



Col. Robert Bruce Ricketts (1839-1918)

My command at Gettysburg [on July 2, 1863] consisted of Batteries "F & G" First Pennsylvania Light Artillery—Battery "G" having been attached to my original command, Battery "F," a few weeks before the battle—the two organizations forming one full six gun Battery.

We were attached to the Artillery Reserve, Army of the Potomac, and marched with that command on the morning of July 2d from Taneytown to Gettysburg arriving on the field about noon.

At 4:00 p.m. I was ordered by Captain Huntington, to whose Brigade of the Artillery Reserve my Battery was attached, to report to Colonel C.S. Wainwright, who commanded the line of Artillery on East Cemetery Hill. We moved up the Taneytown road by Gen. Meade's Headquarters, halted for a short time behind Cemetery Hill, and then moved up the Baltimore Pike and relieved Cooper's Battery, "B" 1st Penna. Light Artillery, on East Cemetery Hill.

My position was in front of where the observatory now stands with my left [artillery] piece near the stone wall—on my left over the stone wall was Wiednick's New York Battery with, I believe, six guns; on my right, down the hill was Reynold's "L," 1st New York Battery with, I think, six guns. All of the above three Batteries, Wiednicks, Reynolds and mine had, as I remember it, 10 pounder regulation rifled guns. Behind my Battery was Stewart's Battery, "B" 4th U.S. Artillery, with

four 12 pounder smooth-bore guns—two of his guns were on the Baltimore Pike facing the town and two were in rear of the two right guns of my battery facing to our front.

After going into position we were engaged with the enemy's artillery during the afternoon until Johnson's [Confederate] Division formed on Benner's Hill for the attack on Culp's Hill. We opened on them as soon as they appeared on the hill and continued the fire as they advanced down the hill to Rock Creek and into the woods at the foot of Culp's Hill. When they got into the woods between Rock Creek and Culp's Hill, our fire was guided by the smoke of [their] musketry fire rising above the trees.

At about dusk, and while we were still firing on Johnson's troops Early's Division [the Louisiana Tigers]—which had formed in a depression running from the town to Rock Creek—suddenly appeared in our front and with the "rebel yell" charged directly on East Cemetery Hill. They were at once under the fire of Wiednick's, Reynolds' and my Battery from East Cemetery Hill and of Steven's Maine Battery on Culp's Hill which had an enfilading fire on them. As far as my Battery was concerned, we opened at once with double-shotted canister and although it was the dusk of the evening and the smoke of the guns made it quite dark, I do not think that any of the enemy who charged in our immediate front were able to reach our guns. Our infantry were,



however, driven back through the Batteries and Wiednick's Battery was compelled to [retreat]. The left flank of my Battery was then completely exposed and the enemy who had climbed the hill in front of Wiednick's Battery were able to reach the stone wall on the left of my Battery. They fired directly down the line of the guns, but fortunately they could not see in the darkness that the ground fell away from my left piece toward the right of the Battery. I remember well the roar of the torrent of bullets as they passed over our heads.

My men behaved splendidly in this great emergency. Soon after I went into position, Colonel Wainwright said to me, "If a charge is made on this point you will not limber up and escape under my circumstances, but fight your Battery as long as you can." I repeated this order to my officers and men, and I do not remember ever to have heard of any member of my command having failed to do his whole duty. Only once, for a moment, when the Infantry were falling back through the Battery, some of my men gave back, but were instantly rallied with the cry "Die on your own soil boys before you give up your guns."

Some of the enemy crossed the stone wall and there was hand to hand fighting in the left of the Battery reaching as far as the 3d Gun from the left, my men fighting with handspikes, hammer stones and pistols. I devoted my energies to keeping up the fire from as many guns as we could and in going along the guns I suddenly came

upon a group, just in rear of the 3d Gun from the left. The group consisted of Lieut. C.B. Brockway, acting Sergeant Stratford, and a confederate soldier who was on the ground. Stratford had a musket [held as a club] which was on the point of falling [on the Confederate] when I

seized it and probably saved the poor fellow's life. I do not, however, remember now what became of him. The story as told by Brockway afterwards was that the confederate demanded Stratford's surrender when Brockway, who was near and forgetting he had a sword, picked up a stone and struck him on the head. Stratford seized the man's musket and fired wounding him severely and then clubbed the musket and would no doubt have brained him if I had not caught the gun at that moment. At about this time and near the same place, James H. Riggin, the Guidon bearer [our flag], staggered against me and fell with the cry "help me Captain." When we found him after the fight he was dead and the sleeve of the right arm of my coat was covered with the brave fellow's blood. We afterward learned that in a personal encounter with a Confederate officer who had attempted to capture the Battery Guidon-which was planted near the Second Gun from the left-[Riggin] had shot the officer with his revolver, but at the same moment the staff of the Guidon was shot in two and poor Riggin was shot through the body.

Three of my men, Francis Reid, Oscar G. Lanaber and John M. Given, commoners on the left piece, were carried away as prisoners. [Given was wounded and died in the hands of the enemy. The other two were afterwards exchanged.] The situation had now become really desperate -Stewart with his two 12 pounder guns on the Pike was firing canister, sweeping the ground that had been occupied by Wiedrick's Battery. There was nothing left on East Cemetery Hill to resist the onslaught of the enemy but the hand-full of brave men of my Battery-but even with the favoring circumstances of the dusk of the evening, the smoke of the guns and the lay of ground, they were becoming exhausted



and would soon have been overcome-but just at this time-probably the most critical moment during the Battle of Gettysburg-Carroll's Brigade of the 2d Army Corps, sent in on the run by Genl. Hancock, arrived and passing by the right of my Battery and down the hill opened fire and the enemy retired.

I never knew how long the fight lasted on the evening of the 2nd, but I remember that after everything had become quiet the full moon was just above Culp's Hill.

- R. Bruce Ricketts September 10, 1893

The Ricketts Family

On East Cemetery Hill the early evening of July 2, 1863, the Ricketts legend was born. Had the famed and feared Louisiana Tigers broken through Ricketts' Battery to split apart the Union Army, the Confederates may have won at Gettysburg. The Tigers had never lost a battle charge before Ricketts Battery and Carroll's Brigade had repelled them. The Tigers lost nearly 1,200 of their 1,500 men in the charge against Ricketts' Battery, but Ricketts Battery lost only seven men, with another 23 wounded. After Gettysburg the Tigers were never reformed as a military unit.

The young captain, R. Bruce Ricketts, who defended East Cemetery Hill the fateful July day at Gettysburg, had set aside a promising career in law to join the Union Army. He had a brother, Col. William Wallace Ricketts, who attended West Point. But he died at age 26 at home a

year earlier in August 1862 after resigning from the service due to ill health. Their grandfather, Lieutenant Edward Ricketts, was a Revolutionary Army officer in the Pennsylvania Militia.

The original Ricketts settlers in our region were the brothers Elijah G. Ricketts (1803-1877) and Clemuel Ricketts (1794-1858), who relocated from Fairfield County, Ohio, in 1822, to Orangeville in Columbia County. The settlement was named after Orange County, New York, and Orange, New Jersey, the home of other settlers in the village.

Elijah Ricketts, a general merchant and farmer, married Margaret Leigh Lockart (1810-1891) in 1830, building a home which still stands on the corner of Main and Ricketts Street in Orangeville. Of Scottish and English descent, Col. Robert Bruce Ricketts was the fifth son of nine children of this union.

Elijah Ricketts and his brother Clemuel Ricketts were huntsmen, and each spring and fall they usually stayed at Schrifogel's Hotel on the Loyalsock Creek, two miles west of Lopez. Family tradition holds that the two brothers found the hotel full one fall day in 1850, and they spent an uncomfortable night on the parlor floor, after which they decided to build their own sporting lodge. They purchased nearly 5,000 acres of land, including Long Pond (Canoga Lake), and constructed the Stone House near the lake in 1852. The three-story Stone House, built of field limestone, is of Colonial design and is now maintained by the Ganoga Lake Association. During the 1850s, the Stone House served as a lodge and tavern which some called "Ricketts' Folley" due to its wilderness isolation.

The Stone House was reached by a stage line (1827-1851) on the Susquehanna and Tioga Turnpike (1822-1907). The turnpike was a



crude road from Berwick to Tioga Point, near Athens, in Bradford County, and then on to Elmira, New York. In earlier days thousands of lumber rafts annually descended the Susquehanna River from Elmira, New York, and Pennsylvania's northern counties, to lumber markets in Harrisburg, and the turnpike through Sullivan County was a short-cut for the raftsmen to return home. The old road generally parallels Route 487 for a portion of the Red Rock area. The stage line left Berwick in the morning stopping at noon at the Long Pond Tavern, which predated Ricketts' Stone House, and guests stayed overnight at Schrifogel's Hotel, eight miles away on Loyalsock Creek. This stretch was called "the road to hell." The turnpike was a county road from 1852 to 1907, when present Route 487 was constructed.

At the outbreak of the Civil War in the spring of 1861, R. Bruce Ricketts had only recently graduated from Wyoming Seminary. He was planning to attend Yale to become a lawyer. Instead, he enlisted as a private in Battery F of the 1st Pennsylvania Light Artillery (the 43rd Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers). Mustered into service on July 8, 1861, Ricketts was promoted a month later to First Lieutenant. The regiment was armed at Washington, D.C., but never served as a unified command. Battery F was assigned in September 1861 to the 5th Corps of the Army of the Potomac and came under fire for the first time in mid-December 1861 against Confederate troops on the upper Potomac River. By February 1863, Ricketts commanded Battery F, but he was now attached to the 2nd Division of the 1st Corps. In May 1863, Ricketts was promoted to Captain, and Battery G of the 1st Pennsylvania Artillery was also attached to his command. Battery F and Battery G were called Ricketts' Battery during the course of his command.

In December 1864, Ricketts was promoted to Major and left his famous battery to command Second Corps batteries attached to the North Corps line in Petersburg, Virginia. He subsequently served as Inspector and later Chief of Artillery for the Ninth Corps. In March 1865, one month before Lee's surrender on April 9, 1865, Ricketts was named a Colonel, last serving as Inspector of the Artillery Reserve, which was nearly all of the artillery in the Union army. He was honorably discharged on June 3, 1865. During the war, he served in several of the most famous battles of the war including Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and the Wilderness Campaign. His troops were in 56 battles and engagements, and were under fire 131 times during the war, but Ricketts was never wounded.

Ricketts returned to Wilkes-Barre after the war but never resumed his law studies. On October 1, 1868, he married Elizabeth Reynolds (1842-1918), descendant of a pioneer Wyoming Valley family. Her father, William C. Reynolds, was in the coal and banking business. Ricketts decided to speculate in the wild lands of North Mountain. His uncle, Clemuel Ricketts, died in March 1858 and his father, Elijah, acquired Clemuel's interests at Lake Ganoga. In September 1869, the 30-year-old R. Bruce Ricketts purchased from his father Long Pond, the Stone House, and nearly 1,700 surrounding acres in Sullivan County. He subsequently acquired the balance of the family lands, another 3,000 acres.

In the early 1880s, Col. Ricketts acquired a high Victorian Gothic double-block mansion at 80-84 South River Street in Wilkes-Barre. The historic street fronting the river common lands was the site of several homes constructed by Wilkes-Barre's coal and financial leaders. The Ricketts mansion was originally built in the 1860s by George Murray Reynolds (1838-1904), oldest brother of the Colonel's wife. It later



became a double-block and was shared by Benjamin Reynolds (1840-1913), the youngest brother of the Colonel's wife. Benjamin Reynolds was primarily associated with the Anthracite Savings Bank, which merged in 1912 with the Miners National Bank (now the United Penn Bank).

The Lake Ganoga Estate

The Ricketts' lands at Lake Ganoga were the subject of several interesting historical events apart from the lumbering era which began in the early 1890s.

In the years 1872-1875, Ricketts maintained a partnership with a Mr. William Curtin of Philadelphia and a Col. Wilson of Trenton, New Jersey, in the lumber business. They had a mill half a mile southeast of the Stone House. Lumber from the mill was used to construct a three-story addition to the Stone House hotel. The addition was familiarly known as the "Ark." Begun in 1872, it opened in the summer of 1873. The Ricketts estate with its new addition was called the North Mountain House. Open all year, the hotel catered to an ever-growing social network of Ricketts' relations and friends until 1903, when the hotel was closed and the Stone House became the summer residence of Col. Ricketts and his wife. The ark was torn down in 1897 and the site became a garden.

The earliest American summer school was begun by Col. Ricketts at the North Mountain House in the summer of 1873. There were two

small-frame buildings surrounded by tents to serve 26 students. The instructors were Dr. Joseph Rothrock, Dr. John H. Green was a slave attached to a Confederate officer during the Civil War. During the great battle of July 3, 1863, known as Pickett's Charge, Green was separated from the Confederates and was captured by the Union Army. He was placed in charge of Col. R. Bruce Ricketts whose own valet was killed in the war. Green stayed with the Ricketts family until his death in 1923. Green was a tremendous reader of history, science, and poetry, a music collector, and radio enthusiast. The Colonel provided Green an education for the ministry and John Green subsequently ministered at Ganoga. A master cook, conversationalist, and philosopher, he was well-loved at the Lake Ganoga community. He was treated as a member of the Ricketts family, handled estate affairs and the Ganoga ice-company, and was buried in the Ricketts' family plot at Ganoga.

Howard Kelley, Dr. Lewis Taylor, and the artist Eugene Frank. Dr. Rothrock later became a national conservation figure and the "Father of Pennsylvania Forestry."

The principal attractions at the Ricketts estate were Lake Ganoga and the waterfalls along Kitchen Creek. Lake Ganoga was originally called Robinson's Lake, named after a hunter who had a cabin at the upper end of the lake in the early 1800s. But it generally was called Long Pond because of its shape. It is nearly one mile long, 600 to 800 feet wide, covers about 70 acres, and is fed by underground springs and a small spring inlet. In 1881, State Senator Charles R. Buckalew of Bloomsburg suggested to Col. Ricketts the name "Ganoga," a Seneca Indian word meaning "water on the mountain." At 2,266 feet above tide level, it is the highest lake east of the Rocky Mountains.



The falls along the east and west branches of Kitchen's Creek were discovered in 1865 by two fishermen who were staying at the Stone House. In 1889, a crew of six men, led by Matt Hirlinger, were hired to construct the trail and stone steps around the falls. The difficult work was not completed until 1893. The 21 falls along Kitchen's Creek were named by Col. Ricketts. Several have native American designations, but others were named after Ricketts' friends, relations, or other associations with his North Mountain retreat.

Colonel Ricketts also constructed a forty-foot observation tower at Grand View, a peak near the Stone House from which guests could see twenty miles into the mountains. Today the state Forest Department has an eighty-foot steel fire observation tower at the site, and from it a view into eleven counties and three states can be seen on a clear day.

The North Mountain Fishing Club was formed in 1879 and continued until the hotel closed in 1903. Hotel guests paid a one dollar fee to fish Kitchen Creek. But before 1893, there was no path along the falls. The North Mountain Club was reformed in 1907 and purchased a tract of land on Spring Brook, a branch of Loyalsock Creek, three miles north of the Stone House, but did not utilize this land. In May 1909, the club leased Kitchen's Creek and certain lands for hunting and fishing. The clubhouse was initially a renovated Trexler and Turrell lumber camp house at Lake Rose, but later the club purchased and renovated a clubhouse it still uses at the foot of Red Rock Mountain.

Ricketts As Land Speculator

During the 1870s and 1880s, Ricketts purchased additional lands, often through tax sales in Luzerne, Wyoming, and Sullivan counties. He was aided by close business and legal associates including Michael Meylert, another Sullivan County land baron, and E. P. Darling, a Wilkes-Barre lawyer.

Edward Peyson Darling (1831-1889) was a graduate of Amherst College and was admitted to law practice in Reading in 1853. He moved to Wilkes-Barre in 1855 and had local banking, utility and railroad interests, in addition to serving as trustee of several local charities. He assisted Col. Ricketts with his land acquisition and served as his legal confidant in the resolution of financial and legal issues surrounding Ricketts' land speculation.

Michael Meylert (1823-1883) was the son of Secku Meylert (1784-1849), a native of Germany who served in Napoleon's army and who immigrated to Sullivan County. By 1845, the elder Meylert, in partnership with others, purchased 33,000 acres in four counties. His son, Michael Meylert, became a surveyor and engineer who, at age 26, inherited his father's interest in the vast unbroken lands.



Meylert, like Ricketts, needed a railroad to exploit his land holdings. As early as 1851, Meylert planned railroad ventures for the region which were either unsuccessful for lack of sufficient capital, or had a fitful history, until many years later when the Sullivan and State Line Railroad and the Williamsport and North Branch Railroad were constructed, both of which can historically be traced to Meylert's efforts.

Until his death in 1883, Meylert was in league with Ricketts in the acquisition of North Mountain tracts through tax sales. These cheaply purchased lands, however, presented Ricketts with very thorny questions of inaccurate surveys, conflicting titles, squatters and timber thieves. Ricketts had to continually engage surveyors and lawyers to obtain clear titles to his lands. Ricketts also employed timber guards to protect his lands since they were constantly subjected to bark and timber stealing. These thieves, however, were extremely difficult to prosecute. As a concession to the difficulty of determining ownership to the state's wild lands, a defendant could escape conviction if he swore in court he did not know he was trespassing on another person's property. The available evidence indicates Ricketts usually was not successful in removing timber thieves from his property until the early 1890s when he leased his lands to a major lumber firm.

Ricketts, Meylert, and Darling sought to exploit their land ventures as early as March 1871 when they formed the Mehoopany Mining and Manufacturing Company to mine semi-anthracite coal and to timber 14,000 acres, owned by Ricketts, in Forkston Township in Wyoming County and in Colley Township in Sullivan County. In January 1872, Ricketts reputedly sold the 14,000 tract to the company for \$200,000, but it is likely he received stock in lieu of cash for the transaction.

Ricketts was not the full owner of the tract. He was in debt to his business and legal associates who helped him acquire his properties and they held certain ownership interests in the lands. The deed to the sale was not recorded until 21 years later when the company and the various ownership interests or their heirs sold the tract to a tanning syndicate as part of the Jennings Brothers lumbering operation in Lopez. For two decades after formation of the Mehoopany Mining and Manufacturing Company, a railroad was not available to haul timber, and the company was limited to small operations along the tracts' creeks, principally the Mehoopany Creek, and presumably to the mill town of Mehoopany, Pennsylvania, on the Susquehanna River.

By 1886, Ricketts still owned 45,000 acres of undeveloped timberland in Sullivan and Wyoming counties. This figure includes the 14,000 acres supporting the Mehoopany Mining and Manufacturing Company. His only substantial sale had been an additional 13,000 acres he had sold to Albert Lewis's Lehigh Valley Railroad venture in 1876.

His mortgage debt on the 45,000 remaining acres was heavy. Ironically, the railroad industry alone had a vast market for timber to make ties, trestles, and rolling stock. The mining industry, too, had a vast need for lumber. In an inflated evaluation to attract investors, it was estimated that Ricketts' lands were worth nearly \$6 million if a railroad were built through them.

A number of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston lumber merchants were interested in the Ricketts lands, but their propositions were not ambitious enough. Ricketts had hoped to sell all of his lands, with the exception of the Lake Ganoga estate, in a massive deal which would



make him wealthy and curtail the management of his troublesome land empire.

In the summer of 1886, the state political conventions met to nominate candidates for state offices. For state governor, which then was a two-year term, they nominated Gen. James A. Beaver, and William T. Davies for lieutenant-governor. The Democrats were bitterly divided into three factions. The regular party nominated Chauncey F. Black for governor and Col. R. Bruce Ricketts as lieutenant-governor. The Ricketts nomination sought to take advantage of his Civil War record, which may have been an awkward decision. It was nearly impossible to persuade Ricketts to talk about his personal accomplishments or his Civil War fame. During this period in the state's history, the Republican party firmly controlled state politics. The Democrats lost the governor's race and the two houses of the state general assembly by a wide plurality. The Ricketts nomination did carry Luzerne County for the Democrats in the governor's race. Within a couple of weeks after the election, an offer was made to Ricketts which captivated him for the next four years.

The English Deal

In November 1886, an incredibly welcome plan was proposed to Ricketts. In Columbia County, the thirty-mile Bloomsburg and Sullivan Railroad was under construction from the junction of the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad at Bloomsburg, on the Susquehanna

River, to Jamison City, the head of a new lumbering district on the northeast corner of the Columbia-Sullivan County line. The town was named after B.K. Jamison, a Philadelphia banker who was financing the railroad and the Jamison City lumbering development. Jamison City was only a few miles south from the Ricketts estate. At this time, a syndicate, composed of Pennsylvania banking and political interests, including A.G. Curtin and H.M. Hoyt, former governors of Pennsylvania, wanted 15,000 acres of lands in lower Sullivan County adjacent to Ricketts' tracts to harvest for the mill at Jamison City.

In May 1888, B.K. Jamison, Morton McMichael, and H.C. Gibson, all Philadelphia investors, secured the option for 15,000 acres of Sullivan County lands, drained by Fishing Creek, to feed the Jamison City operation with lumber. They, in turn, contracted with Col. James Corcoran of Williamsport to operate the mill at Jamison City. The lands purchased in 1889 included 10,000 acres, known as the Tinsman and Wolverton tracts, and half of the Craig and Blanchard tracts, another 4,278 acres, all of which were in Davidson Township. They were owned by a few estates and individuals, but Col. Ricketts was not one of the owners. The syndicate formed the North Mountain Lumber Company to control the tracts.

Of course, a railroad to the Jamison syndicate lands could also benefit Ricketts' adjacent 45,000 acres, and Jamison drew Ricketts into the plan. Ricketts and the Jamison City investors negotiated to extend the Bloomsburg and Sullivan Railroad through Sullivan County to Ricketts' lands. Then the plan envisioned the creation of the Central Pennsylvania Railway, Land and Timber Company, Ltd., which was to be formed in England. The English corporation was composed primari-



ly of Philadelphia and London banking and lumber interests, some of whom were also members of the Jamison City syndicate. The corporation planned to purchase the controlling interest of the Bloomsburg and Sullivan Railroad Company and to combine the 15,000 acres of the Jamison syndicate with the purchase of Ricketts' 45,000 North Mountain acres. The railroad then was to be extended to the coal fields in Bernice in Sullivan County where it would connect with the State Line and Sullivan Railroad.

The corporation would control 94-square-miles in four counties the largest tract of virgin forest remaining in Pennsylvania. It would yield two billion board feet of timber worth a net value of nearly two million English pounds. At this time an English pound was equivalent to \$4.85 in American dollars. It would take 21 years to timber the 60,000 acres, with an average annual net yield to the corporation of 52,000 pounds, which was a 17 percent annual investment yield. In addition, a railroad hauling lumber, coal, and tannery hides would generate another 15,000 pounds annually. The corporation was to be financed by 400,000 shares at ten pounds each and seven percent mortgage debentures totaling 350,000 pounds.

For the next two years, the Ricketts lands were surveyed to determine their timber and mineral yields. With a single-minded determination to pursue the English plan, Ricketts deflected the interests of American lumbering firms also interested in portions of his tracts. There was a stream of letters and telegrams exchanged between Ricketts and his English and Philadelphia investors. In the midst of this fortune-gathering, Ricketts was offered the Democratic nomination for state governor in 1888, but he declined all interest in state politics and

refused the offer. Instead, he did agree to serve as a member of the World's Columbian Fair Commission in Chicago, Illinois, to be held in 1893. Of course, too, he could not decline an important role as member of the Pennsylvania Gettysburg Monument Commission which was responsible for setting up war memorials at the battlefield.

Finally, on January 31, 1889, the Jamison syndicate and R. Bruce Ricketts agreed to sell their 60,000 joint acreage to the English corporation for \$1,920,000. The sale was scheduled for completion on April 15, 1889. The sellers were to receive \$950,000 in cash and \$970,000 in shares in the English corporation. In every respect, the English plan met all of Ricketts' dreams, and in February 1889 the Central Pennsylvania Railway, Land and Timber Company, Ltd., was formed in London and it issued a proposed prospectus in May 1889 to raise the necessary financing. But the plan quickly fell apart. Marketing the plan fell on B.K. Jamison in Philadelphia who was unable to raise the nearly \$2 million to complete the sale. There were factions within the company which disputed the method of financing the project. With the financial troubles that occurred, the bankers sought to interest Ricketts with less cash and more stock. But Ricketts was firm. He wanted at least \$20 an acre in cash or its equivalent. Whether Ricketts' property should be purchased prior to completion of the Bloomsburg and Sullivan Railroad was another issue. A competing banking house from New York also entered the controversy, a natural consequence since a huge commission on a successful sale would follow. But English investors were not warm to a major underwriting with an American timber corporation without a proven business history, since other American lumbering companies had already burned some English stockholders. Finally, the



international money market softened in early 1890, a prelude to a major international recession, and financing the project was in serious jeopardy.

By the end of 1889, Ricketts realized the English deal may not succeed. The Bloomsburg and Sullivan Railroad had already reached Jamison City a year earlier in November 1888 where a major tannery and saw mill were in operation. But there were not any firm plans to extend the Jamison City railroad to Ricketts' lands. Moreover, the key principal in Jamison City, Col. James Corcoran, who operated the Fishing Creek Lumber Company there, had a fortune disappear in a June 1889 flood which destroyed his main lumber business in Williamsport. Even after the disaster, Corcoran was among the interested persons who sought to attract Ricketts into selling his land if the English plan were to fail. But Ricketts was wary of Corcoran, and shortly Corcoran was insolvent and he would be forced to sell his Jamison City lumber operation in 1891.

Ricketts extended the deadline to close the English deal through 1889 and into early 1890, but he was realizing only promises and not cash from the transaction. In the meantime, the State Line and Sullivan and the Wilkes-Barre and Harvey's Lake railroad lines were under construction and would cut through the North Mountain. He wisely sought an alternative cash flow from his timber tracts.

In January 1890, Ricketts began correspondence with E.W. Trexler and Son, an Allentown-based lumber firm which already had a substantial mill at Lopez, a few miles north of Lake Ganoga.

Lopez was formerly known as Tar Bridge because the bridge crossing Lopez Creek was coated with a coal tar paint to preserve its lumber

construction. One view claims it was renamed to commemorate John P. Lopez, a contractor of Spanish origin, who reputedly drowned working in the stream while working on the turnpike. Lopez boomed as a lumber town after 1885 when the State Line and Sullivan Railroad reached the Loyalsock Creek, drawing within a couple of years both the Jennings Brothers Lumber Company and the Trexler, Turrell, and Company.

E.W. Trexler and Son was an Allentown partnership composed of brothers Harry C. Trexler (1854-1933) and Edwin G. Trexler, and their father, E.W. Trexler (1826-1910), who retired from the firm in 1910. The firm had a national reputation in the lumber business. H.C. Trexler was a remarkable entrepreneur who organized major utility, transit, agriculture, cement, and lumbering operations. He eventually became one of the nation's richest men. In the Sullivan County operations in Lopez, J.H. Turrell of Tunkhannock joined the business as Trexler, Turrell, and Company. At Ricketts, the three men captioned the business Trexler and Turrell Lumber Company. Harry Trexler remained in Allentown while Edwin Trexler managed the early Lopez and Ricketts operations.

J. Henry Turrell (1850-1909) was raised near Sugar Run in Bradford County. He left the Wyalusing Academy at age seventeen to enter the lumber business in Sugar Run, later joining with Trexler to lumber in Lopez and Ricketts. He was known as "Cocky" Turrell; he also managed the operations at the Ricketts site. He was known for a long white beard which he kept inside his shirt. Sometimes he chewed on the end of his beard. After his death in ///, J. Elmore Turrell took over his father's interest in the Trexler and Turrell Company in Ricketts.



Ricketts and Trexler representatives met at Long Pond in late January 1890. In the meantime, it was well rumored that the English deal was in trouble. Major lumber dealers in the midAtlantic area continued to express interest in Ricketts' lands, but Ricketts felt obligated to play out his agreement with the English syndicate. As a saving grace, however, Ricketts decided to lease portions of the timber land along Mehoopany Creek to the Trexler company. On April 4, 1890, Ricketts and Trexler signed an agreement which at least gave Ricketts an immediate \$25,000 with the prospect of additional cash if the Trexler lease were continued in future years.

In late June 1890, Ricketts traveled to London with the hope of finally concluding the sale. He signed another agreement of sale, but only for 40,000 acres of his tracts. The latest survey indicated the Ricketts tracts contained 4 billion feet of lumber, about 400 million in various hardwoods such as birch, beech, ash, maple, and occasional cherry, and one billion feet in the softwoods, hemlock and spruce. This time Brown Brothers and Company, a New York City banking firm, was in the deal. But the B.K. Jamison bank in Philadelphia was still listed as the formal American banker. The new corporation was titled the Pennsylvania Land and Lumber Company, Ltd., and financed by 60,000 shares at five pounds each and six percent mortgage debentures totaling 150,000 pounds. Ricketts would receive \$60,000 of which \$637,500 was cash and \$242,500 in mortgage debentures in the company. Now, the annual return for each of 24 years was estimated at 52,000 pounds for a 15 percent annual investment yield. The local newspapers proclaimed Ricketts a millionaire. But the financial market was not improving and creditors were after Ricketts, along with borrowers who read of

Ricketts' fortune. But the August 25 settlement date passed and still the sale was not completed.

In October 1890, Albert Lewis, the lumber king of Wyoming Valley, traveled to England to secure a lease of the Ricketts' lands from the English syndicate. While his principal operations were along the Lehigh River, his Lehigh Valley Railroad associates were ready to add the Ricketts' tract to their Bowman's Creek lands which they were timbering in Alderson at Harvey's Lake, and in Stull by the following year. Lewis, too, already had portable mills in Sullivan County on small tracts he had leased earlier. But Lewis must have realized in England that the entire English plan was questionable. He returned to the United States without a lease from the English.

By the end of the year, the proposed English corporation appeared hopeless, which until the last moment had still hoped to carry the deal, became insolvent in late November 1890 and by May 1891 Jamison was asking Ricketts for a \$500 loan.

By mid-1891, Ricketts knew the English deal had fully collapsed; his close friends similarly advised him and Ricketts moved quickly to salvage his situation. In late June 1891, Ricketts and the Mehoopany Mining and Manufacturing Company agreed to sell its tracts in Wyoming and Sullivan counties, which now totaled 16,000 acres, to tanning company agents known as Davidge and Crary, at the \$20-an-acre Ricketts always wanted. The tanning and leather syndicate purchasers were associated with the Jennings Brothers lumber firm in Lopez which would timber the lands until early 1905.

The Mehoopany Mining and Manufacturing Company, generally composed of Col. R. Bruce Ricketts, the E.P. Darling estate, the



Michael Meylert estate, W.E. Little, a Tunkhannock lawyer, and Henry W. Palmer, a Luzerne County judge, sold their lands to Davidge and Crary on July 1, 1893, for \$310,000. As expected, Davidge and Crary resold the lands to the Union Tanning Company in 1894. With the 1893 sale, Ricketts would have finally realized some profit from his investments. This sale and the 1876 Bowman's Creek sale to Albert Lewis and the Lehigh Valley Railroad were the only two major sales Ricketts realized in his lifetime.

As late as June 1891, the English group was still enticing Ricketts with a revised plan, but now for 20,000 acres of his land. But Ricketts could not receive any earnest money from the English investors to continue an option on the Ricketts tracts, only the promise of increased stock participation in any English plan.

During the 1890 season, the Trexler firm proved very reliable. They had located and built a mill on the Mehoopany Creek, the site of the town of Ricketts, and could cut at least ten million board feet annually on Ricketts' lands. The English plan had failed and in April 1891 Ricketts renewed his contract with Trexler and Turrell, a relationship which would continue until the close of lumbering at Ricketts in 1913.

With the pronouncements in the newspapers that Col. Ricketts was a millionaire from his land deals, which were untrue but never quite retracted, Ricketts began to enjoy an increased social prominence sometimes denied to him earlier when he was "land poor." The Ganoga Lake Branch of the Lehigh Valley Railroad brought a stream of social and business guests to the Ricketts estate from the early 1890s until his death in 1918. Col. Ricketts still owned his mansion on South River Street in Wilkes-Barre, now a Wilkes University dormitory, but in the

summer months Ricketts continually entertained at the Stone House. The Stone House served as a hotel until the end of the 1903 season, after which Ricketts was the genial host for personal guests and business friends at the Ganoga estate in the summer months. During the balance of the year, R. Bruce and Elizabeth Ricketts lived in Wilkes-Barre. He held weekly gatherings of the community's judicial and economic elite at the home, and his only career was tending to the management of his properties. However, his friend, judge Stanley Woodward, did prevail upon Col. Ricketts to accept an appointment as Wilkes-Barre City Treasurer in April 1898, a post he held until April 1902.

In declining health for two years, Col. Robert Bruce Ricketts died at 8:00 a.m. on November 13, 1918, at his Lake Ganoga home.

He was largely remembered in his obituary for the heroic stand of July 2, 1863. But his wide circle of friends remembered him for his gentle soul, wide-reading, quiet charity and his love of nature. Six days later his widow, Elizabeth Reynolds Ricketts, to whom the Colonel was married for fifty years, quietly passed away at the family home in Wilkes-Barre. She had been widely identified with several community organizations, where her special charm drew easy friendships and her family devotion was widely admired. They were buried in a simple, barely-cleared family cemetery in the woods near where the Ganoga log railroad station once stood.