



HAMBURG AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WINDOWS TO THE PAST... *The Official Newsletter of the Hamburg Area Historical Society*

Volume 23, Issue 2

“Preserving Our Past For The Future”

Spring 2024

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Rain, rain, go away, come again another month – like August. What started out as an early spring with milder temperatures has turned into very wet, chilly days. It has, however, been a good start for the flowers. The daffodils, hyacinths and bluebells are beautiful. The wildlife that has been hiding all winter has been making appearances. I have had the privilege to see a muskrat, foxes, deer, a wide variety of birds, and a few nights of hearing the “peepers” and coyotes. What blessings!

A big thank you to Deitsch Eck restaurant for our January Plate It Forward fundraiser. We made \$375. Thank you to all who came out to support us and enjoy a great meal at the same time.

As the weather continues to warm up, so do our Historical Society activities. April 28 is our annual BBQ and bake sale. Be sure to check out all the upcoming programs and field trips in this issue.

Our building project is moving along, albeit a little slower than we’d like, but fear not, ground breaking is on the horizon! Once the exterior is completed, we’ll need to do a lot of interior work. I know many of you are collectors, historians and interior home decorators/renovators. Why not offer your expertise to help create an interesting attractive museum? We’ll also need help and ideas for the landscaping and signage. Don’t be shy! Let us know what you can help with. Looking forward to hearing your ideas.

Deb Billman, President

NEW MEMBERS

- Linda Anspach & Harry Prutzman, Hamburg
- Stephen Clark, Mohrsville, PA
- Kerry & Susan Grim, Hamburg
- Fred Mengel, Shoemakersville, PA
- Greg & Nancy Noel, Sioux Falls, SD
- Dolores Ritter, State College, PA
- Bruce & Denese Shaak, Hamburg

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COMING EVENTS

**Groundbreaking at the site of our new Museum -
Date to be determined, but coming soon !!!**

Regular meetings held first Thursday of the month when school is open. Held at the High School, in LGI Room, 7 p.m.

April 28 – BBQ, meals dispensed from Middle School cafeteria, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Bake sale too.

May 2 – “Walking in Their Shoes” story of 48th Pennsylvania Infantry, by Ben Varner

June – *No meeting*

July 11 – Picnic at St. Michael’s Church pavilion, 5:30 p.m. Covered dish. (eat at 6 p.m.)

Also a program.

August 31 (Saturday before Labor Day) – Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, where we always set up a stand on N. 3rd Street across from the Post Office

REMINDER

Have you remembered to renew your membership? If you are not a Lifetime Member, dues are expected to be paid by the first of each new year. We give a grace period, but if not paid, eventually the Newsletter will stop coming. You wouldn’t want that to happen. A renewal form was in the Fall newsletter, but if you no longer have it, merely send your dues to 102 State Street, Hamburg, with renewal information.

PHOTOS APPRECIATED

We are always on the lookout for interesting photos – for the newsletter or to put in frames or albums at the museum. Must be identified and have a local connection. Don’t throw old photos away!

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OUR ANNUAL BBQ

Mark your calendars for **Sunday, April 28**. It's time for one of our annual fund-raising events, the BBQ and Bake Sale. We are back at the Middle School cafeteria, which is a very convenient place to pick up your boxed meals (from 11 AM to 2 PM). Local members received tickets in the mail, which they can use or sell to others. The money for the tickets (\$11 each) should be sent to us by **April 13**, in the envelope provided. That lets us know how many meals to order from Smokin' Rubs. The meal consists of a generous portion of pulled pork, BBQ sauce, a roll, baked potato and applesauce. It's a delicious, popular meal, and we hope to sell lots of tickets this year. In fact, we hope that many people will use or sell more than the original six they received. Extra tickets can be obtained by calling Beryl at 610-488-6818 or emailing us at historyhamburg@gmail.com before April 13.

Another popular feature of this event is our bake sale. Many of our members bake their favorite recipes and donate them, making our baked goods table a busy place, usually sold out before the end of the day. Those of you who donate baked goods, for your convenience we will be accepting them at two different places and times: on Saturday, April 27 at our Museum, 102 State Street, from noon until 2 PM, or on the day of the BBQ from 9 to 10 a.m. at the Middle School. Bakers, please don't cut or package your items, as we have containers to do so.

Anyone who would like to volunteer to help at the BBQ that day, please call Beryl at the number mentioned above. It's a fun day, and we get to see many folks we have not seen for a while.

ANNUAL SUMMER PICNIC

Since we do not have regular meetings in summer, when the school is closed, we like to schedule something for that time. Each year, we have a picnic. While it has been held at various locations over the years, we have now settled on the pavilion at St. Michael's Church. There, we don't worry about heat, humidity, ants, or bad weather. It's in a spacious air-conditioned room, with what all picnics should have – good food and good company.

This year – mark your calendar - the date is **Thursday, July 11**. We set up at 5:30 and eat around 6 p.m. Everyone brings a covered dish or a dessert, and the Historical Society provides drinks, paper plates, etc. We have entertainment too. Some past programs included railroads, covered bridges, Native

American flute players, and a Boombas group. Whatever we have this year, you are sure to enjoy. Remember the year we were so engrossed in the program that we didn't know a tornado was passing through? It touched down not a mile away! We'll try not to reschedule that.

DEITSCH ECK's GENEROSITY

In January, the Lenhartsville restaurant Deitsch Eck made us the recipient of their monthly "Plate It Forward" campaign. They do this for a different non-profit organization each month, when for each of their daily specials that were ordered they donate \$1. We received a check for \$375 from that effort.

NEW BOARD MEMBER

As Scott Lakits stepped up from being a member of our board of directors to take on the job as our treasurer, that left a vacancy on the board. Sandy Christman, who has been helping us out on the Building Committee and writing proposals for grants for several years, agreed to now become a member of the board of directors. We welcome her expertise.

There is much behind-the-scenes work being done all the time for our Historical Society. The decisions and actions by our officers and board members keep things humming along. We do encourage members to join in activities, as volunteers, committee members, or officers. New faces, new ideas, younger energy are needed and would be welcomed.

CONSTRUCTION SHOULD BEGIN SOON

Although we were told that ground-breaking for our new Museum could be in March, it did not happen. Our parking lot was cleared of vehicles, but the final building permit did not go through as early as expected. Also, Owl Creek, our general contractor, has been busy rebuilding a barn that burned down over in Lebanon County. But it won't be long until everything is lined up and the big day arrives. In a few months, there should be interesting activity at the lot at 4th and Franklin.

TRIP TO GETTYSBURG

In the early days of our Historical Society we sponsored a bus trip to the Gettysburg Battlefield to learn more about our local area's soldiers' contribution and experiences at the turning point of the Civil War.

History will repeat itself as the Historical Society is doing it again on Tuesday, September 10 when we

take a trip back to the Gettysburg Battlefield. Our tour guide will be Ben Varner, Civil War regimental historian and creator of the “Walking In Their Shoes” project. As we tour the battlefield, Ben will talk about several Berks County units, including those from our area, and some special Berks Countians like the first soldier to sign up for the war from Kempton and Alexander Shimmelfennig from the German unit buried in Reading. The tour will include a buffet dinner. Final details, including price and times for the trip, to be announced at the May meeting and in the Summer edition of our newsletter.

PREVIOUS ISSUE’s MYSTERY SOLVED

We now reveal (see article following this one) that the gas station in the last Mystery Photo was at 4th and Windsor Street and belonged to the Yocom family many decades ago. That was no doubt a popular thing for the two Yocom boys (Donald and Glenn) because they could putter around cars and earn money pumping gas. Shown in the photo below are John Yocom, Sonny Weirich and Glenn Yocom, at Johnny’s Amoco Station, 4th and Windsor Street in Hamburg, which was our Winter issue mystery photo.



Working at Johnny’s Amoco gas station

MYSTERY PHOTO

Well, the Mystery Photo in our winter issue sure had a big response! Calling to identify it were Fred Sheeler, Lori Kleinsmith, Henry and Cathy Correll, Dave Eyer, Jean Horning, John Sleboda, Denny Bowers, John Brockman, Bill Dalious, Donna Sweigert, Tom Yoder, David McFall, Daryl Dietrich, Lee and Becky Hefner, and Mary Young.

They all recognized it as the gas station at 4th and Windsor Street in Hamburg. The various owners and different brands of gasoline sold at the pumps

changed over the years, but that photo was taken back in the 1940s or early 1950s when it belonged to John Yocom. More recently, it was converted to stores and offices, and now has become a Rita’s Italian Ice shop.

If you can identify this new Mystery Photo, call 610-488-1817, and leave a message. You will get a call back. The building is no longer there, but stood for a long time in that location.



Mystery Photo

THRIVENT DONATIONS

Our organization has received several donations from Thriven recently. Thivent Insurance (formerly Lutheran Brotherhood) allows its policy holders to select a non-profit organization to receive a donation, called “choice dollars,” from Thrivent each year, based on the amount of the policy and the interest it generates. These donations are used for expenses such as printing or postage, or supplies for other activities. We appreciate being named as a recipient for these funds.

We work hard at our various fund-raisers, because that’s what pays our monthly bills. Any donations we receive for the building project go directly to that, and do not go into our general account.

A DISAPPEARING CULTURE

Language often changes with cultural developments. It’s interesting how some of our idioms and expressions, while still used, have lost their connection to reality.

Carbon paper – its black surface, made of carbon, could be used to type or trace words or images to a new surface. Now we have other means of making “carbon copies.”

We may say we dialed a telephone number, but the dial that the expression came from is no longer around. We punch in numbers, or just speak them, to put a call through. Another telephone expression, “It’s

your nickel,” meant you were paying for the call. And a nickel paid for the first few minutes on a pay phone. Alas, when have you last seen a telephone booth? They are few and far between, and Superman has had to adapt his wardrobe changes accordingly.

“You sound like a broken record,” meant you were repeating yourself, like a phonograph needle stuck in a groove (try explaining that one to anyone under 20.) In fact, even saying ‘my disk is full’ is outdated.

While we may not be familiar with all the terms for new hairdos, we might know what a D.A. was, and a pageboy.

We can admire or despise graffiti, but one of the earlier things written on walls was “Kilroy was here,” dating back to the 1940s or earlier. Whoever Kilroy was, he really got around.

Did you know anyone who drove a jalopy, and could “go like sixty”? Or had a quantity of anything that was “more than Carter has liver pills”?

It’s way out of date to say, when departing, “See you in the funny-papers.” Sadly, even the funnies are disappearing.

Once-familiar objects now look strange. When cleaning out a closet or some boxes on the attic, might you find saddle shoes, a poodle skirt, pedal pushers, an 8-track player, glasses for viewing 3-D movies, flash bulbs (or cubes), or a slide rule? Believe it or not, there will come a time when today’s necessities are also on a list of nostalgic oddities.

And sadly, the Pa. Dutch phrases that our conversations were sprinkled with are disappearing too. Save a few, if you can.

THE BOTTLES OF BERKS COUNTY, PART II

Our newest book is about the local dairy and ice cream industry. This long-awaited sequel to Phil Kistler’s first bottle book is in the final stages of proofing before publication. Featuring more than 170 photos, this book has detailed descriptions of the histories of the milk and ice cream industries and the bottles and other accessories they used here in Northern Berks. This book should be available in late spring or early summer. Its price is yet to be determined. Look for an ad and order blank in the Summer Newsletter, to order your copy.

MADEIRA JUNK BUSINESS

My recollections, by *Therman W. Madeira*

1950 found Gertie Madeira, Kathryn Madeira Stetler (Gertie’s second-youngest of six children) and me sitting around our dining room table pondering a troublesome situation.

My grandmother (Gertie Schappell Madeira) looked across the big round table and calmly said “We have no money for food.” I didn’t comprehend the impact of that statement. I wasn’t hungry. We ate breakfast as usual. But then I was only 12 years old.

Kathryn had moved home with her 3-year-old son, Daniel, after a failed marriage. Home was 437 Franklin Street in Hamburg, just down the street from the white Evangelical Church at 4th and Franklin. Our property at 437 was a double lot with a large white house with a porch across the front, a sizeable garden, and a cinderblock and wood 1½ story garage across the entire back portion of the lot.

My grandmother Gertie went on, “Kathryn wants to go into the junk business like her father, Ed Madeira once had. We want to know, if she does this, will you help in the business?”

At 12 years old, I was fairly big and strong, so I blurted out, “Of course I’ll help.” Boy, I didn’t know what I was getting into. Two women, one in her late 20s and one in her early 60s, and a 12-year-old kid. Not much that Daniel, age three, could do in this big undertaking.

Kathryn and Granny went to Schlenker Motors on South Fourth Street and on credit bought a 1950 navy blue Ford 150 pickup truck, and the junk business began.

The base of our business was the huge garage at the back of the property. (Side note: 437 Franklin had at one time belonged to John Deemer, who ran a small butcher shop and also had been a canal boatman on the Schuylkill Canal.)

Well, that big garage wasn’t empty for long. Hamburg boasted “101 businesses” in those days, including merchants and manufacturing. They all had empty cardboard shipping containers, newspapers, excess metal, rags, etc. and they became our primary customers. They were glad to have someone clean out their stuff from storage rooms and basements two times a week. Kathryn and I made the rounds in the blue pickup on Tuesdays and Thursdays. (Another side note: we did not collect garbage. A farm we called “the piggery” out by the sani took collected garbage to be fed to the pigs. I don’t know who collected that.)

In the 1950s Kathryn’s clientele included the Acme, Rubin’s Men’s Store (later Smith’s), Doris Berry’s, Esther Mengle’s, Diener’s, Rau Brothers, the A&P, Kauffman’s Meat Market, Moyer’s Hardware, Ludwig’s Electric, Miller’s 5 & 10, Fryer’s, Smith’s Dairy, Alexander’s and Parfet’s jewelry stores, just to name a few.

Kathryn and I collected during the day, usually until 5 p.m. We filled the barn with the ”stuff” then took time

to eat supper. After supper, it was back to the barn to process the cardboard boxes by cutting, breaking and packing together to take to a Reading junk dealer. We loaded the truck usually until 10:30 or 11 p.m. then it was bedtime. Next day Kathryn drove the load to Pear & Company in Reading where it was weighed, unloaded and paid for. Kathryn was back home by 10 a.m. and then we would make house calls to pick up newspapers, scrap metal, etc. Gertie worked in the garage, processing and weighing materials and paying “walk-in” people for their unwanted junk. It was “recycling” at a time when that term was virtually unknown

Kathryn had 55-gallon drums in the garage, each for a specific material. Brass, copper, zinc, lead, unknown, we used magnets to test metals. Other materials were separated as well: Rags were “wipers” to be used by mechanics and painters, and “junk rags” were coats, sweaters, whatever. Each class of material brought its own price. The three of us were experts on “junk.”

During school days, after supper and homework, I worked in the garage, processing. Gertie and Kathryn did the picking up of junk.

I became a fairly big kid, and could use a sledge hammer like a toy. Electric stoves were all the rage, and cast iron ranges were old-fashioned. In the mid-1950s many homes had big old cast-iron stoves they wanted to get rid of. One of my jobs (and I loved it!) was breaking up those stoves with a sledge, into handling-size pieces.

The three of us worked in the junk business until 1962 when Kathryn met Lee Machmer of Allentown, got married, and moved away. At one time, she was featured on the national TV show “What’s My Line.” She was a classy lady, and got a manicure for that occasion, but I think they were able to guess her line, a “junk woman.”

The junk business was fun, didn’t seem that hard. We met very nice, grateful people in the process.

JEWELRY DONATIONS NEEDED

It’s not too early to start thinking about our used jewelry stand at the Hamburger Festival. We always have a good crowd, and do well, due to the amazing variety we offer. To donate, call us at 610-562-5904 or any of the officers listed on the back page of this newsletter.

We sell necklaces, bracelets, pins, earrings (pierced and clip-on), men’s and children’s jewelry, jewelry boxes, and purses.

We appreciate your interest and anything you can contribute to this project.



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Daniel and Therman and Ford truck



Daniel Stettler and loaded truck



Kathryn and her 1956 Ford

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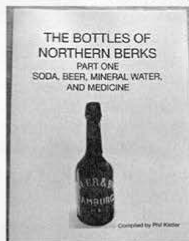
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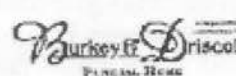
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Kuhn Funeral Home would like to thank Steve Burkey and John Driscoll for all of their compassionate care they have given to the Hamburg community.



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Check out our Memorial Brick Walkway in front of the Museum. Memorial bricks may be ordered at any time, with any names you want, limited to three lines of print. Order forms are available at the Museum, or call 610-488-1817.

Our various books may be purchased at the Museum.

Hamburg Area 1752-1852

Hamburg Area 1850-2000

In Our Neck of the Woods (2nd printing)

Home Cooking and Eating Out (5th printing)

The Bottle Book

Bicentennial History Book (1976)

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