



# Hellertown Historical Society

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

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## Upcoming Events

Santa Visit/Shopping @ Mill – Dec 10

SV Easter Egg Hunt – March 30, 2024

HHS Speaker Series – Coming Soon in 2024!

History/Heritage Day – May 18, 2024



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**Hellertown Historical Society wishes everyone a happy, healthy and prosperous Holiday Season!**



## New Holiday Decorations for HHS Thanks to Grant



**The Walnut Street Bridge is Outlined in New LED Light Strings**

Hellertown Historical Society was the successful recipient of a matching grant from the Hellertown-Lower Saucon Chamber of Commerce to purchase all new Christmas decorations for our Grist Mill site. Decorations were chosen to match the same period-style that would have been used by the former German settlers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Long needle, pine roping was added to our fencing with red bows on the posts. The buildings received pine wreaths on each window, each with a red bow. Along with the wreaths on windows, the Millers home did forego the traditional 18<sup>th</sup> century decor and was adorned with pine garlands around the porch pillars with modern white LED light strings and red bows.

In addition to the new decorations, the Historical Society received one of the old candle decorations, that once adorned utility poles along Main Street, donated by a local resident. That single candle is mounted on the last porch pillar adjacent to and facing Walnut Street for all who pass to see.

The Walnut Street bridge was outlined in new LED light strings and a 5' lighted wreath was added in the center of the structure. Another such wreath was installed on the north side of the Grist Mill facing Walnut Street. A 4' unlit wreath was added to the Wash House behind the Grist Mill.

Hellertown Historical Society sends special thanks to the Chamber for being chosen to receive this wonderful opportunity of funding for new decorations. We invite everyone to visit our site to see how we transformed our site for this special time of Holiday cheer!

*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 shown at left.*

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.

## Hellertown Historical Society

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- Vice-President – Stacie Torkos
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### 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.



### **President’s Message:**

Dear Hellertown Enthusiasts:  
To Every Season turn, turn, turn.....

Another Summer has come and gone, another Winter approaches. As we say thanks for the abundance in our lives, this Fall edition of our newsletter will remind you of one thing that stays constant in our lives: the vibrancy of our Hellertown

Community!

Think about all the events that have been sponsored by the Hellertown Historical Society in the short time since our Summer newsletter edition was sent to you:

- ❖ Community Day booth at Dimmick Park
- ❖ Speaker Series – History of HAL library
- ❖ School day at the Mill by SV School District
- ❖ Hosted conference of the Society for Preservation of Old Mills (SPOOM)
- ❖ Dedicated the Walnut Street bridge as a national historic site
- ❖ Trick-or-Treat at the Old Jail
- ❖ Bake sale on Election Day
- ❖ New Holiday Decorations for our historic site.

Coming up we have our popular annual Open House on Friday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, and the family friendly day with Santa and Shopping at the Mill on Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup>. You can always find details on our website at [HellertownHistoricalSociety.org](http://HellertownHistoricalSociety.org).

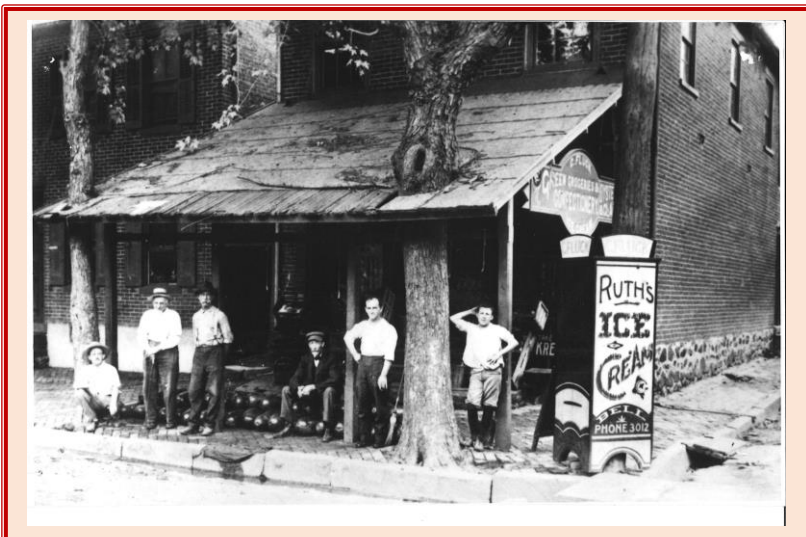
Personally, I give thanks every day for the many community volunteers that show up all the time to make these things happen. They actually enjoy giving back to their community! If you don’t have time right now to join us, you can always support us financially with any amount that you find affordable. We are a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization, so your gift will enjoy tax benefits as a charitable contribution.

May your holidays be abundantly full of cheer and blessings!

*Warm Regards,  
Larry Sutton, President*

### **CORRECTION!!**

The photo at left of Calvin Fluck’s Green Grocery was incorrected identified in the last issue of the Newsletter as being at 612 Main Street. It actually was located at 501 Main Street at the Durham Street intersection. It’s currently the Hanna and Nana Coffee Shop and was formerly Mike’s Kids’ Hot Dog Shop. The Editor apologizes for the error.



## Hellertown's Historic Buildings - #9

A series featuring distinctive and historic buildings in Hellertown – Answer to this building location will appear in the next issue  
Look at the building on left side and see if you recognize the same building at its current site and condition...



## Hellertown's Distinct and Historic Buildings - #8 Answer

A series featuring distinctive and historic homes in Hellertown

This was the home/business of Dr. William Rentzheimer, 502 Main Street c.1925, now a private residence.



### My Return to the Thomas Iron Company

by Bill Frey

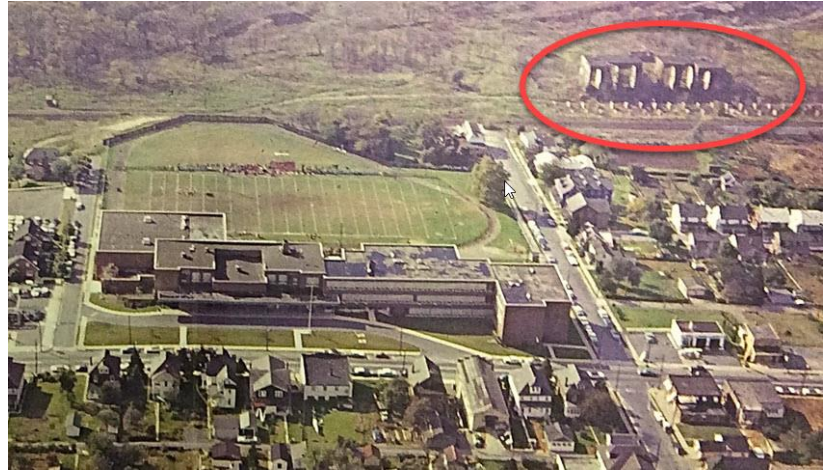
On May 15, 2021, Matt Brady (another HHS Volunteer) and I attended a short hike from the Water St. Park to the Thomas Iron Company ruins. The hike was led by Lehigh University geology professor Dr. Frank Pazzaglia and hosted by the Saucon Creek Watershed Association. The lecture and hike were attended by approximately 25 people. Dr. Pazzaglia gave a short history of the Thomas Iron Company and the surrounding geological formations in the local area with the attendees adding their knowledge making for a very informative lecture. After the lecture we went on our way for a short hike down the rail trail to visit the Thomas Iron Company ruins. This was my first trip back to the ruins in over 50 years. I have a bit of history with these ruins since I was raised two blocks away on Chestnut Street (yes there were three huge chestnut trees on Chestnut Street back in the 50s and 60s). Our neighborhood gang spent much of our summers exploring and playing in and around the Thomas Iron Company ruins. Two things that have dramatically changed in the last 50 years were how nature has reclaimed the area. In the 1950s and 60s the whole area was barren with just high growing weeds. It was a very hot and desolate area. The other thing that dramatically changed and repulsed me was the amount of graffiti painted on all the concrete structures. *Continued on the next page...*

### My Return to the Thomas Iron Company...

*continued from page 3*

Now, upon my return and to my surprise, I was actually disoriented. The whole area has become a forest. As kids, we would lay on the floor of the concrete furnaces and shoot our slingshots at precise targets on the ceilings. I can still recall the echo the iron pellets made when they hit the ceilings and I will never forget how cool it was inside the furnaces. I can recall picking out targets on the furnace ceilings which were probably 100 feet tall. We would carefully take aim at our targets with our slingshots purchased at Carson's Hardware in Hellertown. We had an endless supply of ammo because there were millions of perfectly round iron pellets which came off railroad cars on their way to the Bethlehem Steel Company. Summertime memories were made by the neighborhood kids at the cinder banks and The Thomas Iron Company ruins.

**Red Circled Area Locates the Remnants of the Thomas Iron Works Behind the then Saucon Valley Junior High School, now Saucon Manor**



**Photos of Thomas Iron Works by Clifford Frey c.1916**



**Two photos of the Thomas Iron Works Ruins by Bill Frey in 2021**



## Walnut Street Bridge NRHP Celebration Held

On October 14, under a dreary, rainy sky, a celebration of the Walnut Street “Pony” Bridge's inclusion on the United States National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places was held. Some dignitaries sent proclamations while others, State Representative Bob Freeman and Mayor David Heintzelman, braved the rain to address the group gathered for this historic event. The Hellertown-Lower Saucon Area Chamber of Commerce representatives also addressed those in attendance.

Mr. Larry Sutton, Hellertown Historical Society President, spoke about the Historical Society, the bridge, and a tongue-in-cheek attempt to “hawk” merchandise supporting the Hellertown Historical Society to those gathered. Mr. Roy “Chip” Wagner spoke about his efforts to reach this goal and was honored for his dedication and determination in gathering the necessary information for the Bridge’s acceptance as a Historic Place.

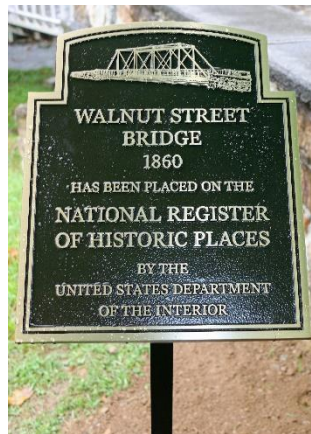
Special guests of honor were several of the Lehigh graduate students who worked endlessly with many Hellertown Historical Society volunteers from 1994–1998 to restore the Bridge. A plaque commemorating the Historic Place designation, donated by an anonymous donor, was at the center of the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

After the ceremonial events, the guests and public were invited into the Tavern Room venue to enjoy refreshments and the music of “The Wonton Soups” courtesy of Hellertown Sporting Goods.

A special thanks to the past and present volunteers of Hellertown Historical Society whose efforts saved this historic bridge and organized an

exceptional ceremony in honor of the Walnut Street bridge placement on the United States National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places.

Commemorative items, including a booklet, “The History of the Walnut Street Bridge”, compiled by Society member, Donald Mills as well as ceramic tiles bearing recognition to the National Register and T-shirts emblazoned with a picture of the historic bridge are still available at the Hellertown Historical Society. Call the office number 610-838-1770 to arrange to obtain these items or visit us during office hours, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday 9:30AM-11:30AM at the Millers House, adjacent to the grist mill.



**HHS President Larry Sutton  
Addresses the Gathered Guests**



**HHS Volunteer “Chip” Wagner, Who  
Oversaw the Effort to Have the  
Bridge Included on the NRHP, Gives  
Remarks to the Group**



**Lehigh Grad Students, Led by Dr. Perry Green (center), Who  
Completed the Bridge Restoration, Reunite 25 Years Later**

## THRIVE at 35 to KEEP HISTORY ALIVE

*Recalling efforts to preserve our heritage & Wagner Grist Mill Complex, See pages 5-14*

Photos by Paul Bealer

**V**OLUNTEER SPIRIT AT HELLETTOWN'S Wagner Grist Mill complex since 1981 probably exceeds 500,000 volunteer hours— a cool \$4 million in savings if all the work they do had been paid. Those volunteers preserve the mill and other buildings plus all artifacts simply because most spent their lives in Hellertown. All love Hellertown and its history.

We can be inspired by these volunteers pictured here and the stories you will read on other pages. A way to thank them for this dedication is work alongside them. Volunteer and appreciate knowledge and history these men and women are sharing and saving.

Among many volunteers that have devoted themselves to preserve Hellertown history are Joe Sofka, Mercer "Grump" Ward, Jeanette and Harry Boos, Jean Lawrence, Mary Pierce and Dolores DiPaolo.

## We Salute Volunteer Efforts of Hellertown Historical Society

**This Article from the former Valley Voice Newspaper Highlights  
Many of our Volunteers and the Efforts they Provide for the Historical Society's 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**Hellertown Historical Society  
150 West Walnut Street  
Hellertown PA 18055**