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## Historical Society of Hilltown Township Newsletter

August 2022

### A Big Thank You!

We would like to extend a special thank you to Hilltown Boy Scout Troop 67. They appeared en masse to perform volunteer work at the Hilltown Farmstead. Our three pre-Civil War buildings and grounds are in constant need of maintenance and repair. Any and all volunteer work is greatly appreciated! If I recall correctly from my Boy Scout days, their slogan is “Do a Good Turn Daily”. Many good turns were performed by them at our site. Volunteerism keeps the Hilltown Historical Society alive. Can you help?

Our May and June events were very successful. In May, a full house at the Township building saw old Hilltown photos and learned a bit of the old villages. A beautiful day in June was on hand to experience a Civil War themed talk of the Sanitary Commission. It seems that we may have another Civil War event next June, this time with the soldiers. Stay tuned.

Coming up soon, on August 7<sup>th</sup>, Bill Stahl will provide a talk of “Legends and Mysteries in Hilltown”. These stories begin in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Do you have any unusual Hilltown stories? Bring them with you. We hope to be able to sit under the shade trees for this, so bring your picnic lunch.

Next will be our 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Festival on September 17. Food, crafts, antique sales, book, map and photograph sales, and our silent auction, so much to mention. This is one of the best free family events in the area. As always, our three pre-Civil War buildings will be open to the public. The hours are 10:00 to 4:00.

Enclosed within this newsletter is an addressed envelope containing five 50/50 raffle tickets. If you return them with \$5, they will be put in the “raffle ticket jar”. At the end of the Festival, a winner’s name will be drawn. The prize will be half of the proceeds collected from the raffle. You need not be present to win.



At noon, we will hold a dedication of a new cast sign that was recently installed along Bethlehem Pike. The Society’s Reuben and Elizabeth Strassburger Farmstead is commemorated with this marker for being listed on the **National Register of Historic Places** (NRHP). The William G. Pomeroy Foundation awards markers to NRHP sites at no cost. He initiated grant programs so that

communities can celebrate their history through signage such as NRHP markers. The Pomeroy Foundation also awards markers for historical sites related to: National Women's Suffrage, Legends and Lore, Historic Transportation Canals, and several state historical sites. Our Society was gifted the marker and post by providing proof of being listed on the NRHP and our financial need. The marker has been erected in front of the Homestead at the intersection of Route 309 and Keystone Drive. The Society greatly appreciates this donation by the Pomeroy Foundation.

In October, we will have our final program of the year, featuring Van Jurin. He will talk about local artists of Hilltown, concentrating on John Falter. A sale of his Saturday Evening Post magazine covers will be held. And even though this is only August, plans are being made for 2023. It looks like an exciting year ahead.

### Local Family Names

One of the many tasks of our Society is the collection and organization of local genealogical information. We can share this information with you however it is not in an online format. This means you can inspect and search for information on-site. If you possess such information and would like to donate it to our archives, it would be much appreciated. Digital information can also be printed out. Our current collection consists of both published books as well as collections gathered by individuals. Some of the names we have information on now Nunamaker / Nonnemacher, Knapp, Kramer, Strassburger, Kern, Fretz, Lewis, Jones, Kratz, Loux, Rosenberger, Clemens, Fabian, Hartzell, Sellers, Phillips, Schwenk, Thomas, Albright, Gras, and a "Guide to Surnames in Bucks County". We also have some listings

of names when they were published by the Bucks or Montgomery County Historical Societies.

### Hilltown High School Class of 1928

We possess some incredible documents in our archives. One of my favorites is the yearbook from Hilltown High School for the class of '28. Three students graduated, two men and a woman. A senior prom would have been problematic. The graduates were LeRoy Moyer, Theodore Moyer, and Laura Smith. Fortunately, with the underclassmen, they were able to field baseball and basketball (girls as well) teams and have an orchestra. It contained all sorts of instruments; banjo, guitar, saxophones and a few drums. The school play was "Forest Affairs".

The experience of such a small graduating class was put best in an essay by Laura Smith in the yearbook. *"In the year of 1924, 26 of us came to Hilltown Township High, to toil in wisdom's soil, but before the year was up some were fired and some quit. Pleasure was not ours to be had in the Freshman class because we were as the others who came before, were considered in all the work to be done, but under the instruction of our able Principal Corwin Weisel and Assistant Principal Charles C. Schlitzer, we toiled the whole year through. But alas, when we entered our Sophomore year, we had but 13 students left. Whether it was the unlucky number, or for some other unknown reason, our class did not keep its number, but dwindled down to nine. We entered the Junior Class with nine. During the year, an additional year was added to our school and new teachers. That year, Charles C. Schlitzer was the Principal, and J. M. Grasse was the Assistant Principal and W. E. Allebach an additional teacher, but somehow or other our class could not hold together for our number*

*decreased to five. When we entered our Senior Class, we found that only three were faithful to our Class. We have our faults, but we have our good points as well. We are a Model Class for one so small. We get along together fairly well and do the best we can. I can well say we are all glad we remained faithful until the end for we were duly rewarded”.*

I wonder what became of these graduates. They entered the world just before the Great Depression. They were in their early thirties at the beginning of WWII. Did they stay in the area? In school, Theodore of Dublin was very tall, athletic and the Class Treasurer. LeRoy of Blooming Glen was the Class President for all four years of High School and played the Sax in the orchestra. Laura of Perkasio was the class secretary and was a speedster on the track team. It was said that a glimpse of her running with her hair out would make a perfect model for a hood ornament for a new Ford. In contrast, the Pennridge High School Class of 2022 consisted of over 500 students.



### **Final Wishes of Charles Leidy (Lyday) of Hilltown – 1785**

On February 24, 1785, Charles Leidy of Hilltown created his last will and testament. He noted that he was weak in body but being of perfect mind, memory and understanding. He died shortly thereafter. He made sure that his widow Ursala was well cared for after his departure. She was to receive 12 pounds (British currency) yearly from their son Charles, after he turned 21. She was also to receive 12 bushels of wheat and 4 bushels of buckwheat yearly. Also, 80 lbs. of pork and

30 lbs. of beef yearly, delivered to her by their sons Henry and Charles, split equally between the two boys.

Ursala was also to receive two barrels of cider and 5 gallons of “still” liquor yearly from Charles. She was to use the northwest room in the family home, with a stove set in and firewood as needed stacked up at the door.

One quarter of the cellar was hers and if she wished it to be portioned off, it would be done and one quarter of the garden would be hers to use. Also ¼ acre of flax for spinning, yearly and all of the flax and hemp currently on the plantation. Upon Mr. Leidy’s death, Ursala was to receive her choice of a cow and a good horse, as well as all of the household furniture and kitchen items. Son Charles was to provide a saddle and bridle. She was also to receive 10 pounds cash when the will was proved.

It sounds as if Ursala would be well taken care of. Other conditions were made to some of his children. Son Henry lived on his father’s plantation in Hilltown, consisting of 125 acres. As long as his obligations to his mother were followed, Henry would receive the land. But he was also to pay portions of the value of that land to his nine siblings.

The plantation where Charles Leidy lived with his wife Ursala contained 135 acres. Both of these lots were joined together on Park Road, near Mill Road. His son Charles was to take possession of that with conditions. 200 pounds (British currency) were to “lie in place” to provide for Charles’ mother. Any other items not addressed within his will would be sold at auction when Charles (the son) became 21.

Charles and Ursala had ten children – Jacob, Henry, Margaret, Eve, Hannah, Mary, Charles, Elizabeth, George and Catherine. Some of the daughters were married. I think

that George might have been the youngest son, since the executors of this will were to support him in any trade he may choose in the future. These children were to receive yearly allowances, so they were also provided for. His eldest son Jacob, who was not previously mentioned, was to receive his regular share plus five shillings.

Mr. Leidy gave quite a bit of thought to this document and how to provide for his family upon his death. His document is signed with an X, his mark, indicating his inability to write or possibly unable to sign his name due to an affliction, but certainly not his ability to think.



Main Street, Looking North from Washington House Observatory

A postcard from the early 1900s shows a view of Main St in Sellersville looking north, taken from the top of the Washington House. Is that St. Michaels Church in the upper right?

### Changing times

In 1856, in an appendix to “The Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Times”, author John Watson compares the time needed to travel from Philadelphia to Pittsburg to a description of the journey in 1766 by William Clarkson, 90 years earlier. In 1856, a train ride lasted 19 hours, a marvel

at the time. Mr. Watson bemoans the fact that such a rapid trip doesn’t allow you to view and enjoy the surroundings.

William Clarkson’s journey began on August 6, on horseback with a servant. He lodged at an inn that night, 35 miles from Philadelphia. He reached Lancaster on the evening of August 7. By the end of the next day, he reached York, and crossed the Susquehanna River at Wrights Ferry. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, he crossed the Conewago River and reached Carlisle. He rested until the 12<sup>th</sup>. Switching to a stronger horse, he traveled to 7 miles west of Shippensburg. On the next day, passing Burnt Cabins, he had to pass 32 horses carrying flour to Fort Pitt, as well as cattle going the same direction. The village of Burnt Cabins is in Fulton County. His days travel was 34 miles. Clarkson noted in his journal, “This days’ journey has been extremely tedious and fatiguing; the road, except for the first 10 miles was nothing but hills, mountains and stones until you pass the Burnt Cabins, when it is tolerable, but hilly”. On August 14, he lodged at the crossings of the Juniata at Bedford, where he stayed for a day. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, he met up with Indians under the command of a Captain Green. They were gathering and drying berries. The night was spent at Stoney Creek. On August 17, he spent the night at Ligonier. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, he reached Fort Pitt in the evening. For the most part, William Clarkson spent the nights at inns.

Mapquest tells me the trip today would take 4 hours and 38 minutes. Progress time-wise, I suppose, but William Clarksons’ journey sure sounds like a good time.

## Upcoming Events – 2022

### Sunday August 7

#### *“Legends and Mysteries of Hilltown”*

Listen to Bill Stahl tell some tall and not so tall tales from our township. Most date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Weather permitting, we might be able to sit under the shade trees. This would be a nice occasion to bring your picnic lunch. The buildings will all be open. This is a free event! Do you have your own Hilltown stories? Share them with us.

Open House 1:30 – 4:00 PM. Speaker’s program at 2:00. Strassburger Farmstead  
**407 Keystone Drive, Sellersville**

### Saturday September 17th

#### *14<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Festival*

A free, fun, family event. See the Pennsylvania long rifle demonstration, bake sale, and visit with the farm animals. The silent auction is always a big hit, take part in the 50/50 raffle. All of the buildings will be open: museum, ramp barn, and the furnished homestead. Book, photo and maps will be sold. Food will be available. A great deal of craftspeople will be on site, demonstrating their craft. Hours 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the historic Strassburger Farmstead.

**407 Keystone Drive, Sellersville**

### Wednesday October 26

#### *“Nearly Forgotten Artists of Hilltown Township”, by Van Jurin*

Bucks County has been the home of many well-known artists. But who are the artists that actually lived in Hilltown Township? One nearly forgotten artist is John Falter, who illustrated more than 100 magazine covers while living near Blooming Glen from 1940 to early 1950s. Falter used local scenes and events to create Saturday Evening Post covers. Many of Falter’s illustrations and accomplishments will be shown by PowerPoint and by viewing original covers. Artwork of Hilltown resident Margaret Merritt Jurin will be shown and briefly described. Mark McCoy, a resident of Hilltown, will display a few of his oil paintings. Various Saturday Evening Post covers by John Falter will be available for purchase, benefitting the Historical Society. **FREE EVENT, DONATIONS ACCEPTED!**

**Hilltown Township Building, 13 W. Creamery Rd, Hilltown Township**



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### **How to End that August Drought**

There are a number of things that you can do to end the drought in summer:

Wash the car

Plan a big outdoor picnic.

Leave the umbrellas at home.

Deep-water your most valuable shrubs.

Hang the laundry out before going away for the day.

Wash the windows and leave them open before going to work.

Any or all of these have been known to bring on rainy weather.



*From Jean Skeath Stahl's book "The Garden Log"*