



Hellertown Historical Society

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

In This Issue

- President's Message – Page 2
 Hellertown's Historic Buildings #11 –
 Page 3
 Word Puzzles – Page 3
 History of Churches Series #3 – Page 4
 HHS to Receive \$10K Grant – Page 7
 HHS Grist Mill Tours – Page 7
 Two Directors Honored – Page 8
 Family Donates \$5K to HHS – Page 8
 Heritage Day Photos – Page 9
 Thomas Edison in Hellertown – Page 10

Upcoming Events

- Community Day – August 17
 Speaker Series – September 10
 Halloween Parade – October 20
 Election Day Bake Sale – November 5
 Speaker Series – November 7
 Light-Up Night – November 29
 HHS Holiday Open House – December 6



Civil War Vets Outside American Legion c.1930
 L-R George Young, John Stein, Robert Reiss

Newsletter Email Contacts

Managing Editor – Donald Mills

editor@hellertownhistoricalsociety.org

General Information

info@hellertownhistoricalsociety.org

Hellertown Historical Society

150 W. Walnut Street

Hellertown PA 18055

610.838.1770

www.hellertownhistoricalsociety.org



First H-LS Heritage Day Held



An HHS volunteer describes the inner workings of a typical grist mill

Courtesy Lisa Boehm Photography

Hellertown Historical Society collaborated with Lower Saucon Township Historical Society, the Saucon Rail Oversight Commission and Saucon Valley Conservancy to hold the first ever, multi-organizational Hellertown-Lower Saucon Heritage Day. The event was held May 18 from 10AM-3PM. Both the Heller-Wagner Grist Mill site and the Michael Heller Homestead sites were open offering many educational and fun activities for children and adults alike. Both sites are conveniently located from each other via a short walk on the Saucon Rail Trail.

The event held rain or shine, did suffer slightly due to the dismal, rainy weather during the day. Some attendees had umbrellas; others just braved the misty weather. However, all the visitors enjoyed themselves while they continually moved through the many activities on hand. There was nothing but positive feedback for the idea of the mutual bonding of organizations to offer these activities at each site.

Hellertown Historical Society hosted both Lower Saucon Township Historical Society and the Saucon Rail Trail Oversight Commission at the Heller-Wagner Grist Mill site. Each group had info tables and displays inside and LSTHS had a May pole in the field just outside the Grist Mill. Many children enjoyed that activity.

Saucon Valley Conservancy opened the Michael Heller Homestead for tours and activities. Their docents welcomed guests to tour the Heller House, the Widow's Home and the remnants of the Heller Barn. Presentations were offered of the Four-Square Gardening concept, the Heller Family history and a discussion about invasive plant species at the Nature Trail. A quilt exhibition was on display in the Widow's Home. A Revolutionary presentation was held as well as a Civil War encampment presentation. Children enjoyed many activities such as painting rocks, seashells, a scavenger hunt and quilting.

Continued on page 2...

Hellertown Historical Society

Officers –

President – Larry Sutton
 Vice-President – Dennis Scholl
 Recording Secretary – Tina Krasnansky
 Treasurer – Gregory Stauffer

Board of Directors –

Matthew Brady
 Vivian Demko
 William “Bill” Frey
 Tyler Gordon
 James Hill
 Sandra Malone
 Gloria Michael
 Donald Mills
 Liz Thompson
 Paul Tucker

Financial Advisory Board –

Tina Krasnansky
 Kimberly Rosario
 Timothy Shantz



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:



It is Memorial Day as I collect some thoughts for this message. There is a connection of this venerable day to the mission of the Hellertown Historical society that we should acknowledge. Both are dedicated to honoring our past, lest future generations forget

the many lives and sacrifices that brought us to this moment. While the stories of our settlers and inhabitants are not as dramatic as lives lost in battle, they are no less important to a community that practices democracy, supports a rule of law, welcomes newcomers of all faiths, and honors those who came before us.

Beginning in June, you can experience a guided tour through Hellertown’s own creation story. Meet the Hellers and understand why they settled in Saucon Valley. Stop at the Miller’s House, Wash House, the Barn and its amazing exhibits of 19th and 20th century farming, woodworking and blacksmith tools. Finish your tour in the Grist Mill museum and learn about life in Hellertown from colonial times to the mid-20th century.

This new educational experience will be given on the second and fourth Saturday, 10am, from the beginning of June to the end of October. Tickets can be purchased at the beginning of the tour in the Miller’s House (\$5 for adults, \$3 for ages 5-17, cash or checks). We believe you will be glad you did it!

You can count on the many other community events by HHS to continue as well, in addition to this information-packed newsletter, our website, a growing archive of past articles and reference material, and a dedicated group of volunteers to make all this happen – for you!

Happy Memorial Day!

*Warm Regards,
 Larry Sutton, President*

First H-LS Heritage Day Held

Continued from page 1...

HHS offered many displays and activities both indoor and out. Attendees enjoyed tours of the HHS Museum which included displays and presentations of how the grist mill once operated. Children attended a writing class which was held in the school house display inside the museum as well as colonial clothing dress-up in the millinery store. Outdoors, HHS had displays on water power turning a wheel, hand-threshing wheat for grain and a presentation in the Herb Garden. The HHS barn was open for guests to view 18th century farming implements and their uses. The HHS wash house offered 18th century laundry methods. A horse-drawn carriage offered attendees a ten-minute ride down along the Saucon Creek. Live steers, used for farming chores, were brought to the site where children were able to pet and see them up close. Children enjoyed the corn board activity where they searched through piles of corn kernels searching for toy prizes. A face-painter transformed children into imaginary characters. Geaker’s Tacos brought their food trailer to satisfy everyone’s appetite with their famous tacos, burgers, steaks, chicken fingers, fries and pierogies. Handouts at the Welcome Center included the History of the Walnut Street Bridge, two hundred years of Hellertown Post Office locations and a self-guided Walking Tour of Historic Hellertown.

The event planning committee has received so many positive comments from attendees. Despite the dismal weather, they feel the event was a complete success and are excited at the concept of continuing this event annually!

See a few photos from this event on page 8

Hellertown’s Historic Buildings - #11

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 - #10 Answer

A series featuring distinctive and historic homes in Hellertown

This was the home of Joseph Fischl, a well-known Hellertown contractor and excavator, c.1925 at 103 Main Street; it’s now a private residence.



Cryptogram – PA Dutch Saying

RCA CLOODAO D VF RCA TACDHQAO D VAR NK QLRSC

WKUDHV

(Hint H=N)

Word Scramble

ASWH USOEH

LESMLIR UHSOE

MUMUES

VERANT ROMO

ATWRE HELWE

IDNGRNGI ONSTES

BEHR ADNEGR

If you think you know the puzzle answers, send them to the Editor via the email address below:

editor@hellertownhistoricalsociety.org

Answers to appear in the next issue

Good Luck!

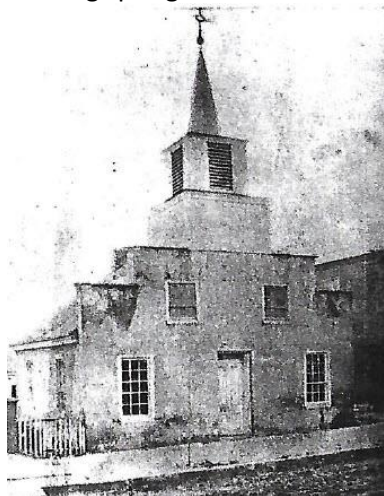
First United Church of Christ

By Dolores Stauffer DiPaolo
Don Mills
Dean Shaffer

This is the third in a series of articles focusing on Hellertown churches and their histories...

Settlers to this area in the early to mid-1700's were attempting to start new lives and escape religious persecution in Europe. As has been documented, there were many early churches established in the greater Hellertown-Lower Saucon area. The history off First UCC begins with these early days.

As congregations and denominations merged, changed, and departed, various area churches changed with them. This resulted in the building of more churches in Hellertown. St. Paul United Methodist Church on Main Street, next to Wells Fargo bank, and the Christ Union Church at the corner of Northampton and Saucon Street were two such churches that resulted from this transition. The former was built on the site of Hellertown's first school. The latter was built on land donated by John Rentzheimer, its cornerstone was laid in July 1870 and the building completed the following spring.



St. Paul used Hellertown's First School Until Building a New Church



St. Paul's New Church Built to the Rear of the School Site

In 1917, the Rev. George Hamm became pastor of the church. As the congregation grew, there was a definite need for a better-suited facility. In the 1920's to 1930's, the Ladies Missionary Society met once-per-month in a small wood building on Penn Street, located across the street from the current church location. In 1936, a building committee was formed to plan a new social hall. Ground-breaking was held at Penn and Northampton Streets, across from the small wooden "social hall" building, on land gifted by the Deemer Family. Many of those wielding shovels for the ceremony were the lady church members.



Ground Breaking for the New Social Hall October, 1936 (Note the wood Social Hall building in the background)

The Deemers donated the excavation work and the stone for the foundation walls from their quarry which is now part of the Steel Club golf course. Others donated money, time and talent to the project. The new Social Hall

had a large area with a stage on the main floor, and a kitchen and banquet hall in the basement.

Once completed, thoughts quickly turned to use this new building as a church. This resulted in the continuing transition and separation of the congregation from the Union Church, which was formally dissolved in 1938, where Reformed and Lutheran had worshipped jointly. Renovations were quickly made to the Social Hall by adding an altar, pulpit and lectern. Pews and an organ were graciously donated by the John Deemer Family. Other families donated required items. Sunday, December 5, 1937, the new stone church was dedicated as the Christ Evangelical and Reformed Church.



First UCC c.1937

In April 1941, the Rev. Adam Schellhase became pastor of the church, though his tenure would be short-lived. At this time in history, the country was preparing for World War 2. Bethlehem Steel Company began the Mountainview Development in Hellertown to house many of its employees who began the production of war material. Through Rev. Schellhase's efforts, the church membership increased to over 500. On October 11, 1945, the church's 75th anniversary was commemorated. Sadly, Rev. Schellhas passed away December 16, 1946, after a lengthy illness.

The Rev. Richard Winters was installed as pastor in spring of 1947. However, after a short period, Rev. Winters resigned in August 1949 to pursue a call to be Chaplain of a mental institution in Washington, DC. During this time, Richard Schellhase, son of Rev. Schellhase, was ordained into the Christian ministry May 25, 1947.

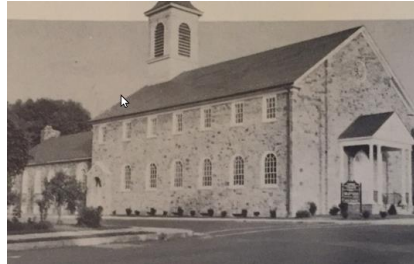
Rev. Richard Butofsky was the next pastor of the church on September 1, 1949. In 1951, the New Jerusalem Evangelical and Reformed Church, known as Apples New Jerusalem Church, was dissolved. This transition by merger saw the congregation grow substantially. In December 1952, a call went out the congregation from Rev. Butofsky that an expansion of the church facilities was needed and appealed to the congregation for funding. Rev. Butofsky resigned to accept a call to Salem UCC in Harrisburg, PA December 1, 1954.



Artists Concept of the Addition

June 12, 1955, saw the Rev. Theodore Haas be installed as pastor of the church. During this period, through the efforts of Rev. Haas, the building committee and the congregation, the church addition and church school were completed after a ground-breaking ceremony on June 19, 1955. Thankfully, through a conversation with the Bethlehem Steel Club, an alteration to the current golf course was about to occur in the same area as the Deemer Quarry.

After meetings with Bethlehem Steel officials, they graciously donated the same style of stone as was used on the original structure. Speaking with influential Bethlehem Steel personnel, Bethlehem Steel Chairman E. G. Grace also graciously donated the 70 tons of steel work for the new addition at cost.



**First UCC with its New Addition
c.1956**

On June 25, 1957, the Evangelical and Reformed Church merged with the Congregational Christian Church to form the United Church of Christ. June 14, 1957, the church members voted to change the official church's name to First United Church of Christ, Hellertown, PA.

In January 1960, a new constitution and by-laws were adopted by the church to conform to those of the United Church of Christ. In October, the 90th anniversary of the founding of the church was celebrated.

A mortgage burning ceremony was held on November 20, 1966, marking the clearing of the debt on the church building. Erected at a cost of \$225,000. The debt was paid off in a remarkable 10 years!

1970 saw the church celebrate their 100th anniversary. To commemorate the milestone, several services were held with previous pastors of the church officiating. Also noted, six sons of the congregation had entered the ministry up to that moment. A banquet was held at the American

Legion in September which saw over 300 members in attendance.

Hellertown celebrated the Centennial of its incorporation in 1972. The church participated with over 20 men in the Brothers of the Brush. The celebration brought families and churches closer raising over \$25,000 for the Hellertown Community Center.



**Haas Hares Chapter Brothers of the
Brush-Hellertown Centennial 1972**

The Rev. Ronald Haney, another son of the congregation, was ordained in January 1973 and called upon to serve as pastor of St. Paul's UCC, Allentown.

In January 1976, Rev. Fred Trimble, Jr. was called upon to serve as pastor, Unfortunately, the "marriage" between Rev. Trimble and the congregation was not as hopeful as many expected. Mr. Trimble submitted his resignation and it was accepted in February 1978.

During those difficult times, Rev. Ralph Althouse served as Assistant Pastor from January 1977 until September 1979 when the Rev. Floyd Swart was elected pastor.

The church has seen many milestones reached since...

*1981 – Gary March became the first full-time Director of Christian Education.

*November 1982 – Barry Holban became organist/choir director. David Somers became Youth Director.

*April 1983 – Carol Dague became Director of Christian

Education and revitalized the Vacation Bible School Program. The Church budget reached \$100,000 for the first time.

*1984 – Boy Scout Troop 319, which has produced 45 Eagle Scouts, celebrated its 50th Anniversary.

*1985 – A chair lift was installed to make basement rooms handicapped accessible. David Bennett became Youth Director. Patti and Kevin O'Connell were added as Organist and Choir Directors, respectively.

*1986 – This year was dedicated as "Bible Study Emphasis Year" with 68 adults in 5 classes studying the "Through the Bible in One Year" program.

*1987 – A long-range goal since 1980 was to increase attendance. The average attendance figure at worship services reached 207, an increase of 54 since 1980. Additionally, though, there was a steady decline in both church attendance and Sunday School in the United States during this period, the church realized a steady growth in Sunday School, thanks in part by adding additional staff.

*A Brass Choir was instituted by Dan Deysher and Kevin O'Connell. Since its founding, it has been used at many special services in the church as well as at other area churches. The Brass Choir has also played at various other functions, including Musikfest in Bethlehem. Patti O'Connell started a Children's Choir which participates during some special occasions worship services.

*1988 – A process of computerizing the church office began. All membership information, financial information and word processing was computerized. Average Sunday School attendance averaged 100, marking a steady growth in the Christian Education

Program.

On January 4, 1991, Carol Dague was ordained as a Moravian Minister and installed as Associate Pastor of Christian Education on February 3rd. The salaries and benefits of this arrangement placed a stress on the finances of the church. A special stewardship drive designed by the Rev. Bill Green of the Conference office resulted in the church finishing the fiscal year in the black.

Over the next several years, the church received large donations from the estates of three deceased members which were used to renovation the church to become 100% handicap accessible, create a new Conference Room and refurbish the Kindergarten Room using design requests from the class and teachers. A new Allen organ was also purchased and installed during the year.

In 1992, Patti O'Connell organized a Youth Choir. The church now had three choirs and the Brass Choir to support Music Ministry in the church.

On September 13, 1992, area churches held an "Old-Fashioned Sunday Afternoon" at Dimmick Park as part of Hellertown's year-long 250th Anniversary of its founding. In the same year, the Palm Sunday attendance reached a milestone of 314, highest ever for a single service in recent history. Additionally, 18 baptisms held that year was also a record for the pastorate of Rev. Swart.

February 23, 1993 saw the last sermon preached by Rev. Carol Dague having served First UCC for 10 years. Carol moved onto Pastor of College Hill Moravian Church in Bethlehem. Nancy Welser, former Director of Pre-School at Salem UCC, Catasauqua, was hired in September 1993 to be Director of Christian Education.

In 1995, a new Pictorial Directory was prepared for the celebration of the Church's founding. The Pastor Swart met the Rev. Robert Brown at the Annual Conference Meeting where Linda Lennon and Jennifer Klotz, members of the church, were introduced as candidates for ordained Christian Ministry. Rev. Brown stated he was the not only the last person from the congregation to be ordained, but the 13th ordained from the congregation. This makes Linda and Jennifer 14th and 15th, respectively. In September 1995, Nancy Welser resigned as Director of Christian Education.

The 125th Anniversary Communion and Brunch was held July 23, 1995 with Rev. Theodore Haas (pastor from June 1995-June 1975) delivering the sermon. To further celebrate the church's anniversary, a pork and sauerkraut dinner was held on October 7th. Former pastors Rev. Dr. Blake Heffner, Rev. Robert Brown and Rev. Carol Dague attended with their families.

While this article only addresses the church's history up to the mid-1990's, the church continues to carry on with a thriving congregation of faithful people who dedicate their lives and service to the church and the community as a whole.

The Editor and writers of the Hellertown Historical Society Newsletter wish to offer our sincere appreciation to Hellertown Historical Society member Dean Shaffer who compiled this historical representation of the First UCC Church and for allowing us to share it with you.



Cornerstone and Plaque Dated 1937

HHS to Receive \$10K Grant

Hellertown Historical Society was notified recently from PA State Senator Lisa Boscola that we were approved to receive a \$10,000 grant from the PA Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) to be used toward inclusion of the entire Heller-Wagner Grist Mill site on the National Park Service National Register of Historic Places. The funds will be used for an agency to evaluate, procure and provide all information necessary to be submitted for the inclusion on the register.

Per the press release "The Heller-Wagner Grist Mill has great historical significance and is deserving of being placed on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places," Senator Boscola stated. "The Heller-Wagner Grist Mill is a 'diamond-in-the-rough,' in which the Hellertown Historical Society is on the cusp of putting on the map as a tourist site that will benefit not only the Borough of Hellertown and its business community, but the citizens and businesses throughout the Lehigh Valley and beyond."

Keystone Planning Grants are awarded by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission as part of the Keystone Historic Preservation Grant Program, which provides funding to support projects that identify, preserve, promote, and protect historic and archaeological resources in Pennsylvania for both the benefit of the public and the revitalization of communities. Funding also supports municipal planning initiatives that focus on historic resources or may be used to meet building or community specific planning goals. The program also supports construction activities at resources listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The funding source for these grants is through the Keystone Recreation, Park & Conservation Fund, which is supported annually from a portion of the state realty transfer tax revenue.

This is a 50-50 matching grant, which means HHS must also invest \$10,000 toward the grant by December this year. Although this is a substantial sum to produce, the good news is that the Society has already received pledges for \$6,000 of the amount needed. Anyone desiring to help us reach this goal may donate toward the 'Historic Preservation Fund'. You may send your check payable to **Hellertown Historical Society**, 150 West Walnut Street, Hellertown, PA 18055; please note 'Historic Preservation Fund' in the memo space. You may also donate online by visiting our website at hellertownhistoricalsociety.org, then selecting the down arrow next to "Support Us" along the top menu row and pick "Donate". A page opens where you may select the "Donate" button. This will open a page to donate via PayPal or a credit/debit card.

Please accept our gratitude for your support of Hellertown Historical Society and our pursuit of restoring and preserving Hellertown's rich history.

HHS Offering Tours of the Grist Mill

Visiting a historic site can be an enriching experience, allowing you to step back in time and gain a deeper understanding of the past. The Heller-Wagner Grist Mill tour offers you a unique glimpse into the lives and cultures of those who came before us. Historic sites have the power to captivate and inspire, leaving you with a newfound appreciation for the world we live in today.

All donations support the Hellertown Historical Society's mission to preserve the Heller-Wagner Grist Mill, Pony Bridge, the Grist Miller's House, Wash House, and related historical buildings and to preserve Hellertown's heritage through the collection, preservation, and exhibition of selected mill-related and Hellertown related documents, artifacts, and photographs for viewing by the public and to provide educational opportunities about Hellertown's heritage.

See the ad below for more information...



Heller-Wagner Grist Mill Tours

150 West Walnut St.
Hellertown, Pennsylvania

\$5.00 for adults (18 and older)
\$3.00 for children (5-17)

2nd and 4th Saturdays at 10 AM

6/22, 7/13, 7/27, 8/10, 8/24,...

Trained docents guide you through Hellertown's
and the Heller-Wagner Grist Mill's history!

The gift shop
will be open
9:30 AM -
11:30 AM



HHS Honors Two Directors

Hellertown Historical Society honors two long-term members of their Board of Directors. Earl Hill and Stacie Torkos, both former HHS Presidents, have ended their tenure on the Board of Directors recently. At the regular Board Meeting in March, 2024, each was presented with a plaque signifying the Society’s appreciation for their dedication, support and service to the Society’s Board of Directors.



Earl Hill (Left) and Stacie Torkos receive commemorative plaques from HHS President Larry Sutton

Local Family Gifts HHS with \$5,000

Hellertown Historical Society sincerely thanks long-time resident Michael Heffner and his family for their generous donation to our historic preservation and education initiatives. Their support is invaluable in preserving our town’s rich history for future generations.



HHS President Larry Sutton, left, pictured with Michael Heffner and his family after presented with the \$5,000 check.



**Photo Highlights from
Hellertown-Lower
Saucon Heritage Day
Courtesy Lisa Boehm
Photography**



Thomas Edison Visited Hellertown

Thank you to Karen Samuels, LSTHS for this Article

In 1904, Thomas Edison hired 19-year-old immigrant Adolf Klinger as a researcher. Klinger went on to open a factory in Hellertown that eventually became the Champion Spark Plug Plant. Adolf Franz Klinger, 1859-1959, did not want to work for his father's hotel chain in Austria. After an emotional argument with his father, Klinger left home to start a new life in America.

He was a brilliant young man who was educated at the University of Prague. In 1904, Thomas Edison hired Klinger as a researcher in one of his New York laboratories. That same year, Klinger married Mary Joska. Edison saw something in Klinger. He offered to find a new research facility factory in Pennsylvania with Klinger as its

General Manager. Klinger found a suitable 8-acre location in Hellertown along Route 412.

A structure was built on the property by 1918 and by 1922, according to an industrial report, the location housed a spark plug company employing 317 people. At the time, many of the employees were under the age of 16.

In 1920, Klinger and his family built a new home on Second Avenue in Hellertown. Thomas Edison stayed with the Klinger family in their home several times over the years.

The Hellertown Plant that was overseen by Klinger was called the Sivex Company.

Klinger developed and held several patents on spark plugs and glow plugs for diesel engines.

In 1928, the Edison Corporation merged with the Splitdorf Electrical Company, a move that allowed Edison to manufacture

radios. Bethlehem Steel Corporation was partner in this new company and the merger included the Hellertown Plant, which was now housed in a 2-story brick building. The Edison/Splitdorf Company was sold to Champion Spark Plugs in 1951. Champion was once the largest spark plug manufacturer in the world.

In 1982, Champion was forced to close the plant due to recession causing 260 workers to lose their jobs.

