

## Bloomsburg Formerly Culver Plains

By Ruth Young

The village of Bloomsburg, formerly known as Culver Plains was named in the early part of the nineteenth century by William Kitchen. The early history of Bloomsburg is very closely associated with the pioneer efforts of the two families namely Culver, sometimes spelled Colver and the Kitchen family history. Both stories are filled with courage and adventure.

William Kitchen came to Norfolk in 1810 with his father and settled in the Bloomsburg area at the age of eleven. In 1814 he substituted for his father when he was called to serve in the armed forces in the war of that period. At the close of the war he was pensioned and given land in the Rond Eau. He married Lavina Heath and after fulfilling his settling duties returned to Bloomsburg and purchased 200 acres adjoining his father's land. He founded the village and named it after his Pennsylvania birthplace. He built and kept hotel for many years. This building has recently been torn down and was located south of the

church on the old 24 Highway. He was well known throughout the county as "Billy Kitchen" during the second quarter of the century. He quickly accumulated land and at one time owned 1000 acres. Early in life he joined the Boston Baptist Church and when Bloomsburg Church was organized, donated the land for church and cemetery purposes.

John Colver, married son of Jabez Colver arrived in Norfolk in February 1794. He had left New Jersey early in 1793 and spent some time along the banks of the Grand River. He had to chop his way through brush and forest to become one of the first settlers in Townsend. He stopped for the night by a spring located east of the present Colver-Culver cairn on what is now known as old 24 Highway. He pitched his tent and made beds of pine boughs for his wife Miriam and young son two years of age named Michael. It was necessary to keep a fire going all night to ward off wolves and wild animals. He built a log cabin and cultivated the ground, grew their own food and tapped the maple trees to obtain syrup and maple sugar which was the only sweetener available.

The earliest records of the Baptist Church in Bloomsburg relate services were held in a log schoolhouse situated near the home of Mrs. W.O. Cooper, Lot 6 Concession 11, as early as 1827. In the beginning it was considered a branch of the Boston Church. Elder George Ryerse was the first minister of the congregation and served over a period of twenty-eight years until 1856. He had been ordained June 6, 1829.

Architectural appraisal of the church was conducted by Catherine Smale, M.R.A.I.C. in 1967. She reports that the "Bloomsburg Regular Baptist Church" built in 1850 and situated at the North end of the Village of Bloomsburg stands as a tribute to the men

located across the road from the old schoolhouse. Previous to these two schools a frame schoolhouse built in 1831 was located on the corner of the farm now owned by Mr. Fred Lee. Parents of the students were assessed, not only in pounds sterling but each was expected to supply one quarter of a cord of wood, cut to fit the stove, before the first of February, for each scholar subscribed. Mrs. L. Vince who collected the history of the Norfolk County Schools, supplies many more details of the early days, (available at the Waterford Public Library.)

Although the church has had some slight alteration through the years it still retains the simple exterior design with the bell tower projecting from the face of the church. One interesting feature was the choir balcony which used to be located in the front part of the building over the entrance, but which would be to the rear of the congregation in the interior of the church. Mrs. Smale's summary with its detailed survey of both the exterior and interior design of the church is an excellent complement to its history. It is included in the history of the Bloomsburg Baptist Church being compiled by Mrs. Tom Freeman.

The red brick schoolhouse, located on the north part of Lot 5, Con. 12 was built in 1866. It served the community until the formation of the Townsend Township School Area No. 1 came into effect in 1951. The new area put through in the 1920's and school was built and completed in 1956 and is Bloomsburg also had a che

factory on the west side of the road. In recent years Scotty Robb and his beautiful woodcarving of gunstocks and other ornamental woodwork has brought quite a few visitors to the village. Equipment is also a prosperous business located on the highway at the south end. While there are many homes with histories going back more than a hundred years, in the area, there are also an increasing number of attractive modern homes. Meanwhile the seventh generation of the Kitchen also very helpful.

Mrs. George Colver, Curator of the Tweesmuir History for the Lynville Women's Institute, supplied some of the details in the family history and other assistance. Mrs. Elmer Kitchen of Waterford was also very helpful.

Early pictures show the road travelling east of the present Highway with the blacksmith shop owned by John Russling and the wagon works upstairs owned by Walter Smith. There was also a carding mill on the west side of the Highway run by water power supplied by damming of the creek and providing a mill pond. Earl Smith a Bloomsburg resident remembers some of these things as the wagon maker was his grandfather.

The little bridge made of quarried stone with a keystone arch is still preserved, although in need of repairs to the foundation. It is located east of the formation highway. It was saved by the intervention of Guy Marston County Engineer when the highway was first put through in the 1920's and he was County Engineer.