



# Historical Society of Hilltown Township Newsletter

PO Box 79  
Hilltown PA. 18927  
Hilltownhistory1@yahoo.com

## August 2021

WE ARE BACK! So far this year, we have had a Zoom presentation and two Open House Events. All were well attended. Yes, it is a new year! Next will be our annual Fall Festival, taking place on Saturday, September 18. All of the buildings will be open to the public. Check out the new display of “Women’s Tools of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”. Look at the attached flyer for more information.

One of the highlights is the Silent Auction. We always look for donations from local businesses. If you have some quality items you think we could add to our auction, please contact us at [Hilltownhistory1@yahoo.com](mailto:Hilltownhistory1@yahoo.com).

We are adding something a bit new to the silent auction this year. We have some local sports memorabilia that will be part of this also. If you have something that fits into this category, please call Bill Stahl at 215-822-8256. How many of you have always wondered “what am I going to do with this?” Your daughters have no interest? We are interested!

Look at the promotional page in this newsletter for more information. We also have a late addition to our programs on August 25, a local history talk. See the event schedule attached.

## 50/50 Raffle Tickets

Contained in this newsletter is a self-addressed envelope containing 5 raffle-tickets. If we draw your name at 4:30 PM on the date of the festival, you win half of the money collected from the ticket sales. You do not have to be present to win! You can send this envelope back to us with the appropriate portion of the ticket, along with your payment. It could be your lucky day.

## Volunteers

We set up for the festival early, and stay until everything and everyone is gone. We could use your help. We will have a few new aspects to our festival that could use volunteers to man. If you are able, email [Hilltownhistory1@yahoo.com](mailto:Hilltownhistory1@yahoo.com).

## Our Social Media

As the Historical Society enters the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, albeit a little late, much information is available online. Follow our Facebook page at The Historical Society of Hilltown Township.

Our webpage can be found at [Hilltownhistory.org](http://Hilltownhistory.org). We try to keep it updated with interesting posts, calendar of events and all thing Hilltown. Check us out!

### **Dual Hurricanes 1955**

In mid-August, 1955, a pair of hurricanes swept through this area, creating havoc and destruction. First came Connie, putting the Delaware River over its banks. The Dublin Fair was shut down. Local fire companies were called out to pump out area basements. In this area, some measurements indicated that 9" fell in a 24-hour period. U.S. Marines evacuated a group of 63 Girl Scouts from Camp Helena near Bethlehem.

Next up was Hurricane Diane a few days later. It was thought that this second front would be merely a minor low pressure, but surprising atmospheric conditions created a monster. During late Thursday, August 18 the Neshaminy Creek overflowed its banks and was now a raging river. Roaring waters inundated area roads Thursday night. At 11 PM, firemen rescued 2 girls from a stalled car in 4' of water. Another rescue occurred on Constitution Ave.

The Pennridge area suffered a great deal of damage from the twin storms, but nowhere near as the river towns along the Delaware. The area fire departments were dispatched to areas near the Delaware River for more pumping duty. Upper Black Eddy was hit very hard, with whole homes being swept away.

Friday morning breaks as a sunny, humid day with rivers, streams and creeks all well above flood stage. Prior to the storms, the area was in the midst of a drought and the Delaware River was 3' under normal. Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup>, the river was over 28' above normal. Evacuations occurred from Bristol to Reiglesville in Bucks County.

Reiglesville was especially hard hit. 100 people there were left homeless. Debris from upriver was jammed against the Delaware bridges.

On Sunday morning, several members of the Blooming Glen Mennonite Church took a plane ride over the flooded Delaware River. They were pilot Andy Rosenberger and his neighbor Norm Good. They are shocked, and at a church picnic that afternoon, they ask Rev. Dave Derstine about helping. Rev. Derstine walked into his office to a ringing phone. It was Margaret Seylar, principal of a Reiglesville school, asking for help. Norm and Andy then addressed the congregation, asking for 100 volunteers to provide aid. The next day, 100 volunteers showed up at the church, along with vehicles and equipment. Fifty National Guardsmen were assigned to prevent looting. They spent all day in Reiglesville, cleaning mud out of basements. Blooming Glen residents baked hundreds of pies and cakes for the flood victims. Day after day they returned to work. In the meantime, they heard stories of the incredible damage up north, in the Poconos, and many deaths in Stroudsburg.

The Reverend, Andy, and Norm flew to that area to assess the damage. After a tour, they offered a work crew of 300 to the leaders of East Stroudsburg. On Monday morning, 27 Pennridge School District busses lined up for the workers. 320 people showed up for the first day of work. A parade of pickup trucks, loaded with supplies and equipment joined in. A police escort took them all the way up to East Stroudsburg. The Red Cross had already cleared the main road to allow for this convoy to approach. Work began efficiently with men cleaning basements and doing heavy work, while women handled the massive cleaning effort. In time, the geographic area widened, and the workers increased, not just those affiliated with the

Blooming Glen bunch, but an assortment of union workers, members of many different churches, factory workers, and regular volunteers. They worked tirelessly until Labor Day, September 5. Their departure that day was again in a police escort, sirens and lights on, as they travelled through all of the towns, back to Blooming Glen. On August 25, the Central News newspaper had a large headline "Pennridge Area Combats Flood Horror with Helpfulness". In all, the Blooming Glen Mennonite Church Disaster Service cleaned 365 homes in the Stroudsburg area, some of which had mud up into the third floor. Donations of food, materials and other services were provided by an assortment of organizations. Hurricane Diane became America's first billion-dollar storm. Locally, between 8" and 10" were recorded. Overall, in Pennsylvania, over 100 deaths were recorded.

The massive cleanup effort that started in the minds of a few members of the Blooming Glen Mennonite Church involved over 12,000 man-hours when it was over. This is what can happen with a few fellows having an idea.

### **Lonnie Osman Stories**

Lonnie Osman, a student at Hilltown High School in 1913, wrote a series of stories about her life experiences. They provide a window into the life of a teen girl in Hilltown over 100 years ago. Periodically, we will publish her stories:

***The Happiest Vacation Day*** – My friend Edna Baude and I had been planning a long time for a trip to Delaware. Finally, we decided to go, on the seventh day of August and remain several weeks visiting some of our friends.

For some time before that day, we talked of nothing but the grand time which we

expected to have. The day before, we were both busy at our homes, so there was lots of extra work including packing our suitcases and getting the lunch ready. I decided not to wear anything that dirt would harm as I knew it would not be very clean by the time that we reached our destination, and selected a plain lawn dress. Our hats and dusters were of course, necessary. By evening, everything was packed and ready, and after some discussion about the day, I went to bed and had a good night's sleep, although I was a little excited.

The next morning, I was up early and thought that I scarcely had time to eat my breakfast. After breakfast, I packed my lunch and then dressed for the trip. My mother took me to Perkasio, where I met my friend, and soon we were on the trolley bound for Philadelphia. We saw some very pretty scenery and in almost every small town through which we passed, we saw lovely homes with nice large lawns and groves. As soon as we arrived in Philadelphia, we went to the boat wharves and boarded the river steamer "Frederica", which we took down the Delaware River. We saw beautiful scenery on both sides of the river and there was always something to attract our attention. Some of the places which we passed while going down the river were the Navy Yard, the Quarantine Stations (This 10-acre Lazaretto, built with a hospital, offices and residences on the banks of the Delaware River in Tinicum Township, processed ships, cargo and passengers sailing for the port of Philadelphia for nearly a century), and Fort Delaware. We met and passed many other boats and steamers and noticed a lot of buoys in the water. We also passed New Castle and Chester, at which places the Frederica stopped.

Up to this time it had been very smooth on the water, but as we entered the Delaware

Bay, it began to get rough. It kept getting rougher until it was so rough that we could not stay out on deck, so we went inside. There we were entertained by music as there were quite a lot of people on the boat. This however did not last long, as it became so rough that no one felt like playing or singing. Some of the people were very sick. I did not feel sick, but my friend felt rather bad for a time. We all waited anxiously for a site of Bower Beach, the place for which we were bound. As soon as we arrived there, everyone felt all right. A number of our friends were there to meet us and we had a jolly time on the sea shore. About 8 o'clock PM, we started for our friends' home in a large hack. On the way, we talked about our trip. Soon after, we reached their home we retired, as we were very tired. We did not awake very early the next morning and spent the day in unpacking, talking, and lounging around.

### **Amos Doane's Cemetery Theft**

Amos Doane was a teacher from Wrightstown Bucks County, who was known to say "There ain't no use for no grammar". It was said he taught at the Concord School. He was from a portion of Wrightstown Township known as Penn's Park, or Pennsville. Here, in the early 1700s, a cemetery was set up, then maintained by the Wrightstown Friends. Only the earliest settlers were buried there. It was on the road from the Wrightstown Meeting House to Rush Valley.

By the mid-1800s, there had been no one interred there for many years according to the memories of even the oldest citizens.

Amos took it upon himself to arrange to have all of the grave stones removed from this old cemetery. The old cemetery was enclosed within a stone wall. Amos created a "frolic" or work party, so men would come

and join him in the task. Many of the stones were used to build a wall along his property along a Penn's Park Road. The field was then plowed under and Amos planted a field of wheat. Neither he, nor his wife or daughter would eat bread made from the crop grown in this field. I wonder where this plot exists today. Possibly under your house?

### **Speaking of the Doanes**

I was planning on a newsletter story on the infamous Doane (Doan) Gang of Bucks County during the Revolutionary War. At four pages, I felt it was too long for the newsletter. It has come to my attention that a television series will be broadcast in the future titled "America's Original Outlaws", featuring this unruly group of thieves. When air dates and more information becomes available, I will share it with you.

### **Something Old, Something New**

You may have seen the visual program we have running during the Open House events. It shows the formation of the Lake Nockamixon project in the 1960s, from beginning to end. It featured many of the buildings and structures that currently rest at the bottom of the lake.

To keep things fresh, we are putting the finishing touches on a new program shown on a 42" monitor of a series of old photographs from the area, including Souderton, Sellersville, Hilltown, Telford etc. They are from the period of about 1906 and show our towns as they were. Most of these photographs were taken by Daniel Ziegler of Souderton, and published by C. M. Berkemeyer of Sellersville. Come on in at the Fall Festival, have a seat and watch the show.

## Life in Bucks County – 1722

Ambrose Bancroft was an English immigrant who ended up in Solebury Township in the early 1720s. He must have been a man of some means, since he was appointed Justice of the Peace of Bucks County in 1723. At the time, he was 42 years old. Prior to that, he purchased a 450-acre parcel of land in Solebury. In the winter of 1722-23, he wrote a letter to his father back in England, describing the pioneer life.

He describes the expense of living in the wilderness, the high cost of tools, household goods and paid workmen. It forces him to do as much as he can on his own. He traded goods with the Indians, at one time a quarter of a deer for 1/3 pound of gunpowder. He has no spare time, since he must clear trees, build a house, and plant crops. His farm animals consisted of about 20 hogs, 12 cows and the same quantity of horses. He had problems chasing down his stray cows, but at least he had a horse to ride in pursuit. Fences must have been a low priority at this time.

His crops consisted of Indian corn, wheat, oats, Ambrose complained to his father that these American animals eat three times what they do in England.

He wrote that he had 4 servants. He sold a woman servant, who he said was not worth keeping. Another ran away to Maryland. He was considering selling yet another one in the summer, since there was no danger of him running away in the winter. Apparently, these servants were indentured servants, not employees.

He was preparing to have a four-bay barn built, since one of his servants was a carpenter of some sort, and he found additional labor to complete the job. The clapboard and wood shingles had already been arranged for. He described his house as 12" thick oak logs, the size being about 27' x

18'. The log seams are filled with mortar and topped off with a wood shingle roof.

Ambrose was involved in a deal, where when he came from England, he brought goods of his own as well as goods from others. He first landed in Maryland, where he traded most of it for tobacco. He then used the tobacco to purchase servants and other goods that he would need in Bucks County. He authorized through an attorney to pay the owners of the other goods that were sent to America with him. He proved to be a shrewd business man.

He noted that a good many people have been digging mines, but the only results were hope. One prospector claimed he was digging up large quantities of a yellow material. He tried to keep quiet about it and even transported this material at night. Rumors of it being gold were unfounded. (*This may have been the site of the Solebury Copper Mine, rediscovered in 1854. When it was pumped out, tools that would have been used in the early 1700s were discovered!*)

He had a busy, but short life here in America. On Christmas Eve 1724, Ambrose was on horseback, crossing the Delaware River, north of Solebury. His horse stumbled, and he was thrown off and drowned. His time in America was less than five years.

## Amazon Fundraiser

Those of you with Amazon accounts can help our Society by going to Amazonsmile.com, registering our 501(c)(3) under Historical Society of Hilltown Township. Your account settings, history, orders etc. remain the same, but 1/2 of 1% of purchases is refunded back to us from Amazon. An easy way to help that costs you nothing. Call Bill Stahl at 215-285-6265 with any questions.

## **2021 Coming Events by the Historical Society of Hilltown Township**

**Wednesday, August 25 @ 7:00 PM - *A new addition to our schedule!***

Hilltown Township Building -17 W. Creamery Rd & Rte 152, Silverdale 18962

**“Villages of Hilltown”**. Explore the long-ago villages with photographs along the old Hilltown Pike, from Line Lexington to Bishop’s Corner. Ivan Jurin will present lost villages, such as Pennville, and will explain how Dublin and Silverdale became independent boroughs. Bob Moyer will continue his recollections of Blooming Glen. Feel free to share your experiences!

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**Wednesday, October 27~ Program @ 7:00 PM**

Hilltown Township Building -17 W. Creamery Rd & Rte 152, Silverdale 18962

**“Nearly Forgotten Artists of Hilltown Township”**, by Ivan Jurin. One of the best-known local artists was John Falter, who illustrated more than 100 magazine covers from 1940 to the early 1950s. A silent auction and raffle of original Saturday Evening Post issues with Falter covers will be held, benefitting the Historical Society of Hilltown Township. Speakers’ Program at the Hilltown Township Building – 7:00 PM

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**Sunday, November 14 @ 2:00 PM** at the Strassburger Farmstead

**“Hilltown Township though Postcards”**, by Aaron Heckler. In a power point presentation, we will learn how picture postcards began in America. We will see numerous then and now comparisons between old postcards and modern-day sites in Hilltown and Silverdale. An Open House Event, Strassburger Homestead 1:30-4:00 PM. Program @ 2:00

**And whatever you do, please don’t forget our September 18 Fall Festival**

**Any questions, please call 267-614-9174**

# **The Historical Society of Hilltown Township Invites You to our Fall Festival and Open House**



**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18TH**

**10 AM to 4 PM \* Free Admission! Rain or Shine**

**KEYSTONE DRIVE & BETHLEHEM PIKE, SELLERSVILLE  
(407 KEYSTONE DRIVE, SELLERSVILLE)**

**Local Artisans and crafts ~ Antique Vendors ~ Farm  
Animals ~ Buildings Will be Open  
Books & Historical Map Sale ~ Bake Sale  
Silent Auction ~  
A Great Family Event  
Much More!**

**[Hilltownhistory.org](http://Hilltownhistory.org)**



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## Lavender



The long germination period of the lavender seeds makes this difficult to get started. It is less stressful to buy plants in pots. It will be in flower throughout early summer, and does its best in a full-sun location. It is used in cosmetic formulas and pot pourri. For an attractive sachet, tie its leaves inside a pretty handkerchief with a ribbon. Tie a bundle of long stems of blossoms or buds around the middle to lay on a window sill. The warm sunlight will release the fragrance. Varieties include Hidcote, a deep purple-blue and Rosea, a pink flower. Yet other varieties come in white.

*From Ruth Skeath Stahl's "The Garden Log".*

For those with an interest in lavender, make sure you visit the Peace Valley Lavender Farm, on New Galena Road, with over 3,000 lavender plants.