



HAMBURG AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Volume 23, Issue 1

"Preserving Our Past For The Future"

Winter 2024

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year to all !!! I hope you enjoyed happy, healthy holidays.

2023 has been a roller-coaster year for our Building Project. However, 2024 is looking much better for groundbreaking for our new museum. Our funding has been arranged through Customer Bank, our plans have been finalized with Owl Creek Construction, and donations have been steady. We still need to keep those donations coming in, as we now have a loan to pay off. Other organizations have had success with larger individual contributions spread out over a three year pledge period. If this is something you want to consider, please talk to one of our board members.

Recently we have placed notices on vehicles on our new lot, letting people know we will no longer tolerate parking there. The lot will have to be vacant for upcoming construction. We do not want to incur any liabilities for damage to vehicles left there, or as in three cases, cars without an updated registration. Things have gotten out of hand with trash left on the lot as well. Please help spread the word, as the borough has said they would help us enforce our No Parking, No Trespassing signs.

This year we have enjoyed many good programs. Brian has another exciting year of programs planned for us. Be sure to check your newsletters throughout the year for programs, field trips and fundraisers.

A big thank you to everyone who helped contribute their time, talents and monetary contributions to our organization this year so we may continue to "preserve our past for the future."

Deb Billman, President

NEW MEMBERS

Dennis and Barbara Dietrich, Hamburg
Kay Fritz, Hamburg
Patrick and Jill Gehringer, Mechanicsburg
Annette George, Mohrsville
Glenn McNeil, Hamburg
Linda Mills, Hamburg

COMING EVENTS

Our regular meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month when school is open. They are held at 7 p.m. in the LGI room at the High School unless otherwise noted. A speaker or program will be held after a brief business meeting. Open to all - come and bring a friend.

January - Eat at Deitsch Eck. See article below.

February 1 - Show and tell. Our focus will be on metal objects from our foundries, but you can bring any object of local interest. Meet in the James Gilmartin Board Room at high school.

March 7 - To be determined.

April 4 - Dowsing, how it works and can help with your garden!

April 28 - Our annual BBQ, featuring pork BBQ, and home baked goods. Tickets will be mailed to local members, and they will also be sold by members. See article on page 2.

May 2 - Ben Varner speaks about the local regiments in the Civil War.

Plate It Forward at Deitsch Eck in Lenhartsville

*For the month of January, when a customer orders any Pa. Dutch Special on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, dine in or take out, \$1 from each special will be donated to our Historical Society. No ID needed, it will happen automatically. **The specials are:***

January 3, 4, 5 - corn Pie

Jan. 10, 11, 12 - chicken pot pie

Jan. 17, 18, 19 - shepherd's pie

Jan. 24, 25, 26 - chicken and waffles

Reservations are suggested.

Wed. & Thurs. 4 to 7 p.m.; Fri. & Sat. 4 to 8 p.m.

Sunday 11:30 to 7 p.m.

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MORE DONORS TO BUILDING FUND

We present our third list of donors, consisting of those from July 2023 to the end of the year. We certainly appreciate all who have come forward to help our efforts to create a new museum, bringing us ever closer to achieving our goal. Some of the people on this new list have also donated before.

\$10,000:

David and Irene Eyer
Harold Holtzman

\$4,500:

Strausstown Rod and Gun Club

\$3,300:

Hamburg Grange

\$2,000:

Michael and Jane Adams

\$1,000:

Dennis and Louise Bowers
Donald and Lorraine Coombe
Thomas R. Confer Estate

\$500:

Kathryn Kaercher Becek
Jean Horning
Cynthia McElrea
Phil Kistler
Rebecca Heffner in memory of Elizabeth, Wm. & Betty

Seidel

Lee Heffner in memory of Stanley and Ellen Heffner

\$100 to \$499:

Allen and Lela Epting
Bob and Mary Hannon
Dennis and Betty Haag
Dolores Ritter
Barry Haag
Donna Dusso
Tom and Jan Yoder
Glenn McNeil
Steve Correll
Janet McElpatrick Peters

Up to \$99:

Mary Loose
Larry and Sandra Adams
William Dalious
Karen Fister
Matthew Haag
Beverly Hess
Rose Loose
Marian Yeakley
John Bachman Jr.
Ernest Leshner
A. Brian Moyer
Donald and Jerilyn Peters

MORE BRICKS LAID IN WALKWAY

It had been a while since the new bricks ordered for our Memorial Brick Walkway had been put in place, but this fall Joe Barr volunteered for the task, and laid 26 bricks in place. Pat Pitkin keeps a spreadsheet of the location of all the bricks, so those wishing to find the ones they are interested in can easily do so. Once we move to our new location at 4th and Franklin Street, this important feature of our museum will be moved too. We have marked a special place on our landscape plans for our Memorial Walkway.

OUR BBQ WILL BE APRIL 28

If they purchase BBQ tickets, people will not have to cook on Sunday, April 28, taking home a delicious BBQ meal instead, and also they will be helping our organization financially. The boxed dinner will consist of a generous helping of pork BBQ and sauce, a bun, a baked potato and apple sauce. Also, we will have a bake sale, with all sorts of home-baked treats for sale.

Local members will receive six tickets for the BBQ in the mail, which they can use or sell, and all money for the tickets MUST be returned by a specific date (to be determined) in April, so that we can tell the vendor how many meals will be needed. We do order some extra meals, but not many, so do not count on that. If you want more tickets than the original six, call Beryl at 610-488-6818, or any officer, before that closing date. People love these BBQs, so put on your salesman's hat and see how many you can sell. This fund-raiser is always a hit, so mark it on your calendar. Meals distributed from the Middle School cafeteria.

We would love if all the good bakers out there would bake their favorites and help make this a success. Any baked goods should be brought to the Middle School cafeteria on the day of the BBQ, before 10 a.m., or you can call any officer and make arrangements with them. The people in charge of the bake sale will be able to cut portions and box them, or you can box or bag them yourself. People do look forward to our bake sale.

MYSTERY PHOTO

The sign in the photo helped identify our last Mystery Photo. Quite a few people remembered the Acme Market when it was located at State

Street and Peach Alley, back in the late 1950s. (Soon after that the grocery company moved to the 700 block of S. 4th St.) Earlier, an old home with a picket fence surrounding its back yard was on the corner at 262 State Street for many decades, belonging to the Luberg family. When they had all died, the place was torn down and Hamburg's first "super market" was built there. It featured *a door that opened automatically* when someone approached – a thing we now take for granted but it really amazed customers back then! After the Acme moved, the store became a Thriftway grocery, and then an IGA. The IGA had just moved to its new location on east State Street when, on July 3, 1980, the empty store at 260 State Street burned down. That location was then sold and a doctor's building was built there.

Calling to identify the Acme photo were Denny Bowers, Lynn Ernst, Barry Haag, Dolores Hess, David McFall, Beryl Schrack, Donna Sweigert, Jean Sweigert, David Trump, and Tom Yoder. All had special memories associated with that store.

Probably no one can remember when the front part of the Luberg home was an early "5 and 10", but some might recall when the local gas company had a small store in there. There was a show window built into the front of that house.

Our new Mystery Photo should be familiar to some people, as the building is still there, a bit changed. If you can ID it or the location, call 610-488-1817 and leave a message. You will get a call back.



Mystery Photo

NEED ANSWERS? WE HAVE THEM

Editors and writers love research, and they often go right to Google when they are looking for answers. However, that source is no help sometimes, especially for details of local people, places, and events. But our Historical Society has

a library that focuses on the details of this area, and very often has those answers.

It is surprising how much you can find out by perusing our various books. For instance, we found the details on that IGA fire (see Mystery Photo) in "Hamburg Area 1850-2000." Many a discussion has been enlivened by looking at our collection of "Pinnacle" yearbooks! Our other major history book, "Hamburg Area 1752-1850" has not only history but amazingly clear old photos, fraktur and maps. We still have some copies of the "Bicentennial History of Hamburg Borough" printed in 1976 by the Bicentennial Committee, and it contains a lot of pictures and articles that make people exclaim, "Wow, I never knew that." Our recently-published Bottle Book features beautiful color photos of the old glassware from area bottlers, distillers, and doctors, embossed with their names, many of which are very rare and sought by collectors. Not just a picture book, it also contains much information on those businesses, with a sense of what life was like back then. A book on glass milk bottles from local dairies, as well as other dairy and ice cream information and photos, will be coming out soon.

More sources of information that we have are old directories of the area, in which the ads are just as interesting as the other data. We have a unique atlas with very detailed maps of towns and townships in Berks County in 1876, and a 2-volume set of Montgomery's "History of Berks County" published in 1909, which has so many fascinating stories of local families. Our shelves contain books on the canal, and the histories or directories from local churches, cemeteries and villages. We have a unique book of all the deaths and resultant burials of patients at the TB Hospital, compiled by two of our members. Our ever-popular cookbook "Home Cooking and Eating Out" is in its 5th printing, and is more than a book of recipes. It has anecdotes, photos, nostalgia on every page. Another of our popular books is "In Our Neck of the Woods," which is a collection of stories about our people and places, and brings out this area's character like no other.

A real gold-mine of information can be found in the 100 years of bound copies of *The Hamburg Item*, where you'll read history in the making, through the decades. The ads in those are as fascinating as the news.

We have many photo albums and scrap books that preserve the past. And they are not “in the cloud,” they are there on our shelves, to be paged through and enjoyed. We encourage visitors, and it’s all free. We are open each Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m., or other times by appointment. Even better, if you purchase our published books, you’ll have them at your fingertips always.

Moving day, when we acquired all those Hamburg Items, was May 6, 2014. On a flat-bed truck borrowed from Ryan Strauss, some of our members transported the heavy shelves, and took the large books in their cars, from the Item office on 4th Street to our museum. 100 years of local news is now an important research tool at our museum.



Elmer Schrack and Ryan Strauss moving Item shelves out.



Item shelves arrive at 102 State Street



Moving crew (l-r): Elmer Schrack, Dale Graff, Craig Correll, Janet Barr, Pat Pitkin, and Ted Miller

CRITERIA FOR MUSEUM ARTIFACTS

Over the years, we have received thousands of artifacts, photos, books and other things that are useful in preserving our history and way of life. We certainly appreciate that people entrust these things to us, and will do our best to display them or keep them available for research.

However, sometimes boxes of things are left at our door that do not belong in our museum, and then we have to dispose of them. To remedy this, we have drawn up a guideline for what we can accept for the museum.

*It must have to do with **our area**.*

*It must have a **historic value**.*

*Photos should be **identified** – who, where, when if possible, and any other details.*

*Any **duplicates** will be sold or returned.*

When you have something to donate, call or bring it in and show it to an officer or board member. If accepted, they will fill out a donation form. This will help us in the huge task of designing and creating good exhibits at our new museum.

We apologize for the cluttered conditions at our present location. We have been overwhelmed with so many good items, and ran out of place to put them. We’ll strive to do better as soon as we have place to do so.

OUR PAST – WE MADE THE BEST

We were the “Broom Capital of America”, if not the world, at one time. The large broom factories here made a wide variety of brooms, suitable for many tasks. For instance, one model was made of materials that would not create static electricity, for use in dynamite factories. Industries and housewives all had their favorites, and the local workers who took pride in their work made them all. It was an exacting task, using carefully chosen broom corn, striving for perfection.

Our other industries also made products that were known for excellent quality, some sent all over the world. Hahn fire engines, specialty boilers from Hamburg Boiler Works, castings from our various foundries, clothing from the mills, bricks from giant kilns, a variety of batteries, were made by local workers and shipped out to a waiting world. During WWII, several local industries were awarded the Navy E

and other commendations for their important contributions to the war effort.

Other products had a more limited but no less appreciative clientele. Our ice cream, baked goods, and candy came from people who prided themselves on producing the best. And of course, the dairies would provide free delivery of fresh milk etc. to homes before breakfast! People could have confidence that the local farms and orchards were doing their best, and the small independent butcher shops provided exactly what the people wanted. The products of Dreibelbis Mill near Shoemakersville were much in demand. And all would agree, Keiser's Peanut Store had the best candied popcorn and roasted peanuts ever!

We took for granted that a job worth doing is a job worth doing well. Manufacturers could rely on the pattern shops and machine shops to do things right and on time. Rau Brothers was known for excellent custom-made tinware, as well as new tin roofs, and they created some stylish metal ceilings, and the unique ticket booth at the Strand Theater. There were hard-working individuals doing wallpapering and painting who would never do an inferior job. Some of the tiny crossroad communities had a busy mill or a creamery, and most had a general store.

The stores in a small town have to be good or they don't last. The little stores like 5 & 10s and shoe stores, clothing and jewelry stores, pharmacies, hardware and lumber stores, knew their customers and aimed to please. Grocery stores faced stiff competition, so had to do their best. Our "department stores" provided extra services such as free delivery, personal attention, and of course, Santa Claus at Christmas time.

So it was not only for that weekly paycheck that the thousands of local people went to work each day, it was also for the satisfaction of doing a necessary job, and doing it well. And getting to be fast and accurate, if they were on piece-work!

At our museum, a popular feature is the many photos of all the workers at various industries, taking time to line up outside their plant, to be snapped for posterity. Owners, foremen, workers, all pleased to be part of a job well done.

We look forward to creating special exhibits in our new museum, featuring this area's industries and mercantile establishments. There are still folks who remember when there were long lines of workers at banks on pay day, and

lots of shoppers visiting the stores any day of the week (except Sunday!). We take very seriously our mission of preserving that unique past.

HIGHWAYS BYPASSED HAMBURG

In May 1952, the Pa. Highway and Bridge Authority announced plans to build highway bypasses around Hamburg. For decades, interstate traffic used State Street, resulting in spectacular truck accidents at the intersection of 4th and State. Coal trucks and plenty of other vehicles drove through town on 4th Street. This was about to change, with bypasses of routes 122 and 22, to the west and north.

First to be built was the section of Route 122 (now Rt. 61) from Five Locks to Port Clinton. C.W. Good of Lancaster got the contract to build four miles of the bypass, to include a nine-span concrete arch bridge, 880 feet long, over the river, railroad and Rt. 22, what is now Old 22. It would also involve a cloverleaf with the Route 22 bypass, in Tilden Township.

The bypass of Rt. 122 opened to traffic on September 16, 1955. Fourth Street got quieter.

These photographs were given to us by Bob Mazaika, whose father Al Mazaika worked on the bridge project.

It is interesting to note that when the forms for the arches were no longer needed, our Hamburg Fire Company used them to build the Field House. The arched roof of that building echoes the arches under Route 61.



Route 122 bridges under construction, early 1950s

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Our annual membership dues is \$25 per household.

Our Museum at 102 State Street is open each Sunday afternoon, except holidays, from 1 to 4 p.m. We are proud of our large collection of photos and newspaper clippings, books on historical subjects, yearbooks, histories of towns and churches, and 100 years of *The Hamburg Item* newspapers. We have artifacts of all kinds to pique your interest. Come and browse to your heart's content. Admission is free.

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)

HAMBURG AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2024 OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Vice President – Elmer Schrack 610-488-6818

Secretary – Janet Barr 610-562-0240

Treasurer – Scott Lakits 484-332-9440

Membership – Pat Pitkin 610-488-1817

Programs – Brian Riegel 484-523-2554

Museum Coordinators – Pat Pitkin & Elmer Schrack

Facebook Page – Brian Riegel

Directors: Cathy Correll, Barbara Graff, Pat Pitkin,
Brian Riegel, Marcia Scharadin, Pat Lakits,
Sandy Christman

Newsletter: Janet Barr (editor), Dale Graff, Barbara Graff,
Pat Pitkin, Brian Riegel

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