

**The Old Stone House:
A History
By
Douglas Sturm**

In 1965, my wife, Margie, and I, together with our sons, Hans (age 5) and Rolf (age 3), entered into the ongoing history of an Old Stone House on the banks of the Susquehanna River located in what is now Lewisburg, PA. And there, Margie and I continued to live for 34 years. Its location—in the current designation of the US Postal Service—is 37 South Water Street, Lewisburg, PA 17837.

A house, it should be understood, is far more than a building. It is a history, or more precisely, a story of stories. As it evolves from year to year, it changes in important ways.



The William Williams House, 37 S. Water St., Lewisburg 1786

During that time, stories about the house are told and passed on across generations—some susceptible to scholarly verification, others not—yet each is part of its overall history, enriching its residents and envioning community.

In its beginning, this Old Stone House emerged from a tract of land of about 320 acres

acquired in 1773 by Ludwig Derr from Richard Peters of Philadelphia, Secretary of the Land Office for the William Penn family. The tract bordered on the West bank of the Susquehanna River just south of Buffalo Creek—at that time part of Northumberland County.

In 1785, Derr determined to create a town within that property, securing the services of Samuel Weiser, a surveyor, to design a pattern of streets to some of which Derr assigned names of members of his family. The town's original name, Derrstown, was later changed by the populace to Lewisburg (Lewis is an anglophilic version of Ludwig). In Derr's sketch South Water Street, closest street to the River, was but one block long and remains as such. A later map extends South Water Street as far as St. George Street, yet that is unlikely. Strangely, it seems that Ludwig Derr, a few years after inaugurating this development, traveled to Philadelphia, then simply disappeared from the scene, his son George assuming management of the territory. In fairly quick succession, George sold the land to a Dutch merchant, who then sold it to Carrel Ellinkhursen, who in turn bestowed it on his son.

William Williams, who purchased directly from Derr in 1786 the land on which this Old Stone House is located, constructed both the stone house and a store. The store's location on this spot is most likely explained by the presence of a dam across the river slightly to its South. Rivers, at that time, were a major means of transportation with dams providing for the development of commercial activity wherever they were positioned. Williams' store, it has been suggested, was the primary trading post of Derrstown, and, as such, became a center for social interaction and political discourse. Remnants of the dam remain evident even yet in the twenty first century, especially when the river's waters are low.



37 S. Water St. from the rear yard, showing the conjoined frame building.

The house, when we purchased it in 1965, consisted of two conjoined parts. The fore part (facing the river) was a two story, four room structure with unfinished basement and

attic, made of field stone quarried most likely from a local source. The aft part—offset by about three feet to the South—was a frame building lacking basement and attic. At the time of our acquisition, these two structures were joined, but, it seems, originally they may have been separate from each other. More on that below. Several years ago the Old Stone House was named “the oldest surviving dwelling on the plat laid out” in 1785 [3].

In architectural design, the Old Stone House is described by one source as “Federal—plain, regular, orderly” [1], but by another as “a two-story, three-bay vernacular building constructed in rubble stone masonry” [3]. The latter source also comments the “the house has a simple molded cornice and window openings spanned by decorative jack arches.”

Williams, obviously an energetic entrepreneur, contributed to the enhancement of commerce in this portion of the town not only with his trading center. He is said to have initiated ferry service across the river to convey wagons to and from a dirt road running along its eastern bank [1, 2].

Describing the character of this part of town during its early years, an article in *The Daily Item* (March 30, 1997) was headlined, “Lewisburg's riverfront streets share a rowdy past.” The reporter documents this judgment in part by conjectured uses of the Williams' property during the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. These alleged uses, along with other matters, pose a series of yet unanswered questions.

Brothel. Some say that 37 South Water Street served river men (maybe others) as a brothel. When, under whose management, and in which portion of the house (stone or frame) have never been documented, although some suggest that the ghosts (friendly) of these sex workers continue to hover about the premises on occasion.

School. Some say that an early school was located on the property. Again, when, in which building, and under whose auspices are matters unanswered. Margie and I, as might be expected, are rather fond of this possibility given our own professional careers as educators.

Pub and Wine Cellar. Again, some historical commentators suggest that the property housed a pub. Intriguingly, it has been proposed that perhaps the pub included a tunnel between the Old Stone House and the handsome brick building next door (41 South Water). That building includes a strikingly fantastic vaulted brick basement, a perfect setting for a wine cellar, lending some slight credence to that story. However, the only evidence of the alleged tunnel is located on the north side of the brick house nearest to the front where, at ground level, there appears the outline of the top of a door later removed and bricked in.

Other, less dramatic, but no less intriguing questions about the Old Stone House also remain unanswered yet add to its long history.

Cement Porch and Front Door. At the time of our acquisition of the property the front entrance into the Old Stone House was situated at its southeast corner facing the river, requiring several steps up onto a rather massive concrete porch that extends beyond the south side of the house itself. Obviously both porch and steps were a late addition, most likely, some say, in the early decades of the 20th century, by a Mr. Wendel who at the time owned the property and was in the concrete business. Stylistically, this addition ill befits the architecture of the original house; however, eclecticism is often the fate of antique houses.

An added curiosity respecting the original front entrance to the Old Stone House is located on the inside front wall of the basement, where the outlines of a door, now stoned in, are discernible. Whether, as this seems to intimate, the original front door was located below



Walled in basement doorway in the wall facing Water Street

ground level remains undetermined, although, if so, it would match a similar entrance still in use at the basement's northwest corner facing the rear of the house. That entrance opens to a set of steps leading outdoors to ground level.

Basement: Natural Drain and Supportive Structure. Over the decades, aspects of the basement have been altered in various ways. Originally in the Old Stone House, the basement was most likely dirt. However, at some time a partial cement floor was added, perhaps to accommodate the installation of central heating, leaving one sizeable section open to the ground, although roughly covered with a moveable wooden platform. We were informed that the open spot was, in effect, a “natural drain,” serving a critical function on those occasions when the river flooded. As a matter of record, the West Branch of the Susquehanna River at Lewisburg from 1865 to 2011 suffered five major and nine moderate floods. During our

tenure in the house, we experienced the effects of one major (1972) and four moderate inundations. We can testify that, on those occasions, the drain, in fact, served such a function.

The centerpiece of the supportive structure of the house is a remarkably hefty wooden beam running north and south across the building's midpoint resting at each end on an indentation in the stone wall. As usual in such structures, joists run in a perpendicular direction, resting on notches in the central beam at one end and similar indentations in the



Main basement support beam with replaced end and newer support column

stonework at their other end. It seems that over the decades those portions of the beam and some of the joists resting on stone suffered from decay requiring remedial action. In the case of the beam, it appears that at each of its ends a short and slightly smaller beam was introduced resting in the stone wall and then, where it abuts the original beam (with the decay removed), both are supported by a sturdy square brick pillar.

As joists suffered from a similar fate, steel jack posts were installed when and where necessary, leaving the basement with, in appearance, a grove-like cluster of steel posts scattered throughout, some added during our own residency in the house.

Electric, Gas, Heating, and Water Systems. Most certainly, the Old Stone House was lacking these more modern systems and their respective conveniences for over a century. The house was heated originally by its four fireplaces, with light during evening hours probably provided by candles and kerosene lamps. Water must have been hauled from a well (its location is unknown). Cooking stoves were fueled by wood or coal. What specific years these modern systems were introduced is uncertain, likely in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

When we acquired the house a fuel oil furnace was located in the basement, employed

to heat and circulate water via a network of baseboard piping running throughout all rooms. The necessary exhaust system for the furnace appropriated the flues of the first and second floor fireplaces on the back section of the house. At that time, these two fireplaces were closed off and covered over leaving visible only a slight portion of their respective stone hearths. The other two fireplaces on the front of the house—downstairs living room and upstairs bedroom—were left open, though, given the absence of dampers, seldom used, stuffed instead with papers to reduce heat loss.

Similar changes to the structure of the Old Stone House (once joined to the frame house) occurred as other systems were introduced: electricity, water and plumbing, gas (for cooking)—resulting in a tangle of pipes and wires altogether detracting from the original appearance of the building especially on its inside, demonstrating that the conveniences of modern technology trump the purity of antique structures—for better or worse. Recent residents have added dampers in the useable fireplaces and centralized air conditioning.

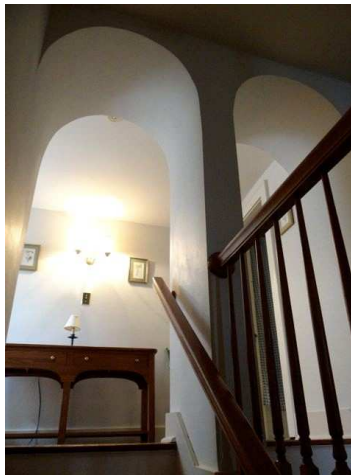
Bathrooms. The addition of bathrooms to the house, upstairs and downstairs, the former roughly above the latter, contributes to the puzzle about when the stone house and the frame house were joined. When these bathrooms were introduced, they were located not in the Old Stone House, but in the fore part of the frame house contiguous with the back wall of the stone structure, yet also extending out from the north wall of the frame house. That particular placement of the bathrooms might well suggest that, at that time, the stone and the frame houses had been previously separate from each other, but were conjoined in order to provide for these “modern” conveniences and make them accessible to both of the older buildings.

A Sizeable Step Up and an Altered Staircase. Possibly supporting that conjecture are two noticeable features also on the inside of the house at the point where the stone and frame structures are fused. First, both the first and second floor passageways from the stone house to the frame house require a considerable step up (approx. 12 inches). To be sure, the land from South Water Street to Walnut Alley (along the back property line) slants up appreciably, although it would have been easy to compensate for that had the two structures been joined at the start.

Second, close scrutiny of the top of the staircase to the second floor (which rests against the south wall of the stone house) at the top point of its newel suggests originally the final step required a ninety degree turn to the right onto the upstairs hallway. Currently, however, the

final step is straight ahead, precisely at the placement of the large step up from the stone house into the frame house, and near (on the right) to the entrance to the upstairs bathroom. The alteration of the staircase, in short, was needed to accommodate the addition of the bathroom and the joining of the two buildings.

Rounded Archways: An Anomaly. Possibly adding to that thesis is the presence of two decorative rounded archways at the top of the stairs. Passage through one happens as one steps from the staircase to the upstairs onto a floor at the height of the frame house. The other archway marks the large step down onto the (lower) hallway in the stone house. Architecturally the rounded archways clash with the original style of the Old Stone House. However, since the tops of the twin archways are of the same height, they seem to compensate visually for the difference in height of the two floors.



2nd Floor Archways between stone and frame buildings

In sum, whatever the reasons for joining the two houses, it seems likely that these changes—the addition of bathrooms, the altered staircase, and the rounded archways—all occurred at the same time, perhaps about 100 years ago.

Bay Window. A one-story three-panel bay window jutting out from the south wall of the Old Stone House was also introduced at some time in its later history, breaking the stylistic lines of the original structure, yet most likely added for good reason, primarily to provide more light and warmth from the sun during daytime hours and, secondarily, to allow a more expansive view of the river. The bay window may have replaced a regularly sized window, but that is unknown.

In either case, the bay window compensates for the notable lack of windows on both

the north and the south walls of the Old Stone House. The north wall (with only a small attic opening) lacks windows because it contains the extensive and intricate chimney system accommodating the four fireplaces. Respecting the south wall, all three staircases (basement to first floor, first to second floor, and second floor to attic) rest against it, making it awkward to place windows there (again, except for an attic opening). Five windows grace its front wall (plus a small basement opening and a half-window on the entrance door). How many were on its original back wall (prior to the joining of the wooden and stone houses) are unknown; currently there are two. Possibly, the bay window was added when the two houses were attached, resulting in the removal of two or more windows on the back wall together with the subsequent need for more light in the hallway and up the stairs.

The construction of the bay window required the removal of a portion of the south stonewall and the addition of a support structure, evident in the basement. Also evident in the basement is the removal of a portion of the back stonewall, allowing access from the original basement to a rather skimpy crawl space under the frame house providing access to piping and wiring.

Hurricane Agnes Flood (1972). As noted, we experienced the effects of one major flood during our tenure in the Old Stone House, resulting in the need for extensive repair. Flood



Flood of 1936

waters filled the basement bottom to top, reaching to about five and one-half feet on the first story. A photograph of the house (now in the possession of its current resident) in a previous major flood (1936) manifests a similar depth. We were strongly advised in 1972 not to initiate any major renovations for a full year, allowing ample time for the house to dry out thoroughly and to rid it of all mildew and mold. That we did, then proceeded with several reconstructions.

1. Re-mortaring (pointing) the stone walls. In general, mortar used to bind bricks or

stone together is susceptible to decay, ultimately disintegration. The Old Stone House had apparently not been re-mortared over many years, and the waters of the 1972 flood weakened its walls appreciably. Needing to restore the mortar throughout the entire structure top to bottom, we sought a mason versed in antique stone houses. At the advice of local experts, we secured the services of Parker Boop from Glenn Iron who, with two sons, undertook the task, though, at his insistence, we had to secure all the appropriate materials and scaffolding for him and he was to be paid in cash for his labor at the end of each week's work. With his advice and our ready acquiescence, the mortar was (slowly, but expertly) inserted flush between the stone, without decorative protrusion.

2. Re-plastering internal walls. Obviously, the flood raised havoc with plastered walls and ceilings throughout the downstairs rooms. Margie and I first removed multiple layers of wallpaper all of which were of a dark hue, uncovering horsehair plaster that we also removed down to the lath. We secured a team of plasterers from Mifflinburg to do the restoration who at first balked when Margie announced her desire to install an “old fashioned” style of plaster, but who, when finished, expressed their approval of the result. We then had all walls and ceilings painted white.

3. Electrical system. We were required to rewire the entire electrical system throughout the house, and did so, while replacing an old fuse box with a circuit breaker bringing the entire system up to the current code.

4. Flooring. Originally, the floors throughout the stone house consisted of soft wood boards of variable width. However, throughout the downstairs, the flooring was “modernized,” most likely during the early decades of the twentieth century according to a local floor specialist, by covering the original boards with a thin veneer of narrow and notched hardwood strips—many of which over subsequent years of use had cracked and broken. Moreover, the ravages of the 1972 flood resulted in some buckling of the boards. Rather than replace the entire floor during our post-flood renovation to replicate its original style, we accepted the advice of the specialist to do repairs as needed, then lightly sand and refinish the entire surface. After all, historic buildings, while they may represent an earlier time, are destined by the sheer force of history to change; efforts at full fledged restoration are themselves almost inevitably cosmetic.

5. Fireplace facade. However restoration is not always futile, as evidenced by a change induced by the flood's effects on our first floor front room fireplace. When we acquired the

Old Stone House, the wooden facade of that fireplace seemed somewhat out of sync with the style of the house, manifest especially in the character of its mantle (compared with its parallel in an upstairs bedroom). During the initial clean up following the flood, the entire wooden facade of that fireplace seemed to have loosened from the wall. With one slight touch, the entire facade came crashing to the floor, revealing a beautiful stone front that had been hidden from view. From a pile of scrap wood in the attic we retrieved a piece that matched the upstairs mantle, and enabled us, in our judgment, to accomplish one small work of genuine restoration.



Stone fireplace revealed below covering facade.

Doorways. From appearances, the doorways from the hall to the downstairs rooms and between the rooms themselves were all at some point widened and doors were removed, presumably with the introduction of central heating. As a result, the entire downstairs of the Old Stone House would have seemed far more spacious and admitted far more light than previously. That effect was enhanced when, following the flood, we removed dark wallpaper and painted walls and ceilings white.

Upstairs Rooms. Undamaged by the 1972 flood were the two dominant rooms on the upstairs of the stone house, both seemingly intended as bedrooms. The front room retains, in our judgment, the basic features of its 18th century origin. Its fireplace, though unused, remains intact; the character of its closets, its window and door frames seem original; its wide board flooring appears not to have changed.

The back room, however, has been transformed in significant ways. Its fireplace, given the introduction of central heating, has been almost entirely hidden. Those from whom we purchased the property, to accommodate allergies of their older son, paneled all the walls and inserted a false ceiling. Only the flooring remains intact.

A Third Small Room. Entrances to each of the two dominant rooms are from a hallway running from the top of the stairway toward the front of the building. Just beyond the doorway of the front bedroom, however, the hallway ends with a door entering a very small space with a window facing the street and from which rises the stairway to the attic. That small space was used as a bedroom by the previous owners, but then as a hideaway study for Margie during her high school teaching career.



Notched beams in the attic of stone section;
stone-enclosed flues against end wall.

The Frame House. Among the historical mysteries that remains unresolved is whether the frame house, now integrated with the stone house, was constructed by William Williams in 1786 to serve as his store, later to be used for other purposes. Among notable differences that may bear on that mystery are its flooring and roofing. Where floors throughout the stone house were constructed originally with soft wood in variable widths, the floors in the frame house (except for the kitchen and bathroom) consisted, it appears, of hard wood of uniform width.

In the case of roofing materials, when we acquired the property the stone house was covered with vintage gray slate tiles while the roof of the conjoined frame house consisted of asphalt shingles. Many of the slate tiles at that time were badly deteriorated and had begun to leak. Given the counsel of David Arndt, a local contractor with respect for antique houses, we introduced metal roofing to replace the slate, following as well his advice about its continuing

care. What other alterations of roofing may have occurred to these buildings over their lifetime remain lost to our ken.

Asbestos Siding. The siding on frame house when acquired consisted of white asbestos shingles. We were informed that this sort of siding had become popular in this region several decades ago because of its durability and easy care, needing only to be repainted occasionally. However, keenly aware of the discreditable history of the asbestos industry and the serious health hazards of the material, we considered replacement, but, sorry to admit, postponed that project. We have no evidence of the building's original siding.

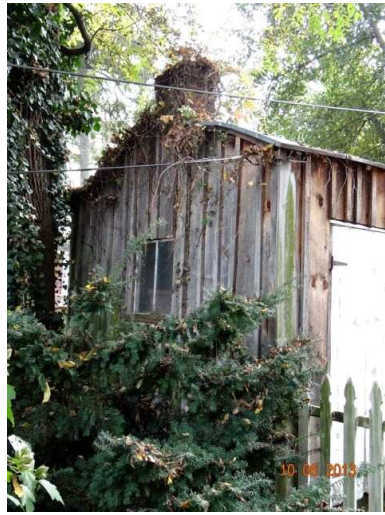
Frame House Alterations: Upstairs. The owners of the property from whom we purchased it, Edward and Viola Partridge, altered both the upstairs and downstairs rooms of the frame house. The upstairs of the frame house consists of two successive rooms (without hallway) that might well serve as small bedrooms. However, to accommodate an elderly parent/grandparent, the Partridges transformed the backmost room into a small kitchen with needed appliances and counter space, using the front room as bedroom and living space. The grandparent shared the upstairs bath with the family. Added to this mini-apartment was a back entrance including a porch and outside stair to the ground (creating in effect a fire escape from the rear of the building). We removed the appliances and counters, and used the two rooms as, respectively, a bedroom and a study.

Frame House Alterations: Downstairs. The front room of the downstairs is framed with an outside door on the south side of the house; the entrance to the downstairs bathroom on the north; a step down into the hallway of the stone house on the east; and an open door entrance to the kitchen on the west. That space served as a playroom for our sons and their neighborhood friends when young, thereafter, as they entered their teen years, as a dining room.

The major alteration to the frame house introduced by the previous owners was to enlarge and modernize the kitchen adding to it a cozy dining nook and providing a wide three-paneled window opening to the backyard. This major alteration was accomplished by enclosing a catchall shed previously located at the back of the house. The primary impetus for this major reconstruction came from Viola Partridge, who, besides her professional work as a mathematician, was a gourmet cook.

Shed. At the rear of the land, a small nondescript wooden shed is located facing Walnut Alley, very near an old walnut tree. Over the years we used it for various purposes at

different times—storage, play space, garage—not suspecting it had ever played an important role in the life of the Old Stone House, even though we had noticed a dilapidated chimney on its roof.



Shed with chimney at rear of the property lot

We learned differently, however, when Margie noticed a man and woman taking photographs of our house. Initiating conversation with them, she learned he was a grandson of Martin Hahn, who with his wife had once resided in the Old Stone House during the early years of prohibition. The shed, they informed us, had been originally a “summer kitchen,” but



Martin “Royal Hen” Hahn

when prohibition was in force Martin had transformed the kitchen into space for a moonshine still distributing its product for local use. Martin's wife kept watch for possible “revenoors” (a term originally used to designate liquor tax collectors, applied later to officers enforcing

prohibition), signaling him when suspecting their presence to cover the moonshine apparatus. A photo of Martin Hahn was discovered in Bucknell's archives by William Wiest, the archivist. An enlarged copy of the photo, showing Hahn in a somewhat unkempt three-piece suit with top hat is in the possession of the current owner of the Old Stone House, Isabella O'Neil. As an aside, during the same period of time another man about town, perhaps an acquaintance of Martin, was known to walk the streets of Lewisburg leading a pet goose on a leash.

Property Line. From some now forgotten source, a story about the property line on the south side of the Old Stone House came to our attention. The next door brick house, already mentioned, was constructed some decades after the stone house was in place. When the brick house was completed, however, the owner of the stone house brought a legal suit against its owner declaring that the north wall of the brick house was over the property line and demanding therefore that it be immediately removed. At the court hearing, the presiding judge was reported to have placed a map of the relevant property before himself, and re-drawn the property line to incorporate the wall in question onto the land of the brick house, and pronouncing that from henceforth that what he had drawn would constitute the legally recognized line. With that judgment, he dismissed the case. That line, so indented, remains in effect according to present day courthouse records.

Social interaction. A house, I have declared, is more than a building; it is a historical happening, a story of stories, whose structure and use are susceptible to constant transformation for many reasons, the most important of which are its inhabitants. The notability of any particular house is contingent in part on the interests and character of those inhabitants and their interactions with others. Stories of William Williams, Mr. Wendel, and Martin Hahn are cases in point. Another was Dr. John W. Rice, a long time and distinguished professor of biology at Bucknell, who in 1925 instituted a medical dispensary on the campus that has continued ever since. The Old Stone House was home for him and his family, several of whom remained in or returned to Lewisburg.

During our early years in the house, we were among about ten families in the immediate area with young children of roughly the same age, all of whom treated their several properties as open space, an inclusive playground available for snow ball fights, hide-and-seek games, explorations along the riverbanks or whatever. Sometimes three or four youngsters would appropriate our rowboat (with lifejackets) to extend their play to local "islands" — named by them "Big Ducky" and "Little Ducky."

Later, during the course of Margie's twenty-year tenure as a high school English teacher, many of her students came to the house, sometimes for counseling, assistance on assignments, even escape from family circumstances, but oftentimes as well for pot luck dinners open to one or another of her classes, following which they would together attend a performance of some sort at Bucknell.



Margie Sturm at home in 37 S. Water St. in the 1990s

Moreover, both Margie and I have been active in diverse community associations, using the house as a location to advance their respective missions, e.g., Women in Transition; Democratic Women of Buffalo Valley; regional chapter of the ACLU; Community Alliance for Respect and Equality (CARE); Social Concerns Team of the Beaver Memorial United Methodist Church.

Other times, families and friends would converge at the house, e.g., to prepare for Christmas caroling; to picnic during an Independence Day celebration; to gather around our piano singing Labor Union songs, Gospel music, or African American spirituals.

In sum, the Old Stone House, while it is a physical structure that has, over its lifetime, been altered in intriguing ways, has also served multiple functions throughout the larger community of the Central Susquehanna Valley—adding, at best, to its quality and to its future. To comprehend fully the significance and historical meaning of any building requires that we view it as an active and ever changing social location, contributing in one way or another to the lived experience of a people, their culture and their history.

A Postscript. Our sons, Hans and Rolf, both professional musicians, are now located in urban areas. Nonetheless they remain fond of Lewisburg and of the Old Stone House. In

1997, they released a compact disk, Back Home, to celebrate that love. The front cover of the CD is imprinted with a photograph of an oil painting of the house by Mary Alice Orr, long time friend and art teacher of the Lewisburg High School. The back cover includes a photo of the house from the same angle taken by the Terry Wild Studio in Williamsport. Hans and Rolf composed all the music on the disk, some pieces of which were inspired specifically by their early life in this region. The CD is their testimony to strongly rooted influences that eventuated in their respective adventures in life.

Yet the title of the CD, Back Home, should give us pause, for none of us can go “back home.” Houses and homes are historical entities. As such the Old Stone House is not now what it was during our sons' youthful years or, even more surely, what it was in its own beginning. And its tomorrow remains indeterminate. To be sure, efforts at strict historical preservation have their place, yet are, in the long haul, bound to fail, since all entities, whatever their composition, are doomed eventually to disintegrate and to slip into the swirling dust of the universe that continues to haunt us as an unraveled metaphysical mystery of life's origins and destiny.



Sources and Acknowledgements

(1) Lewisburg: History of 19th Century Lewisburg Architecture, John W. Anderson, et al. (Union County Tourist Promotion Agency, 1976).

This 48 page booklet was prepared on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

It contains multiple photographs, drawings, maps, and script arranged chronologically from the late eighteenth through the 20th century. It concludes with a brief vision of desirable changes following the devastation of the 1972 flood.

(2) [Lewisburg, Pennsylvania](#) (Wikipedia)

<[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewisburg, Pennsylvania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewisburg,_Pennsylvania)>

A typical Wikipedia article, ranging from the origins of the town to the present time.

(3) [Livingplaces...Lewisburg Borough](#),

<http://www.livingplaces.com/PA/Union_County/Lewisburg_Borough.html>

This piece contains a “brief history of Lewisburg,” extending from its beginning to the beginning of the 21st century.

(4) [Livingplaces...Lewisburg Historic District](#),

<http://www.livingplaces.com/PA/Union_County/Lewisburg_Borough/Lewisburg_Historic_District.html>

The contents of this lengthy article are described as follows: “The Lewisburg Historic District was listed on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in 2004. Portions of the text below were adapted from a copy of the original nomination document. Adaptation copyright © 2008, The Gombach Group.” At the end of the article are listed several sources useful for additional historical research into the changing character of Lewisburg over the decades.

(5) See Carrie A. Liberante, “Good Old Days, Lewisburg’s Riverfront Streets Share a Rowdy Past.” *The Daily Item*, March 30, 1997, pp. B1, B4. Liberante’s article contains pictures and discusses stories linked to the Williams house, including its possible use as a brothel and tavern, and the rumored surreptitious connection between the large, vaulted cellar of the house next door (41 S. Water St.) for liquor storage, sold at 37 S. Water St.

(6) This article has benefitted greatly from the interest and hospitality of the house’s current owner, Isabella O’Neill, who enabled us to take many of the illustrating photos found in this article and shared many stories and observations about the house.



Adventures in Starting a Small Business in Lewisburg

by
Irmy Hartung

Most of us have come from other areas to live in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, and we each have a story to tell. This is the story of Charles and Irmy Hartung.

We had come from the New York City area, and then moved to Philadelphia where Charles attended and graduated from Optometric College. He had passed 3 State Boards the first attempt. Now the great unknown was before us. It was 1953. Where should we find a rural community in which there would be a good location to establish an Optometric practice and where it would be a great place to raise a family. The search was on.

During my three-week vacation from work as a Medical Assistant, we ventured off on a 1700-mile journey through Pennsylvania in our 1941 Pontiac. We kept a log - descriptions of the towns visited and information from talking to the locals and State Police about it. We arrived in Lewisburg on a Sunday morning. No one was on the streets; no stores were open. So everyone must have been in church or in bed. Oh well, off to the next stop. It was interesting to us that no matter where we went in a 60-mile radius, we kept hearing from state troopers that the area they served was nice but we really should look into Lewisburg for our needs. We traveled north, west, and south where we saw Bedford (located about half way between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh) as a possibility for locating. We returned to Lewisburg for a second look after all those recommendations. We met with Edwin Mensch, realtor, and stated our needs. He promised to call us within a short time with office and apartment possibilities. In those days after WWII, space was at a premium for business needs. Whichever space opened in Bedford or Lewisburg, that would be our choice. True to his word, Mr. Mensch called within a few days. Chuck went to investigate and returned with enthusiasm to begin a new phase of our lives.

In early August we arrived in Lewisburg in our Pontiac packed with all our belongings and our pet turtle sloshing around in its bowl near the inside roof of the car. It was 2 am and we tried to get into our apartment but no luck. Luckily the house next door had living room lights aglow and we found someone sitting reading. Whew. Possible help. A short introduction, assurance that getting into the apartment was a possibility and we thankfully had landed safely, so to say. The friendly neighbors turned out to be Bill and Nancy Ruhl, who became life-long friends.

With no furniture, we slept on all our linens and blankets and ate food that did not require refrigeration or heating. Now it was time to get to work at the office location in a space adjoining the Busser Supply business on Market St. between 5th and 6th Sts. A waiting room, secretarial space, wash room, exam room and storage had to be rebuilt. From August to October people would see a 6'4" young man working with a carpenter to create an optometric office. In the evenings for months we hand-addressed a total of 5000 announcements – yes, 5000. We heard about that personal touch for two years afterwards. On his first day open, Chuck never got home for lunch as visitors came in to look around and wish him good luck with his Practice. We were on our own and yes, scared if we could make it. We didn't know how to play bridge! (another story) The news that we were in a flood zone did not help.



Charles Hartung in the Lewisburg office

We started our family and Cathy, Steve, and Dane were born and raised in Lewisburg. While Chuck and I had adopted Lewisburg, our children are natives. We

were living in a small apartment with no hallway [called a railroad apt.] so the search for a home was the next step. Mr. Mensch came to the rescue again and offered a home in the "country." It was August, 1956. It meant a down payment and a mortgage for \$90/month. Could we do it? It was a brick home built in 1954, by a stone gravel street. There were soybeans and corn growing from the backyard to within sight of now Route 15, which was about a 1/2 mile away. There was no shade. Answer - we had a laundry pole with 4 corners of lines, on top of which was a canvas for shade. Since then many trees have been planted on the main lot and our adjoining lot.

Then came the years with events least expected, like Agnes, the flood of 1972. I heard a warning alarm during the night and called on the phone to see what the emergency was about. In those days you could talk to an operator. I was warned to come to the office and protect our property. Well, I put my bike in the car, packed a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and my knitting and off I went to town. The nightmare began.

I drove to town, found a high place to park the car and opened the office. What was I to do? Starting with putting things on tables, etc. at least off the floor, I then was aware that the patients' charts had to be protected and somehow I managed to get them in the car. There was activity in the Doughnut Shop across the street (now Casa de Pizza), so I went there asking, "What do we do -- just watch the water come up?" I had no idea of flood damages of the past. The Police Chief, Gordon Hufnagle, had already drowned, and a car was being pushed sideways along 6th Street by the force of the water. Water was rising up the parking meters and one felt so helpless against the forces of nature.

Quite suddenly the front door of the office flew open and a small army of men rushed in, grabbing things off the walls, tables, etc. Who were they, what were they doing in our office? I panicked and screamed for help as I saw John Baker, our mayor, come in. I yelled over all the bedlam, "John, get Chuck!"



Agnes flood, 1972: Market St. looking west from 5th St. Our shop was just beyond Busser's Supply

Men pushed past me and went into the exam room. Before I could stop them, they forcefully lifted the top of Chuck's desk up, not realizing it was notched to side cabinets. Everything flew in the air - lamp, books, frames, lenses and whatever he had laid there the night before. Suddenly things were being put into two trucks parked out front. John had managed to get Chuck across Rt. 15 in a rowboat. We stood there in the middle of a nightmare. The trucks rushed off, we followed. The men were volunteers from wherever and were not aware of the bumps in the road. Hitting straight on, the contents of the truck fell over - everything (yes, lenses, instruments, etc.) fell over in a heap. They continued on to unload at the Armory. As best they could, the debris was piled in a heap on the floor. When Chuck saw that he said, "Here is my life's work." Shock. I was blamed for having gone to town and opening the office. Next came many days of scrubbing walls and doing anything to restore the office. Of course, moldy walls showed up soon because of all the water behind what we could see. There was nothing more to be done except wait out the summer months for things to dry out and all his equipment could be repaired. Optical labs at that point were overworked repairing the equipment of other victims of Agnes.

Finally in fall, we were able to begin again. What we did not realize was that the whole building was water soaked and the dampness would be a hazard to Chuck's health. He came down with another viral pneumonia causing him to lose 3 months

work. I marvel to this day how loyal patients were to wait long months for their glasses over the summer and then followed by his illness. That takes us up to fall, 1973.



Demolition of flood damaged buildings;
Busser's and our shop are already gone.

Redevelopment government agencies slowly began to demolish or buy up houses on the square that was Market Street from 5th to 6th, that became Hufnagle Park. We were promised we could leave our office in just a few weeks. That promise dragged on until December 1977, five years.

There were legal complications with our lease with Busser's that would not allow us to move into our own building across the street. We would lose all government help (1% loan to rebuild, if I recall correctly). Had we known it would take five years we probably would have just moved. In those years Chuck had to do the best possible in making repairs for the office while aware it was not his property. I remain amazed again at the patience of Chuck's patients.

Finally Christmas 1977 we were given three weeks to build a new office at #528.

We worked round the clock with many loyal workers to create a new office. During that freezing time, the pipes froze, had to be thawed, and that caused a fire. Mike Black heard the alarm and came to the rescue. His quick thinking and action saved us from more damage. I worked at night tearing out horsehair insulation.



Charles and Army Hartung in front of #528 Market St.

John Ruhl worked in the cold basement putting in insulation for the new heating system. I still have the long knife with a short piece broken off as a reminder of those days of him cutting insulation. Thanks to a great many hard-working plumbers, carpenters, etc., we prepared to open January 13th. That date held its own story. We moved across the street in a blizzard on January 13th, a Friday no less. There Chuck had his optometric practice until 1989 when he retired.

Retirement. Again, changes in life in which Chuck expanded his pottery skills, his own basketry patterns, and finally water color painting. His is probably the only painting of the Presbyterian Church tower half sporting half white and half black paint. It happened to be at the time the church was being painted and he painted as he saw it. My favorite memory of his painting is of him sitting along the side of the stream at Half Way Dam (that's how we got to know the name).

Point of interest – the pine tree that was in the back yard of the old office on the south side of Market is the beautiful tree that graces Hufnagle Park, a special beauty at Christmas time.

It has been a pleasure to reminisce with you. Lewisburg Is Our Home and we have been blessed to be here.

✧ **ACCOUNTS** ✧

Elias Church History

by

Robert K Lynch

Welcome to the Elias Church! You have just stepped back in time to 1806 when The Elias Church was built. Thomas Jefferson is president. The Louisiana Purchase was negotiated with the French just three years earlier for three cents an acre, more than doubling the size of the United States. There are only 16 states, none west of Ohio. The Elias Church, located in Youngman's Town, rests in West Buffalo Township and within Northumberland County. Youngman's Town, founded in 1792, will not be carved from Northumberland until 1813 when Union County is formed. Surprisingly it is called Mifflinburg as early as 1805, even though the town was not incorporated by that name until 1827; there is no "Turnpike" road between Mifflinburg and Lewisburg until 1828, 24 years later. Records indicate that monetary transactions are in pounds, shillings, and pence. No wonder the Elias Church was only the third church built in the Union County.

1773: The Presbyterians organized and built the first church in the area at Buffalo Cross Roads (about 5 miles northeast of the future site of Mifflinburg). The original building and an 1816 stone replacement no longer stand. It was rebuilt for a third time in 1846 on the original site and that structure is still standing today. It was purchased several years ago by a private owner and is no longer used as a congregational church. This original congregation represents an era when Indian hostility was present and, in 1780, settlers left the valley for their own safety. This time in history is referred to as "The Great Runaway"; however, shortly after 1780, settlers began to return to the valley.

1788: Enough settlers dotted the valley that the need for other churches became evident. As was customary during this era, the German Reformed and Lutherans combined and erected a new church called the “Dreisbach Church” on the New Berlin Mountain Road. Martin Dreisbach donated seven acres of land for the erection of this “Union Church”. The original church was of log construction and included land set aside for one of the earliest grammar schools. A second brick church replaced the original structure in 1845 and while being remodeled in 1970, its foundation collapsed, causing damage beyond repair. Immediately, a new brick church was built on the site and its beautiful structure can be observed today.

1805: Youngman’s Town continued to grow and sentiment developed that a new German Reformed-Lutheran “Union Church” was needed since the travel distance to the Dreisbach Church was inconvenient and time consuming. A building committee was formed which included Sebastian Whittmer, John Dreisbach, George Roush, and Michael Schock; a subscription list was created to finance the new church (list of church members and amount pledged for construction). Elias Youngman, founder of Mifflinburg, provided a plot to be used for this purpose. Reverend Ludwig Albrecht, Wilhelm Ilgen, Frederick Adam Gutelius, and others were also influential in the construction and creation of the building and its congregation. By 1806, the new church, named “St Elias Church”, was up and running.

The following is a brief sketch of four influential people of the church:

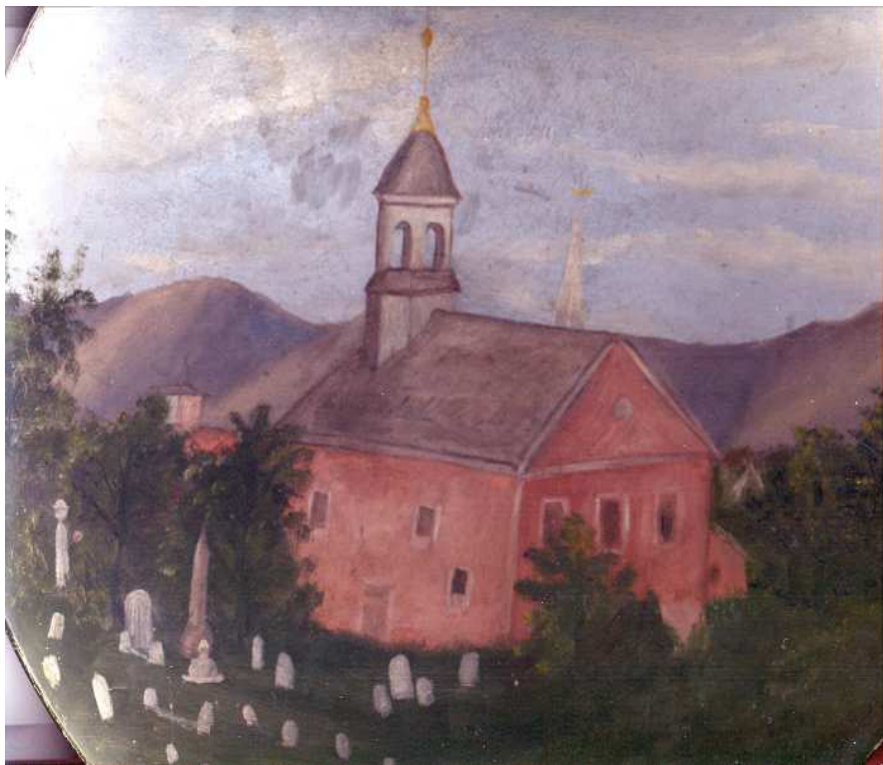
1. Elias Youngman: founder of Youngman’s Town, later named Mifflinburg. He provided land for the Elias Church and cemetery, which is also called the “Elias Church Cemetery” and located adjacent to south and west of the church.
2. Frederick Adam Gutelius: along with his wife Anna Catherine, became the parental ancestor of all the Guteliuses in the United States. They had 15 children with most growing up to be congregational members. Frederick was the first Union County Commissioner. His children grew up to be the most influential family in the development of the Mifflinburg buggy industry from the late 1840s through the early 1920s. In 1900, Gutelius was the most common local name in

Mifflinburg. The original home is located at the corner of Fifth and Green Street and has been restored by Preservation Mifflinburg, its owner.

3. Reverend Ludwig Albrecht Wilhelm Ilgen- The first Lutheran minister of the Church. Some of his descendants are present members of Mifflinburg's Lutheran Church.

4. Reverend Fries- The first permanent German Reformed pastor, beginning in 1812, and who remained pastor until his death in 1839. He was a fire-and-brimstone minister who was very outspoken on church issues.

1806-1857: The German Reformed and Lutheran congregation worshiped in the Elias Church until 1857. As the town and church membership grew, a decision was made that new and bigger buildings were needed. Both congregations built their own new churches at their present sites; the German Reformed (St. Johns UCC Church) at 417 Market St. and the Lutheran (First Evangelical Lutheran Church) at 404 Market St. Services were conducted in the Elias Church until 1857 when the newly built churches were completed.



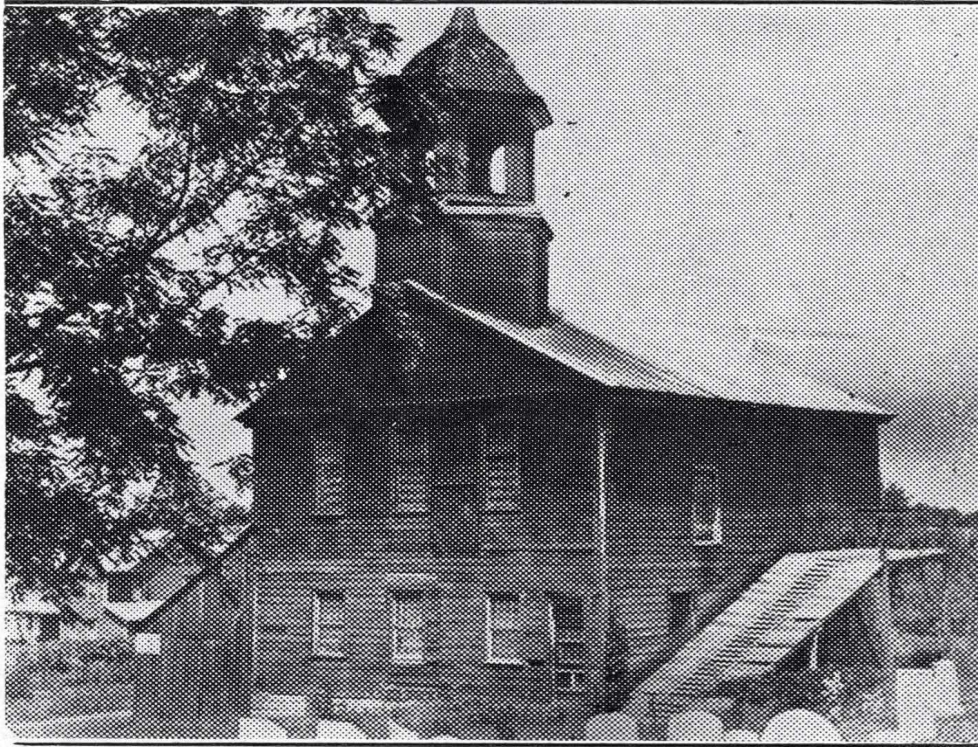
Painting of Elias Church during school period 1857-1876ⁱ

1857-1876: On May 4, 1858, the Elias Church was conveyed to the Mifflinburg School Board for the sum of \$1,000 and remodeled into the Mifflinburg Primary and Grammar School. Extensive renovations were made to the building with partitions for four class rooms created on the first floor, two sets of steps relocated for ingress and egress to the second floor auditorium, including other necessary changes. The Mifflinburg Primary and Grammar School operated in this building for the next 19 years. By 1876 a new elementary/high school was built at the foot of the Mifflinburg Cemetery Hill. On March 6, 1878, the Mifflinburg School Directors sold the Elias Church building to Robert Weirick.

1878-1904: Robert Weirick, a buggy trimmer and farmer, used the Elias Church as a barn and storage for grain over the next twenty six years. During the latest restoration (2006 to the present) plenty of oats and wheat were found within the walls of the building. Much of the structure was altered with the addition of barn doors on the east side and a hay door to the second floor on the west. On the north wall, a second floor grain chute was added to accommodate lowering grain to the first level. On May 2, 1904, Robert Weirick sold the structure to buggy maker John Gutelius and Son.

1904-1919: John Gutelius and Son used the building as a repository for his buggy manufacturing business located on Market Street. While owning the building, he added a buggy ramp on the south side of the building and cut through the framing on the south wall to install doors for access to the second floor. Signs of the ramp still existed during the restoration of the building. Mr. Gutelius and Son sold the building to Thurston Diehl on August 16, 1919 and by 1921 it was remodeled and used as a double house rental property.

1919-1936: Both sides of the remodeled double house were equal in size with identical layouts. They consisted of a living room to the west, a dining room in the center, and a kitchen on the east. Porches and doors were added on the east and west sides of the building. Each rental consisted of three bedrooms and a bath on the second floor. On January 3, 1936, during the Depression, the Mifflinburg Bank and Trust Company took possession by deed of the property from Thurston Diehl.



The Elias Church during its use as the Gutelius buggy repository 1904 - 1919ⁱⁱ

1936-1939: After ownership for a little more than three years, the Mifflinburg Bank and Trust Company sold the property to Reno M. Hoffman on October 10, 1939. The assumption is that the bank operated it as a rental during this period.

1939-1983: Reno M. Hoffman was the sole owner until October 27, 1983, when he changed the deed to include his daughter, Edith Irene Hoffman.

1983-2004: Edith Hoffman continued to rent the double house to provide her with an income until her demise. The estate of Edith Irene Hoffman sold the property to Preservation Mifflinburg Inc. on December 30, 2004, for \$35,000. Preservation Mifflinburg consists of Mifflinburg area residents who are interested in preserving historical buildings and its history, particularly the legacy of the Gutelius family and its historical impact on Mifflinburg. They are a 501C nonprofit corporation that works in cooperation with other like-minded organizations in the Mifflinburg area.

2004-present: The Mifflinburg Bank and Trust Company very graciously granted Preservation Mifflinburg Inc. \$35,000 for its purchase plus \$2,000 dollars for start-up expenses. The transaction was completed on December 30, 2004. It had been the hope of the estate that the building would be preserved because of its historic value and “one of a kind” significance. The community is indebted to the Mifflinburg Bank and Trust Company for making this happen.

2004-2006: Preservation Mifflinburg Inc. is to be commended for having the foresight to save such a singularly important historical building. On March 2, 2006, Preservation Mifflinburg turned over the project by deed to the Mifflinburg Heritage and Revitalization, Inc. that operates within the scope of being an agent of the Mifflinburg Borough.



View of Church during time of double house 1919-2004

(Author's photo)

2006-Present: Since March, 2006, the Mifflinburg Heritage and Revitalization Inc. has continued to restore the historic Elias Church, officially renaming it “The Elias Center for the Performing Arts.” Numerous grants

totaling \$600,000 plus was applied to the project. Three methods were used to guide the historical restoration. They are:

1. Written description- The interior of the Elias Church is described in detail in Chapter II of the “History Of The First Lutheran Church, Mifflinburg” located in the Lutheran Church office. It describes in detail the location of doors, pulpit, isles, etc.
2. Present churches built circa 1806- German-Reformed Churches of that era were basically identical in size and appearance, with minor exceptions, such as made from stone, brick, or timber framing. Some of these churches still remain with very few alterations. Two churches are the “Bindnagle Church”, located one mile north of Palmyra, PA, and the “Peace Church”, located in Mechanicsburg, PA. The Elias Church was the third church built in the area and is the oldest church building surviving in the immediate area. It is unknown where an older timber-frame church exists, certainly none in the area.



Exposed Timber Frame Walls after removal of Interior Apartments

(Author's photo)

3. Forensic evidence-this is physical evidence discovered while dismantling and restoring the building. The original stair location during the church period was identified by the mortice and tenon joints located in the northwest and northeast corner of the building. This evidence comported perfectly with the Bindnagle Church's staircases, built in 1803, which remain in excellent shape. It also fit the written description as outlined in "The History of the Lutheran Church". During the school period the staircases were relocated to the southwest and southeast corners of the building. Evidence was clear with an outline of each step imprinted on the wall leading to the second floor. When the building was remodeled into



View of Church interior after Restoration 2012 – 2013 (Author's photo)

a double house, the stairs were moved for a third time, with a staircase provided for each side of the dwelling. During the recent renovation, the staircases have been again moved and restored to their original 1806-1857 location. Windows, doors, petitions, framing and opening of the balcony have been returned to their original locations by combining knowledge of the three above methods. We are

confident the building reflects its original construction. The building is now in its final stages of becoming a reality. The restoration is nearly complete, including electricity, heating and air conditioning, restroom facilities, ticket office, storage areas, and other small projects. An open house is planned for May and by the time you read this article, a full schedule of program events will be in progress in the “Elias Center for the Performing Arts” for your enjoyment.



Exterior view of “Elias Center for Performing Arts”2012-2013 (Author’s photo)

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Mifflinburg Telegraph, Articles beginning in 1862.

Information from the Elias Church Committee who worked at restoring the building.

Original Elias Church documents in possession of the UCC Church.

History of the Lutheran Church, located in the First Lutheran Church.

ⁱ The artist of the painting is Christina Pontius Larabee (1785-1877), a descendant of the Pontius family. The plate painting was in the possession of Ruth Wehr Zimmerman, also a descendant of Christina Pontius Larabee. You probably remember Ruth as our Union Co. Commissioner several years ago. Ruth personally donated the plate painting to me on behalf of the Elias Church. Identifying the date of the painting was done by the three methods of restoration indicated in the article. Observe the door on the south side; it had to have been installed after the church was abandoned since the pulpit was located in the exact location of the new door after being turned into the Mifflinburg Grammar School in 1857. This identifies the earliest date of the painting. The pulpit would have been removed for the door and hallway that was added at that time. Evidence of a hall, the door and two sets of steps leading to the second floor on the south wall was very clear during restoration. The Presbyterian Church and Mifflinburg Academy Steeples appear in Christina's painting. However, neither are the original steeples identified in the painting. The Academy was torn down and rebuilt in 1864, therefore changing the steeple that is identified in the picture. This establishes 1864 as the latest date it could have been painted. The Presbyterian church collapsed due to a snow storm in 1881, changing the steeple as well. This is how the date of 1857-1864 was established. The photograph was taken with my camera from the painting and transferred to the computer. This is the only known picture of this period.

ⁱⁱ The photographer is unknown. About 25 years ago a friend of mine and professional photographer, John Dersham, bought a group of glass plates from Bill Mattern, a local historian and antique dealer. John reproduced these plates originally taken by photographer Groover Bierly about 1913-1918. Many now appear in local history books written by Charles McCool Snyder and others. Lois Huffines used many of these John Dersham prints in her latest book. There is a good possibility this Elias Church buggy print was taken by Groover Bierly, although there is no proof. Groover Bierly lived in Mifflinburg.

✧ ACCOUNTS ✧

A Year on Crystal Spring Farm

by

Ruth-Alice M. Seebold Spangler

I would like to share with you a year on the Clarence Christopher Seebold Crystal Spring Farm of 175 acres west of New Berlin during the 1950s and 1960s. Our source of water is from a crystal clear spring that is on the farm, giving it its name. The farm was bought by Christopher Seebold III in 1837, Christopher Seebold IV 1870, Christopher Seebold V 1884, and Clarence Christopher Seebold 1936. It has been owned by the Seebolds for the past 176 years. The late Clarence Christopher and Margaret Seebold are my parents, who headed my family when my sister Nancy and



In June we used the Case tractor with a sickle bar and a hay rake.

I were growing up. Here is a year-long account of the rhythm of work on a farm, seen from the perspective of a young daughter in the household. The farm remains in my family today.

Producing Milk

Each morning my parents had to get up early to go to the barn to milk the twenty-one cows and also had to milk the twenty-one cows every evening. The two milking

machines had to be carried from the milk house in to the barn. In the barn there were two rows of cows. One milking machine went on one side and the other milking machine went on the other side to milk. You put the machine on each cow's teats and continue to each cow. When the milking machine container became full, you would empty the milk in a bucket. Then you would carry it to the milk house to pour the milk through a filter in a strainer into a milk can. After each morning and evening when you were finished milking you had to wash the milking machine. In the evenings, the cans of milk were put in the spring water overflow trough to cool and to keep them cool till morning. Later my parents bought a milk cooler that would cool the milk overnight.



Tractor, baler, and wagon full of hay in June. Dad is the on tractor, sister is on the hay wagon, and I stand on the ground.

Every morning Dad would take the milk in four milk cans to New Berlin Rosedale Dairy Co. When that closed he took the milk to Dairymen's League Co-operative in Mifflinburg. Sometimes I went with him. In the evenings of the winter months, while the cows where milked, my sister Nancy or I gave the cows chop, silage, and hay to eat. We also gave chop, hay, and water to the calves. There were also a number of cats at the barn that liked to have some of the milk. After the cows were milked in the summer

they would go out to pasture to graze. Each day they were put in different fields to eat grass. They would be in the pasture all day till it was time to milk them, around 4:30 pm. Then you would go to the field and call them by name or call “come boss, come boss,” etc. They would hear you, start to walk toward you, and keep walking right into the barn. After you milked them in the evening during the summer, we would put them in the orchard over night, close to the buildings. In the winter months, we put them in the barnyard overnight.

Every spring someone would come and spray the inside of the barn white with lime to disinfect or sterilize the barn so we could sell milk. The milk inspector always came around to see if it was done. The procedure is called whitewashing the inside of the barn.

I had my own calf that I named Trigger. I would lead, comb, pet and feed her. She grew up to be a milking cow and had two sets of twins, and we had another cow that had one set of twins. We thought that was a little unusual. When it came time that we had to sell her, my dad cut off her horns and now I have them as bookends. We had our own bulls. My dad fed them hay in a trough and watered them from a bucket. I thought all the bulls we had were scary.



Cow “Trigger” with twins, Ruth-Alice, and mother.

Poultry, Eggs and Pigs

We also had pigs, ducks, and chickens. You would feed the pigs chop with whey (liquid from making cheese at Rosedale Dairy Co.) or pig chop with water that was put in their trough. The pigs would also eat corn off of corncobs. My mother raised ducks and dressed them to sell. At one time she had as many as 145 ducks to dress (killed and cleaned) and sell. My mother would buy 300 peeps from Mattern Hatchery and raise them to full maturity. The peeps were put in a building called a brooder house. There



Flock of ducks in the yard getting ready to take a swim.

was a coal stove, and a big metal circle (called a hopper) that they could get under to keep warm. After the peeps lost their yellow down, grew their feathers to full maturity, and started to lay eggs, it was time to move them to a different house called the chicken house. By then the matured chickens that were in the houses would have started to molt (lose some of their feathers) and stopped laying eggs so it was time to sell them. The houses had to be disinfected to kill any chicken lice by sprinkling lime around the place they roosted and around on the floor before new chickens were housed in the chicken houses. We had two chicken houses that housed about 150 laying hens each. You had

to go in the chicken houses and reach in the hens' nest to collect the eggs every morning and evening. There was straw in the nests and also on the floors. The eggs had to be washed, weighed, and placed in crates so they were ready to sell. A Mr. Speck came around by truck to pick up the eggs. My sister and I went along to the mill to get chicken feed so we could pick out the printed fabric bags, which were full of feed. After the printed feed bags were empty they were washed and used for dresses, pillowcases, sheets, quilts or anything to sew.

Farming the Fields

In early spring it was time to plow, harrow and disk the fields. This preparation was to get the ground fine so there are no lumps and ready to plant. After the fields were plowed a tractor and an open wagon were driven to the field to pick stones. Stones too big to stay in the plowed field had to be picked up, put on the wagon, and hauled away. The crops to plant were oats and corn. The corn was planted when the dogwood trees were in bloom. The wheat (winter wheat) was planted in the fall. Another thing my dad did was to cultivate the corn after it had grown some to kill the weeds. The cultivator was attached to the front of the tractor, because you had to drive between the rows. You really had to watch carefully so that you would not hit the corn stalks. You would not cultivate after the corn became knee high.



Dad is with his only Farmall tractor chopping corn for the silo in September.

You also looked at, and fixed, the barb wire fence around the fields. When the crops start growing, if you could see yellow wild mustard it was time to walk through the field and pull the mustard. Wild mustard is a weed that should not be in the field with the crop when the crop is harvested.

In June, you would get started to make hay. First you would cut the grass (clover or timothy) with a Case tractor that had a sickle bar attached to make rows. The sun would dry the cut grass, and then we used a hay rake to rake it so it would finish drying. To rake we used the same Case tractor to pull the hay rake that turned in circles, lifting up the grass so air could circulate through it, getting it completely dry, and putting it in rows ready to bale.

A tractor pulled a baler and wagon. The baler picked up the row of dry grass and made bales that came out of the back of the baler. Someone on the wagon, behind the baler, had to reach with a hay hook and pull each bale onto the wagon. You stacked the bales as high as you could reach, filling the wagon full. After the wagon was full you unhitched the wagon from the baler. Then you took another tractor, hitched



**Self-propelled combine emptying grain from combine bin
in to truck box in July.**

it up to the wagon, and pulled it to the barn. There you unloaded the wagon by lifting each bale into the haymow or hayloft. If the bales got too high you would use an elevator. You would lift each bale up, and one at a time, put it on the elevator. The elevator takes the bale up and drops it in the haymow where you put the hay hook in it and pull or lift it and put it in an orderly fashion. The dry grass is called hay that the cattle eat for food.

In July, it was time to combine wheat. You would use a combine that was pulled by a tractor. There was a landing on the combine where you would stand with a burlap bag under a bin to catch the grain. When the bag became full you would close the bin and tie the bag closed. You would continue until the landing became full. Then it was time to transfer the bags to the truck and take them in to the barn's granary bins. My dad eventually traded in the tractor-pulled combine and bought a self-propelled combine. The self-propelled combine put the shelled wheat in a bin. When the bin became full it was dumped into my dad's truck. When the truck box became full you would take it to the barn and unload it in the barn bins.

In August, it was time to combine the oats. The same method was used as to combine wheat. Combining wheat and oats also makes straw. The straw is the stalk below the heads of grain of the wheat or oats. The straw comes out of the back of the combine and drops to the ground. You would use the hay rake to rake it into rows like we did with the grass and use the baler to make bales of straw. You put the bales on a wagon and bring it to the barn and there unload the wagon in what we called a straw shed. The straw is used for cattle bedding. The shelled wheat and oats are called grains that are ground into feed, and some is sold.

In September, it was time to fill the silo with chopped up corn. You would take a tractor to pull a corn harvester and wagon. The corn harvester would chop the corn ear and corn stalk into small pieces and blow them into the wagon that is pulled behind the corn harvester. When the wagon is full it is time to take it to the silo and unload it into what is called silo filler. That machine had an auger and blower that would blow it up into the silo. When you take it out of the silo it is called silage and you give it to the cattle for food in the winter months.

When October arrives, it is time to pick the ears of corn off of the corn stalks, using a tractor pulling a corn picker and a wagon. The corn picker cuts the ear of corn

off of the corn stalk, takes off the corn husks, and throws the ear of corn onto the wagon. When the wagon is full you take it to the corn crib, unload the ears of corn into the corn crib using shovels and then by elevator.

In the fall my parents would saw trees to length to fit in the cook stove. They threw the cut wood into a small building called the wood house. Through the winter we carried the wood by arms full to the back porch and put it in the wood box. Here it would be easy to access when needed.

Winter Work

In November, around Thanksgiving, it was time to butcher the pigs that had been fed whey and ears of corn. My dad took a gun to the pig pen and shot the pig in the head to kill it. Then he pulled the pig behind a tractor to the spot where they would do the butchering. They laid chains across and down in a rectangular wooden trough called a scalding trough. The chains were to support the pig carcass with the chain ends hanging over the trough's edges. They filled the scalding trough with scalding hot water and



The head butcher and his helpers

placed the dead pig in the trough. They used the chains to turn the pig side to side or over so it was easier to scrape off the hair with a hog scraper. Then they hooked the pig's back legs on the tripod hog hanger and set it upright.

Next it was time to cut the underside of the pig to be able to remove the insides. They kept the stomach, intestines, liver, heart and kidneys. They took out the liner of the stomach. Later they filled the stomach with potatoes and sausage or potatoes and cabbage and baked it for a meal called filled pig stomach. The intestines were scraped and cleaned usually by the woman to encase sausage. The head meat, liver, heart, kidneys and the pig feet without the hoof were cooked outside in a big iron kettle till done. Some people saved the pig feet for later to make souse. (To make souse you scrape, wash and clean the pig feet. Cook till meat is tender. Pick meat from the bones and put with some of the cooking liquid, vinegar, salt and pepper and chill overnight. After it is chilled it is ready to eat.) They dipped the cooked meat and the bones out of the iron kettle with a slotted ladle and put it on the meat bench. Then you would separate the meat from the bones and grind the meat in a meat grinder. This was used to make scrapple and pudding. Lard was made from the fat of the pig. The rest of the pig is cut up for pork chops, spare ribs, and fish (a tender piece of meat that they called fish.) Hind quarters and front shoulders were sugar cured. This is what we call ham. Scraps of meat and sometimes the one shoulder were used for sausage.

At the butchering, there usually were relatives, family, and maybe a head butcher to assist. Butchering usually started early in the morning after the milking of the cows. The ladies would cook a big meal and at noon everyone would come in and sit around the table to eat a delicious meal. After they were finished eating, they would head back out to the butchering site to finish the butchering.

In January or February, my father and mother would clean clover and timothy for seed to plant in the spring. They ran the seeds through a fanning mill to separate all the weed seeds, so they didn't plant them with the good seeds. They put the good seeds in burlap bags and tied them shut so they would be ready for the planting season. Also through the year my parents ground up corn and oats in a grinder called a hammermill to make chop feed for the cattle.

During the winter months, was also the time to sew clothes, crochet, tat, embroidery, knit, cut and piece quilts, and then quilt them. Plow and shovel the snow.

Also in the summer months my mother had a big garden. Some years the garden became so large it overflowed into a field. I can remember string beans planted in the corn field. After the garden matured came canning and freezing of the vegetables. My sister Nancy and I always helped in the evenings to do the barn chores. And we always helped in the summers with other things.

There is a lot of work living on a farm.

Farming Today

Farmers today still work hard, but there have been a lot of changes. For instance, in the 21st Century there is not as much work required baling hay. Now they bale big round or rectangular bales and use a fork lift to move them. They do not plow the fields. Instead the fields are sprayed to kill any live plants before the seed crop is planted by “drilling” or punching the seed into the ground, a cultivating method called “no till.” Most farmers shell the corn instead of harvesting the corn on the cob. Now farming is specialized: Farmers milk a lot of cows, raise a lot of chickens for eating or for eggs, raise a lot of pigs, or do grain or grass farming. Tractors and combines are bigger. GPS computers are in the self-propelled combines and tractors.



Ruth-Alice with her dog “Whitey” and one of the pet cats

Notes on the History of Lewisburg's Cameron Fire Company

**by
Robert E Stackhouse**

With the amount of information I have to work with, I will attempt to allow the reader to have a better understanding how the early fire service has progressed in the last couple of centuries. It started in approximately 1831 with a small hand powered engine, which, to say the least, was very insufficient. As the town grew and folks demanded better fire protection from the borough, the Borough Council authorized the purchase of a used unit that was available from the city of Philadelphia. The early fire company was then called the Lewisburg Valiant Fire Company, and the hand pumper was also labeled the Valiant, purchased in Philadelphia. This piece was very cumbersome to operate. It took eight personnel, two on each corner operating the pump handles, to make it function properly, along with a constant line of folks using leather buckets to carry water to fill the reservoir on the pumper, keeping the pump supplied.



“The Valiant”, Lewisburg’s first fire-fighting apparatus (1831)

As happens in any organization, morale started to decline and remained in an up and down mode for some time because of personalities involved. The Borough Council, through their good judgment, decided that they had to try and improve the fire protection in the community as the Valiant was not very efficient. Other communities were buying more modern units that produced a greater flow of water with less effort and personnel. They looked into the possibility of acquiring a steam-operated pump. After much discussion among the Borough Council, probably in 1873 or 1874, they decided to look at a Silsby pumper which was one of the best being made at that time and had an excellent record as being a very reliable unit.

Through this period the Valiant Fire Company was renamed the Lewisburg Fire Company. In the year 1874 the Honorable William Cameron donated \$10,000 to the borough toward the purchase of the Silsby pumper. The Borough Council raised the remaining amount to enable the purchase of this unit. It came



The Silsby Steam-Powered Pumper (1874)

with three hose carts to accompany the pumper. At this point the morale of the newly re-named fire company rose to a very high level, normal when something is brand new. One problem that came about was that only a select few folks had a key to the engine house where the Silsby would be kept, which raised tension among some of the members as well as some folks in the community. This management dynamic still exists to this day in many organizations, when just a few folks feel that they are the only ones who run the organization.



Hose cart similar to the three Hose Carts purchased with the Silsby Pumper

With limited space, I will not go into the detailed requirements that the borough put on the Silsby Company specifying how far and how high the pumper could flow a stream of water. The one point worth mentioning is that it flowed water a number of feet above the Baptist Church steeple. This satisfied the Borough Council.

I am omitting much of the fire department minutes at this time as there was some argument about who knew what and the minutes are not really

complete, but a motion was made that the Lewisburg Fire Department name be dropped and, in 1916 in a motion that was not properly recorded, the name was changed to William Cameron Engine Company in honor of William Cameron who had given \$10,000 towards the purchase of the pumper. This is recorded in the courthouse.



Cameron Fire Engine Company, 1958 Left: 1941 Seagrave 750 gpm pumper.
Right: 1936 Seagrave "quad" 600 gpm pumper. ¹

We are going to leave the era of the steam pumper at around the year 1936 and, to my knowledge, this is the last time the Silsby actually functioned as a reliable working unit. The story goes that it was sent to Sunbury to pump out

¹ Left to right: Front Row: Ellis Kerstetter, Deputy Chief; Donald E. Walters, Chief of Department; Robert E. Stackhouse, Assistant Chief. 1st Row, David L. Arndt, Paul Bowersox, Charles R. Meachum, Harold Erdley, Ralph I. Ammon, Sr., C. Dale Schrader, A. Lake Yocum. 2nd Row: Mearns Arbogast, Anthony Kifilo, Oliver Hummel, Raymond P. Kline, Clarence Erdley, James Meachum. 3rd Row: Theodore L. Yocum, Charles Holtzapple, Guy Benfer, Clyde Ernast, Charles Parsons, Harold Herman, Walter Beaver.
A "quad" has a booster tank of water, and a complement of hose, a full bed of ground ladders, and a 600 gpm pump – four types of equipment.
Photo previously appeared in *The Borough Bulletin*, Jan. 1959, p. 7.

cellars after the 1936 flood and, because the water being pumped was contaminated with oil, sand, and other contaminants, the pump was made inoperable. In 1936 the borough purchased a Seagrave truck, known as a “quad.” In 1940, the last Seagrave pumper to go into civilian service was purchased by the borough. This was due to World War II. All subsequently manufactured apparatus went to the military.

After the war ended, fire service was making major changes in the way folks were trained and newer apparatus was being brought on the market. In the early 1960s the borough purchased a 1000 gpm (gallons per minute) Mack fire engine that was quite a change in what we had as running stock, and later on the borough purchased a new concept in aerial devices called a snorkel manufactured by the Putnam Corporation. It was the first one of this design delivered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The two older pieces of equipment were disposed of. At this time the fire company had an active contingent of approximately 35 to 40 members and this held into the 1980s, but as many volunteer-based organizations experienced, active members started to decline and, in the middle 1990s, the first paid personnel were hired. Now, in the year 2013, there are 22 paid folks on call 24/7 which one must realize does cost money to operate, but as mentioned before, volunteerism experienced by fire companies throughout the country was declining very rapidly and to obtain excellent fire protection this is what is happening throughout our state.

In this short communication one can see that we have come a long way from 1831 to 2013, but who knows where we will be in the next thirty years as we see many new electronic and other inventions coming our way?

Documenting our colorful history, a portion of the building on North Firth Street, known as the Administration Building, was set aside for a museum to house many of the articles that we had accumulated over the years. The biggest task that was taken on was in 2001 when a small group of fire fighters decided that they would see if they could restore the old Valiant. As they started this project, they soon discovered that almost every part had to be replaced and, after many hours of hard labor, the Valiant threw a stream of water for the first time in

over a century and a half. We feel that our small museum is worth your time to stop in and see where it all started. Appointments to visit the Liddick and



Some of the equipment used by the Cameron Engine Company today

Stephen Memorial Museum can be arranged by calling Chief Rick Sheesley, whose assistance in arranging the above photo is much appreciated.

Further Sources

Much information about the William Cameron Fire Company can be obtained by visiting the museum in Lewisburg, North 5th Street at Buffalo Road (Rt. 192).

Readers wanting to know more about the Cameron Fire Company can consult *The William Cameron Engine Company 100 Years of Service, 1874-1974*. A copy is available at the Union County Historical Society, Union County Court House, Lewisburg.



The Bull Run Fire, Jan. 7, 1972

by

Robert E. Stackhouse

I was entering my first week of the last year of my tenure as Chief of Department. Shortly after midnight on this fateful day, when the personal alerting devices in each firefighter's home went off, activated from the 911 Center, announcing a fire discovered at the "Bull Run Inn and Bowling Alley. When we as the first responders arrived at the scene we discovered fire shooting out of the entire front of the building.



The Bull Run fire, January 7th, 1972

Someone shouted that there were people living in the apartments above the Inn. I immediately dispatched three firefighters to inspect the entire second floor to make sure, if there was entrapment, to notify me immediately. As it turned out there were no folks in residence at that time.

Readers should note that this was not the building where the present day Bull Run Inn at 6th and Market is located. The building that burned was located on

Market Street between 6th and 5th streets, and Bull Run Creek actually ran under the building. The restaurant and bar portion of the building fronted Market Street, while the rear portion was a bowling alley. The national fire fighting practice in describing buildings uses “A” to denote the front of the building (in this case the side facing Market Street) and then proceeds clockwise with side “B” facing 5th Street, “C” the side along the alley paralleling Market Street, and “D” facing 6th Street. I will use these letters in what follows.

The first engine on the scene took the hydrant located in front of 518 Market Street to feed the elevating platform known as a “snorkel” with a reach of 65 feet. It was placed near the corner so it could reach two sides of the building. The second engine took the hydrant at the corner of 6th and Market streets next to the Town Tavern. Two heavy attack lines were placed in service and advanced to the “D” side of the building. This was done to stop any extension of the fire from the rear of the apartments.

At this time I personally made an inspection of the bowling alley and did not find any fire, and only a light drift of smoke was visible. When the deputy chief and I went to inspect the other two sides of the building we discovered heavy smoke pushing out under the eaves of the roof with some force behind it. This told us that there had to be another empty space somewhere above the bowling alley. Being a native of Lewisburg I remembered that many years ago there was a public laundry known as the Peerless Laundry. When that went out of business the building was sold to a car dealer and used for storage and repairs, etc. At this point the ceiling was lowered, which left a void of about 3 feet. Somehow the fire had crept across from the apartment and had ignited the timbers holding up the upper roof. At that time, seeing what was about to happen we had the “snorkel” move to the “D” (West) side of the building to stop any spreading of the fire across the street.

Originally our 1000 GPM engine was sent to a hydrant located on the corner of 6th and Saint Louis streets and had dual 3-inch supply lines laid to protect the “C” side of the building. But, when the suction hose was connected and the hydrant was turned on, there was no water coming out. The engineer immediately notified me of this situation. I cannot repeat here what I said to myself.

There was supposed to be a 12" water main installed to feed this hydrant. Our water map showed this, but the line was not installed until the next spring. This meant that we had to move to another hydrant a block away and had to leave the 3" supply lines lying in the street. This operation was going to feed one of our master stream devices to protect the "C" side, which was the rear of the structure.

Across a small alley at this point were three weather-beaten residences that would have gone up in minutes if the fire had reached them. Also, only fifty feet away, were the Busser warehouse and Heimbach lumberyard that we were very much concerned about. I had a crew place a ladder on the corner of the "B" side to try and ventilate the room and try and relieve the pressure that had build up very quickly. The latter had just been placed to make the ascent to the roof when an explosion blew the entire rear of the building out. We had hose lines in place so there was no spread of the fire to the structures mentioned above. The fire was held at this point with no further extension to any other areas.

We were on the scene till mid morning of the next day. Cameron Fire Company handled the fire without mutual aid from any other company. The fire brigade from the U.S. Penitentiary was held at our station and were ready to respond if needed. They were well trained and many times had responded with us. That unit does not exist at the Penitentiary any more.

I was well pleased with the effort that all of the firefighters displayed for so many hours and that there were no injuries. As with any major incident, there are always unexpected problems that arise that you have no control over.



Silent Voices:
Amateur Photos and Movies as
Historical Documentation
by
Lois Huffines

Images from the past may be silent, but they are not mute. Photographs and early homemade movies have no sound, but from them we can derive important historical information that otherwise would have been lost to us. Amateur and candid shots typically tell us more of the daily routine and evoke a sense of individual personalities in ways that formal and staged photographs with their standardized stares and forced rigidity suppress. This lesson is amply demonstrated by four reels of 16 mm film from 1937.

The four reels, now digitized and presented on DVD, were rescued from a trash heap in 1976 by James Schwartz, now a retired funeral director in Mifflinburg. The



The original film reels, nestled in tins and packaged in cardboard boxes
DVD offers viewers a slice of history from their own backyard, as it was in 1937. And just in time! Appropriately, the new DVD arrived during the Bicentennial of Union

County, a celebration of times past. The DVD offers a local answer to questions of how life once was and brings some of those memories forward just before they might have lost.

In 2012, Schwartz donated the original reels to the Union County Historical Society just at the time Marion Lois Huffines was researching the history of Mifflinburg for her book, *Mifflinburg and the West End*, published by Arcadia in 2012. She borrowed a 16mm projector from Bucknell University and was astonished to find that the reels contained 36 minutes raw footage of Mifflinburg and surrounding towns, taken in 1937. Sponsored by the Union County Historical Society and underwritten by several of its members, Huffines contracted with McVicar Video Productions of Lewisburg to have the film digitized and produced on DVD for sale to the public. Originally the film segments as they appeared were basically random, taken wherever the photographer



300 Block of Chestnut Street, Mifflinburg, facing east

happened to be at the time. Huffines edited the film, reordered the segments by location, and provided subtitles identifying places and locations. Bruce Teeple, a member of the Union County Historical Society, introduces the DVD, providing some context for viewing it. He notes that in 1937 the United States was still suffering effects

from the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt had just been elected to a second term, and that World War II had not yet threatened on the horizon.

The 1937 footage provides a view of daily life in Mifflinburg and the surrounding towns. As the photographer traveled around the county, he filmed individuals active in their routine activities. Although his black and white moving images are without sound or technical effects, they tell the story of how people lived, worked, and enjoyed their leisure. In the film, for example, gas station attendants pump gas while washing windshields, checking oil and water levels, and showing the dip stick to the driver. At the Atlantic station, the attendant works in white company overalls and sports a cap, looking quite professional. At the Kocher Texaco station, the attendant wears a cap adorned by the Texaco star symbol. Still other gas station attendants don work clothes from home and wipe their hands of oil and water on the



Mifflinburg's Atlantic Gas Station, no self-service here yet!

front of their clothing when no rag is handy. One sees the interactions with the customer, the cars of the era, and the careful attention given to the work task. In Mifflinburg, vehicles line the streets, and 1938 Studebakers are already being advertised.

The photographer filmed the workers at several industries. At the Kooltex Knitting Mills and at the Kurtz Overall Factory, which stood across the tracks from the Mifflinburg railroad station, we see the workers as they leave for home. Though tired at the end of their workday, they seem glad to help out the photographer by walking by him as he films their departure. He filmed workers at mill docks as they load and stack sacks of flour at Snook's mills in Mifflinburg, Swengel, and Vicksburg into trucks beds and even a horse-drawn wagon. At one mill, the truck departs by driving backwards up the street—now what was that all about?



Workers from the Mifflinburg Flour and Grain Mill

On Chestnut Street in Mifflinburg, the photographer shows shop workers and displays in shop windows. At Gast & Sons Dry Goods, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Gast stand by the doorway, and Edmund Shively's Appliances has its own delivery truck which also advertises the store's telephone number. A jaunty young man waves as he walks past the Corner Lunch shop and the Mifflinburg Book Store. At the Crossroads in Laurelton, we see Pete Pursley's General Store and Post Office, and even Pete's brother-in-law. Other workers are busy too: Ken Erdley delivers milk for Wehr's Dairy, probably at Cowan, and sticks around for conversation with the photographer and friends. Preston Knepp's Grocery Bus sells peaches at 14 cents per pound and egg noodles for 8 cents.

Outside the Mazeppa Mill, hunters stand with rifles and their hunting dog ready to take off for the woods.

The photographer traveled to every school in central and western Union County. He seemed intent on photographing every school child. He filmed students and some of the teachers at Mifflinburg High School, Hartley Township High School, and Lewis Township High School. He visited every elementary school, and as a result, we see these lively, energetic students at recess and watch while their teachers, ever mindful of the



Students playing London Bridge at the Buffalo Crossroads School



Millmont Elementary School, Paul Reamer, teacher

time, try to gather them briefly for a picture and then back into the school room. The photographer visited the schools in Swengel, Millmont, Laurelton, Green Grove, White Springs, Pontius, Rand, Creek School, Red Bank School, Forest Hill, Mazeppa, Buffalo Cross Roads, Cowan (both Grammar and Primary schools), and Vicksburg. As the students are being photographed, the younger ones push and shove each other; the boys show off, and the girls try to behave. The older students, especially some of the young ladies, turn their heads in shyness. They play London Bridge and Farmer in the Dell, strategies to give the photographer a way to film each individual student. Anyone who attended school in this area of Union County in 1937 is probably on the DVD.



Mary Ellen (Ringler) Nolan taught fourth grade at Pontius School

Other pieces of history show up then too. The photographer filmed the veterans serving at the Civilian Conservation Corps camp in Weikert, as the men prepare to carry out their assigned projects involving timbering, trail building, and reforestation. Raymond B. Winter appears in this segment of the film although his name is enshrined at the state park at Halfway, further to the north. At the Weikert camp, the cooks for the camp order a couple of men, as part of their KP duties, to peel potatoes in preparation for dinner. As often happens in filming, the men stare at the camera motionless until someone, perhaps the photographer, reminds them that it is a movie camera. It is then that one sees their personalities emerge in good-hearted teasing. The film also has images of the CCC at Halfway where the young men at this camp perform a flag-lowering exercise at the end of the day, marching in step until they believe themselves to

be out of camera range. At that point they break into a run, perhaps hurrying to dinner. The camp itself shows off its fine stone work, quite an accomplishment still seen, in part, as Halfway Dam. The photographer even filmed the camp from the lookout.

Still other institutions appear in the film, ones that remind us that the daily logistics of living, working, and passing on continue a cycle from one generation to the next: Mifflinburg Bank and Trust, Laurelton State Bank, Strunk Funeral Home, and B.T. Lance Monument Works. The four-story Brown's Buggy Factory (later Sterling Bros. Throwing Mill), a building no longer standing, appears in the background, near what became the Mifflinburg Community Park, which in 1937 was a ballpark with a stand of bleachers. Herbster's mills at Laurelton and at Laurel Park are still in operation.

The photographer also filmed the residents at Laurelton State Village for Feeble-minded Women of Childbearing Age as they did their work, going to the barn with milk buckets and a pitch fork. Some of them were so shy at having their picture taken that they walked backwards toward the camera. Back in Mifflinburg, we see a 1937 fire drill



Mifflinburg Firehouse, razed in 1976 to make room for a new larger firehouse

as the Mifflinburg fire trucks race to Gardner Gottschall's shop behind the Lewisburg Hotel to hook up hoses, douse a "fire," and remove a "victim" in an ambulance provided by Strunk Funeral Home. Residents gather to watch the commotion. A fireman shows the inner workings of the emergency alarm located between the firehouse and the borough building.

The past differs from what we see now in myriad ways, and vibrant memories are often triggered by the sight of seemingly insignificant details. Young boys wear knickers or bib-overalls to school, and they had not yet discovered the baseball cap. The girls are in dresses, and the older boys don coats and ties, sometimes even a vest. The cars look clunky to modern eyes, but they sure beat horse-drawn wagons, and there is already a traffic light on Chestnut Street in Mifflinburg. One catches a glimpse of a horse and wagon at work, but by now horses in towns were out of work, and ponies were brought to town to offer families a chance to have their children photographed taking a ride. Wringer washers sold for \$69.95. Lux soap was for sale, and gas stations advertised



Edmund Shively's Appliance Store sold wringer washers for \$69.95

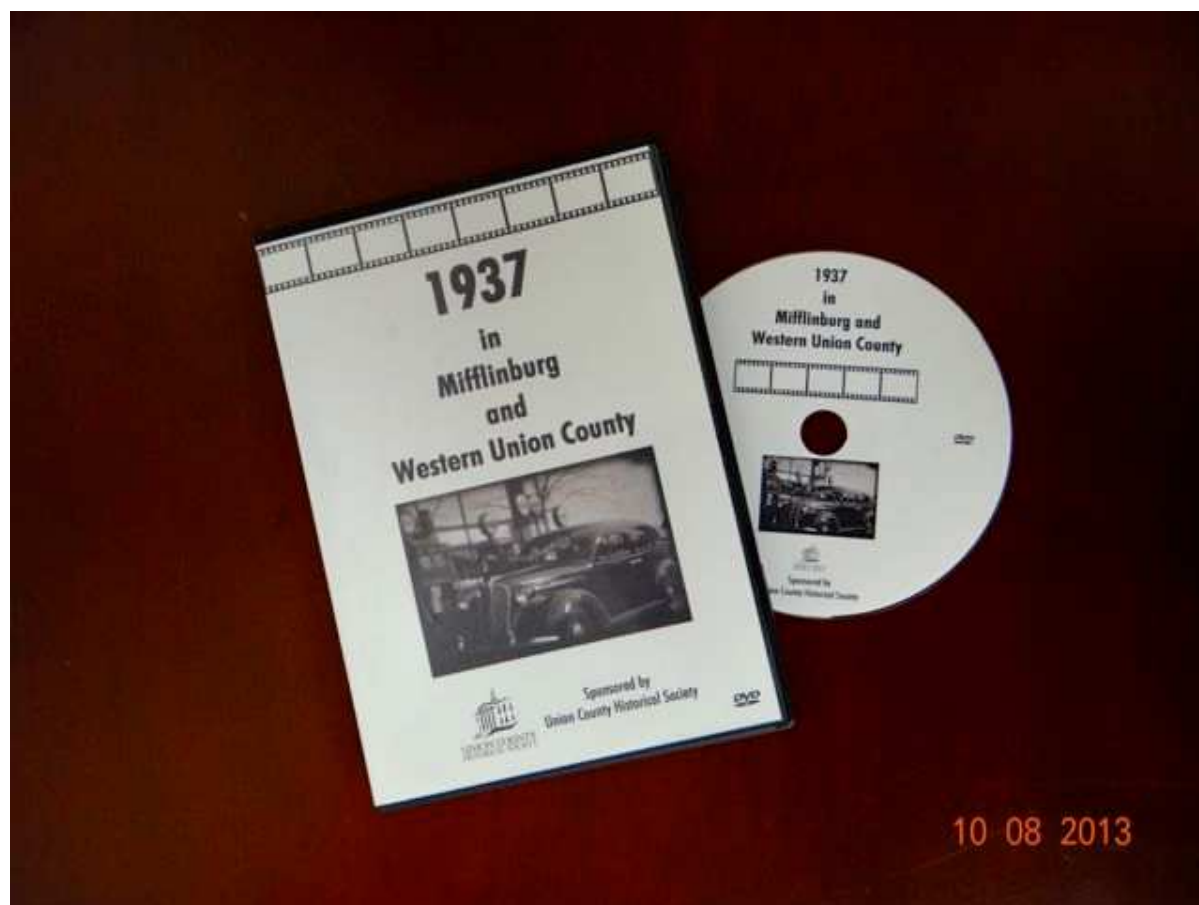
sanitary rest rooms. Milk trucks made deliveries to private homes. Mills and small industries provided a way to make a living, and many more men smoked.

Much has changed since 1937, but the film captures a slice of time as it was. Viewers get a feel for the community, how people worked together, and see how one-room schoolhouses might have brought students and teachers together, helping them to know and respect each other in ways that are sometimes lost today. Modern viewers will recognize places and some of the people, and they may be surprised by how many memories are evoked by these images of long ago.

The photographer has not been identified although many people suggest that it was Edmund Shively, who owned an appliance store but was also a teacher and photographer. The photographer himself is reflected in a store window in one of the film segments. Is he really Shively, who also appears later in the film at Swengel School? What about some of the other people who appear in the film? Who were they and what happened to them? The camera used by the photographer was one of the hand-held models on the market. These models were easily carried from place to place. The film was made by Agfa, and one suspects that the camera probably was too. One notes that all the footage taken by this photographer was taken outside.

Local history is where “big history” actually begins and where it is lived. While change seems to be accelerating in modern society, a look back, even 76 years back, offers a context for how today communities came to be what they are. A look back offers perspective—a lot of people preceded us and have lived and worked, and celebrated in the small local communities that we call home today. Each of them had a personality that made them unique, and that personality even emerges as we watch how they react to the camera’s eye. Whereas some people welcome a camera, others are shy, still others “perform” for it to make themselves noticeable, and one person even thumbs his nose at the photographer! Each generation leaves its mark for those who follow. We may not know who preceded us, but we realize that they made a life for themselves in the best way they could, each taking a step toward the future. None will ever know how far their influence reached, but for a brief 36 minutes, we can look back to 1937 and see their world. It is an amazing opportunity to see the past, and because of films such as this one, we may appreciate its people, our predecessors, all the more.

The DVD *1937 Mifflinburg and Western Union County* is on sale at the Union County Historical Society for \$15 plus tax. The Historical Society may be reached at (570) 524-8666 or by email at info@unioncountyhistoricalsociety.org. The DVD may also be purchased at Laurel Market and from Tony Shively in Millmont at (570) 922-4297. The DVD tells a visually significant story of local history. It makes a great gift for those who want to know or to remember how it really was in 1937.



The newly issued digitized DVD of the four film reels

The original four reels of 16mm film were given by James K. and Carol G. Schwartz to the Union County Historical Society in memory of Katherine R. Roush and Mary E. Koons, who were noted historians in Mifflinburg and the West End.

✧ **ACCOUNTS** ✧