



SCHUYLKILL HERITAGE

A Newsletter of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County



Volume 4, Issue 2

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

March - April, 2009

LETTERS FROM HOME



Where is “home”? For some it was across the Atlantic or perhaps the Pacific or Alaska or California. The home we are talking about is the little borough of GORDON, PA. situated in Schuylkill County just a few miles south of Ashland. Gordon in the earlier days was called “PEROTE”, named by Col. Wynkoop on his return from the Mexican War and the place where their last battle was fought.

Residing in Gordon and serving as the Minister of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church was Rev. Arthur Charles Harris, from the years of 1922-1951. Rev. Harris was a veteran from World War I, serving as a Chaplain. He suffered from being gassed, lost all of his teeth, one lung and other chronic health problems for the rest of his life.

Rev. Harris remembered how lonely the days were over in Europe because he knew no one and never heard news about anything happening at home.

Now here we are twenty three years later, involved in another War-World War II.

Having a sad memory of World War I and the loneliness and sad feelings of home, Rev. Harris decided upon a new venture, a newsletter to all the service men and women from Gordon, not only from his church but from the total borough of Gordon.

As Rev. Harris embarked upon his new venture, he found there were more than 150 men and women from Gordon in the service. An amazing amount of young people from little Gordon, population just over 1,000. Nevertheless, Rev. Harris was committed to his plan which he started with his first newsletter dated April 16, 1942 and signed it as “Your old ex soldier friend”, Rev. Arthur C. Harris.

What were the contents of these newsletters? The good Reverend wanted the service people to know where each was stationed so he tried to keep everyone apprised of their locations. Next he wanted all of them to be aware of what is happening “back home”.

The title of “what is happening back home” took in a wide variety of pieces of information. We started out with who has passed away, who moved either in town, out of town or within the town, who is home on leave from basic training, did anyone get promoted, someone is going to Officers Training School and even that our town practiced for the first “black-out”. As the months flew by, Rev. Har-

ris included scores from the teams of the area in football season, basketball season, and baseball season. He was especially proud of his townspeople getting promoted- I choose not to name anyone lest I would offend someone by not mentioning their name.

The Good Reverend enjoyed Humor and also honored the requests of “his servicemen”- so here is one such article.

MOM WRITES HER SOLDIER SON.

One of our soldier friends, who wants to keep his name kept secret, sends us a clipping from the servicemen’s paper published at Fort Sill which contains a letter from a mother to her son. “You’ve been printing letters the servicemen write, now please, for me, print a letter which a mother wrote to a serviceman,” he begged.

And, although we don’t feel too good about it, for him we reprint the following:

Deer son;

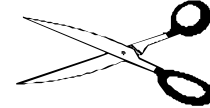
Yer paw has a job now the first in 48 years. We air a little better off now. \$17.75 every Tuesday, so that we kud do a little fixin’up.

We sent to Sears n Robuck fer one of them thar contrapshuns called a bath room. It took a ploomer to git the durn thing in shape. On one side of the room is a long thing that looks like the pigs drink out of it, but you git in and warsh all over. On t’other side is a little white thing called a sink. That is fer lite warshin like the face n nek. Silly aint it. But in t’other corner we really got something thar. This thing yew put one foot in and warsh it clean then pull the chain and git fresh water to warsh the t’other foot. Too lids come with the durn thing, but we aint had no use fer them in the bathroom, so I use one fer a bred board and t’other one we framed yer grampaws pitcher in. These air awful nice pepul to deal with and they even sent a roll of writin paper with it.

*Well take keer of yerself,
Yeer Maw*

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Governor Rendell Cuts Historical Commissions Grant Budget to \$0.00



We just received word that Governor Ed Rendell has proposed a \$0.00 for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's (PHMC) grant program for FY 2009-2010 budget.

This will be a big blow to our financial welfare at the Society. Each year since 2002 we have applied for a General Operating Support Grant to help us defray our operating expenses such as our utility costs which hover around \$18,000- \$20,000 each year. We were getting \$10,000/year which was reduced to \$9,000 two years ago. If this is in fact cut it will be critical for us and our operations next year.

Today we sent letters to each of our three state legislators asking them to oppose this cut. If you are inclined to support our efforts you could either write or call your representative.

Representative David Argall
237 W Broad St.
Tamaqua, PA 18252 570-668-1240

Representative Neal P. Goodman
37 West Centre St
Mahanoy City, PA 17948 570-773-3075

Representative Tim Seip
396 S. Centre St. Pottsville, PA
17901 570-624-3145

We would appreciate any help you may be able to offer in this budget cutting matter.



Help Wanted

Activity Chairperson

The Society is in need of a volunteer who would help find programs and schedule trips that would be of interest to our members. as well as establish some in house youth programs. We have many people scattered throughout the county who are happy to provide interesting and informative programs for organizations and clubs.

The Program Manager would find and schedule people to provide a program for our membership meetings which are the last Wednesday of each month.

They would also plan historical bus trips that would be of interest to the members.

They would also schedule youth

Gift Shop Manager

We are looking for someone who has retail experience coupled with a creative imagination to help us to establish a small gift shop at the Society.

That person would be responsible for the purchase and display of merchandise, maintaining inventory and tracking sales whether it be in store or on-line sales from our website.

If you are interested and would like to explore this opportunity please contact Dave Derbes at 622-7540 or email us at sch.hist@comcast.net.

activities for Saturday mornings.

If you are interested in this position, please call Dave Derbes at 622-7540 or by email at sch.hist@comcast.net.

Historical Society of Schuylkill County Survey

You should have received a survey from Historical Society of Schuylkill County in the last week or so. The survey was designed to solicit input from members into the operations of the Society.

We are very interested in how you feel the Society is doing its job. Are we providing the information and programs that you want?

If you haven't completed and returned your survey, please take a few minutes and complete it. If you misplaced it you may find it on our web site: www.schuylkillhistory.org

We will have an organizational meeting on Saturday, March 28th at 10:00am at the Society's headquarters to discuss the results of the survey and other organizational business. Members are encouraged to attend.

8th Annual History Faire at Mall A Success



It was Valentine's Day and the Mall was pretty crowded despite all the talk about a poor economy. Maybe the fact that the Historical Societies of Schuylkill County were there for the 8th Annual History Faire had something to do with it.

Every community historical society was present displaying their wares from books to photos to calendars and anything historical. It seems to be getting bigger and bigger each year. Not many people passed by without stopping and looking at the items on display.

We had our "New Deal" exhibit and introduced our "Now and Then" power point slide show. Both attracted people, especially the slide show, which featured a little over 100 mixed slides showing places as we see them today, "Now" followed by what it looked like back "Then". It took 9 minutes to view the entire show and some people found it so interesting that they stayed to see it twice before they went about their business.

It was a good event and allowed all the societies to get a little attention and show our citizenry what we are all about.

Pottsville Republican Editorial April 22, 1909

POLITICS AND WOMEN ...

The evils of public life had better be reserved for the contamination of man while the home remains unsullied in the hands of woman... They can accomplish little good with the ballot ... So it is well to say to woman, remain at home, keep pure and helpful the home that there may be one feature of life that is not contaminated with neglect, dishonor and impurity. The woman who feels herself chafing under the restraint which has been placed upon her by the denial of the right of franchise can inform herself at home and perform a better work by making those close to her do their duty on election day, for by so doing, she will be accomplish a double purpose, the improvement of the political world and the maintenance of the high standard of the home.

Coming Events

March 7, 2009, Saturday, 7:30PM

Murder At Ford's Theater will be at the Sovereign Theater at 7:30 PM. Charles Sacavage, Stu Richards, Tommy Symons and a cast of local players will portray when actor John Wilkes Booth fatally shot President Abraham Lincoln.

Visit the Historical Society of Schuylkill County before and after the performance for a little insight on Schuylkill County's involvement in this historical event.

March 26th, Thursday, 7:00 PM

Brian Ardan, author and faculty member of the Stevenson Library at Lock Haven University will speak about his new book, "The Anthracite Coal Region's Slavic Community". The book speaks about the influx of Poles, Slovaks, Carpatho- Rusyns, and Ukrainians to the anthracite coal mining region of Pennsylvania. Books will be available for sale and signing by the author. The program is free and the public is invited

Please Note:

Our March membership meeting will be on Thursday instead of the normal Wednesday night.

April 29th, Wednesday, 7:00 PM

A slide program, "Good Old Days", based on the history of Tumbling Run will be presented by Dave Derbes. The program will feature many old photographs of Tumbling Run as it was used in the early days. The program is free and the public is invited

Receive your newsletter via email ...

We started e-mailing newsletters in September. I believe those responding to our request are satisfied with the service. With the price of postage going up again in the near term we are going to make another appeal to see if we can send more out via the e-mail route.

If you will send us your e-mail address and your regular mailing address we will be more than happy to switch you over on the next newsletter.

It will not only save us money, paper and time as it takes our volunteers a couple of days to print, fold and label the entire 500 some newsletters.

Share your old photos with us

We are always looking for and appreciative when someone brings in old photographs of places and events around the county.

After all that is our purpose; to discover, procure, and preserve the records of the history of Schuylkill County and any materials which may illustrate that history.

We recently examined some old glass negatives and glass plate slides sitting in a locker in our storage room. We believe many of them have never had prints made from them. Glass plate negatives and slides were first developed in the early 19th century.

They are fragile and sensitive to temperature and humidity fluctuations.

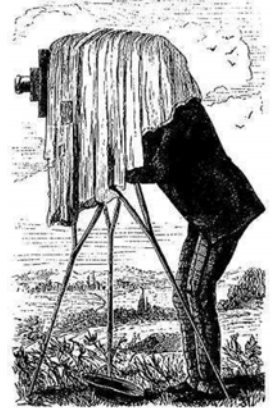
Having said all that, you may discover that you have some in an old chest up in your attic or stashed away in a cardboard box down in the basement.

If so, we would love to have a look at them. We know the image captured on the plate is old. More than likely a significant event or place. Many of the plates have written on the edge what the subject was and whether it was taken

by a professional photographer. Photographers like Bretz, Patterson or Allen were in Pottsville and the county.

We are also interested in other old photographs that you might have. They don't have to be of the glass plate type. Old family photo albums that may have pictures of parades, street scenes or events. Pictures of trains, canal scenes and old airplanes in Schuylkill County are examples of images that are of interest to us. With today's technology we can scan a picture and preserve the captured image for our archives. You may keep the picture if you want it. We just want the image.

If you come across some old pictures, please consider sharing them with us. We don't want to lose some of the treasures of the days gone by in Schuylkill County.



LETTERS FROM HOME

Continued from page 1

I would have been thrilled and honored to receive letters like these from home as I'm sure these service people were.

Reverend Harris mailed his last newsletter on March 29, 1946 just about four years after starting them in April 1942. He indicated that he was concluding the newsletter because more than one-third had been returned because of improper addresses. The final paragraph reads, "Both Mrs. Harris and I send our greetings and best wishes to everyone of you. May He who never slumber nor sleeps watch over you and return you to your homes and loved ones in the not too distant future. Cordially yours, Arthur Harris."

An amazing piece of Schuylkill County's little Borough of Gordon history circulated throughout the world

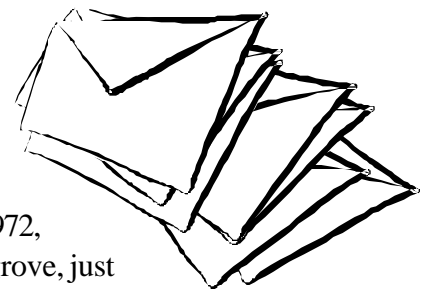
by Rev. Arthur Harris .

Rev. Harris passed away in the autumn of 1972, and is buried in Selinsgrove, just below Susquehanna University.

The copies of the newsletters mentioned in this article are now the property of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County Archives and are available to the general public.

Indebted to Rev. Dr. Mark W. Harris (grandson of Rev. Arthur Harris) of the Lutheran Church of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, for his most kind and generous sharing of these very valuable papers.

Dr. Peter Yasenachak, Executive Director



Three Great Books at One Great Price

A Collection of 20 Historical Musings Written by Leo L. Ward

Volume IX 1994 NO.2 \$15.00 + \$0.90 tax + \$4.00 S&H Total \$19.90

20 historical accounts all about Schuylkill County written for the Pottsville Republican by our late President Leo Ward. Learn about the Pioneer Furnace, or the Centre Turnpike or the Spanish Flu Epidemic of 1918. This is a must read for history buffs of Schuylkill County.

Publications of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County ...

Volume IX 1989 NO.1 \$10.00 + \$0.60 tax + \$4.00 S&H Total \$14.60

Four great stories ... all about Schuylkill County

The Last Days of the Confederacy by Confederate General John B. Gordon.

125 Years of Journalism by Herwood E. Hobbs

The Story of the Yuengling Brewery by Edith C. Yuengling

The History of the Philadelphia & Reading Coal & Iron Company by Bernard E. Buggy

Early Transportation in Schuylkill County

\$10.00 + \$0.60 tax + \$4.00 S&H Total \$14.60

An exquisite collage of rare and very historic photographs depicting the evolution of transportation within our very own Schuylkill County.

This is not your ordinary history book. Packed with pictures of canal boats on the Schuylkill River, horse and carriages and old trains. Why it even has a picture of the first automobile brought to the county by Robert Allison that is now in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC.



The combined price for all 3 books is \$35.00 + \$2.10 tax + \$6.00 S&H for a total of **\$43.10**. but if you buy all three together you will get this historic collection of Schuylkill County history for one very low price of **\$28.17** which includes tax and S&H.

Free Gifts

But wait .. if you buy this historic trilogy during the month of March, we will include absolutely **Free ... two highly collectible postcards showing the historic shooting of Thomas Sanger and William Uren by Thomas Munley and another of the Schuylkill County Prison**

as it appeared in 1878.

But hurry ... this offer will not be repeated for at least another two months ...

Send your check of \$28.17 made out to the Historical Society of Schuylkill County along with your address and we will rush these books to you via USPS mail.

Historical Society of Schuylkill County



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

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

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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.

The Historical Society
Of Schuylkill County
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