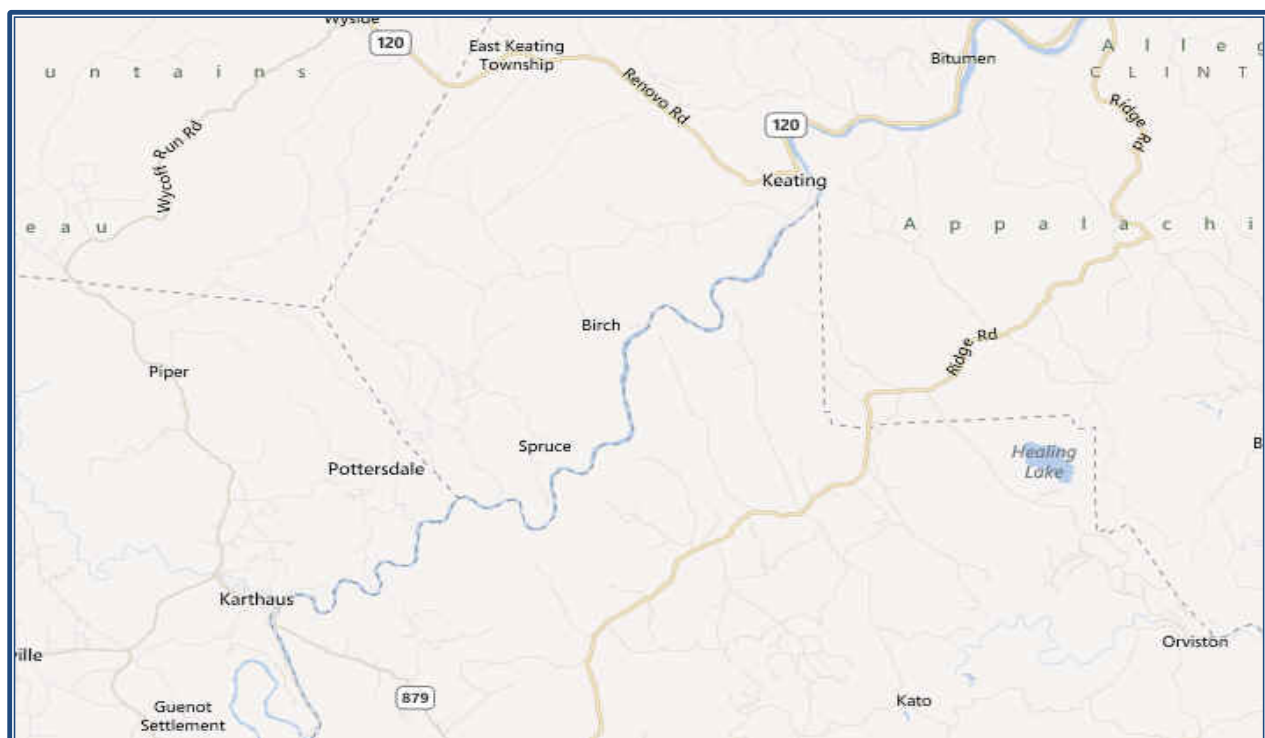
Frontenac's enemies were fond of saying that he used his position to make illicit profits from the fur trade. Beyond question he traded to some extent, but it would be harsh to accuse him of venality or peculation on the strength of such evidence as exists. There is a strong probability that the king appointed him in the expectation that he would augment his income from sources which lay outside his salary. As a member of the King's Court it was expected that to undertake such a desolate appointment in the new world it would go unsaid that any

riches that could be garnered would be one's to keep. Public opinion varies from age to age regarding the latitude which may be allowed a public servant in such matters. Under a democratic régime the standard is very different from that which has existed, for the most part, under autocracies in past ages. Frontenac was a man of distinction who accepted an important post at a small salary. We may infer that the king was willing to allow him something from perquisites. If so, his profits from the fur trade become a matter of degree. So long as he kept within the bounds of reason and decency, the government raised no objection. Frontenac certainly was not a governor who pillaged the colony to feather his own nest. If he took profits, they were not thought excessive by anyone except Duchesneau who was Frontenac's rival in the King's court who had been snubbed for the position of Governor. The king had recalled Frontenac not because he was venal, but because he was quarrelsome and returned him upon realizing that he was precisely the correct man for the job.

I had found the validation that was required with evidence sufficiently strong to indicate that a fortune in gold coins amassed from the French fur trade was more than probable. The coins buried and marked by a cross chiseled into a solid stone face at the confluence of the rivers now only needed to be found.

Native Americans knew of the cross on the rock and conjecturing as to its significance created their legend to explain its existence.

Near Keating until the railroad was built in 1901, could be seen the "Cross on the Rock" a great natural wonder; a perfect cross of heroic proportions carved on a rock along the river. Fortunately an excellent photograph of the remarkable natural curiosity is in existence since it since has sloughed away since its creation in the mid 1680's.





The Cross on the Rock.
(Photo by Rev. W. W. Sholl, Rebersburg.)

An Historical Account of the Cross on the Rock as Narrated by Henry Shoemaker, noted Pennsylvania Historian

HAVE you ever seen the cross on the rock?" said the old half-breed. I had several hours of a wait before me at the station for the afternoon train, east bound, and the acquaintance with this aged native had promised to pass the time very pleasantly. I had never even heard of this "natural wonder," so I asked where it was, and if we had time to go and look at it.

"I begged the contractors, when they were building the railroad not to destroy it, and they let it be, but I call its preservation a miracle," he added. "Yes, we can go and see it; it is not far up the creek." So I left the party of trainmen who were sitting on the platform of the freight house whittling the planking with their sharp case knives, and accompanied the Indian along the newly-graded railroad.

It was not a long walk, and I felt amply rewarded for the effort. The rock, high and massive, rises from the right-of-way, and on its side is a perfectly proportioned cross, cut deep into the strata. "Who could have done that?" I inquired. "The early French pioneers, or rather one French missionary, a priest, did it," said the half-breed. "He tried to convert the Indians hereabouts to Christianity, over two hundred years ago. He had striven for weeks to convert

them, but they were a willful and superstitious lot, and defied him until he carved that cross. Then a catastrophe occurred, in which the missionary and most of the natives lost their lives, at least that's what I've heard from the very old people.

The early inhabitants of this point were an independent tribe; they claimed allegiance to none of the surrounding Indians, and by victorious wars proved their right to self government. They were lighter colored than Indians generally, and some of them had grey or bluish eyes.

"They claimed descent from European sailors who had come to the American continent a thousand years ago. In this they were probably incorrect, as their religion had nothing in it that savored of the old world beliefs ancient or modern. They had a multitude of divinities and were always adding new ones to the list; also discarding older ones who failed to answer their prayers.

A religious revival had taken place among them shortly before the coming of the French missionary. "Several of the leading warriors while on their way to a buffalo hunt on what we now call the 'barrens' saw to their amazement a most beautiful young woman, wading in the river at the mouth of a Trout Run. She wore a flowing cloak made from the spotty hides of fawns and trimmed with gauzy draperies as fine as spider webs. The morning sun shining on her hair, gave out a glint of rich gold, and the same tint was very noticeable in the lustrous dark eyes.

The Indians forgot the chase and started to follow her, but she always kept far enough ahead so that they could not catch up to her. Her way led up the run, and every now and then when she passed through an opening made by a windfall, the sun would gild and glisten on her beautiful hair and eyes. As one man, they called her 'Golden Glow,' and, completely fascinated, followed her to the creek's headwaters. There she disappeared, but they found themselves in the midst of the largest herd of buffaloes they had ever seen.

There were thousands of the animals bellowing and running about among the tall trees. Interspersed with them were considerable numbers of moose and elks, while deer were too plentiful to be worth noticing. "Every Indian in the party had been to this hunting ground previously, but never had game shown itself there in such abundance. The brutes seemed anxious to be slaughtered, so the hunters turned in and killed them by the hundreds.

They were weeks in gathering together the hides and drying the choicest meats, and built heavy sleds to draw them down the mountain at the next snowfall. Before they departed there was an unusually early snow, and they got all their sleds into the valley without an accident. "When they met their tribesmen they started to tell of their wonderful fortune, but their friends were so anxious to tell of the strangely beautiful maiden they had seen in the river and how the fishing and hunting had been better than they had ever heard of it that they refused to listen. To emphasize the good fortune, a tribe of Indians who had been at warfare with them for some years, came and voluntarily surrendered, giving themselves into servitude.

"Before anything of a favorable nature would occur 'Golden Glow' was always seen in the river or on a steep hillside, or resting under a beech tree near the council house. She never answered when they spoke to her; she disdained gifts they offered her and no one could get within a hundred yards of where she stood. The older gods having been far less generous were discarded root and branch, and the worship of 'Golden Glow' substituted.

"She was so beautiful that all the young braves aspired to the priesthood, a calling that had in the old days been decidedly unpopular. The handsomest braves, after much rivalry, were selected, and practiced their rites with dignity and reverence, but the mysterious divinity did

not deign to notice any of them, although she often appeared to them when at prayer or chanting hymns in her praise.

"She was the most accommodating divinity imaginable, for she always seemed to answer their supplications, and could be actually seen, even if her face did not betray any emotions at the homage paid her.

When Father Ernest Laborde appeared at the confluence of the two rivers he met with the first serious obstacle that had confronted him in a career of over ten years in the wilderness. "Here was a tribe of Indians entirely satisfied with their religion, having a tangible divinity who was beautiful to look at, and who invariably favored their supplications.

Of course he disbelieved that anyone had ever really seen her, for he had prayed as fervently as any, and knew others even more devout, yet none had ever heard so much as the rustle of an angel's wing. Gently, though firmly, he tried to persuade the Redskins that they only saw their divinity with eyes of faith, that not being material they had never actually seen her, in the sense that we see a rock, a tree, or a bird.

"Every member of the community, old enough to reason had seen her, and no amount of argument could convince them otherwise. If this Christian faith possessed divinities that would come and live in their midst and grant such bountiful favors, they might listen, but let Father Laborde first adduce some of his proofs. The good priest had brought a delicately carved cross of rosewood, and one calm evening, feeling so discouraged, that he was on the point of leaving, he built a stout foundation of stones and mud and set the cross on it. He was only thirty years of age, well proportioned and attractive looking, and failure rested heavily on his impetuous soul.

"From a worldly standpoint the conversion of these masterful Indians at the 'meeting of the waters' meant much to him. If they were converted the French trading company had planned to erect a formidable blockhouse in the neighborhood, and he had been promised the largest parsonage in New France if he succeeded. While meditating before the cross, his mind wandered to the beauties of nature around him. The river rippled at his feet, gilded here and there by the glint of the dying sun as its slanting rays poured through the vistas of tall pines, hemlocks and beeches. All manner of wild flowers were in profusion, and even a few frail blossoms like women's eyes lingered among the shining leaves of the laurels. The moss was like a velvet carpet under his feet, the sky was like a fresco at Versailles.

"Occasionally he heard the rattle-like cries of the kingfishers or halcyons as they darted close to the water, or the somnolent croaks of the ravens flapping lazily back to roost high up in the mountains. His eyes finally rested on a pool of dead water, where night herons were congregated in unusual numbers.

"From the way they flapped their striped wings and opened and shut their large beaks, he felt something was to happen. He forgot all about his task, so intently was he watching the comic antics of the birds. He felt a breath blow in his face and as he looked around his cross tumbled out of its foundation, and lay broken on the rocks. Back of him stood the slender figure of a young girl, clad in a flowing gown made from the hide of a fawn, with the golden rays of the dying sun gilding into rich tints her lustrous hair and thoughtful eyes. For an instant he presumed her to be one of the Indian girls, but from her attire and queenly grace his heart told him she was the river divinity 'Golden Glow,' who had brought such blessings to the savage community where the waters joined.

"Their eyes met, they both smiled, it seemed as if they had surely been acquainted before. He would have spoken, but she walked by him and the great flock of herons hopped up and surrounded her. With her feathered companions she disappeared among the laurels back of the pool. When she was gone he looked at the fallen cross, it was broken into twenty-four pieces, and was beyond repair. It was growing dark, so he returned to his tent, where his sleep was filled with dreams of the divine 'Golden Glow.'

"In the morning he cut several ironwood poles and fashioned a new cross much stronger than the delicate piece of rosewood that had been so easily shattered. That afternoon he put it in place where the other had stood. Nature was just as entrancing as the day before, and despite himself he fell to admiring the wonders about him. A troop of deer, many of them with half-grown fawns, were splashing idly on the edges of the pool. He felt a breath, like a zephyr blown across meadows from cool woodlands, he looked around, the ironwood cross fell to the ground, and was hopelessly smashed.

"The beautiful young girl was standing pensively by the stream; their eyes met, they smiled as if in recognition of old acquaintance; she moved on and was surrounded by the deer and passed into the forest with them. He looked at his cross, it was broken into twenty-five pieces; this sturdy ironwood was as shaky as rosewood. That night he dreamed even more of the river goddess, but in the morning he took two gun barrels and welded a cross that he was sure would last.

"Towards evening he planted it in an extra strong foundation, and fell to meditating before it. His eyes wandered to the edge of the pool where a long, tawny panther, was stretching itself and yawning. He was not afraid of anything, and the sight at close range of this titanic beast fascinated him. Soon a second panther, larger than the first, peered through the laurels, and cat-like began to lap up water in the pool.

"In a few minutes he heard a slight scratching and cracking of dead branches and a third panther crawled down from one of the tallest white pines. A fourth, the largest of all, rose up from behind a rotten log along the bank, and before long the number of this savage coterie had grown to twelve.

Later six cubs joined them, and frisked in the presence of their sedate elders. He felt the same sweet breath blown beside his face, the cross toppled over and lay broken into dozens of pieces on the sharp rocks. His eyes rested on the mysterious divinity. She looked more beautiful this evening than previously, if such a thing were possible. Their glances were followed by smiles and, to his amazement, he saw her lips move, and she spoke to him in the Indian tongue : 'My religion is living and real; come, leave those crosses and follow me into the forest.'

"He started to follow her, and was within a few steps of where she stood encircled by the panther families, when the force of old traditions, old customs, old beliefs, overcame him. He stopped short, and the beautiful divinity 'Golden Glow,' with her strange escort, was gone in the gloom of the forest. He returned to his tent, and all night the question agitated him, should he go with her, that is if she ever appeared to him again, should he give up the beliefs of his fathers and adopt this apparently potent faith.

"Then he would weaken and think of his brothers and sisters at home, their respectable name, the rewards that his nation promised if he Christianized unwilling savages. He saw himself an archbishop, the friend of kings, in a marble palace; his ascetic training had neutralized the value of merely a beautiful companion in the wilderness. As the dawn filtered in through the

crevices in the tent, a new idea seized him. He would cut a cross in the rock which the mystic goddess could not blow over, and struck by the impregnable strength of his faith, he would convert her, and maybe she would be the greatest woman in Catholicism since St. Genevieve.

"With a hammer and spike he repaired to the quiet nook where his crosses had been, and in the huge rock which rose above the bank he chiseled a cross of noticeable size. Then he fell to meditating, as was his wont. On the opposite side of the pool a solitary wolverine was lying on the rotting log; he could not help watching it, with its wide open, un-winking eyes, so crafty and yet so still. He felt a breath of indescribable sweetness blow past his face, the cross on the rock remained inviolate.

"He thought he heard a sigh like a breeze among birch leaves; he looked, and the divinity, 'Golden Glow' stood beside him. He felt her blow her breath again. He fancied he saw tears in her eyes, which grew larger and larger. They assumed the proportions of a vapor, and soon she was lost to sight in a white fog which filled the entire vicinity. He called to her, but not even an echo answered.

"With difficulty he started to find his way back to his camp, but the air became so thick that it seemed as if the forests were on fire. True enough, they were, for great tongues of red and purple flames shot out of the timber on both sides of the river. He heard a snarling at his feet, and dimly made out the form of the solitary wolverine. When he reached his tent the flames had surrounded the whole Indian encampment, and the terrified Red Men, with their families, were crowding into canoes and starting down the stream.

"His first thought was self-preservation, but as he started to get in his boat, the wolverine sprang at him viciously. Unarmed, he tried to tear the animal off with his powerful hands, but he was losing time, while the flames were drawing closer. As he finally shook loose from his tormentor, a horrible form rushed at him from the blazing underbrush.

It was Wheel of Rivers, titular chief of the local Indians. His naturally calm face was contorted with passion and hate.

'You with your new religion have destroyed the river goddess. We know you have, for we never had a forest fire while she was with us;' with that he struck Father Laborde to earth with his war club, and leaped into the empty canoe. The flames were now darting across the river, and it was too late to escape. Wheel of Rivers drifted stoically into the fiery curtain and was never seen again. Most of his tribe met similar fates, but a few who got away earlier, floated down the river to places of safety.

"But the young priest's mission had been accomplished in a way; when the French built their fort at Grande Point, some years later, their most dangerous foes were no more, but thousands of acres of burned waste showed the area of their domain. The cross on the rocks, blackened a little by the fierce flames, remained inviolate, a symbol of the faith and people who were soon to make the region a white man's stronghold. The river goddess never reappeared; her fair soul had faded into nothingness with the disappointment of her fiery baptism.

For years, the Seneca legend persisted of a rock with a cross chiseled into its face; but not in the Borie for no stone was as large as required by the tale nor waterways or trails existed by which the Frenchmen could have made use. Since the carving had religious significance, the Indians, did not disturb the rock or search for the hidden treasure, of which none were aware.

Shoemaker, Pennsylvania historian, likewise was unknowing of the true meaning behind the “cross on the rock” and so the area remained undisturbed.

The treasure of the Cross on the Rock became a legend and faded into relative obscurity. It is a known fact that several historians mentioned the great rock, as did the Seneca and if true, it is one of the largest treasures to be buried in the Keystone State.

The Territory, Terrain and Towns of the Region



The 1600's saw the Leni Lenape Indians, a branch of the Minsi Tribe, using the area as a vast hunting ground. The virgin pine, hemlock and hardwood forest was populated with deer, elk, bear, wolves and panthers and the streams teamed with pike, eel, shad, trout and salmon.

An ancient trail, the Sinnamahoning Path, passes through what will be called Keating on its way to the upper Alleghenies. The Sinnamahoning Path followed the West Branch of the Susquehanna from “the Great Island” at Lock Haven to the Sinnamahoning Creek at Keating, to Portage Creek, then to Canoe Place near Port Allegheny and on to the Seneca Indian country in the upper Alleghenies. The river and Indian Path were the highways of the time. No interior roads existed in the colonies this far West with exploration and travel conducted mainly by canoe.

Major floods plague the area which was sold to the English in November 1768 - the British purchase lands south of the West Branch of the Susquehanna from the Six Nations of the Iroquois at Fort Stanwix, NY for ten thousand pounds but contentions remained and hostilities ensued between the British, French and Indians ensued.

In 1768 General Potter, who served under Washington during the Revolutionary War, surveyed the lands purchased from the Indians as far up the West Branch of the Susquehanna River as the Forks of the Sinnamahoning. Shortly thereafter white settlers begin taking up lands which had not been purchased by treaty from the Iroquois. After repeated warnings to leave, the Iroquois attempt to force the settlers from their lands by conducting numerous raids against these settlers. These hostilities were especially lethal between 1778 and 1779.

In the Fall of 1778 - Four-fifths of the West Branch population left their homes for forts and stockades in what was called the "Big Runaway" in order to protect themselves from the Indian attacks. By the Spring of 1779 during the "Little Runaway," settlers once again fled their cabins to the frontier forts and stockades as General Sullivan lead an expedition to destroy Iroquois villages and crops to the north in New York. Unprotected cabins were destroyed as the Iroquois and the Tories (British) moved to meet General Sullivan in his suppression of the Indians.

With the cessation of the Indian Wars the first survey of the township was made by John Huston in pursuance of a warrant, dated May 17, 1785, for John Strawbridge of Philadelphia and contained 285 acres of land situated on both sides of the Sinnamahoning Creek, at or near the mouth. A few years later the land was sold to Patrick Lusk, who in turn sent his son and daughter to settle on it, eventually giving to his son the land on the south side of Sinnamahoning Creek and the north side to his daughter, Martha.

In 1797, Francis King, a surveyor, was hired by John Keating of Philadelphia to explore the lands in the northern part of the State then owned by William Bingham of Philadelphia. King, struggling with a fourteen-year-old boy and a packhorse, became lost and wandered the wilderness for six weeks. King was taken violently ill at the home of a settler near the intersection of the Sinnamahoning and West Branch of the Susquehanna and was laid up for approximately six weeks before returning to his home at Asylum. Following King's recommendation, John Keating purchased 300,000 acres of land in Northwestern Pennsylvania, in the present counties of McKean and Potter. By 1822 lumbering operations began along the Sinnamahoning Creek for the market down the West Branch of the Susquehanna. The principal marketing points for lumber cut in the region during these years was at Harrisburg, Lancaster, and Marietta, where the large buyers from New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, and other large cities east and south, came to make their purchases.

Keating-on-the-Sinmahoning became a hub of activity by 1853, attracting lumbermen, miners, hunters, river pilots, runaway slaves, mountain whites, back woodsmen and Irish, German and Hungarian immigrants who came to work on the railroad, in the lumber camps or mines. The Gakle house and the Keating Hotel were the primary centers for fun.

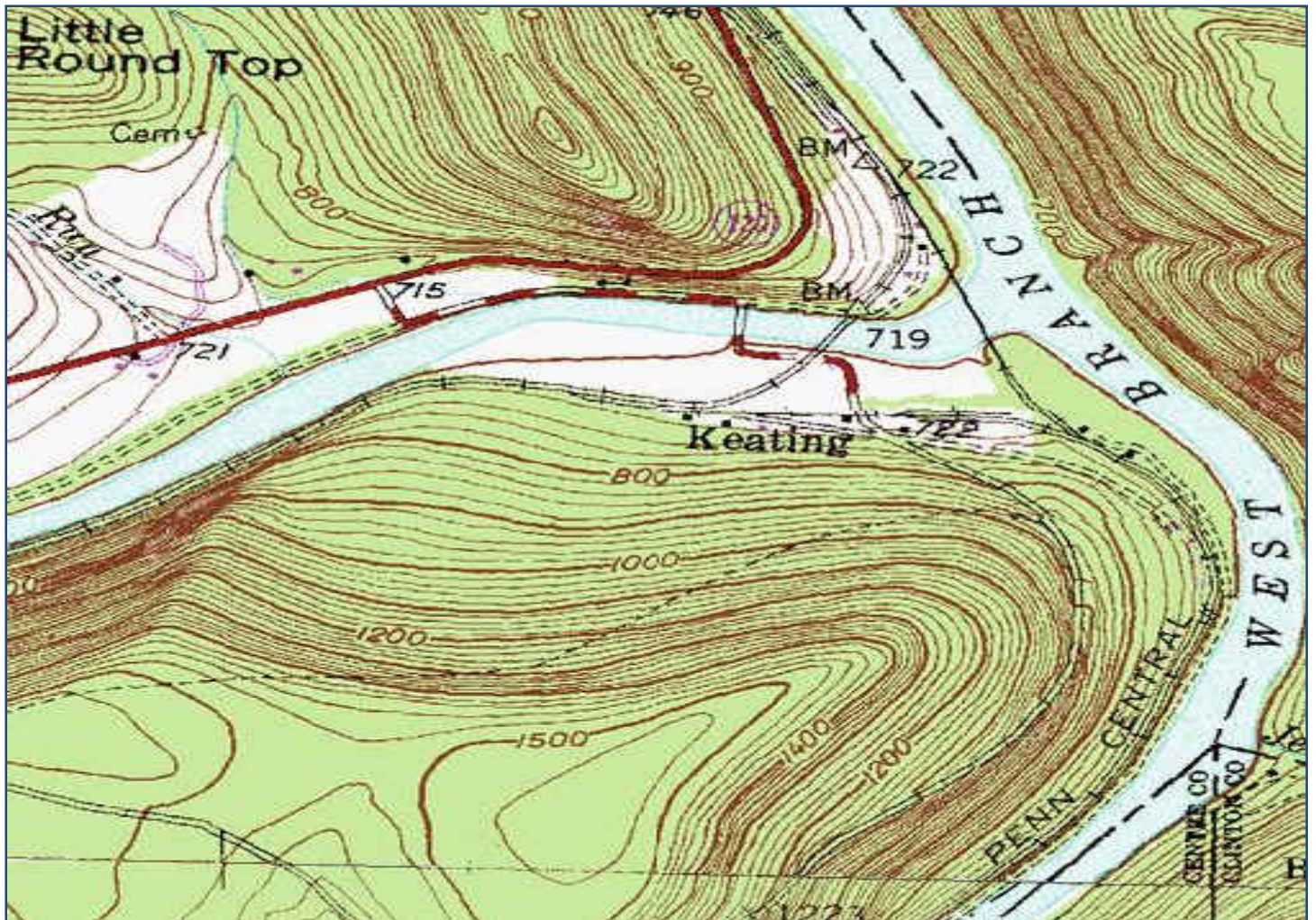
Even though now settled Keating still showed remnants of its roots when in 1858 an engineer employed by the P&E Railroad found petroglyph under the ledge of rocks nearly opposite Keating Hotel. On the rock were many images of various birds and animals. The most conspicuous carving was a rough draft of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River and Sinmahoning Creek. The head of the creek was embellished with the likeness of an elk and the source of the river with the figure of a deer, seeming to point out that, on the creek elk were found, while the deer most abounded along the river.

By 1875 -East Keating was home to three railroad depots and post offices. Round Island, Wistar and Keating Station (Nasby PO). Keating post office named Nasby by Col A.C. Noyes since the Keating name was already taken for Keating Summit. J.R. Van Daniker was postmaster, telegraph operator and ticket, freight and express agent. Two stores were erected in the township, one at Wistar, owned by Eldrige and Averill proprietors of the coal mines and coke works. The other is near Keating Station and was owned by J.W. Merry, who also built and owned the Keating Hotel, a four story building, including basement, capable of entertaining fifty guests.

Keatings long and colorful history essentially came to its end in April 1965 when the Keating Hotel, owned by Mike and Helen Donnelly, destroyed by fire on April 15.

Shortly thereafter in June 1972 a major flood of Susquehanna and its tributaries caused as Tropical Storm Agnes dumped 28 trillion, 50 billion gallons of water on the Susquehanna basin flooded the village, knocking down the road bridge placing the last nail in the coffin of the once thriving town leaving nothing more than a few hunting camps and an area infested with rattlesnakes.

Traveling through Keating today it is difficult to imagine it as a center and hub of commerce but two hundred years ago - 1853, Keating was the busiest spot in West Clinton County - the Mecca for lumbermen, miners, hunters, river pilots, to say nothing of runaway slaves, mountain whites, back woodsmen; or of the Irish, German and Hungarian immigrants who came to work on the railroad, in the lumber camps or mines, and who stayed and prospered.



More to Search for than the “Cross on the Rock”

Local historians know the Indian silver mine legend which, came from Keating. The legend tells of a group of Indians, coming from Moccasin Run and carrying heavy packs, who asked to spend the night on a white man's place. One of their packs split open and lumps of silver ore fell out. Indian stories also spoke of a silver mine in the region.

All of the families living there in the 1840's and 1850's knew of it - the Gakles, Delaneys, Moores, Huffs, Nelsons, Keplers, Conweys and Callahans. It seems that around 1840 a dozen Indians or so came down the North Branch in canoes, beached them on "The Point" and took off into the hills up Moccasin Run. After a day or so they returned, each with a heavy bag on his shoulder, and asked Mr. Gakle's permission to stay for the night beside their canoes. When one sack broke open, rough lumps of stone fell out, which proved to be silver ore. Many people have since hunted for the mine, searching every possible opening not only on Moccasin Run but on Grass Flat and Round Island Run as well. No trace was ever found.

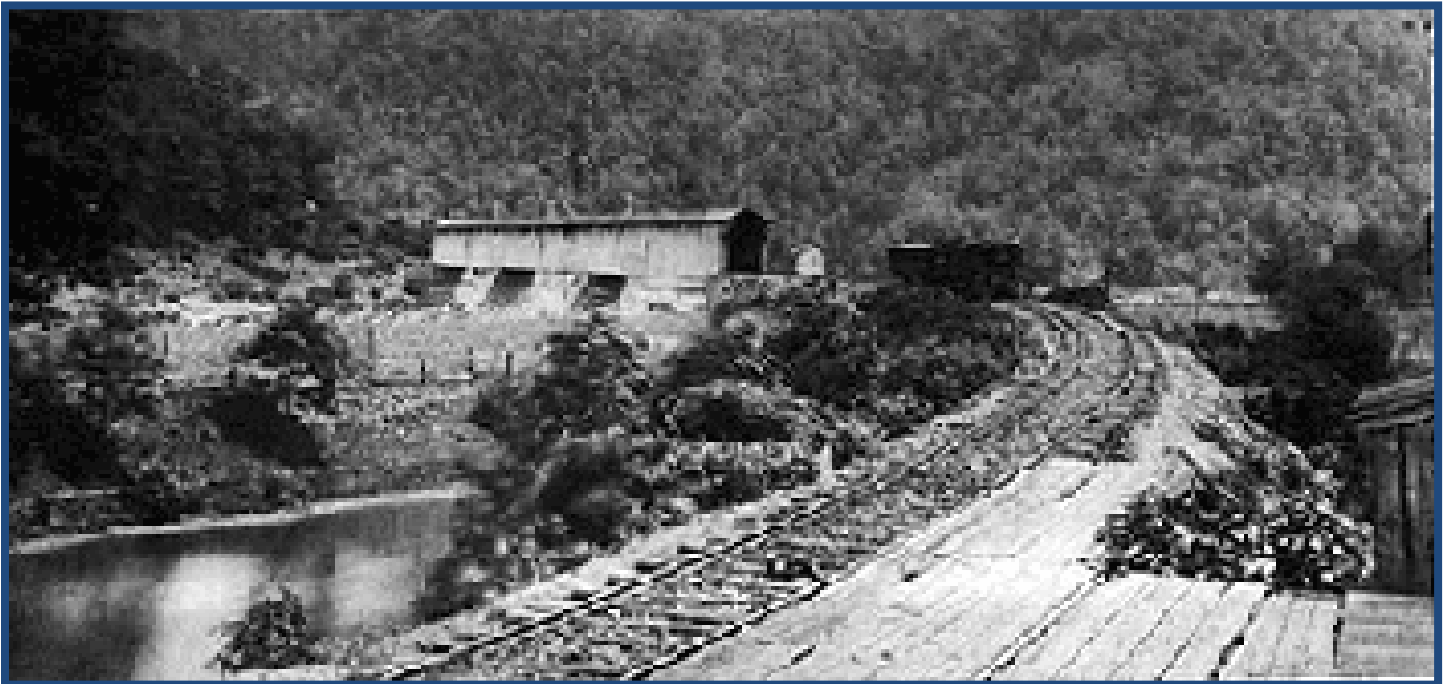
Other stories tell of settler Seth Nelson who once threw a mountain lion out of his cabin. A tiny cemetery is all that is left of the small settlement of Nelsonville. Across the road is the site of the boarding house that used to welcome lumber jacks.

Not far away is one of the Rhone places, the scene of a mystery where a man was either burned or buried in a cow.

The story says that in the late 1800s, Dolf Rhone's wife ran off with Dr. Nevlis from Karthaus. At the same time she left Rhoneville, the old, unused boiler was fired up and a cow was butchered. Dolf, so the story goes, was never seen again.

One version has bloodhounds tracking the missing man's trail to the spot where the cow was killed, although his remains were never unearthed. Another one favors the boiler. A less grisly version has Dolf turning up alive, well and probably embarrassed by his wife, in another Pennsylvania community.

Keating Mountain was also known as Grove Hill and Hickory Hill. Oral history says the Underground Railroad ran through here. One spot on the mountaintop had the nickname "Nigger Hill." According to a 1914 account in *The Express*, a few Blacks lived on the mountain even before the Civil War era. The old nickname could have also referred to the Indian population and the mixed heritage of some of the bygone families.



Keating Railroad Bridge in 1870

The mountain also has numerous legends about the Prohibition era. There was one popular "industry" - "moonshining". Distilling whiskey was a chief source of income for some remote mountaineers who lived by hunting and fishing. Practically everyone kept whiskey on hand for snake bite and various other "ailments". The story goes that when one old-timer was caught by revenue officers with a barrel of whiskey in his house, he said, "What is one barrel of whiskey in a family with seven children and no cow?"

The Keating store was the Men's Club and the children's paradise, though there was little candy as we know it. The old fashioned "lick-rish" sticks, tough and bitter, made good "tobacco-juice" if properly hoarded in the cheek. Small boys could thus imitate the masterly "bullseyes" scored by their fathers in the saw-dust box at five paces. Or there might be copper-toed boots to look at longingly on the shelves, perhaps to try on and wear home. Only boots so reinforced were practical, and were for winter use only. Both boys and girls wore "copper-toes" as ordinary shoes were not equal to the rigors of Keating life.

The Wykoffs say their families were farming on the mountaintop before 1840, and agriculture was alive and well in their little community until the Depression forced them and other farmers to sell and move elsewhere.

Then there is the really incredible story is about Mike Donnelly and his oil well. The story says Donnelly, then the owner of the Keating Hotel and still a township supervisor, and Homer Scrimshaw, who worked for the railroad, became oil partners in 1952. Scrimshaw got the idea of oil, so the story goes, from seeing the black gold flow out of the Sinnamahoning Creek where it joined the river during flood times. During the Leidy gas boom, a well was reportedly sunk 3,000 feet. "They hit oil, but there's no oil around with 150 miles," Winner said. "Everybody thought they were pulling a joke." After Donnelly got out of it, Winner said he and others took up the search for the mysterious oil. He said, "In the last 10 to 15 years, half a million dollars has been spent on that field. Twelve wells were drilled but they never found the reservoir. It's the lost Keating oil."

Along with these economic pursuits another natural treasure existed. Eliza Margaret Bailey Merrey was the First Aid, Red Cross, mid-wife and for children often the undertaker. Many of the mountain people refused to consult a doctor preferring to rely on their own home remedies or on those of Liza Merrey. She grew her own herbs or gathered healing bark and roots used for burns, fevers, cuts, dyspepsia or gout. For bandages she always had a ready supply of old soft linen at hand and when she set a broken arm and bandaged it to splints the break usually healed perfectly. One day in a mountain cabin where she had gone with some of her healing oil for burns to try to save the fight leg of a two-year old who had stepped in a pan of hot apple butter, she noticed a box of dirty crooked sticks drying behind the stove. "We are curin' ginsin'", the mother told her. "You mean those thick roots are ginseng?" asked my

grandmother, as well as she had seen were small and thin. "Sure", said the mountain woman, "The whole hillside over yonder is full of it".

That was the beginning. Nearly all the hills around Keating had ginseng roots. Women and children could cut them with a small ax or sharp cleaver, wash them in the creek and bring them to the store, in trade. These roots were dried in the loft above the store for several months, then shipped to New York at \$5.00 a pound. An exporting firm sent ginseng to China in return for quinine. Many children had shoes for the first time with their ginseng money or the family had a barrel of white flour, or mom had new calico for a dress.



Keating Hotel 1870's



Keating Hotel 1910



Keating Hotel Fire 1965

The Personalities and Ways of Life in Keating

In order to recount briefly the background of the man who, along with floods and log-jams, put Keating on the map, it will be necessary to shift the scene to the England of 1847 in late December, when Joseph William Merrey was born in city of Burton-on-Trent. The name Merrey comes from the Anglo-Saxon, meaning happy; it is spelled with two "e's", and is pronounced Merry, not Murray (Scot.). Little Joe had a fair education for 19th century England. He went to grammar school until he was twelve. At that time all the children had little jobs on the side. There were many ways to pick up a tuppence or ha'penny; helping with

boats on the Trent River, holding horses for hucksters who came to market in the city. On rare holidays it was a memorable experience for the boys to walk a few miles to the woods which were said to be all that remained of Sherwood Forest, there to play with bows and arrow at being Robin Hood. (Hop-a-Long Cassidy was still a century away.) Probably that was the beginning of Joe Merrey's love of land, trees, woods, and of his passion to own many acres of his own. When he began to grow tall at the age of 13-14 he took on several jobs and saved his money. He was among other things a "tea-taster" for Hargreaves Ltd., of London. He also worked in his uncle's store. One duty of the store was to stand outside and "cry the wares". All his life Joe could rattle off a list of the things sold in that shop such as "Tripe and Trotters, Turpentine and Beeswax, Peppermint and Tansy". (According to Webster, "tripe" is the lining of an ox's stomach, not very desirable meat, could also be pork. "Trotters" means pig's feet, pickled or plain.) Evidently meat was meat, and nothing was wasted. Later on in Pennsylvania he enjoyed many Sunday breakfasts of kidney and sweetbreads which the butcher "threw in" free of charge, with the roast of beef.

By 1865, Joe Merrey had saved enough money to come 2nd class to New York. He was 17 years old, 6'3" tall, a nice looking boy with curly dark hair, and the beginnings of a beautiful moustache which he cultivated assiduously to make himself appear more mature. He had either self-assurance of ability because he promptly got a job with the New York Evening Post, and soon convinced the Post's editor that he was a young man of parts, or else the other reporters wanted him to get such an impossible assignment that he'd fluke it. Anyway, he was sent to Harrisburg to report on flood conditions in the Susquehanna. It seems that an earlier flood in 1861 had done great damage to rafts and New York business men who had large lumber interests in Clinton County had lost heavily. So Joe Merrey came up to Lock Haven, then to Keating because it was there that logs, piled up for rafts along Sinnamahoning Creek, were being swept away.

He never forgot his first sight of Pennsylvania Mountains and rivers, nor was he to see again as great destruction because the flood of March 17, 1865 was the worst on the Susquehanna until the St. Patrick's flood of 1936. Not even the flood of '89 did as much damage in general. Heavy snows in the mountains, early thaws and spring rains had caused the three chief branches of the Sinnamahoning Creek and seven tributaries of the West Branch to rise in a flash flood which swept away several houses and drowned much of the livestock in low lying areas.

Joe Merrey stayed at the Keating Hotel run by John Bailey and his wife, Liza. Bailey too had left England for a more adventurous life, though he wasn't forced to "make his fortune" over here. Being the oldest son of a Country Squire he would have inherited a good estate in England. Instead he signed off to a younger brother and eventually came to Keating, bought Patrick Lusk's land on the south side of Sinnamahoning Creek, built a hotel and store, and married a young German girl. Bailey, about 35, took a liking to his young, robust compatriot and let him

act as extra helper in the hotel, and clerk in the store. Everyday the new arrival, Joe, telegraphed his reports to New York concerning the lumber business, the condition of the rafts and of the flood water.

The young rowdies who came to the store on payday soon found that when Joe was around brawling in the hotel was taboo. He had what is the equivalent of a right upper-cut which he had learned on the boat coming over, and with his unusually long arms, he had the advantage over a more sturdy opponent. Also while on the boat he had added ten years to his age and now was 27; no one ever suspected he was only 17.

Family stories are told of characters such as Alexander "Boonie" Myers, the last of the mountain men. He mysteriously knew the exact spot where a man was buried without a trace, and was eccentric enough to refuse any pain killer after accidentally shooting off the end of his finger with his muzzle loader and guys with first names such as "Poker" and "One Arm". Other stories tell of settler Seth Nelson who once threw a mountain lion out of his cabin.

Education in Keating in the Late 1800's



In the 1870-80's, education in Keating was a rather spasmodic affair. School was held for a few months in the Spring and Fall as deep snow made mountain roads impassable in the Winter. Most of the teachers were men. Their only necessary qualification was to be able to handle rough boys who were too obstreperous for "lady teachers". Then too, the school, for most pupils, could be reached only by the railroad bridge, as there was no wagon bridge over Sinnemahoning Creek, thus the children had to compete with long freight trains on their walk to school. In spite of hair-raising stories concerning children caught on the bridge no one was ever killed "walking the ties", though the morning session frequently didn't begin until the trains had gone by. If the teacher was a bully, as sometimes happened, he took his spite out on little girls who being compelled to stand on one foot for "talking", often went home with bare legs covered in red welts made by a willow slip.

There were so many families on the mountaintop at one time that the Cryder Schoolhouse was hauled up from Moccasin Run to serve the area's children. Built about 100 years ago, the building is empty now but still standing.



Keating/Wycoff Home in 1900



Keating Flood 1972

The Quest to Find the Cross on the Rock

And so on a particular day in August of 2012 I once again loaded my truck and headed into the relative wilderness of the Pennsylvania Wilds accompanied by my constant companion Kathryn to the place where once stood the thriving little hamlet of Keating; nestled into the Allegheny Mountains at the confluence of the two streams that had been the encampment of the French Voyagers some 350 years prior.

Judging by my research it appeared that I was in sole possession of the only picture that exists of the “Cross on the Rock” a monumental find that I hoped would lead me to the precise spot of its existence.

Winding along the mountain road I arrived at the near ghost town while the dew was yet on the leaves of the mountain laurel that covered the steep hillsides. The town long gone having fallen into ruin and ravaged by fire left little to see; but the awe inspiring peaks and undulating valleys and streams caused me to reminisce of “Golden Glow” and the Seneca that called this area home for a thousand years. Wild flowers lined the river valley and except for the periodic hunting camp the area is once again an unspoiled wilderness. Wildlife and birds teamed within the forest and meadows and the calls of the various species filled my ears like music.

I traversed an old dirt road running parallel to the train tracks heading toward Clearfield; the very tracks that the old Indian guide had walked Henry Shoemaker down nearly 100 years ago detailing his story of the Indian Deity to him as they walked to the cross on the rock.

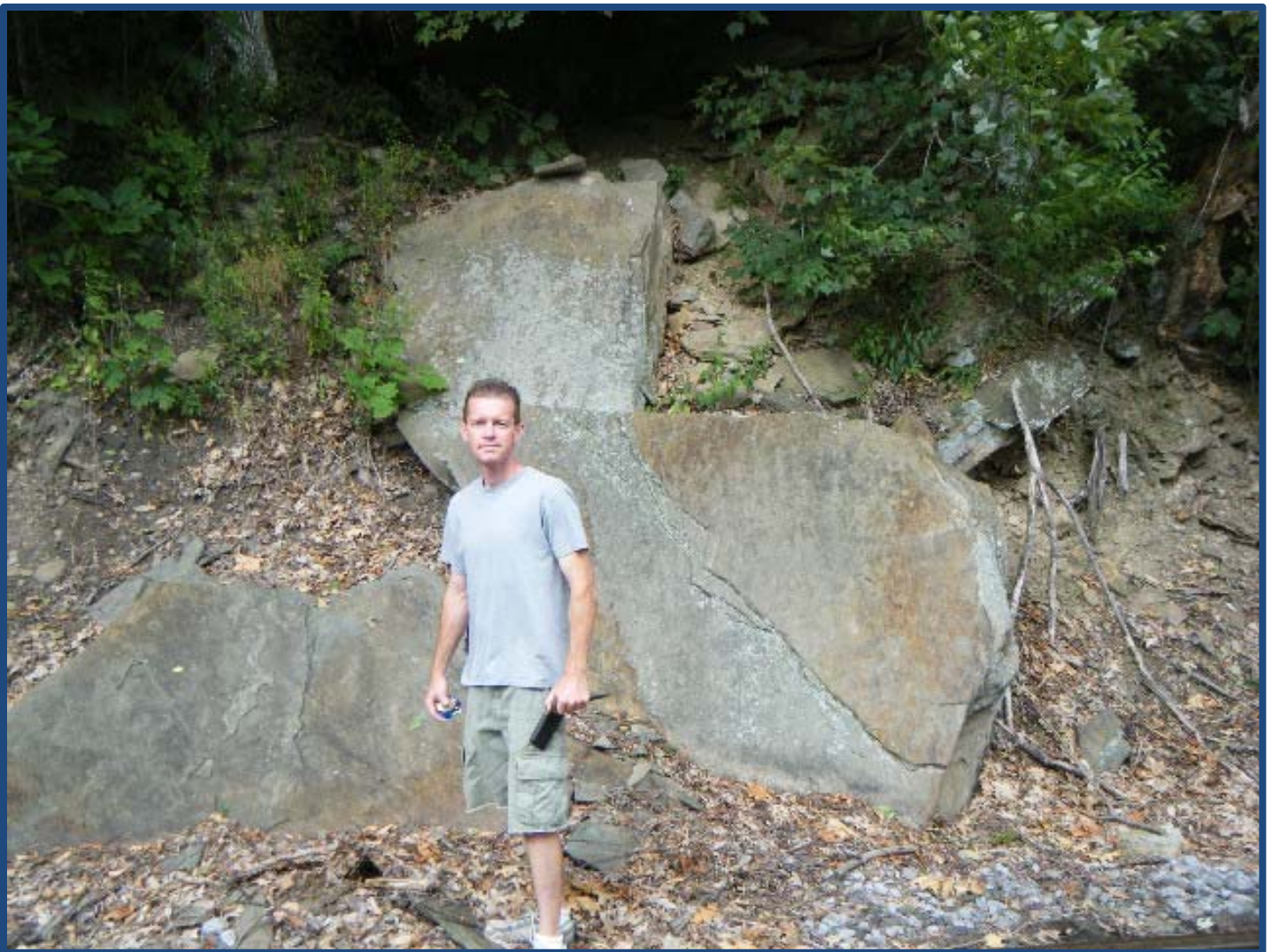
Holding the picture, I attempted to line up its skyline and terrain features with those of my surroundings but became interrupted by the appearance of a large timber rattlesnake that blocked our path. Having never encountered a rattlesnake we became side tracked with its capture all the while Kathryn repeatedly reminding me “be careful Dad, be careful”. Given the precarious nature of our exploration; I on foot and Kathryn in her wheelchair without so much as a pocket knife I decided it was best to return and continue the search another day; better prepared for whatever lay in wait in this vast wilderness.



Rattlesnakes are plentiful in the area. Katie and I captured this 4' Timber Rattlesnake

All was not lost. I had gained a tremendous understanding of the area and the terrain that I would be facing. I returned the following week determined to find the site with trusted friends Lonnie and Amy Lockwood; two key members of our treasure hunting team who had seen my old photograph of the cross on the rock and expressed an interest in helping me locate the huge stone escarpment that it had been chiseled into.

By the time we reached Keating it was a steady rain. The air was crisp with the smell of earth. I mused that it may keep the snakes in their holes but not the treasure hunters out of the field when we believed that we were so close. Once again I walked down the old tracks of the Erie Railroad but this time with three sets of eyes on the horizon and looking for the terrain features displayed in our old picture. Within a few hours, with little uncertainty we had discovered the precise location of the “Cross on the Rock”.



Lonnie Lockwood standing at the base of the escarpment that held the “Cross on the Rock”



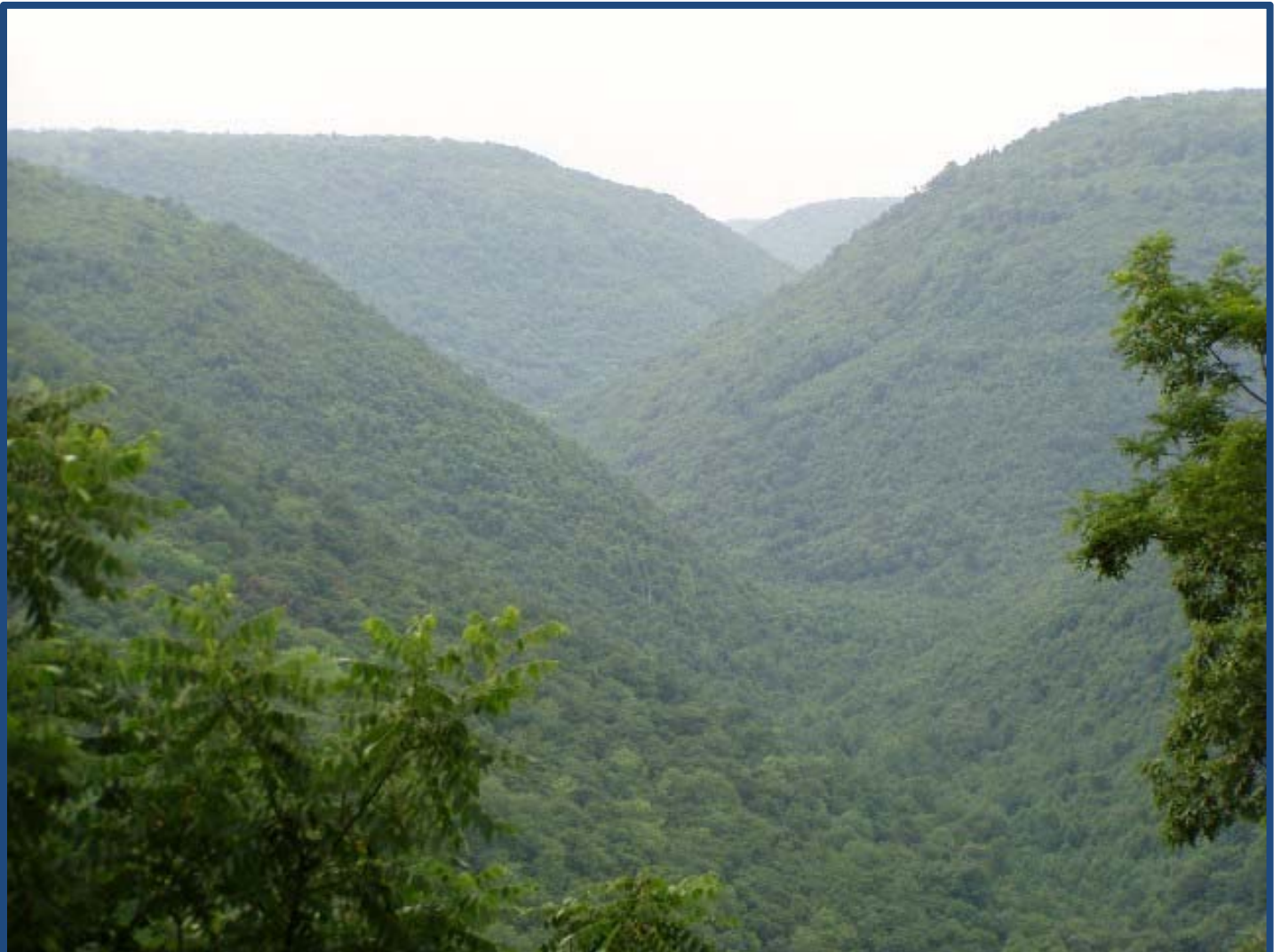


The location of the “Cross on the Rock” is easy enough to find provided you have the old photograph. Recovering the treasure will be more difficult. To date we have made no attempt to recover this cache and it may yet be waiting just under the surface for someone to find.



Lonnie and Amy Taking a break from the hot sun to find some “color” in the river

There are some deeply wooded areas around Keating which have never changed, which are the same today as in 1853. To such a Keating, the centuries matter little, for in the mountains; Time is not and Treasures Await.



Keating Area 2012

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