



## **SPECIAL EDITION**

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*Rick Sedlisky, Editor*

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### **A Letter from My Grandmother Introduction by Peter M. Stenzhorn**

I am my Grandmother's Elizabeth Oltendick Stenzhorn's only living grandchild, and as such, I grant the Lackawanna Historical Society permission to exclusively publish her letter verbatim in the "History Bytes" newsletter.

It should be noted that the correct year of birth for my Grandfather Peter J. Stenzhorn, is a typographical error in the letter, since the correct year of his birth was 1851 in Callicoon, NY. The original letter was handwritten.

In historical context my Grandmother was born when Abraham Lincoln was President and my Grandfather age ten in the year Lincoln became President.

The name Oltendick changed over the years to Olendick, Ollendick, Ollendike, and Ollendyke. I have found many relatives with these spellings.

Each of the four surviving children of Peter J. Stenzhorn and Elizabeth Oltendick Stenzhorn received a typewritten copy of the letter and in my case, my Father also had the original handwritten version. Some of my Grandmother's Brothers and Sisters also received a copy. My father's letters reverted to me in 1973.

My Grandmother and Grandfather had seven grandchildren, six males and one female. All six male grandchildren served their country in military uniform - four during World War II, one during the Vietnam War and one in peacetime. Of the six, two became Commissioned Officers and four of the six lived in Throop. Their Granddaughter also lived in Throop for much of her life. Despite time, distance, and age the seven grandchildren knew each other well and were often in each other's company over the years. A copy of my Grandmother's letter reverted to each grandchild.

I have since discovered a second letter written by my Grandmother to her mother, Catherine Warner Oltendick. It was written before my Grandmother met my Grandfather. The second letter was written in Philadelphia in 1880. In this 1880 letter, my Grandmother mentions visiting her Grandmother and Aunts. The names of the Aunts are not the same as genealogical information on my Great Grandmother Catherine's family. These Aunts and Grandmother are from my Great Grandfather Oltendick's side and as such, the analysis indicates the Oltendick's arrived in America much earlier than first known.

I'm sure if my Grandmother was here, she would think it wonderful to have her letter published in the newsletter. I hope you enjoy reading it.



Peter and Elizabeth Oltendick Stenzhorn  
Sometime before 1930  
Photo courtesy of Peter M. Stenzhorn

Written in Throop, Pennsylvania - October 16, 1933

## **MY LIFE HISTORY WHICH I HAVE WRITTEN TO MY CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.**

I, Elizabeth Oltendick Stenzhorn was born the sixteenth day of July in the year of our lord 1864 on the mountain side of Priceburg, now called Dickson City, where my father rented a small farm. There were only two farms there - father's and Mr. Carl Stine's.

When at the age of nine months, my father Gearheart and mother Catherine, moved to Gooseridge, now called Throop. My father bought the Jenkle Nichols farm of sixty acres. The old road from Bucktown, now called Dunmore, ran through my father's farm. The old stagecoach which ran through the farm up the valley to Carbondale was driven by Anderson Savage. On my father's uphill farm was an old log house built many years ago and which was torn down in my childhood days. I was reared on that farm and attended a one room school where Mr. John Mahoney was my teacher. The old school is still standing. I had a fair education.

I was the oldest of ten children - seven brothers, three sisters, and one step sister. When a girl, I helped my father work on the farm. I milked the cows and attended to the sheep, chickens, pigs, and many other animals, and helped him dig potatoes for the winter out on our farm. I also helped to take care of the younger children.

I helped my father to wash the sheep just before he cut their wool. We would drive them down to the Lackawanna River across the field to wash them and then father would put them in a green dry place to dry. When they were dry, father with the help of another man would cut all the wool from the sheep and put it in the attic to dry until winter. Mother would get her spinning wheel and spin the wool to make we children stockings. Mother made us stockings and father knit us children mittens. My father's people in Germany, men and women all knitted. I used to study my school lessons at night and watch my father and mother knit.

When my father went to the old mill in Providence, which is still standing under the bridge, Mother would say "Lizzie, you go with pop while he is getting the feed at the mill". "You go up to Mulley's store (which was at Providence square) and get some groceries and bring them home". I would get those things and go down to the old mill, father would be waiting there for me. Sometimes I had to wait quite a while, and father would get out of patience and say "where were you so long?" They used to carry everything in the store those days - shoes, groceries, hay, furniture, plows, dry goods, dishes, lime, dolls, and mostly everything you wished to buy. It would seem funny now to our children to see one store have everything in it.

I used to go riding on horses and used to take one horse called "GRANT". He was branded with the letter G. Those horses we used in those days all came back from the Civil War. I would get on his back and go over the hills on the farm on Sunday to an old log house where an old maid and her brother Martha and Folander Silsby lived. I would

rap on the door and she would say "Pull the latch, and come in", the latch happened to be a string. I spent many a happy hour with them.

My life on the farm was not at it is today. I worked hard and had to walk five miles to church and Sunday school. It was a happy time, as there I learned my Bible, My God and Savior, Jesus, who died to save me from sin. My pastor was Reverend Frederick Zitzleman. I was christened in that church in Scranton, my sponsors, now deceased were John and Elizabeth Miller - Godfather and Godmother. There were only a few farms in Throop - my father's and next to it the Secor farm and the Savage farm and back of father's farm was the Doherty farm. Below the farm was a little town called Smoketown, now called Olyphant.

When a girl, I used to sit in the old kitchen window in the morning and see the deer go by from one mountain to the other and there were also a lot of wild game. I would see wild geese fly over the farm and the owls would go in our barn at night. If they could not find a way out at night, they were blind in the morning and we children would get them and we got quite a lot of them in my younger days.

One day I went to bring my father some water to drink while he was plowing in the field and I saw a red fox walking behind him in the furrow of the plow and I said, "Father, where did you get that nice dog?" He said, "That is a red fox and he has been following me all day and when it is dark he will go back into the woods again."

They were nice woods and all kinds of trees and beautiful wild flowers grew there, I used to get the cows from the woods to milk them and used to take our dog with me to fetch our cows home. It was so nice in the Springtime. It was nice to hear all the different kind of birds sing. It was lovely then to go through the fields and woods.

I used to climb the wild grape vines and get the grapes for Mother. She would make jelly out of them. We had all kinds of nuts - chestnuts, hickory nuts, hazel nuts, butternuts - but most of these nuts are gone now. We used to gather them, especially the butternuts and our hands would get so stained. We children would be so tired from gathering the nuts.

Then Mother would have us gather all kinds of teas for the winter - Pennyroyal, Bonesett, Loo, Sweet Flag and many other kinds. Then in the winter when we were sick, Mother would know just what kind of teas to give us. We had no doctor bills to pay and we were always healthy.

We had our regular time for meals. Father was very strict with us children. We had to be in bed at nine o'clock and there was no going out at bed-time. When in bed we would listen to the wip-poor-will and he would keep up his song until morning.

It was real farm life but we children were happy then. In the fall of the year we gathered in the fruits and nuts. I had to climb the apple trees and help Father pick the large apples. If he did not have much sale for the apples, in the fall, he would dig a deep

trench in the ground and put the straw on the bottom and then put in the nice big apples and fill it nearly to the top. Then another layer of straw would be put over them and covered with dirt. Then in the early spring he would take them out and sell them. He did the same with cabbage and potatoes. Out of the small apples he would make cider and let it stand until the next Summer. Then he sold it for vinegar and he also sold lots of sweet cider to drink. I had to turn the old cider press nights until ten o'clock as there was so much harvest work to be done and we had no time in the daytime.

Then the potatoes had to be dug. Father and I dug all day and Father would have some hired help sometimes, but not much. He would have two big lumber wagons which he would take in the field and then we would dig potatoes until five o'clock when the children would come home from school. Father and I would pick the big potatoes and put them in bags. There were not many small potatoes. Then we drove home from the field and put the potatoes at the outside cellar door and then the chores had to be done and the cows had to be milked- about eighteen head, and then there were pigs to be fed and other things to do. Father and I milked the cows and then we came in the house and put away the milk in the cans and put it in a spring with running water. Then the evening's milk and the morning's milk had to be sold. My oldest brother John peddled the milk and then Mother would have supper ready.

After supper, Father would say to me, "Now, Elizabeth, we will get at the potatoes at the cellar door outside". Father would carry the potatoes in a bushel basket in the cellar. I had to shovel all those potatoes and fill one basket while he carried the other in the cellar. I had to be very careful not to crush a potato as my father was very careful that nothing went to waste,

How very tired I used to be when we were through with the day's work. I did not have roses strewn along my pathway through life - only hard work for me in those days, but I had some good experience which other girls had not.

At the age of 47, my father got hurt on the railroad. The Price-Pancoast Coal Company's breaker was being built in 1880 and the railroad was built before the breaker through fields and trees and stumps and in the fall of October 1881, my father got hurt with his team while plowing for the new railroad. The plow got in a rut fast and my father tried to get out and the plow handle struck him in the right side. He lived only for a week and died.

At the time of his death there were thirteen of us children. The youngest was a sister eleven months old. My Mother lived on the farm with my brothers and sisters and myself and worked there but not on such a large scale as when father lived. Mother sold some of her land for a big school so she got along very well. We had to do the best we could.

In 1882 my mother was robbed - burglars got in the house and stole \$150.00. I will never forget the fright we got in the morning.

Later, my youngest brother Henry, rented the farm and lived with Mother a few years on the farm.

In the year 1882 I was married to Peter Stenzhorn, a resident of Honesdale, Pennsylvania, who lived at Cherry Ridge on a farm with his father. His mother was dead. He was the second oldest child - there were four brothers and three sisters. When a boy, he worked as a tow-boy on the old canal running from Honesdale to Hoboken.

When about twenty-five years old he went to Hammonton, New Jersey to work there. He met with an accident on his foot and when he recovered, he came to Throop where we met and were married. We lived with Mother in the "Old Homestead" on the farm, until five months later, when we bought our own home in Throop.

The Price-Pancoast Coal Company was building a breaker in 1881 and my husband was the first to break ground for the breaker and he worked for the Price-Pancoast Coal Company for thirty-five years. His pay was not much - at the beginning he got \$1.50 a day until the foundation for the breaker was laid. He was head over all the men in the carpenter shop. These men are all dead now. They were: William Henderson, Harry Jarvis, John Casey, Jack Galfney, George Bingham, William Calahan, George Wiland And Anthony Finerty. The Superintendent of the Coal Company was Charles Sanderson. In the year 1913, my husband resigned from his job as foreman. He gave one month's notice to his general foreman. Then the men, Superintendent, and Foreman presented him with a billfold and twenty-five dollars for his faithfulness.

He then took up team-work for himself, hauling coal and other team-work. In 1908 my husband and I and the children moved on my mother's farm - "the Old Homestead" - and Mother still lived at the time. We lived there for five years - did the farming and dairy work and had twelve cows and four horses. We worked hard on the farm and did very good. Then in 1913 we moved back to our old home in Throop.

In the Fall of 1914 on November 28th my dear mother died at the age of 78. After leaving the farm, my husband worked as a carpenter for about three years.

Our union was blessed with eleven children - seven are dead and four are living - two boys and two girls living up until this time in 1933. Our children: Frederick Carl was born on March 20, 1884 in Throop and was killed at Blakely, Olyphant Railroad Crossing with his younger brother Gearheart on September 7th 1918. Mary Catherine was born March 25, 1885 and died November 6th, 1911. Henry William was born March 18th 1888 and died July 24th 1888, Twins Lena and Leda were born August 24th, 1891, Lena died on February 12th, 1897.

Peter George was born November 16, 1893. Lizzie Bella was born August 30th 1896. Albin K. was born August 4, 1899. Esther Caroline was born February 14th, 1903 and died April 14th 1903. Elsie Madeline was born October 5th 1904, Gearheart August was born December 22nd, 1907 - he was my baby and was killed September 7th, 1918.

Those living are: Elsie, Leda, Albin and Peter.

On September 8th, 1930 my dear husband who was born in Calicoon, New York, October 24th 1854, died at the age of 78, leaving me Elizabeth Stenzhorn, and four children and five grandchildren.

I am still living in my old home in Throop - 441 Sanderson Street and would have been married fifty years on November 1st, 1932.

My oldest daughter died at Lake Winola and was brought home to the farm - "The Old Homestead". She left one child, Marion three years of age at her death. I took Marion and was a mother to her until she was seventeen years of age and then she went back with her father at Clarks Summit for two years and now at this writing she is living in Brooklyn, New York, working as a stenographer in a New York City Office.

My son Peter George lives at Wellsboro, Pennsylvania and Albin has charge of an A & P Store in North Arlington, New Jersey. My daughter Leda lives at Lake Winola. My youngest daughter, Elsie lives at 437 Sanderson Street in Throop.

All of my children were born at the same place, 441 Sanderson Street, Throop, Pennsylvania.

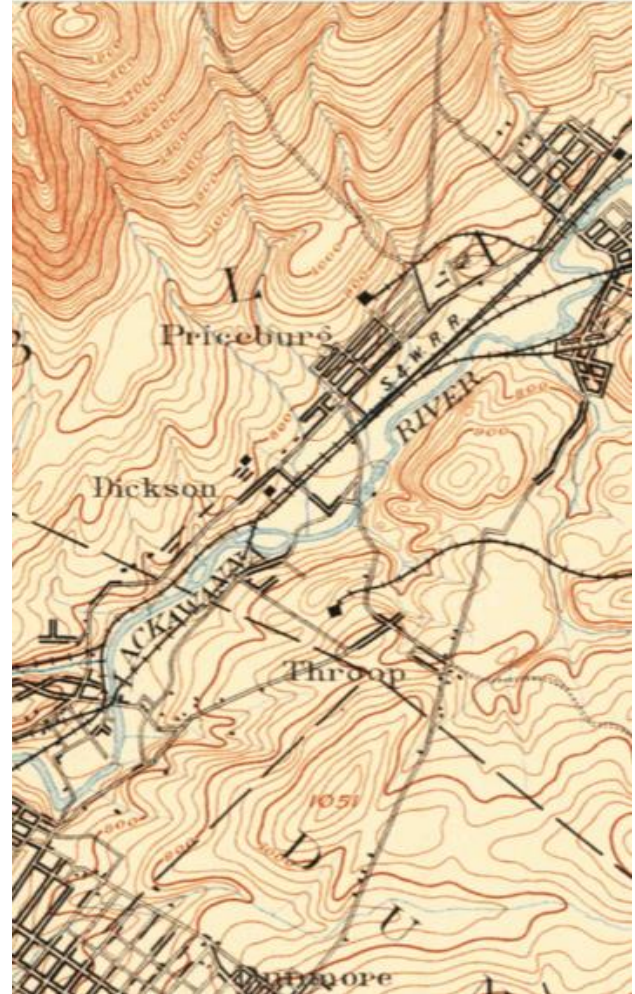
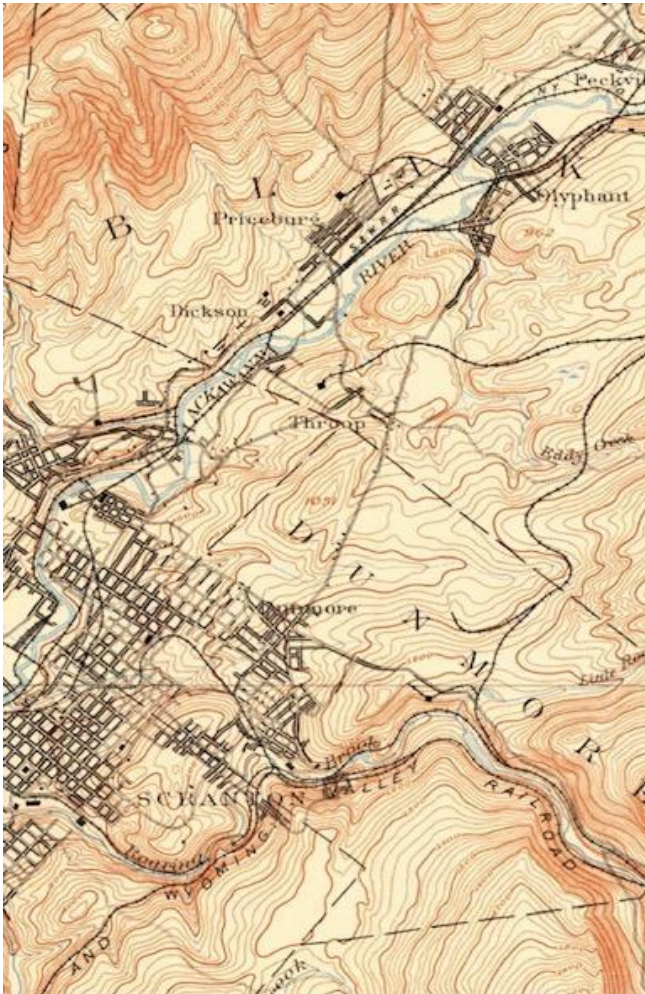
My father was born in Oldenburg, Groshertzok, Germany, and came to America at the age of twenty-two. My mother was born in Bergebdorf Germany, near the Vera, and came to America at the age of eighteen. Out of this family now living are my brothers and sisters: Carrie Steinecke, living in Throop, Pennsylvania; George Oltendick living in Throop; August Oltendick, living in Throop; Henry Oltendick, living in Chinchilla, and Jacob Oltendick, living in Dickson City, Pennsylvania.

I have seen many changes since all these towns grew up to large cities and towns. The city of Scranton was called Slocum Hollow when there were only two roads to get into Scranton. There were no trolley cars - but horse cars and where the Court House now stands there used to be a great swamp surrounded by willows and the boys and girls used to go skating on the ice there in the winter. Scranton was a very small town in my younger days. I have seen it grow to a big city. What a wonderful change in time past.

My life has been spent in Throop for sixty-nine years in 1933. I thank my Heavenly Father for all the loving kindness. I may not have thanked him enough when I think of how wonderful he has brought me through all my sorrows and deaths and trials and when at last my work is finished, may I enter the Lord's Kingdom where all sin and sorrow end and joy will never cease.

MOTHER \*\*\*\*\*



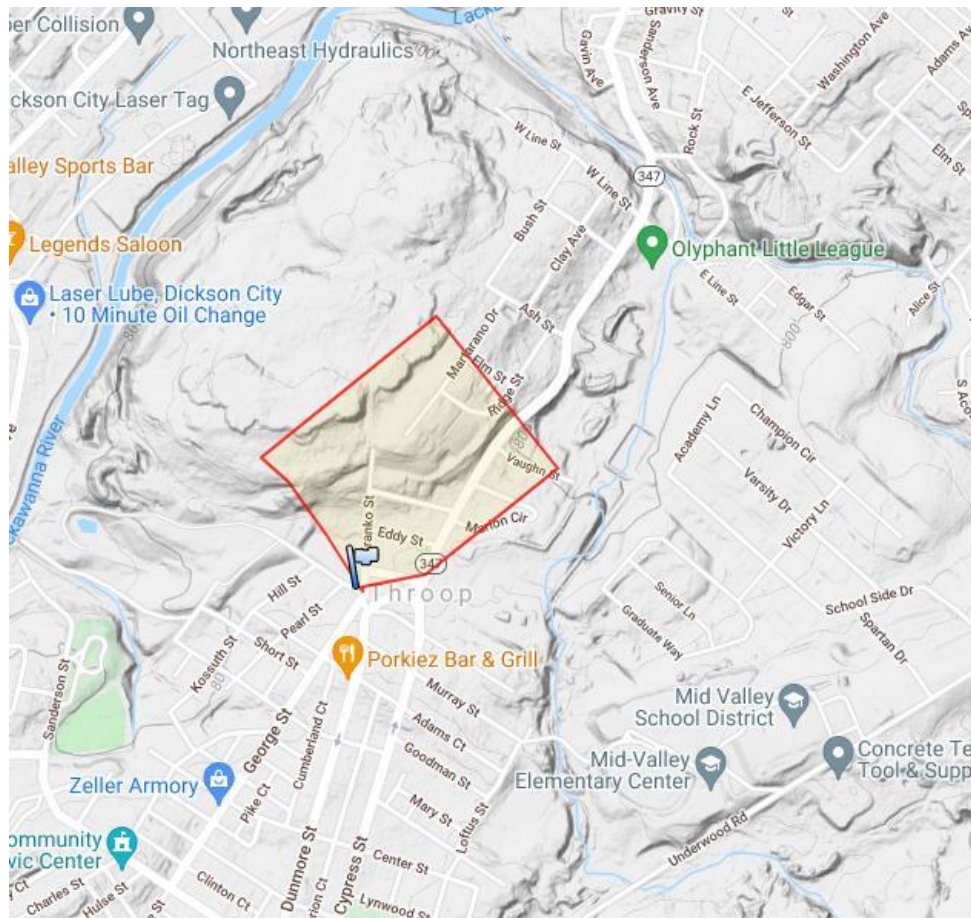


Maps Courtesy of Peter M. Stenzhorn

The map on the left shows Throop and surrounding jurisdictions with Scranton/Dunmore to the south, Olyphant to the north, and Dickson City/Priceburg to the west. Throop is in small print to the right of the word, "Lackawanna". The small, black dot above the word, Throop, is the location of the Price-Pancoast Coal Company breaker where Peter Stenzhorn worked for 35 years. The black line extending from the black dot is the Pancoast Branch of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad.

The map on the right is a close-up with Throop in the center, Dunmore to the south and Dickson City/Priceburg to the west. Not shown extending from the black dot that represents the breaker are the spurs of the New York, Ontario & Western Railway and the Delaware & Hudson Railroad that also served the Price-Pancoast operation.





Map courtesy of Joe Rudzinski

The area outlined in red shows the approximate location of the Oltendick Farm.

Peter M. Stenzhorn is the son of the late Albin Stenzhorn and Amelia J. Stenzhorn. Peter grew up in Throop, Pennsylvania.

He is a graduate of Throop High School. He earned an Associate in Arts Degree from Yuba College, Marysville, California, a Bachelor's Degree in Finance from Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, and a Master's Degree in Managerial Science from Marywood University, Scranton, Pennsylvania.

He has been an Adjunct Faculty Member in Logistics at Johnson College and in Information Technology at both Misericordia University, and for 10 years at Penn State Scranton Campus, Dunmore, Pennsylvania.

During the Vietnam War, Pete served as a Sergeant in the Strategic Air Command of the United States Air Force and afterwards as a Captain in the United States Army from which he retired.

He and his wife, Linda, are members of the Lackawanna Historical Society.