

# MASSANUTTEN

SETTLED BY THE  
PENNSYLVANIA PILGRIM

1726

THE FIRST WHITE SETTLEMENT  
IN THE  
SHENANDOAH VALLEY

By  
HARRY M. STRICKLER.



he did not remember it. He told me that some years ago an old log house stood a few hundred feet to the north of these stone houses, that it was torn down and the logs were used to construct a stable near the barn, that recently these same logs were sawed into lumber which was used to construct the cannery at Alma. He thinks that this was the original Long home. No doubt this is true and the stone houses with fort protection were built during the French and Indian wars.

I am inclined to believe that it was the original intention to construct a tunnel from the vault to the well also thru those openings left in the walls of the former. It may be that it was never deemed necessary to construct the fort according to the original design, the Indian wars having ceased and all fears from that quarter being allayed.

This is the most elaborate fort in the Massanutten section. It is located at the edge of the yard of Mrs. Price's home which is a fine old brick mansion, located in the center of a five hundred acre fertile river bottom farm.

### "FORT EGYPT"

#### *The Jacob Strickler Home Known as Egypt*

In the midst of Egypt, hard by a cool spring, is a very large old log house supposed to have been built by Jacob Strickler. He lived there until his death, and his son John died there in 1802. It is south of a point opposite the mouth of Mill Creek. None of these old homes are more interesting than this one. The Stovers lived here after John Strickler's death. John's daughter married a Stover. The house is now owned by J. C. Burner of Luray. It is of logs and has been weather-boarded and is in a good state of preservation. In the centre is an immense stone chimney. The large beam across the fireplace, eighteen inches square, is at least ten feet long. It has other small fireplaces in it, and there are several square holes (pine holes) for pine torch lights. Several of the rooms are immense. Originally the roof was high, and no doubt the third story was used for sleeping quarters, as an excellent flight of steps leads up to this part of the house. The fort cellar is similar to the one under the stone house in Massanutten but larger and better preserved. At one time there was a stairway leading down into the outer cellar. This is a very large room, extending the entire length of the west side of the house. The south and west walls of this room are pierced with four or five loop

holes. The spaces between the girders overhead are filled with mortar so as to present a smooth surface. From this room a door opens into the vault. This room is sixteen feet long by thirteen feet wide and arched over with solid masonry, the ceiling in the middle being about seven and one-half feet high. Several iron hooks protrude from the walls as well as several wooden ones, placed there at the time the walls were built, apparently. This is an excellent cellar, dry and of even temperature. In some respects this is the most pretentious of the fortified cellars. The large chimney and fort cellar represent an immense amount of labor. The Samuel Strickler home near New Market has the same kind of floor.

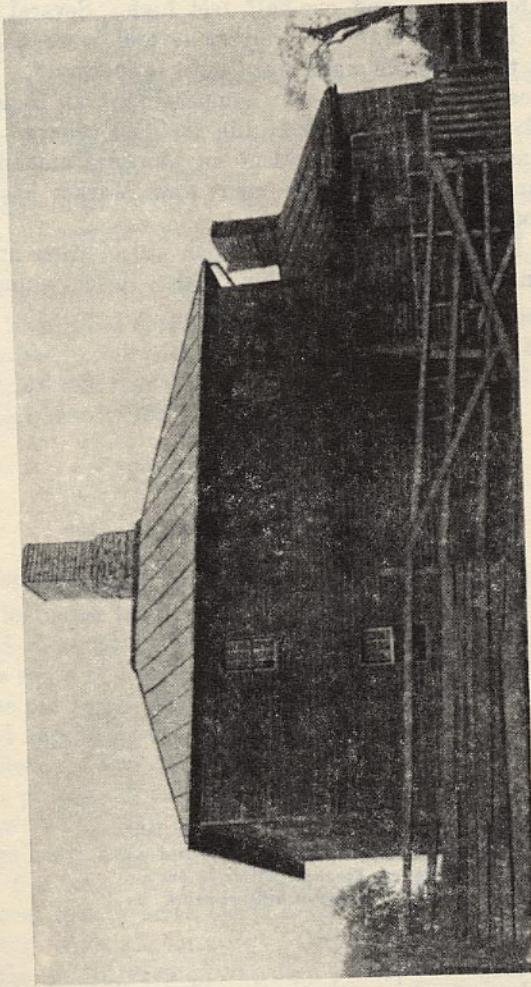
The house is about 30 feet square, with an addition at the north side of more recent construction with a brick chimney.



**"THE MASSANUTTEN MILL"**

A sketch by the author of the pioneer mill and miller. This mill was probably used as early as 1726 by Abraham Strickler on his Egypt plantation, where it still remains.

At this old homestead is probably the oldest mill in the Shenandoah Valley a solid stone structure and in as good a state of preservation as it was when it was made. It is a solid stone bowl about as large as an ordinary wash-tub, with a small hole drilled from the bottom to the outside for the meal to pass thru after being ground by the pestle.



**EGYPT, THE HOME OF JACOB STRICKLER**

Son of Abraham Strickler. This log house is built over a vaulted cellar or fort. This Fort, the Roads Fort and Stover Fort are all well preserved. This Fort cellar has an outer and an inner cellar, both fortified and well preserved. Here I find a stone mill used probably by Abraham Strickler, the pioneer, as early as 1726.

Until a few years ago there was another very old log house standing in Egypt near the old home above referred to. It was smaller and probably of older construction. Mr. J. C. Bowers told me that when he tore it down he found in it a brick with the figures 1705 upon it. This may have been the home of Abraham Strickler, the first settler, and the date may have referred to the time when he came to America. I have been told that it had puncheon floors, that is, slabs with smooth surface up. This old house was probably built before the Indian raids as it had no fort cellar.\*

Just to the north of Massanutten and on the same side of the river is Egypt. Roughly speaking, we might say the north gate is at Lick Branch, while the southern gate may be considered as being where a small stream comes down from the mountain and enters the river where it approaches the mountain. But Mr. Lee Strickler tells me that Egypt extended up into the lower part of Massanutten Bend, that the dividing line was a straight line, leaving the river some distance above the White House and running straight toward the mountain to a place called "Crater Hollow" about a mile north-west of Salem, and that the large body of land located just south of the White House bridge, whereon Abraham Strickler, Sr. lived, was always considered as being in Egypt. He also says that the northern limit of Egypt went beyond Lick Branch to a point south of J. W. Ruffner's brick mansion. These limits of Egypt are consistent with the lines of Abraham Strickler's first grant. His line starts four or five hundred rods (320 rods equal one mile) up the river from the White House, then it runs N. 30 W. 414 rods, then runs almost due east, N. 80 E. 144 rods, then by a short line to the river, then down the river to a point where the river approaches the mountain, then it runs N. 39 E. 520 rods to the river, near Lick Branch, then N. 60 E. 120 rods, then N. 82 E. 20 rods, then N. 17 W. to the river, then up the river to the beginning. These lines take in lower Massanutten Bend and all of Egypt, extending 120 rods beyond Lick Branch. Very early Abraham Strickler called his grant Egypt, and this explains why Egypt was considered as extending up into the Massanutten Bend and beyond Lick Branch.

#### THE OLD BURNER HOME FORT CELLAR

Proceeding down the left bank of the river from the old house in Egypt we approach the mouth of Lick Run (Probably Elk Lick

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\* It may even be discovered that he was here as early as 1705.