



## Pennsylvania Mountain Stories (1909)

*Henry W. Shoemaker*

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Henry Wharton Shoemaker (1880–1958) was a prominent American folklorist, historian, diplomat, writer, publisher, and conservationist.

Shoemaker was born in New York City, but was closely associated with Pennsylvania, where he spent summers in childhood and took up residence later in life. Shoemaker summered in McElhattan, Pennsylvania, at an estate called Restless Oaks owned by his mother's family, and wrote that this experience deeply influenced his lifelong devotion to folklore and legend, hunting heritage, and historical and environmental preservation.

After his brief stint on Wall Street, Shoemaker turned to publishing, running newspapers in Reading, Altoona, and Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania. He was also an active writer, which he had begun in student publications at Columbia. He gained notice as a journalist after 1898, when he reported legends from Pennsylvania mountain residents and workers in lumber and hunting camps and coalfields, which he first published in central Pennsylvania newspapers and then more widely in the book *Pennsylvania Mountain Stories* (1908). This was the first of twelve volumes in the *Pennsylvania Folklore Series* (1908–1924) that promoted the culture and landscape of central Pennsylvania.

From his maternal home in McElhattan which he inherited, Shoemaker devoted much of his energy to environmental conservation and considered folklore associated with the endangered landscape deserving of preservation along with the state's forests and wildlife.

He was praised for drawing attention in his creative writing to the traditions of the Pennsylvania "mountaineers." His goal, he announced, was to show the legacy of legends for landscape features such as trees, animals, caves and caverns, rivers, and mountains; by making people realizing the spiritual narratives associated with the environment he hoped to make them more respectful and conservation-minded.

Shoemaker's humanistic interests in his creative writing also showed in his campaign to have artists use local folklore as a resource for literature, poetry, art, and music. A prolific writer, he produced more than 100 books and pamphlets and hundreds of articles. In addition to his books of legends such as *Susquehanna Legends*, *In the Seven Mountains*, *Penn's Grandest Cavern*, *Tales of the Bald Eagle Mountains*, *Allegheny Episodes*, *Juniata Memories*, *North Mountain Mementos*, *South Mountain Sketches*, *Black Forest Souvenirs*, for which he is best known, he published more ethnographic field collections of songs and ballads (*Mountain Minstrelsy of Pennsylvania*, 1931), folk speech (*Scotch-Irish and English Proverbs and Sayings of the West Branch Valley of Central Pennsylvania*, 1927), and crafts (*Early Potters of Clinton County*, 1916). He also wrote some of the earliest accounts of hunting and animal lore, such as *Pennsylvania Deer and Their Horns* (1915), *Pennsylvania Lion or Panther* (1914), *Wolf Days in Pennsylvania* (1914), and *Stories of Great Pennsylvania Hunters* (1913).

Contents:

- Why the Steiner House Patient Pulled Through
- The Story of Altar Rock
- The Spook of Spook Hill
- The Romance of Postoffice Rock

- The Fate of Simeon Shaffer
- The Legend of Penn's Cave
- The Hermit of the Knobs
- Prairie King
- Old Righter's Ghost
- The Mountain Soldier's Presentiment
- Granny Myers's Curse
- Witchcraft vs. Mother-in-Law
- The Haunted Tavern
- Fanny Hedden's Hotel
- The Ghost Walk
- Ole Bull's Castle
- Booneville Camp Meeting
- The Bald Eagle Silver Mine

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