

## THE SHAWHAN WHISKEY TRADITION

The year was 1786; the place was a farm near Chartiers Creek, a few miles southwest of Pittsburgh; at the time the land was in dispute as to whether it was the territory of the state of Virginia or that of Pennsylvania. The farm, of several hundred acres, belonged to the farmer who was in the huge barn, which held not only grain and other produce, but also contained barrels of aging whiskey. The gentleman was Daniel Shawhan, Jr., born in 1738 in Kent County, Maryland. Daniel was ready to broaden the market for his whiskey, which had become fairly well known in the area, and he pondered what he should use for the brand name. After due consideration he decided to call it "Monongahela Red", in recognition of the fact that he was located in the Monongahela River Valley and his whiskey had a reddish amber color. Thus began a tradition of marketing Shawhan whiskey that was to last into the 1970s.

At the age of forty-eight, Daniel could look back on a life where he was born the first son of Daniel Shawhan, Sr., who had been born in 1709, the first son of Darby Shawhan, Sr. and his wife, Sarah Meeks. Darby, 1673-1736, a Scotch-Irish tobacco farmer, has been recognized as the first Shawhan to migrate to England's American Colonies, settling in Kent County, Maryland in about 1698. Darby and Sarah were married in 1707 and they soon acquired 100 acres from a tract of land called "Shad's Hole" – they named their property "Darby's Desire" on which they farmed tobacco, grew fruit trees, and raised sheep, hogs, and cows. They probably also converted some of their fruits into spirits for personal consumption and to use in bartering. After Darby and Sarah's deaths in 1736, the land was managed by Daniel, Sr., who sold it to his brother John in 1740; the family of Daniel, Sr. with his two-year old son Daniel, Jr. in tow, moved to Frederick Co., Maryland. The family stayed there for many years, through the French and Indian War period, in which Daniel, Sr. served in the Maryland Militia, until 1759, when they pushed further westward into Hampshire County, Virginia (WV), locating near Romney. It was there that Daniel, Jr. met and married the beautiful, Margaret Bell, with "hair like the sunsets, filled with gold and reds".

It was also there that Daniel, Jr. became skilled in the art of whiskey making, learning from his father. The basic process involved first obtaining, grinding, and mixing the grains into a mash in homemade wooden tubs; corn was the predominate grain, mixed with barley, rye or wheat. Malt, yeast, and other fermenting agents were then added, together with a measure of hot, pure spring water. After a suitable period of time to ferment, the resultant brew was ready to be poured into a still to be distilled. A typical frontier still consisted of a pear-shaped copper kettle topped by a detachable head with a tapered neck that ended in a spiral of tubing called a "worm". When the still was fired, alcoholic spirits vaporized upward into the head and through the worm. The worm was immersed in a barrel of cold water, which caused the heated vapor to condense into whiskey. Drawn off through the end of the worm, the liquor was often distilled a second time, or "doubled" to increase its alcoholic content; the finished whiskey was then poured into jugs, barrels, or whatever containers were applicable. The spent "stillage" of mash was saved for livestock feed.

Shortly after the death of his father, in about 1771, Daniel, together with Margaret and their first four children, moved westward, probably on a Virginia land warrant, to the Chartiers Creek area, near present-day Carnegie, Allegheny Co., PA; they were following the footsteps of Margaret's brothers who had migrated to the same vicinity in the late 1760s. Daniel laid claim to 650 acres and began clearing the land and building habitation for his family and livestock. In the Revolutionary War, Daniel may have briefly returned his family to Maryland, during the "Indian Troubles", as he served with a Maryland troop in 1776; he was later listed as serving with a PA Militia organization. After the War, Daniel again resumed his farming and continued to experiment with the distillation of whiskey; he became prominent in the area, enough to have his home listed as a voting location.

Daniel finally returned home to resume his life as a farmer and whiskey distiller. His "Monongahela Red" was soon a success, but Daniel became worried about the value of his Virginia land warrant in the dispute with Pennsylvania, and the increasing burden of the whiskey taxes that the newly established American government had instituted for revenue. The history books call it "The Whiskey Rebellion" and it is an ugly chapter in the first difficult years of the newly formed United States. The presenting problem was the call by some legislators for an excise tax to be placed upon the sale of whiskey. The western states, particularly western Pennsylvania and the Allegheny region of Virginia, did not take kindly to what they considered unfair taxation. However, as is always the case with volatile issues of this sort, much deeper problems lay beneath the surface. For these westerners, life on the edge of the frontier was, at best, dangerous and, at worst, a matter of sheer survival. For us today, it is difficult to imagine the