



# SCHUYLKILL HERITAGE

*A Newsletter of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County*



Volume 6, Issue 3

*“to discover, procure, and preserve...”*

May - June 2011

## Pottsville was the First Town in the North to Receive Word of Fort Sumter

*“The Ball Is Opened.  
Fort Sumter Fired On,  
Fighting Like Hell!”*



On this day April 12, 1861 the Civil War started, and Schuylkill County had another first in the history of this country.

Pottsville Was The First Town In The North To Receive The News Of Fort Sumter

Several years before the opening of the rebellion, Mr. John C. Beck of Pottsville, recently deceased, accepted a position as foreman on the Wilmington, N.C. Herald. As the time drew near when it was apparent that war must come, Mr. Beck quietly began to make arrangements to return north. There was a strong Union sentiment in Wilmington, but not enough to secure absolute protection to advocates. The editor of the paper fervently was opposed to secession but there were controlling interests in the papers directorate that loved him to its course of supporting the south.

On the day on which Fort Sumter was fired on, April 12, 1861, Mr. Beck was in consultation with the editor of the Herald. When the assistant entered the editorial room

under extreme excitement, Mr. Beck turned to the stairs leading to the copy room when he overheard the editor say, “Tell Beck.” Mr. Beck was recalled into the office and he was there informed that the Herald was just in receipt of a telegram announcing the firing on Fort Sumter. He was advised to consider his sentiments and to remain with the paper and denied further inducements being offered.

But there he refused. He asked a special favor to be given permission to telegraph the news to the Miners Journal in Pottsville. He was told that all communications north had been stopped, and that it might be impossible to gratify his request.

However, he was advised that if it was at all possible to get the news through it might be done for him. He then completed the message as received by the Herald. “The Ball Is Opened. Fort Sumter Fired On, Fighting Like Hell!”

The message did get through to the Journal. On its receipt Mr. Benjamin Bannan was greatly excited and took the telegram up to the Miners National Bank, and showed it to Mr. Isaac Beck, saying, “I have just received this message from John, I can near believe it! Whatever John has said must be true, try to have it confirmed,” was the reply.

Mr. Bannan immediately got in communication with Philadelphia, and then New York and they had heard nothing, saying it was very difficult to hear from the south. But that if there was any thing within the message they would have immediately heard ... But they did not until they had the actual message. So Pottsville was the first place in the north to hear of the opening of hostilities and a fellow townsman, Mr. John C. Beck, had the distinction of being the sender of the message.

John S. Beck, 1908

Compiled by John Stu Richards

This letter is in the files of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County.

# Jerry Wolman: a legend in his own right



The Spectrum, the legendary sports/entertainment arena, located in Philadelphia, held its final event on October 31, 2009, a Pearl Jam concert.

Formal demolition of the structure began in November 2010. It had opened in the fall of 1967 and was Philadelphia's first modern indoor sports arena, intended to be the home of the Philadelphia Flyers hockey team as well as the home court for the '76ers pro basketball team.

The Spectrum was the brainchild of Schuylkill County native, Jerry Wolman. Construction was completed within sixteen months at a cost of \$7 million. Mr. Wolman was the moving force behind the construction as he needed a place



for his new hockey team to play. He already was the owner of the Philadelphia Eagles and was extending his love of sports to indoor professional hockey.

Not to be left out, baseball had a Wolman connection as well. Mr. Wolman, at the time, owned Connie Mack Stadium which he leased to the Phillies.

Not bad for a dropout from Shenandoah's high school, one of nine children, whose parents operated a produce market in Shenandoah.

The Spectrum is now part of Pennsylvania sports history. It was where the Flyers won their first Stanley Cup on May 19, 1974, defeating the Boston Bruins in game 6. Schuylkill County native Jerry Wolman will always be remembered as "the man that forever changed the landscape of Philadelphia professional sports" and rightfully inducted into the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame.

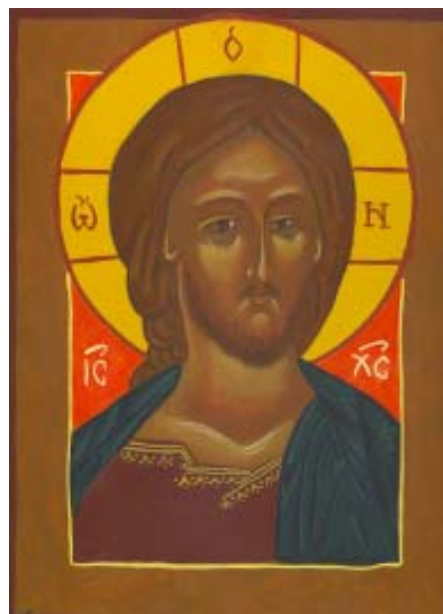
Schuylkill County will always remember him as one of its own.

## Icon Raffle

Icon artist Kim Fritges gave us an icon that she recently painted for the Historical Society to raffle off. The Icon is worth \$300. Tickets are \$5.00 each or 3 for \$10.00. The winning ticket will be drawn on June 29<sup>th</sup> at our monthly meeting. You do not have to be present to win.

Tickets may be purchased at the Historical Society in person, by mail or phone. Check or Credit Card.

Call 570-622-7540. We will mail back your ticket stubs.



The Icon is 9" wide, 12" high and 1/2" thick. There is a saw tooth picture hanging hook on the back.

## Motorcycles, Barbie Dolls and WYSO Flowers Coming Soon

We will be making several changes in exhibits in the coming weeks.

We will be exhibiting several Barbie Doll Collections that will run from May thru August.

We will also see the WYSO Spring Flowers Art Exhibit that will replace the Merry Monk Exhibit.

Then in July we will have our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Vintage Motorcycle exhibit with some rare and valuable motorcycles provided by members of the Perkiomen Chapter of the Antique Motorcycle Club of America. This was a very popular exhibit last year and we have had several requests to bring it back again this summer. We

expect it to be in place by early July and run til the end of August.

In addition to these changes we will be displaying a collage of photos and postcards that will replicate activities of county events in days gone by in tribute to the Schuylkill County Bicentennial.

## New Schuylkill Books

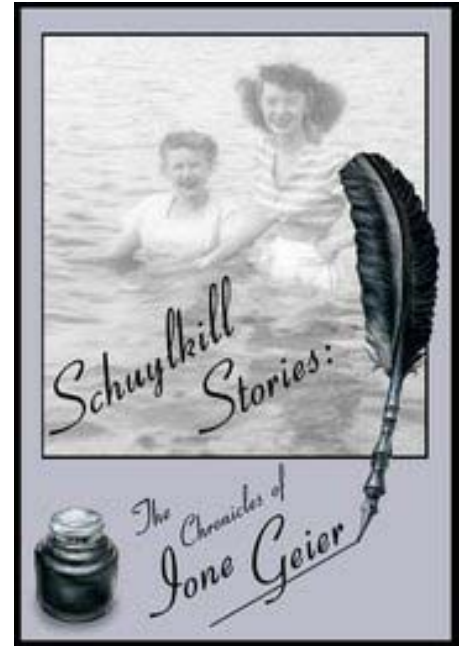
### Schuylkill Stories: The Chronicles of Ione Geier

A collection of articles written during the prizewinning journalist's 40 years at the Pottsville Republican newspaper.

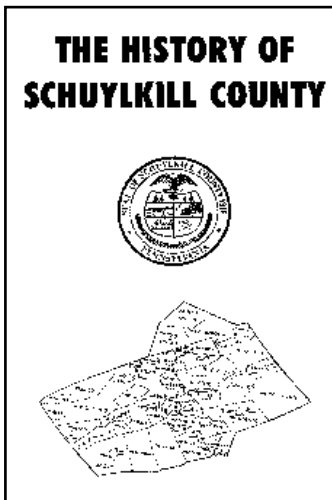
This book has two purposes: to publish a sort of alternate history of Schuylkill County with the kind of information you normally wouldn't find in a history book; and to benefit three nonprofit organizations in Schuylkill County.

Articles in this volume include stories about county residents during World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II, local authors, embarrassing moments, memories of Pottsville, Frackville, and Shenandoah as they were in the mid-1950s and a wide variety of other stories of people from Schuylkill County.

**Limited supply. Price \$20.00 including sales tax. S & H \$3.00.**



## The History of Schuylkill County



This book was originally published in 1950 by the Pottsville School District and reprinted with the permission of the District by the Historical Society of Schuylkill County.

It is a history of the Schuylkill County written for the young resident and covers all phases of life in the county from coal mining, transportation to farming. An appropriate gift for anyone interested in county history. Reprinted during the celebration of the County's Bicentennial.

**Order # B076 \$10.00 plus tax**

## Recent Acquisitions to the Historical Societys Collections

Four model WW II airplanes by Jack Leary.

Photo of the Metropolitan Insurance Co. 1932 picnic by Marion Riehl Chessa Bragman.

Records(78's) of Pottsville Forty Chorus and Elk Famous Forty from Alice Rozetar.

23 Postcards of the county from the Historical Society of Columbia County.

## Schuylkill Canal Photos

The Society is looking for photographs and other items that are related to the Schuylkill Canal to add to our new exhibit. If you have any photos of the canal and are willing to share them with us please contact the Society at 622-7540.

Anyone having an interest in participating in an informal discussion group focused on the county canal history is asked to contact the Society.

## The Cry of Limie Dimie

Where is the crier now? He would drive the county villages and patches every spring and fall at house cleaning time with a horse and wagon filled with lime and was a joy to many house wives and farmers. His cry was ...

"In time O'lime, In time O'lime, Lime for a dime, A dime O'lime,

A dime O'lime, White wash lime, For a dime, Just in time."

Source: Folklore of the Schuylkill Canal, John Bowman

# Upcoming Programs

## Genealogy Workshop

The Historical Society will be conducting a **Genealogy 101 Workshop** for beginners on Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup> from 12 Noon to 4 PM.

This will be the first in a series of workshops that will encompass the methods of searching for your family history. Admission is \$5.00 for members and \$10 for non-members. Call 622-7540 to enroll.

**Civil War Roundtable**  
**Wednesday, May 18th 7:00 PM**  
 Schuylkill County's men in the Navy and Marines during the Civil War

**Wednesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM**  
 Battle Of First Bull Run  
 (150th Anniversary is July 21).

## Ukrainian Folk Dance Workshop

Monday, June 27<sup>th</sup> thru Friday, July 1<sup>st</sup> at the Ukrainian Homestead, Lehighton. For information call

Paula Holoviak at 570-708-1992, Sandra Duda at 610-377-7750 or Joe Zucofski at 570-622-8056. Deadline June 13<sup>th</sup>.

## Tour Historic Philadelphia

On Wednesday, May 11<sup>th</sup> the St. Clair Community and Historical Society is sponsoring a bus trip to Philadelphia. A guided walking tour will explore downtown Philadelphia.



The cost, \$70.00, includes transportation, a guided walking tour and dinner at Michaels in Douglasville on the return trip. A choice of 3 entrees will be available.

**Call 429 - 2272 or 429 - 2242  
for reservations.**

**Wednesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 PM**

Dave "Big Owl" McSurdy will talk on "Indians of Pennsylvania". He will have artifacts and tell the story of the original inhabitants of our state.

The program is free and the public is invited.

**Wednesday, June 29<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM**

**Show n' Tell with George Blum**

Bring in your antiques, family heirlooms and collectibles for a verbal appraisal by George Blum Appraisals. George has been an antique dealer, appraiser and consultant for over 40 years in Schuylkill County.

*\$5.00 item.* Maximum of three items.

## Pottsville Night Out

**Friday, July 8<sup>th</sup>  
5:00 to 9:00 PM**

The Historical Society will sponsor a program "Days of Old: Who's Who in Pottsville History". Our exhibits will be open and we will have guided tours of downtown Pottsville pointing out the unusual architecture and notable places and locations where historical events took place.

The Schuylkill County Fire Museum will have a couple of their antique fire trucks on display and will tell you about the Great Fire of 1914.

This will be a fun night for the family and those interested in leaning more about Pottsville in the Days of Old.

## Visit our On-line Gift Shop for Schuylkill County Gifts

### Now Accepting Credit Cards



We are now accepting all the major Credit Cards (Visa, Master Card, Discover, American Express and PayPal) at the Society and On-line for purchases, donations, membership application/renewal and research fees. We hope this will make dealing with us more "user friendly" and convenient for you.

## Block of Art

For the second year the Block of Art was a big hit for the Historical Society. Over 500 visited the exhibits of The Wyso Merry Monks of Centre Street School Collection and the Icon Art that was displayed and demonstrated.

Icon artist Kim Fritzges from Mountain Top displayed and demonstrated icon art. Edward Sirkot had his collection of Pysanky and Ukrainian art and crafts. Jennie Atty Gelles and Peter Pearson both displayed their icon art. Steven Lichak (Wyso Curator) gave an interesting WYSO talk on



Saturday before a great crowd of enthusiastic visitors.

The Kazka Ukrainian Folk Ensemble put on a special performance on Sunday attracting the biggest crowd for the day!

It was a great event and we thank all those artists who took the time to participate and allow us to exhibit their art work. We also want to thank our own Kris Miller Siple and Jill Salmon who put the entire event together.

## Celebrating Civil War 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



### “Remembering Our First Defenders”

was a fine program to open a series of plays presented by our own local Civil War historians.

The performance started with a narrative and short video program by Tom Shay of the firing on Fort Sumter and subsequent call for militia by President Lincoln to defend the Capital.

Re-enactors Stu Richards, Tommy Symons, Karen Esack, Bryan Dunnigan, Mark Pflum, Gary Weaver and Cliff Hutton portrayed the part of veterans as they looked back at those first days of the Civil War.

They recalled the emotional departure from their families and the excitement of their journey to Washington via Harrisburg and Baltimore, their confrontation with southern sympathizers in Baltimore and the plight of Nicholas Biddle who was the first to shed blood after being hit on the head with a brick.

We plan on having similar “re-enactments” throughout the coming years of the Civil War 150<sup>th</sup> celebration.

# WELCOME

## New Members

We welcome the following new members to our Society.

Charles Achenbach	Lindsay Allen
Robert Antonini	Edward Averill
Diana Backus	Jessie Balulis
Frank Bergen	Jim & Sharon Burkhart
Andrea Curran	Allen Daly
Carol Esteu	Robert B. Evans
June Fairhurst Fay	Lisa Forney
Nicole Forney	Susan Gavalis
Jeff Heiser	Arlin A. Kramer Sr.
John Leary	Stephanie Lubinsky
Elaine Luschas	Lenny & Karen McHugh
Patrick McKinney	Michael Morris
Robert A. Pugh	Christine Schultz
Kerri Schultz	Cheryl Shope
JoAnn Shuff	Shelby Splain
William Summers	Robert Svrcek
Susan Swearhart	Michael Swilp
John Talieri	Marilyn Torpey
Sam & Kelly Troup	Elwood Umbenhauer
Barb & Charlie Wagner	Kathryn Kay Wells

## It gives us fits, please help

As mentioned in our last newsletter, we have only one Microfilm Reader that works and occasionally gives us fits.

Thus far we have been able to collect a total of \$700 towards a replacement machine. Quotes for a new machine run as high as \$10,500.

Perhaps you may know of a hospital, newspaper or some other business that may have a Canon Microprinter 90 that they no longer use or are willing to sell. If you would let us know we would appreciate your help.

Our thanks to the following who have supported this effort.

Barry Becker, Marcia G. Flanigan, Geni P. Chittum, Anonymously, Concezio & Roseanne DiGregario, Dr. & Mrs. Charles H. Zois, Diana Backus, Dewolfe & Wood, Linda Greene.

The Historical Society  
Of Schuylkill County  
P.O. Box 1356  
Pottsville, PA 17901

Non-profit org.  
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Permit # 485

## Historical Society of Schuylkill County



**Tourists, Historical  
Researchers, Scholars and  
Genealogists are Welcome**

**305 North Centre Street,  
Pottsville, Pennsylvania  
(570) 622-7540**

### Board of Directors

#### Directors

Pam Delenick    John "Stu" Richards  
Tom Dempsey    Kris Miller Siple  
Mark T. Major    Bill Van Stone  
Howard Merrick    Jay Zane  
Deborah Reed

#### Director

Peter Yasenchak, Ph.D.

**Sch.hist@comcast.net**

**www.schuylkillhistory.org**

#### Society Hours

Wednesday 1:30 - 6 p.m.  
Thursday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Friday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Saturday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

The Purpose of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County is to discover, procure, and preserve the records of the history of Schuylkill County and any data or materials which may establish or illustrate that history.