



Hellertown Historical Society

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

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Upcoming 2020 Events

- SV Easter Egg Hunt – Dimmick Park - Apr. 11
 Hellertown Heritage Day – May 16
 SV Community Day – TBD
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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Hellertown's Civil Defense

Article and Photos By Gil Stauffer

I am a member of Hellertown Borough Council. Not that this fact has anything to do with my story, it's just that during a recent Council meeting the Chief of Police of Hellertown (knowing that I have an interest in all things radio) leaned over and whispered to me "we have Gonset Communicators in storage that you may be interested in seeing." Well he instantly got my attention so I whispered back "yes...and when."

Well...that was the beginning of a long road down memory lane for me. When I saw those old, old, old, Two Meter Gonset Communicators the memories overwhelmed me. As I tentatively touched these radios of yesteryear, I decided then and there to write about the origins of these wonderful pieces of equipment (which can now be found in the Hellertown Historical Society Museum) and my introduction to Civil Defense in Hellertown during the 1950s.

I was just a teenager in 1957 when my friend Steve Sobota urged me to attend a radio meeting of the local Civil Defense. I remember the meeting was held in Borough Hall, and wasn't really a meeting at all. It was a class that focused on learning morse code. As I quickly learned, if you mastered Morse Code, and some radio theory, you could take an FCC test and eventually become an Amateur Radio Operator (a Ham) and operate the Civil Defense radios called Gonset Communicators.

After just one meeting I was hooked! I loved Morse Code and had no trouble understanding radio theory. And, under the watchful guidance of George Knapp, Gordon (Gordy) Jacoby, and Ed Grogg I took the test and became a Ham! So did my friend Steve Sobota.

I became K3BLN. Steve Sobota became K3ALV. George Knapp was already W3EKL, and Gordy Jacoby was W3PQX.

In 1957 Mr. Gilman (who was affectionately known as Pop Gilman) was in charge of Civil Defense for Hellertown. George Knapp was in charge of communications, which meant he was in charge of all things radio for Civil Defense in Hellertown. As the months passed, many others in Hellertown became interested in Civil Defense radio communications and strove to become Hams. While I can't remember all their names and their radio call-signs (I wish I could), I do recall Jim Fitzpatrick, Jack Holloway, Larry Gozzard, Dennis Stauffer, and Susan Stauffer. Our go-to person who provided help in so-many-ways was Don Stauffer.

You'll never guess where the Hellertown Civil Defense Center was located. Under the Band Stand in Dimmick Park! The entrance is still there today. As you approach the rear of the band stand you'll see a door. Upon opening the door there is a short flight of steps that lead under the bandstand. The space, at that time, was divided into three sections...a radio room to the left, a storage room to the right, and a general open area in the middle. Being young, the space seemed enormous, but actually it was probably quite cramped.

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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 Members and Friends,

We continued to experience exciting growth in 2019 due your enthusiastic support to preserve Hellertown's heritage. THANK YOU!

This is the time of year when we remind you, our members and friends, to join or renew your membership with the Society. As you may know, the Society is comprised only of volunteers and your dues and support keep this organization's doors open for students, researchers, and the public. We cannot do this without you, and your support is appreciated.

Make sure that you follow us on Facebook and check back on our website for upcoming events and fundraising efforts. As we close the door on 2019, I wish you and yours a very happy New Year and, as always, thank you for supporting your Historical Society!

Stacie Torkos, President

Hellertown's Civil Defense...

Continued from Page 1

The best part of the Civil Defense Center, in my opinion, was the radio room. It contained an operating position with some of the most reliable radio equipment of the day: a Johnson Viking Valiant transmitter, a Hallicrafters SX-101, and the venerable Gonset Communicators. Oh yes, I forgot to mention there was a huge Tower situated along the edge of the band stand that contained all the antennas for these wonderful pieces of radio equipment.

The Gonset Communicators, which operated on 144 megacycles (now called megahertz) were used to communicate short distances. Regularly scheduled radio drills were held with the Civil Defense Center in Easton, which was in charge of all civil defense activities in Northampton County. Our local contact with the county was a gentleman who lived in Hellertown near the intersection of Cherry Lane and Easton Road...Ernie Szmodish (I may have the spelling wrong but it's close).

The group of radio operators, all Hams, eventually formed a radio club with the FCC call sign K3JJV. This group, composed of mostly teenagers with adult advisors, was quite active in not only supporting local Civil Defense drills, but also participating in nationally sponsored radio related emergency activities such as setting up

and operating communications equipment in the field in both good and bad weather.

As many of you may recall, the Civil Defense movement of the 1950s and early 1960s waned, and eventually gave way to other priorities. As for the Hellertown Civil Defense radio operators, life simply got in the way. The teenagers went off to college or moved on to other interests (work and family). The Hellertown Civil Defense organization eventually faded away.

However, the door that leads to the old Civil Defense Center is still there. I've often wondered what is down there. I'm sure if I somehow obtained a key and crept down the steps, I would still hear the beep-beep of morse code and the garbled sounds of radio operators checking to make sure that all was OK with the world, especially Hellertown and Northampton county!



Two Gonset Communicators (circa 1960) discovered in Hellertown Borough Storage. The radios operated on frequencies from 144 to 146 MHz using Amplitude Modulation (AM).



Close-up view of a Gonset Communicator affectionately known as a "Gooney Box" to radio operators of the day. Note the "Civil Defense" emblem. Each radio was the property of Hellertown Borough...for Civil Defense use only.

HHS Word Scramble

By Dolores Stauffer Di Paolo

Our facility offers much in the way of Hellertown's History, but no more than our buildings do themselves...

LREMI SUHOE
NATERV MORO
USEMUM
NABR
HWAS HUSOE
NARIT OMRO

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

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

THEME: Holiday Fowl Language

PANOC
CAPON
OSOEG
GOOSE
KDUC
DUCK
ONSHIR ENH
CORNISH HEN
ECIKNHC
CHICKEN
USQBA
SQUAB
KUTEYR
TURKEY

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

"Happenings"

DJOHUSOEC HJS QDZO, EJSS KC
JSAVAXSQ. ODZ ZS TXHO GDJ
EIS HOOLHX SPP ILOE HOQ
ISJKEHPS QHV. EIS
GLO ADOEKOLSC, ZHEAI GDJ EIS
QHESC.
J=R

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

"A Fun Day"

KEHHBUJSX OMX CMG M OMX
COMMUNITY DAY WAS A DAY
DEL HAASJUW, WLAASJUW MUO
FOR MEETING, GREETING AND
AMSJUW WEEO DEEO,
EATING GOOD FOOD,
AGIAKJMFFX STA DMZBFEBG TES
ESPECIALLY THE FABULOUS HOT
OEWG HMOA ZX EBL TTG.
DOGS MADE BY OUR HHS.
O=D

Westerwald Pottery

Stop by our gift shop and browse our selection of Westerwald Pottery. All of the pottery is made in Scenery Hill, Pennsylvania and is wheel-thrown, brush decorated in blue and gray and imprinted with "Hellertown" on each piece. Because every piece is handmade, no two products are exactly alike.

We will be offering these at our events throughout the year or you may stop by the Miller's House - you may just find something for that hard-to-buy-for person on your shopping list. We are open Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM.

Below is a sampling of the pieces we carry...



FORMER SCHOOL BUILDING
 on Northampton Street

Did You Know?

In the year 1870, a lot located on Northampton Street, was donated by Tilghman Eisenhart for the purpose of erecting a schoolhouse. A two-room brick structure was built. Philip Lerch and his daughter Emma were the first teachers. Some years later an additional room was added. In 1910, the building was supplanted by a more modern building, The Wolf School building, which housed all the pupils of the Borough, numbering 142.

Hellertown's Distinct and Historic Homes - #2

A new series featuring distinctive and historic homes in Hellertown – Answer to this home will appear in the next issue

Look at the home on left side circa 1925 and see if you recognize the same home at its current site and condition...



Hellertown's Distinct and Historic Homes - #1 Answer

A new series featuring distinctive and historic homes in Hellertown

This home was used for the same purpose in the left photo in 1925 as it is in the right photo today.

This home is located at 326 Main Street and is now the **Heintzelman's Funeral Home**.

In 1925 it was **Bergstresser's Funeral Home**. What a coincidence!



German POW's In Hellertown???

By Dolores Stauffer Di Paolo

Before I get to the Hellertown part, I want to give you an introduction to the situation during World War II...

As World War II raged on, the Allies were running out of room to keep the POWs. From 1942 to 1945, more than 400,000 war prisoners were shipped to the United States and put in rural camps across the country. One of those camps was Fort Indiantown Gap.

At the time prisoners were arriving, farms and factories across our country were struggling with severe labor shortages due to the manpower needed for our armed forces. POWs, according to the Geneva Convention, could only be made to work if they were paid. Some of the thinking was, let's put these guys to work, but wait, what if they escape? Eventually they decided to take the chance and put the prisoners to work in the canneries, farms to harvest wheat, or pick asparagus and potatoes. They worked any place they were needed, but not dangerous jobs, and only minimum

security was needed. Farmers who signed contracts for POW workers usually provided meals for them and paid the U.S. Government 45 cents an hour for each worker. The POW made about 80 cents a day for himself that provided him with pocket money to spend in the canteen.

Out of the thousands of POWs in the U. S. during WWII, only about 2,222 tried to escape, and most were quickly caught.

By 1946, all the prisoners were returned home to their own countries.

How Hellertown was affected by this...

As another volunteer and I were entering pictures into our computer program used to document our Hellertown history, we came across a picture of Americans arresting a group of Germans during WWII. A name was attached to it as the photographer. To us both, being born a bit after WWII, this was amazing for us. We asked some of the slightly older volunteers about the photographer and that led to the story of POWs working in Hellertown.

These POWs were housed at Fort Indiantown Gap. They would be loaded into trucks and brought to Hellertown to work on the potato

farms that were owned by the Bachman's and the Herman's.

They worked until lunch and were invited into the kitchen for lunch. These men were so trusted that the guard would leave his weapon on the porch and join them for lunch. The farmers usually provided lunch for the prisoners. After they ate, it was back to the fields. At quitting time they got back in the Truck and headed for Fort Indiantown Gap.

The POWs were so content in their environment that few ever tried to escape. They (POWs around the country) referred to their prison as a golden cage.

Hellertown Historical Society seeks individuals that may be able to offer more information or experience with this story. If anyone has more to share, please reach out to us using the contact information from the front page and tell us more. Many persons approaching the age of 70 and younger likely knew nothing about these facts. We look forward to gathering more information about this and printing it in future issues.



Arthur Schrantz, a Hellertown native, was a soldier during World War II offering the Hellertown Historical Society a few photos of his tour in Germany. See two of these photos on the next page.

Here a US tank from the 12th Armored Division is seen in the German village of Rouffach.



Here a group of German POW's being guarded by a US soldier in Arthur's group.



German POW's picking potatoes on farms near Hellertown. Photo taken around 1945.
(Courtesy Bangor Daily News)

Helm's Apple Orchard

As Remembered and Written by George E Werkheiser

During the World War II years, manual labor was hard to find and hire. The draft had taken many of the young men in town to fight the war with the Axis Powers while those who were not drafted, worked at home in manufacturing plants to meet the demand needed for defense.

William Helms, from Lower Saucon Township, had an apple orchard where the fruit was soon ready for harvesting. With no available manpower, he decided to lease the trees to anyone who wanted to pick the fruit. My Uncle Robbie (Robert 'Bob' Werkheiser) told my father about this and my Dad went to the orchard to see if this was true. He was told to pick a tree that he would like to harvest and it was marked as his for that year's harvest. I believe that all of my Dad's brothers also selected trees. When the apples were at their peak, it was time to harvest.

My father got home from his job at Bethlehem Steel Company around 3:30PM. He would have a quick snack then load every basket we had to go to the orchard. We also took a step ladder so we could pick a majority of the apples without climbing the tree. Mr. Helms was very strict about breaking branches on the trees and understandably so. We picked as many as we could load in the car and head for home. This went on, almost daily, until the tree was bare of any fruit.

My mother was pleased on one hand that we had so many apples, but frustrated on the other hand with what to do with them. The side porch of our house was filled with baskets of apples. She cooked apples into apple sauce and canned it for later use, made apple pies, apple dumplings, apple fritters, dried some apples for schnitz and knept, but still could not see the floor of the porch because there were so many full baskets still waiting for their fate.

Uncle Robbie came by one day and said he would take the remaining apples to the cider mill. I believe the mill was in a barn at the Laubach Farm located on Lower Saucon Road about 2 miles before Kunsman's crossroads. I do remember that he brought a full barrel and a half of cider to our home. We made a stand for the barrels and drank the cider until it started to turn to vinegar.

I do not have any idea what was paid for the tree at that time, but when I see apples in the store today for \$1.99/pound, I know we had the bargain of a lifetime.

Saucon Valley Easter Egg Hunt



Saturday, April 11th at 10 a.m.

CANCELED DUE TO CONVID-19



*Coordinated by the
Hellertown Historical Society*

For more event info:

