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—By FOOTLOOSE—

REMINISCENCE DEPARTMENT

(One of our favorite contributors today fills up this space. We thank him—and so will you readers.)

By **BENJAMIN A. FRYER**

Assistant Secretary of State George S. Messersmith, of Fleetwood, fills the highest national position ever gained by a Berks countian because he has been a successful diplomat for over 20 years, representing the U. S. in Berlin, Vienna and in other European and South American countries.

Diplomacy is his strong point. It is natural because it is inherited. Two of his ancestors, Daniel and John K. Messersmith, must have been master diplomats, for they alternated as Berks county treasurer for 31 years. Diplomacy had to be used every year to keep their positions. Daniel held the office 1789-1807; 1809-1811; 1819-27. John K. was treasurer 1807-9; 1811-1814; 1817-1820.

A record like that required diplomacy. The dictionary defines it: "One remarkable for tact and shrewd management." It must be remembered that at the time referred to the position was not elective by the people, but an appointment made annually by the county commissioners. And for 31 years these two men by tact and shrewd management kept the job in the family—alternating when one got tired handing it over for a few years, to get it back later.

The first Berks Messersmith of which there is any mention was Stephen, buried in Oley in 1730. The assessment list of that township for 1734 lists Mary Messersmith, owner of 100 acres.

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Now the printed record shifts to Exeter, the township of the Lincolns, the Boones—and the Messersmiths. For the first time a George—same name as the assistant secretary of state—appears, as does Val Messersmith. They are on the 1759 Exeter tax lists. Val is down for 20 pounds and George for one pound.

The two county treasurers appear to have been Reading people. The tax list of Maxatawny for 1759 contains the name of Conrad Manesmith; likely the same family. Our secretary of state was born in Fleetwood, October 3, 1883. From the dates given it can be seen that the Messersmiths have been in Berks over 200 years—and three, accomplished diplomats, must have been or they could not hold two positions over half a century.