



# HAMBURG AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Volume 23, Issue 3

*"Preserving Our Past For The Future"*

Summer 2024

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

One of the best things about summer is visiting parks and historical sites, and our state is blessed with many of them. Walking through old buildings and seeing how our ancestors lived and made do with just raw materials and hand-made tools is amazing. Air conditioning was unheard of. The buildings were often made of stone and kept cool naturally, and smaller windows kept the sun out. Shade trees, cellars and springhouses were places to cool off.

I have scouted my own area in Tilden Township for historical outbuildings. There are many still standing, and the current owners were generous in showing them to me and allowing me to photograph them. I saw old wash houses where the family would soak clothes and linens in kettles of water and lye soap and scrub them on a washboard, then rinse in another kettle, then finally wring them out and hang them on a line. I saw smokehouses and butcher sheds that are still occasionally in use. Ground cellars that are still serviceable would be a great place to sit and read a book on a hot day! But the most abundant buildings I found are outhouses. I even found a two-seater! We may not use them for their original purpose, but they make cute storage sheds. I use mine as a potting shed. So keep your eyes open as you travel country roads and enjoy the area we live in and the history waiting to be discovered.

Speaking of historical sites, our organization will be hosting a bus trip to Gettysburg on September 10. See details in this newsletter. We will have a knowledgeable tour guide, fun and games on the bus, and a good meal before heading home. No matter how many times I've been to Gettysburg, I always learn something new. It looks peaceful and beautiful now, but you can't go there without feeling the presence of those who lost their lives there. The bus will fill quickly, so call for reservations if you'd like to join us.

The BBQ in April was very successful. Thanks to all who helped.

We wish you a wonderful summer and hope to see you at the picnic in July and at the Hamburger Festival at the end of August.

Deb Billman, President

## NEW MEMBERS

Scott Thren, Hamburg  
Jeff Schreppe, Seabeck, WA  
Brayden Heckman, Hamburg

## COMING EVENTS

*Since we hold our regular meetings at the High School, we do not have meetings during the summer break. But that does not mean we have no activities. Note them below. And when school starts again in September, our regular meetings and programs will resume, on the first Thursday of each month, at 7 p.m. at the High School, usually in the LGI room.*

**July 11** - Our annual picnic, held in the pavilion at St. Michael's Church. See details on page 2.

**August 15** - Tour Orwigsburg Historical Society 5:30 p.m. See details on Page 2.

**August 31 (the Saturday before Labor Day)** is the annual Taste of Hamburg-er Festival. Our Historical Society always sets up a stand on North Third Street.

**September 5** - Regular meeting. Program by Dwayne Henne based on his book "Henne Legacy" covering his ancestors' journey from Germany to Pennsylvania in the 1750s.

**September 10** - Bus trip to tour the Gettysburg Battlefield, featuring the soldiers from our area who fought there in July 1863. See details on Pg. 2.

**October 3** - Charlie Adams III program "Ghosts of Hamburg." Don't miss this one!

## BBQ A BIG SUCCESS

On April 28 we held our annual BBQ and distributed the meals from the cafeteria of Hamburg Area Middle School. Thanks to the volunteers who worked on the line, and the bakers who stocked our baked goods tables, many people ate well that day! We did pork BBQ and sides from Smokin' Rubs, and sold out the large selection of donated baked goods from our members. Our profit was \$4,441 from the food, and we sold some of our history books there as well. We anticipate having this event twice a year from now on. See photo on Pg.2.

### *In This Issue:*

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## **OUR HAMBURGER FESTIVAL STAND DONATIONS APPRECIATED**

Spring leads to summer, and then at the end of that season there is the Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, which is always on the Saturday before Labor Day. Our stand will be at its usual place, across the street from the Post Office on North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Volunteers and customers are essential for the event, but the basis of our success is the donations of used jewelry etc. we receive from thoughtful and caring people. We always acknowledge that our items are donated.

Our eclectic stand has three aspects. The games include a dime toss (for all ages) and a fishing hole where every little tot wins a prize. Game prizes include donated mugs, cups, and stuffed toys. Our information table sells our history books, cookbook, and other published material, as well as collectible King Frost Parade pins. The jewelry sale area could not exist without donations of items for children, men and women, including bracelets, pins, rings, pierced and clip-on earrings, jewelry boxes, purses, men's items, and of course necklaces of any design and color. This variety provides a diverse mixture not usually available elsewhere.

Donations of jewelry etc., and mugs and stuffed animals are appreciated throughout the year. Call 610-562-5904. Also, volunteers are needed for the set-up and take-down crews, as well as tending the stands. Call an officer or board member, or the phone at our Historical Society house at 610-562-3664. Can you donate an hour or two of your time for one of our biggest fund-raising efforts? This is an important fund-raiser for us each year, and our crews of helpers are the stars of the show! Our stand is near to a very good music stage, so we enjoy that as well.



*Another successful BBQ*

## **JOIN US AT OUR ANNUAL PICNIC**

Mark your calendars. Thursday, July 11 is the date of our annual picnic, held at St. Michael's Church pavilion. It is a covered dish social, with everyone bringing a food item to share. We will set up at 5:30 and eat at 6, indoors in air conditioned comfort. Hot dogs, drinks and paper products will be provided by the Historical Society. The program will be "Historical Americana Music" by Harry Prutzman. Bring the family for an evening of good food, fun and conversation.

## **VISIT TO ORWIGSBURG MUSEUM**

On Thursday, August 15 we will be taking a tour of the Orwigsburg Historical Society's museum at 1009 East Mifflin Street in Orwigsburg. The tour will begin at 5:30 p.m. We are also invited to join their meeting at 7 p.m., and the program is "From Württemberg to the New World: The 400-year journey of a Pennsylvania-German family." To carpool, meet at Hamburg Bible Church, 731 Port Clinton Ave., Hamburg, at 5 p.m.

## **GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD TRIP**

Join Hamburg Area Historical Society as we storm the Gettysburg Battlefield! We have scheduled a bus trip for Tuesday, September 10. We will leave at 6 a.m. from the Walmart parking lot (nearest to Mavis Tire). Our tour guide will be Ben Varner, founder of "Walking in Their Shoes: Civil War," a project to connect families with their Civil War heritage. The tour will be a Berks County centric tour as Ben highlights the contributions of units from Berks. He will also call attention to several special individuals from our area as we tour the battlefield. We will be "walking in their shoes" as we go to the areas where these units fought. "There will be some walking parts to this tour. Other details:

\*Bring a brown bag lunch

\*An evening buffet dinner at the Farmhouse Restaurant in Gettysburg is included in the price. For more information see [thebarnpa.com](http://thebarnpa.com).

\*We will return to Hamburg at 9 p.m.

\*All gratuities are included in the price, \$85.

\*To reserve your seat, email Brian Riegel at [acesop32273@comcast.net](mailto:acesop32273@comcast.net) or direct message the Hamburg Area Historical Facebook Page. Only 27 seats are remaining. This is a fundraiser for the Society, and a unique way to learn history.

## ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Each year our Historical Society gives a scholarship to a graduating student at Hamburg Area High School with a high grade in social studies. This year the \$100 scholarship and a year's membership to our historical society goes to Brayden Heckman. We congratulate him and wish him well in his future studies.

## WEEDERS WANTED

The warm summer weather has encouraged all sorts of weeds to grow in the small backyard space behind our museum, adjacent to our parking area. It would be great if one or two people could come some morning and pull out these weeds and haul them off. Please call 610-488-1817 to volunteer for this job.

## BOTTLE BOOK #2 ALMOST HERE

Our latest book, "Dairy Industries: Milk and Ice Cream" is being printed. With loads of pictures of milk bottles and other dairy memorabilia, this new 172-page book by Phil Kistler will be for sale for \$35 in late June. Copies will also be available at our picnic on July 11. This unique book of local interest would be a great gift or a nice addition to your book shelf.



## DONATION FROM VIRGINVILLE GRANGE

On May 1, some of our officers and members attended the meeting of the Virginville Grange, where we were given a check from that organization for \$1,500. They praised our efforts in preserving local history, an endeavor that they share as well.



*Our members and officers receive a check from the Virginville Grange*

## SEEING THOSE OLD PLANES FLY AGAIN

During the World War II Weekend, held at the Reading Regional Airport each year in early June, we can always anticipate hearing and seeing B-29s fly over Hamburg again. There is no mistaking the sound, as they approach, and we go out and look up, and yes, there it is, and we proudly salute the plane that helped to win the war, and will always bring back memories.

In the early 1940s, it was rarely just one plane up there. They flew over in large formations, and gave us hope, even in the dark days when headlines were somber. We drew pictures of these planes on the brown paper covers of our school books, and played at being pilots and gunners. Am I giving away our age here? Some of us do "remember Pearl Harbor," and also the air raid drills when school children went to shelters and put on entertainment to pass the time. It was never very scary, unlike the experiences in shelters in Europe, but it was necessary to be ready, just in case.

Blackouts were held, to prevent any enemy from seeing targets. With all our foundries, mills and factories producing war materiel, and the railroads and highways in this area, we could have been a target, if things had gotten that far. Private citizens manned lookout posts, ready to report any unfamiliar aircraft. Scrap drives collected metal, and kids brought tin cans to school, to be turned into tanks and planes and guns.

This is why we get a lump in our throats and tears in our eyes when those old planes fly over. We were in a war on two fronts, and we managed to win it. That's what we remember when we hear and see those old planes. Thank a veteran today.

## MYSTERY PHOTO

The picture of the building in our last issue was identified by these callers: Joe Barr, Dean Dalious, David McFall, Bill Dalious, Leroy Rentschler, Richard Stine, and Tom Yoder.

That old red building stood at 253 Washington Street in Hamburg for many decades, and the sign above its door used to say Jacob Muntz, Blacksmith and Auctioneer. Those of us who remember it can recall its open door, the glow of the furnace, and the ring of hammer on metal in its dim interior. There were often retired men in there, sitting around solving the problems of the world, and visitors bringing or picking up work. Sometimes you could hear harmonica music as well. Dean Dalious recalls that Jake made rings out of horseshoe nails and gave them out to kids. Jake Muntz was born in 1888. He was a blacksmith and Army veteran of WWI. When he retired in 1977, he had been a blacksmith for 70 years. Jake also became an auctioneer at age 20, and he cried sales in several counties for fifty years. He and his wife Lizzie lived on 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Shoemakersville. After her death, he resided with a nephew, Donald Keim, of Bernville RD2. Jake died in 1979, age 91.

A nostalgic drawing by Tim Barr of Jake at his shop can be seen in our publication “In Our Neck of the Woods.”

That side of Washington Street has certainly changed, since all these building on the north side have been torn down: Charlie Showers garage, Jake’s blacksmith shop, and the Smith Engineering building.

If you can identify one or more of these Girl Scouts in our new Mystery Photo please call 610-488-1817 and leave a message. You will get a call back.

*Mystery  
Photo*



## MADEIRA TRUCKING COMPANY

Our northern Berks County area has always been a transportation crossroad – from the days when the river and Indian trails were the only routes through the forested terrain. Then roads, a canal, and railroads brought the world past our doors. In the present day, trucks are the mainstay of transportation, one source saying that trucks deliver at least 70 percent of all goods in the United States.

Having two interstate highways going through Hamburg, and later around it on bypasses, we are all familiar with the steady parade of tractor trailers going through, day and night. They make it possible to pick up and deliver goods from mills, factories, warehouses, and take them right to stores and customers. How did this mode of transportation come about?

In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, some businesses saw a need for a vehicle to haul large cargoes – logs, boats, cars, machinery. From early models, which were sometimes refurbished surplus Army trucks with trailers, the semi was developed and improved, and in time these large trucks drove nationwide, much of it on roads that had been built for horses and wagons or small vehicles. The national interstate system of better highways, built after the end of WWII, did a lot to help the trucking industry.

A local man, Edward F. Madeira, came home from Navy duty and in 1946 he chose to go into the trucking business, and bought two trucks. Much of his early business was delivering for other local firms, and in 1948 he got permission from the Interstate Commerce Commission to haul plow parts for the Hamburg Plow Works to more distant areas. His business, located at the east end of Island Street, kept growing, with more trucks, more local men employed as drivers. The original garage was expanded several times, in 1954 and 1966, with large additions built by local contractor Howard Ernst. A common sight were Fruehauf and Peterbilt trailers parked along Fifth Street,

ready to be hooked up to haul freight. By the 1970s, he had an even larger paved area at the end of Island Street and about 80 trucks and tractors.

Madeira used Ford equipment to haul these trailers, and in July 1950 he signed up to participate in Ford's nationwide Economy Run, with a Ford V-8 tractor model from Schlenker Motors. This was a promotional effort by Ford to publicize driving statistics, and Madeira had to record every mile traveled with that truck, every load hauled, gas and oil used, plus any repairs and maintenance for the next six months. His runs included weekly trips hauling rolls of knit goods for Globe Bleach and Dye from Shoemakersville to Kentucky.

Madeira's tally showed they hauled loads averaging 23,133 pounds, for a total of 42,895 miles in that six months (July 1, 1950 to January 1, 1951). The truck averaged 6.8 miles per gallon, with gas costing 24.1 cents per gallon. His work for this promotional event impressed the Ford people, and his part in it was written up in Ford's national advertising in 34 trade magazines. Pictured were his truck and the loading platform at the Pennsylvania Railroad freight station in Hamburg, and showed Burkey Underwear and the Hamburg Broom Works buildings in the background.

One of the drivers, Edward's brother Therman E. Madeira, eventually logged two million miles, and also worked as a mechanic for the firm. The industry is well-regulated, with limits on drivers' hours, and weight limits for loads. It's a demanding job, but there have been welcome improvements - excellent truck stops, better highways, modern weighing systems, and of course the introduction of CB radios. By the 1970s, when almost every driver had a CB radio, the road was a lot less lonely.

Edward Madeira branched out to include Madeira Leasing Company. In 1974 these were transferred to his son, Edward K. Madeira. He sold them in 1979 to Penske Leasing of Reading, but continued to own and operate a contract carrier operation, employing about 20 people. At present day, that Island Street location is owned and operated by Eshelman Transportation.

You are never out of earshot of a highway in this locality. The hum of the tires, the rumble of the big rigs, is part of our lives. Going back two centuries, the teamsters were not a truckers' union, but busy men driving teams of oxen, mules and horses, hauling iron ore, farm products, animals, machinery, on well-travelled gravel roads where four-lane highways are now. Many local men worked as drivers, and some of them chose to be armed, because they could be waylaid and robbed. Drivers making deliveries carried money on the way home. Are you familiar with the legends about Schaumbach's, a stopover for anyone driving over Hawk Mountain? Some of them never got to the other side.

One Saturday in June, 1950, Hamburg's police chief, Paul Rau, counted the vehicles that passed through town on State Street (Route 22) and Fourth Street (Route 122) for two hours, 10 a.m. to noon. He counted 2,002 cars and trucks. Doing the math, that's about 16 per minute, through the intersection that had the only traffic light in town. No wonder standing on Rip's corner and watching traffic go by was so entertaining! Another survey, about five years ago, estimated 41,000 vehicles per day went through Hamburg on I-78. It's certainly even more now, and all of us who can see the highway know that the stream of trucks and cars is heavy any hour of the day or night.



*Madeira's truck parked on South 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Note Hamburg Plow Works in background. L-R: Therman E. Madeira, Ralph Schlenker, Edward F. Madeira*

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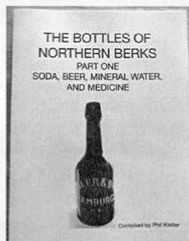
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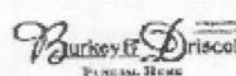
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Check out our Memorial Brick Walkway in front of the Museum. Memorial bricks may be ordered at any time, with any names you want, limited to three lines of print. Order forms are available at the Museum, or call 610-488-1817.

Our various books may be purchased at the Museum.

Hamburg Area 1752-1852

Hamburg Area 1850-2000

In Our Neck of the Woods (2<sup>nd</sup> printing)

Home Cooking and Eating Out (5<sup>th</sup> printing)

The Bottle Book

Bicentennial History Book (1976)

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