

## Blossburg News & Views for February 8, 2012

by Lonny Frost

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### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

On Monday, Feb. 13th the Blossburg Borough Council Meeting will be held from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM at 245 Main Street in the Council room. All citizens are welcome to attend.

There will also be a School Board Meeting on that day in the auditorium of the North Penn High School from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM. All are openly invited to attend.

If you see Dottie Gibbon this week, do not forget to wish her a happy birthday.

Remember to send your announcements to [news@blossburg.org](mailto:news@blossburg.org) or call (570) 638-2486.

### **BLOSSBURG TIES**

While growing up here in Blossburg and later moving to Covington, I would hear tales from my grandfather, Curly Frost, that there were panthers that roamed the mountainsides of Wellsboro, Mansfield, Covington and even Blossburg.

If you have ever heard a panther scream it is something you will never forget. The last one seen and heard by a Frost family member, was in the pastures behind a barn that still sits at the top of Cushion Road in Covington Township that was in the early 1970's.

However, there is another true and much earlier story that ties Blossburg to the much feared panthers that once roamed this area.

During the winter of 1814 near the Canoe Camp Creek area, sat a log school house, that twice a month held an evening session of Spelling for the older students.

Canoe Camp Creek was on the line of the Williamson Road, between Mansfield and Covington. The Strattons and the Williamses were just a few of the families that lived along that area.

While returning home from one of these evening sessions Curtis, Martin and Seymour Stratton were with Jehial and Thomas Williams. The boys were walking the

half mile that laid between the school and their homes, when they were frightened by a woman's scream.

At first the boys thought there was a woman in distress in the forest until they heard the scream a second time. The second scream was much closer to them this time. A shiver ran down their spines as they realized a panther was close by. The Stratton brothers could hear their dog barking in the distance and knew they were close to home, but they were not sure as to what to do. However, when they heard the heavy steps of the panther coming through the frozen brush, they grabbed each other's hands and ran screaming in fear to the house.

The parents believed the boys had been spooked by the screech of an owl and they were not impressed with the story the Stratton boys had told them. So all three boys were sent directly to bed for telling a tale.

By the next morning, just before sunrise, Mr Stratton found a heifer that had been mangled severely. He also found distinctive tracks in the snow. He immediately ran to his neighbor, Daniel Williams and told him about the attack on his heifer. Both Mr. Stratton and Mr. Williams then looked around for a missing ox-hide that had been hung previously by Daniel. They found the hide had been carried across the road and buried in the snow just a short distance from from Daniel's house. Next, both men went to the Millers and told them about the panther. Soon a hunting party of six was put together. Erastus and Augustus Niles brought along an assortment of guns. At that point they quickly started following the tracks that the big panther had left behind. As the men tracked the cat other neighbors joined in the hunt and dogs were added to track the scent of the panther.

Four hours later the hunting party crossed the State Road near Covington and came to the mountains near the borough line of Blossburg. By this time every rifle in the settlement was cocked and ready to shoot as they moved in. At 11:00 A.M. the sound of two shots echoed across Blossburg. An hour later the body of the large panther was found. The joyous announcement that the big panther was dead had all the men shaking hands and congratulating each other for a job well done. They placed the panther's body on a sled and took it from Blossburg back to the

Stratton home in Canoe Camp. The neighborhood was very pleased to know the panther had been killed and no one had been injured.

Curtis, Martin and Seymour Stratton, as well as, Jehial and Thomas Williams were greatly relieved to see the body of the dead panther. All five boys knew how close they had come to death and they knew it proved that neither of them had lied about the panther that followed them home from school.

I do not know if this story is the reason that the PANTHER was selected to represent the town of Blossburg. All I know is today, the black panther mascot stands to remind us of our love for our community, the strength of its citizens and the pride we have for our students, who are our future. For we are a town full of North Penn Panthers!