



# Hellertown Historical Society

Dedicated to Preserving the History and Heritage of Hellertown and its People

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### Upcoming 2019 Events

- History Lives At  
Union Cemetery – June 27-28
- Community Day – Aug. 17
- Keep Watch for Additional Events*



*Feedback is essential for any publication to improve and grow. We welcome readers to provide their opinions, suggestions and comments about the content featured in our newsletter. Please send your feedback to the Editor at the email address below.*

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## One "Wet N Wild" Saucon Valley Egg Hunt

The Annual Saucon Valley Easter Egg Hunt is always held "rain or shine". Unfortunately this year, that phrase came very much into play.

Dedicated volunteers from Hellertown Historical Society, those from Relay for Life of the Greater Saucon Valley/Bethlehem Area and those from the former Saucon Valley Ambucs all gathered under the Dimmick Park pavilion early on April 20<sup>th</sup> while the heavy rains drenched the area. All were checking local weather radar and other online services waiting and hoping for a break in the weather to get onto the various fields to "drop" the eggs and other prizes in anticipation of hundreds of children who would later scurry to grab them.

Our break came just in time for us to do our 'task at hand' and held off until shortly after the 10AM start so that the event could go on. In a mere 30+ seconds after the siren wailed from one of the fire trucks in attendance, the children scooped up every egg and prize loading their buckets, baskets and bags with their treasures. As quickly as the hunt ended, so did the break in the weather as rain started to fall again.

The crowd then huddled under the pavilion as each child looked through their goodies for those elusive prize eggs. Some received chocolate bunnies as prizes and there were some large stuffed bunnies as grand prizes. All those who won were ecstatic with their awards.

While the crowd huddled under roof, children lined up to visit and get photos with the Easter Bunny who was chauffeured to the Park just before the hunt started thanks to local businessman and community friend Ron Smith and one of his fire trucks.

Despite the anticipated rain and possible thunder, the event went off as planned, albeit a bit "wet n wild".

Hellertown Historical Society wishes to extend special thanks to Hellertown Borough Council for use of Dimmick Park and the facilities, Hellertown Police Department for security, Hellertown Streets and Parks Department for Park preparation, Dewey Fire Company Fire and EMS for their emergency stand-by assistance in helping with the success of this event. And we offer our special thanks to the overwhelming generosity of the sponsors who made this event a reality with their donations of funds and services:

**Advanced Optics, Binney and Smith/Crayola, Four Winds Concrete, Gary's Custom Cuts, Giant Food Stores, Hellertown Crossroads Hotel, Hellertown McDonald's, Just Born and Reilly Chiropractic**

*Please consider these Community Supporters for your own needs*

### Submit Articles or Stories

Hellertown Historical Society  
Newsletter seeks any stories or news articles pertaining to Hellertown's History and its people. Anyone is encouraged to submit articles, stories or news to the

newsletter Managing Editor for consideration in upcoming editions. Submissions may be edited for content and/or space requirements. Please use the contact information on this page to submit your entry.

The Hellertown Historical Society (HHS) Newsletter is published by the Hellertown Historical Society, 150 W. Walnut Street, Hellertown, PA 18055. Statements and opinions expressed in the HHS Newsletter articles and editorials do not necessarily represent the policies or opinions of the Hellertown Historical Society.



## President's Message:

Dear Members and Friends,

We just wrapped up our two Spring events, the Saucon Valley Easter Egg Hunt and Hellertown Heritage Day. The egg hunt is always a fun time to see all the kiddos take pictures with the bunny and scoop up the eggs in hopes of finding one of the prize eggs. For Heritage Day, although there was a little bit of rain, our site was bustling with various activities. This event represents what HHS is all about. Make sure you check out the pictures that follow in this edition.

Summer is almost here! The Heller-Wagner Grist Mill site is a great public space to visit, especially since we are located along the Saucon Rail-Trail. We sure are lucky to have such a charming and peaceful place in our community. Stop by anytime to enjoy the outside grounds to explore, fish, or have a picnic lunch. We hope to see you soon and thank you for your support!

*Stacie Torkos, President*



## Looking for “Heller Helpers”

By Andrea Danner

The Hellertown Historical Society would like to recognize Joan and Art Antonioni for their hard work and dedication. They recently spent numerous hours digitizing our “Heller Helper” collection.

The “Heller Helpers” were written by Betty G. Massman, a sixth great granddaughter of Christopher Heller. They contain an extensive compilation of the Heller family and their descendants.

This eighteen-volume work, plus a “Table of Contents” is a terrific start for anyone trying to research the Heller family.

Joan meticulously put all of the volumes we had in our possession onto flash drives. Volunteer Greg Stauffer then added the “Heller Helpers” to our online file to preserve the information for generations to come.

We are currently searching for the following missing issues from our collection:

**Volume 13: Issue #1; Issue #2;  
Issue #3**

**Volume 16: Issue #3; Issue #4**

If anyone has any of these issues that the Society could borrow and digitize to our collection, we would be very grateful if you would contact us. Please email us at: [info@hellertownhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@hellertownhistoricalsociety.org) or call: (610) 838-1770 and leave a message.

**Save The Date**  
***History Lives at Union  
Cemetery Hellertown***  
**Tour the Graves and Learn  
About Four Well-Known  
Hellertonians**  
**June 27 and 28, 6-7:30PM**  
**(Tours Approximately  
Every 10 Minutes)**

## Cemeteries of Centuries Past - Part 2 of 3

By Dolores Stauffer Di Paolo

In the last Hellertown Historical Society newsletter there was an article that discussed one of the oldest cemeteries in the Hellertown region...Lower Saucon Cemetery. But, there is another local cemetery that is just as interesting and just as old, and one that most Hellertonians have never heard of...Lime Kiln Cemetery.

Lime Kiln Cemetery is a little tricky to find, so let’s hop in our imaginary car and take a short drive. Imagine that you are driving south on Main Street and at the traffic light at Water and Main you are turning right onto Water Street. Continue past the newly refurbished Water Street Park and across the bridge and turn right onto Creek Road. Almost at the end of Creek Road (a half mile or so) on your right you’ll see Lime Kiln Cemetery. There is no sign marking the spot but you’ll know you have arrived...it’s the only cemetery on Creek Road. And, by the condition and types of headstones, you’ll immediately realize you are in a really old cemetery!

By the way, back in the day, there was an abundance of lime in the Creek Road area and many lime kilns had sprung up along Saucon Creek (which runs parallel to Creek Road) hence the name “Lime Kiln Cemetery!”

Circa 1999, the Lime Kiln Cemetery contained sixty-six headstones. Some of the headstones had inscriptions that were legible and some headstones were unmarked. Most of the unmarked headstones were made of red shale.

The earliest headstone, where the inscription can be deciphered, is that of Susanna Heller. Written in German, it tells visitors that Susanna was born October 3, 1774 and died February

14, 1776. By contrast, the most recent headstone that can be read is that of Daniel Rothrock who was born April 20, 1825 and passed away on September 10, 1890.



**Lime Kiln Cemetery**  
(Photo Courtesy Saucon Valley Conservancy)

## Congratulations Tom Henshaw!!

Hellertown’s Supervisor of Parks, Pool and Streets has retired after many years of service to the Community.

Hellertown Historical Society sends our sincere congratulations and thanks for your service.

Enjoy many years of much deserved retirement.



**Tom Henshaw at Retirement Gathering**

## HHS Cryptogram

*By Dolores Stauffer Di Paolo*

See if you can solve this "Hellertown Historical Society" Cryptogram. The answer will be published in the next issue of the Newsletter. If you cannot wait for it, send your answer to the Editor at the email address below for confirmation...

[editor@hellertownhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:editor@hellertownhistoricalsociety.org)

BG BQ JRHLJNF GCEG  
GCN JNPLSRGBLDEJM  
AEJ CNJL, HEJTRBQ FN  
SEZEMNGGN,  
PBQBGNF LRJ  
HBSSNJ'Q CLRQN.  
L=O

The last cryptogram appears below along with the answer. Congratulations to all who submitted the correct answer to the Editor.

Where Oh Where?

CZPENVS AZPENVS  
HICKORY DICKORY  
ANPE TCN CQW GCX  
DOCK WHO HAS THE  
EXS GN GCX NOA  
KEY TO THE OLD  
UQZO'W ONPE?  
JAIL'S LOCK?

Answer:

G C X  
THE  
EXSWG NHX ENJ.  
KEYSTONE COP.

Hint : G=T

## HHS Word Scramble

THEME: Water, Water

Everywhere  
YPNO  
TRAWE  
WADMSEO  
HIGH  
TALWUN  
EHTLRELWNO RIDSGBE

Unscramble the above words.  
Answers will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.

Answers to the last word scramble. Congratulations to all who submitted the correct answers to the Editor:

THEME: Name the Mayors

ENCBKE  
Beneck  
LMILIWAS  
Williams  
CZTILMSUH  
Muschlitz  
KUCLF  
Fluck  
PEFIMZR  
Zimpher  
EZNHMTIEALN  
Heintzelman

Save The Date  
*Hellertown*  
*Community Day*  
At  
*Dimmick Park*  
*Hellertown*  
August 17

## WHAT ARE YOU SUFFERING FROM?

*by Dolores Stauffer Di Paolo*

Are you recently retired and the thrill wore off, and now you find yourself getting bored? Is your wife nagging you to get a hobby or go out to the mall and hang out with the other retired men?

Are you single or widowed and find living alone is very lonely? You don't knit or do any other crafts, so what can you do to pass the time?

Are people tired of you dropping in for a visit because you have nothing else to do?

I have the solution that you have been looking for! Come down to Walnut Street in Hellertown. NO, NOT THE CEMETERY, the other side of Walnut ST. Come to the Historical Society and spend 1 to 3 mornings a week with us. That is what I did, and boy, am I glad I did. I found a whole new group of really good friends. We maintain the museum, help with easy office work, and a whole bunch of other fun things.

We are here Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 9:00 to 11:30. Just come down and walk right in the door that says Office. You will always be greeted by a friendly face.

## History Lives At Hellertown's Union Cemetery

*By Andrea Danner*



This year marks the 15th Year of "History Lives Cemetery Tours" at the Union Cemetery in Hellertown. These FREE tours provide an opportunity to become familiar with past residents of Hellertown who had an impact in the progress and growth of the Borough of Hellertown during their lifetimes. By attending these tours, visitors become motivated to preserve Hellertown's heritage for future generations by reliving the contributions made by these past residents with their community endeavors.

The Tours will be held June 27 and 28, 6-7:30PM each evening. Please meet inside the cemetery near the Main Street entrance. Tours leave approximately every ten minutes. There is no charge for these tours. In the event of rain, the narrations will be held in the Christ Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall, 69 Main Street near the cemetery @ 7PM.

Tour the gravesites of **Verna Muhr** (narrator - Dr. Susan Ackermann) **Dr. Paul Lipp** (narrator - David Pearson), **"Burt" Stehly** (narrator - Terry Boos) and **George "Fritz" Halfacre** (narrator - Eric Medei).

## Former Resident Recalls Hellertown's Covered Bridge

*By Richard K. Geyer*

Apparently my cousin, Grump Ward, thinks I recall some details about our town's long lost Saucon Creek Covered Bridge, since I lived a stone's throw from it when I was seven years old. Fast math, that would be 1934. So for an old buzzard like me to be asked to recollect a few items, is both an honor as well as a strain on the memory!

Actually the first thing that caught my eye when we moved to the large stone house was the well-rusted remains of some automobiles that had probably challenged the mail train many years ago and their parts eventually returned back to Earth. The red, rusty parts more or less caught your eye.

One indisputable fact about the benefits of those old covered bridges...that none can boast about having today...not the famed Hill-to-Hill bridge or the Philip J. Fahy Memorial Bridge both in Bethlehem, is that you had a place to stay dry thanks to the roof and sides. Beyond that added expense, of course, some of the old covered bridges still in existence have a beauty about them, whether it is by design or location. I can assure you they are photographed more than some modern ones.

All the construction on the sides and roadway of the Saucon Creek Bridge had rather massive wooden beams. On each side were, perhaps, one foot square, but curved beams much like you see today in huge laminated support beams. How they managed that curvature is beyond me. But they were shoulder high at the middle and went below the flooring of the bridge. I can still hear the "fromp...fromp" as the tires went over these floor boards.

Under the bridge as fishermen and swimmers discovered, was a veritable criss-cross of steel rods, perhaps an inch in diameter. Just the ideal size for swinging hand over hand, that is if you were tall enough to reach these red rods. I guess later in years they would be called "monkey bars". If you were lucky, you might make it to the other side with dry feet.

During this time, there was quite a low area in the road between the bridge and the railroad crossing. On several occasions, this would be flooded. In one instance, I recall my Dad drove through with water coming in through the doors. But we made it without "paying the toll" to about ten or twelve young, eager guys waiting to make a buck.

The Silver Creek, which empties into the Saucon Creek near the bridge, got a real face lift by the use of what we at the time called a steam shovel...whether or not it was actually powered by steam, I cannot say. When finished, we marveled at the fantastic straight new waterway. And I recall tagging along with George Repash as he trapped muskrats before the remodeling job.

I have no accurate count of the hundreds of times I crossed that bridge, walking, riding a bike or driving. But I do recall, as a twelve year old, the claim of being the first pedestrian to cross. As I did, I paused momentarily at the middle, the expansion joint where there was maybe an inch gap. We used to claim we could put one half of our bodies in Hellertown and the other half in Bethlehem as this was the dividing line. There on a nice smooth stone, as long as your finger, was "Saylor.Contractors" printed in pencil...and I had a free souvenir!

*From the Bethlehem Globe-Times, June 1, 1938...*

### **Work Started Today On Old Hellertown Covered Bridge**

A landmark dear to the memory of many Lower Saucon oldsters, is to be a memory.

This morning fifteen men, working for the Edward A. Daylor Company, Coatsville, began tearing down the Hellertown covered bridge at Water Street, across the Saucon Creek.

The structure, thought by many to be one of the oldest of its type in the State, will make way for a modern steel and concrete bridge with wide street approaches and sidewalk. It will consist of to fifty-foot spans with a five foot sidewalk on the downstream side.

Barricades, ordering the motoring public to detour, have been placed at Main and Water Streets, on the Hellertown side of the bridge, and along the Seidersville Road in the City of Bethlehem. The detour is listed at 3.8 miles.

The passage of this structure, known as "the Old Stever bridge," is merely another step in the advancement of Hellertown as a progressive, growing community. During the past few years, several particular landmarks have bowed to improvements.

According to present indications, it will not be long before another familiar Hellertown landmark, the old Central Hotel, located at Easton Road and Main Street, is merely a memory.

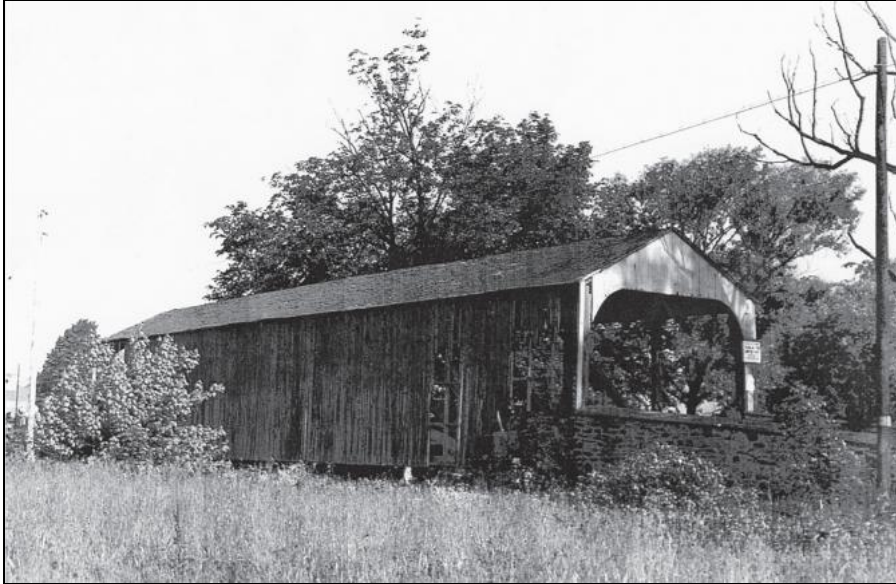
Chances are that work will soon be started to raze this building, retaining the original inside structure, for the new town hall. The building was recently purchased by the Borough.

It is understood that Daniel W. Pepper, Borough Engineer, will soon begin drawings for the architectural style of the building.

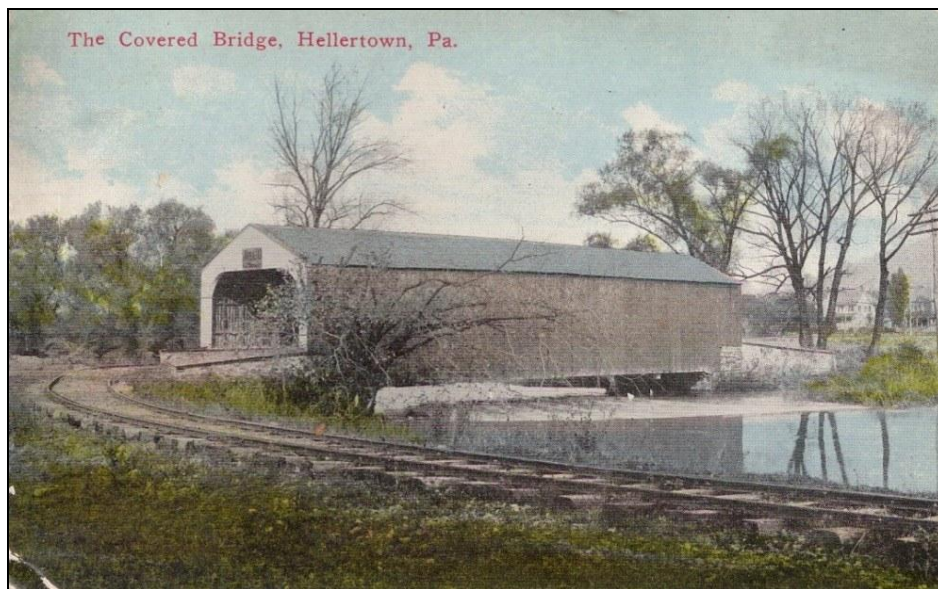
Later this year, PennDOT plans replacement of the Water Street bridge that spans Saucon Creek from Hellertown to the Southeast border of Bethlehem. The bridge was found deficient in a recent inspection and replacement was the only option. This will be the third known bridge to span the Saucon Creek at this location.

This construction project is expected to begin in a couple of months and be completed by October this year. Although, as we know how some of these projects can be delayed, you should not plan to be driving or walking to any Lehigh University home football games just yet.

With this construction approaching, it was thought to provide a little history and some perspective on the original covered bridge that once spanned the Saucon Creek before the current concrete one was built to replace it...



This photo shows the dilapidated condition of the original covered bridge before demolition began in June 1938 for the current bridge to replace it. It was built in 1846 out of native white pine lumber. The bridge was also known as “Stever’s Bridge” because of a beautiful stone home located at the Western end that was the residence of the Stever family, who were descendants of Hellertown’s namesakes, Christopher and Simon Heller. *(Courtesy Karen Samuels)*



This photo shows the West end of the covered bridge in better days, looking North, with the old Reading RR spur still in place. This RR spur was used to carry limestone from quarries near the current Heller Homestead to the old Thomas Iron Works that was located at the North end of Hellertown at the end of Thomas Avenue along the Saucon Creek. The tracks, of course, are gone now. But some of the concrete trestles that supported it can still be seen crossing the creek bed on the North side of the bridge going toward the Reading RR mainline that is now the Saucon Rail-Trail.

# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Hellertown's Post Office Building

By Andrea Danner

On Wednesday, April 17, 2019, The Hellertown Post Office Building was recognized with a grand 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, led by Hellertown Postmaster, Joe DiRusso. There was something for everyone! Many local businesses donated food to feed the crowd that came to celebrate.

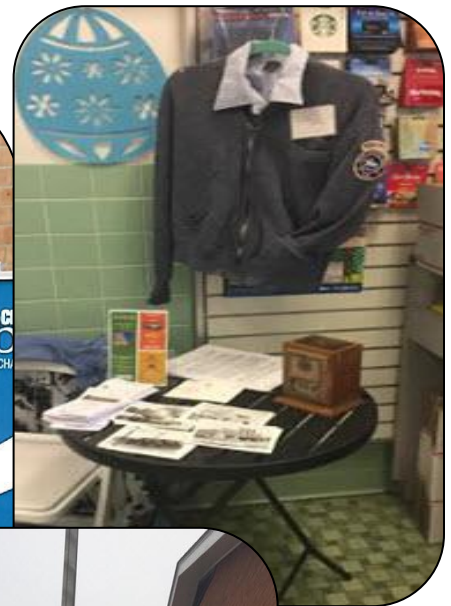
Bill Frey, former USPS employee and current HHS volunteer, has worked closely

with Joe to supply the Post Office with Hellertown Post Office Memorabilia from our Hellertown Historical Society Collection. The walls were adorned with pictures of post offices past. HHS members Jeanette and Harry Boos, along with Andrea Danner provided Hellertown themed postcards to the public to have stamped with a commemorative mark for the occasion.

The ceremony started with the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Boy Scout Troop 319. Remarks and accolades from local dignitaries, USPS representatives, The Chamber of Commerce and

elected officials followed.

It was also mentioned that Joe DiRusso recently hosted USPS Postmaster General, Megan Brennan! Postmaster DiRusso welcomed past and current postal employees, in the crowd, during his comments. He announced that there was a special commemorative envelope for sale and thanked everyone for coming. (Joe was kind enough to donate one to the society, which we have on display.) Then the moment arrived for the ribbon cutting ceremony. Here's to the next 50 years!



## Your Genealogy Begins With 'You'

By Joan Antonioni

My family genealogy research began in 2010. It did not require DNA testing kits. All I needed was to open a large box in the back of my closet. The contents included pictures made from the newest *Instamatic* camera when film processing asked "Do you want duplicates made?" to still-life pictures from the late 1880s. There were documents of the Naturalization process and small ledgers meticulously noting parents and siblings birth and death dates from the "Old Country". This is the spring day when I would embark on the best journey of my life. While I was captivated, charmed, engrossed, spellbound, gripped at the contents, I knew that this was my genealogy. My past, present, and future embarkation began to unfold.

The following are four common comments from family and friends:

1. **"I would not know where to start."** Start with what you have...your name and immediate family members, address, basically, all about your life.
2. **"I don't have anything to go on."** Think about my first comment, and then, look at your pictures for "a picture is worth a thousand words"; a family Bible documented with birth and death dates; church records documenting baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals while focusing on who were sponsors for these events; "DOD" records or military records from the Department of Defense; your ancestor's County records include deeds, Naturalization process documents, deeds, marriage licenses; burial records...etc.
3. **"I don't care."** There may be someone in your family or will become a part of your family who

will ask **"Where did gram or pop-pop come from? Who were their parents? What did our family do for a living? Why did they come here?"** What a legacy it would be to share with them their special genealogy album to continue.

4. **"I am done. How far back did you go?"** Family genealogy is never done. There remain births and deaths as well as special events that need to be added to your family history. How far back in time you research depends on the reliability of information and your personal achievement's satisfaction. Family records could have been destroyed by wars, immigrating countries changing boundaries, fires, even at ports of entry, accidentally discarded, or the lack of governmental space may interrupt your research.

Most importantly, begin your genealogy for the above reasons. Sometimes it will feel like you are putting a 10,000 piece jigsaw puzzle together in the same color! The journey begins with **"YOU"** for it is **"YOU"** who remembers.

## Johann Christoph Heller Built the Minsi Trail Bridge??

By Don Mills

Well no, not exactly. Although Christopher Heller, Hellertown's namesake, really does have a connection to the construction of the Minsi Trail Bridge in nearby Bethlehem and here is how it breaks down...

Johann Christoph Heller, a.k.a. Christopher Heller, fathered several children, the first of those children was a son Johann Simon Heller, born July 18, 1721 in Pfeddersheim, Germany who accompanied the family on their journey here aboard the ship, Winter Galley. Simon Heller in turn fathered 16 children, the third child, a son

named Jacob Heller, was born March 6, 1750.

Among Jacob's children was a son named George Heller born 1783. George in turn had a son named Samuel Heller. Are you still keeping up with this? Samuel, in turn, had a son named James Heller. Then James had a son named William Heller. I hope you have followed all that! William Heller is the person who ties Christopher Heller to the Minsi Trail Bridge. Now, here is how...

Born in Bath, PA, William Heller eventually moved to Bethlehem after living in Bath his first 16 years. At age 17, he was hired by Lehigh Valley Bank. In 1904, still employed as a banker, William entered into real estate and became a leading real estate agent in both Northampton and Lehigh Counties. Later, William became involved in politics becoming a city councilman. It is in that position, he urged other members to consolidate Bethlehem and South Bethlehem which finally occurred in 1917. This was the catalyst necessary to tie the North and South sides of the City. Once accomplished, the need to tie the city between the North and South became reality and the Minsi Trail Bridge was built.

Among the other important accomplishments of William Heller was the building of Hotel Bethlehem while he was Chairman of the Bethlehem Hotel Corporation at a cost of \$1.25M.

William Heller went on to become director of Lehigh Valley National Bank, the Bethlehem Securities Company, the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce and President of the Melrose Land Company and Bethlehem Cemetery and a member of many Bethlehem Civic organizations.

*(Information for this article courtesy  
Josh Popichak, SV Patch)*