



Hellertown Historical Society

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

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Upcoming Events

- Dine to Donate – October 16
- Halloween Parade – October 20
- Trick or Treat @ Jail – October 31
- Election Day Bake Sale – November 5
- Speaker Series – November 7
- Light-Up Night – November 29
- HHS Holiday Open House – December 6
- Shopping at the Mill/Santa Visit – December 15



Geyer Auto Company c.1925 site now occupied by Lehigh Valley Health Network building

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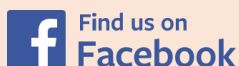
Hellertown Historical Society

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History Education at HHS



Interior of HHS Museum

The Hellertown Historical Society's mission statement includes a provision that the Society "provide educational opportunities regarding Hellertown's heritage, for students and adults."

Adherence to that provision has been a mainstay of the HHS since its inception in 1981. Tours, student activities, special heritage celebrations, and "off-campus" gatherings such as the Union Cemetery tours of years ago have connected thousands of adults and children to Hellertown's past.

In 2023, the HHS Board of Directors approved the creation of a committee that would review the Society's student field trip and public tour programs and recommend and implement updates that would elevate the programs to contemporary standards. An Education Committee comprised of seven former educators met regularly for a year to develop new visitor experiences for students and adults, remaining mindful of the value of years of previous work.

The committee began meeting in March 2023. Decisions were made to update the existing field trip by creating a half-day experience that leaned on interactive (hands-on) lessons based on daily life in colonial Hellertown, specifically the overall operation of the grist mill. Lesson plans were aligned with Pennsylvania Academic Standards in social studies and STEM-based (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) subjects. Lessons were designed to be adaptable to the academic abilities of students in grades three through eight.

What does a new field trip look like?

Continued on page 4...

Hellertown Historical Society

Officers –

President – Larry Sutton
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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:



Hello Friend!

Simply because you are reading this newsletter, I know something about you – you care about community, and especially our Hellertown Community. Thank you for caring! You stand alongside

the many volunteers and supporters of the Hellertown Historical Society that invest their time, talent, and treasure to support our community events.

Please check out the calendar of community events that you will find inside this newsletter. In addition to the events sponsored by the Historical Society, we all benefit from the events sponsored by the Borough and the Chamber of Commerce.

In between these many events, we all benefit from an unusual amount of community park space that we can enjoy all the time. Did you know that Hellertown has roughly double the amount of public-use space than the national average? Dimmick Park, High Street Park, Gregory Park, Reservoir Park, Tumminello Park, Water Street Park, Grist Mill Park, Detweiler Plaza, Saucon Rail-Trail, and the incredible swimming pool. That’s just inside the Borough! We are truly blessed. Our neighbor, Lower Saucon Township, offers even more community space for our common use.

It takes commitment by the community and its government to keep this going. We are many members that have to keep caring, together, to keep a strong community. Your support matters, in any form. Thank you for reading this newsletter. And, thank you for any time, talent, or treasure that you can give back to your community. See you around town!

***Warm Regards,
 Larry Sutton, President***

Hellertown Historical Society Member Spotlight

This is to introduce a new feature to the newsletter where we “shine a spotlight” on our valuable supporting members. Each edition will feature a member of the Hellertown Historical Society with a brief bio and photo, if available.

Introducing - Bruce McIntosh



Bruce is a Lifetime Hellertown Historical Society member, supporter and proud Hellertown resident. He was first drawn to HHS when the Society advertised for interested volunteers to assist with Tavern Room rentals. Since then, his interests have grown to include assistance with grounds keeping at the historic Heller-Grist Mill site. Bruce is also showing interest in developing museum programs and Grist Mill interpretation. Please say hi to Bruce when you see him actively volunteering with HHS.

Hellertown's Historic Buildings - #12

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 - #11 Answer

A series featuring distinctive and historic homes in Hellertown

This was the first fire station for Dewey Fire Company located at 35 E. Saucon Street. The building was erected in 1900 and formally accepted from the contractor January 8, 1901. It served as combination fire and police station. The fire company built and moved into a new larger headquarters in 1955 and currently operate there. This structure is now apartments.



Cryptogram - Motto

PCFFCUSDOG PCUWSZVC - NUCECUBC WS (Hint S=T)

Word Scramble

EIRMENREHZT
 LREEIG
 UHABLCA
 HIWAR
 OHTASM
 PMAHTON

ISATOB
 TWRLEEEI
 HMCABNA
 MAKNEARC
 NAEWGR
 SSHE

KNLIICHE
 NNKERIA
 URCSEAL
 RHEWAIKT
 ELLYBRE
 UECFRNA

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!

Congratulations to Tom Kereczman of Hellertown who correctly answered the puzzles in the last edition!

Answers – “The hurrier I go, the behinder I get PA Dutch saying”
 WASH HOUSE, MILLERS HOUSE, MUSEUM, TAVERN ROOM, WATER WHEEL, GRINDING STONES, HERB GARDEN

Please Mark Your Calendars For These Upcoming Events

October 16, 5PM-8PM – “Dine to Donate” Fundraising Event at Braveheart Highlands Pub
10% of all Proceeds from Dine-In Customers will be Forwarded to HHS

October 20 – Hellertown Halloween Parade, Theme “Fall Harvest” – 2PM Rain or Shine

October 31 – HHS Trick or Treat @ Hellertown Jail 6PM-8PM

Rear of 631 Main Street in Laubach Alley

***November 5** – HHS Election Day Bake Sale

Millers House Porch (Inside if Inclement) 9AM-6PM

***November 7** – HHS Tavern Speaker Series 2024

Historian Ken Ranieri Presents “Create Your Own Family History” Doors Open 6PM

November 29 – Borough Light-Up Night 5PM-8PM – Dimmick Park

***December 6** – HHS Holiday Open House Doors Open 6:30PM

***December 15** – HHS Shopping at the Mill and Santa Visits the Mill
Noon-4PM

* HHS Events Held at our Heller-Wagner Grist Mill Site 150 W. Walnut Street Hellertown PA 18055

History Education at HHS

Continued from Page 1

Following their arrival and an enlightening presentation on Hellertown’s early history, students divide into four pre-determined smaller groups that rotate through three interactive lesson sites and a tour of the grist mill museum where they learn how 200 years of technological advances have vastly changed the way people live and eat, dress, work, learn, and stay healthy. The four activities are split into two parts by a half-hour lunch break in the Tavern Room.

The interactive lessons provide engaging hands-on learning opportunities that help students learn how waterpower technology made grist mill operations possible, and how simple machines enhanced colonial farmers’ ability to raise and harvest grains and other crops. Students get an opportunity to make wheat flour using hand-driven grain mills, and swing a threshing flail to learn first-hand how much physical effort

their colonial counterparts exerted to separate wheat grains from wheat stalks.

Domestic chores also provide lessons. Using washtubs, soap bars, antique washboards, old-fashioned clothespins and a clothesline, students learn the weekly regimen of washing a family’s clothes. Lessons like these are fun and provide examples of changes in domestic life on the Pennsylvania frontier versus today’s world.

By the time students head back to school at 1 p.m., they have learned about the settlement of the Pennsylvania wilderness, the people who established Hellertown, where they came from and why they left their homelands, how the grist mill became an important part of many people’s lives in the Saucon Valley, and how advancing technology continually changes the way people live and work.

The Education Committee also reviewed existing public tours of the 1761 Heller-Wagner Grist Mill Museum and found several

ways to incorporate new stories surrounding the Heller family and Hellertown’s colonial heritage, while retaining the town’s local character through exhibits that showcase 19th- and 20th-century home life, industry, recreation, education, and commerce. Some exhibits were rearranged, and three new exhibits were added. Exhibit interpretations were broadened to reflect how Hellertown adapted to regional and national trends of growth and progress. The museum is full of Americana.

With an eye toward increased visitation in the future, the committee held a February open house for prospective tour guides and then conducted eight weeks of training for 15 people. A cautious scheduling approach – one tour on the second and fourth Saturdays of June through October – was taken this past summer. Visitation was light, but guides gained valuable experience. Current marketing efforts should increase visitation in 2025. Field

trips will be offered beginning Spring 2025.

An additional form of education will debut this October when seven interpretive signs are installed around the grist mill complex. The signs, made available through a Northampton County Hotel Tax grant, offer a learning opportunity for visitors who walk through the complex after hours or without the aid of a guide. The signs detail the history of Hellertown, and the buildings and other features maintained by the Hellertown Historical Society: the Wash House, Miller's House, Heller-Wagner Grist Mill, the grist mill raceway, and the Walnut Street "Pony" Bridge.

The Education Committee will conduct training for additional guides next Spring. If you are interested in becoming a part of the tour or field trip programs, please inquire at info@hhstours.org



HHS Museum Display Showing Grain Chute and Hopper, Chart of Grain Production Process and More



Schoolhouse Display Inside the HHS Museum



HHS Volunteers Demonstrate Period Laundering Techniques Inside the Wash House

(Courtesy Lisa Boehm Photography)

Why Not Join Hellertown Historical Society?

Download the membership form from our website and send it to us with your appropriate fee, or...

Join online with your credit card or PayPal account, or...

Stop at our office at 150 West Walnut Street, Hellertown PA during business hours and we will help you join.

"Members are the Backbone of our Organization"

[Control-Click Here to Join on Our Membership Website Page](#)

HHS Introduces New Logo Contest

Hellertown Historical Society in Hellertown PA seeks a new logo for the organization. As such, the new logo contest is now open and runs until midnight November 16, 2024. Anyone wishing to enter may do so. We seek all artists, young and old, professional or amateur, to submit entries. Judging will occur early in December with an expected announcement of the winning design around December 15. The winning design will receive a \$500 cash prize!!

During the early existence of the Hellertown Historical Society, a logo contest was held to design a new logo for the newly formed organization. The winning entry was an image depicting the Liberty Bell in a flatbed wagon. This image appears below.



Although this was embraced at that time, this does not represent the role our organization plays as we pursue our mission. It also has very little connection to Hellertown's vast history other than the one fact that the Liberty Bell did pass through Hellertown in 1777 on the way to Allentown for safe keeping from the British Troops. Hellertown's history comprises of much more than this event.

You will find links to the logo contest guidelines and rules on our website and Facebook pages. Or, use this following link to download, print or view the guidelines and rules for submitting entries...

[For Rules Control-Click Here](#)

If you cannot access the links, you may stop at our office during business hours to pick up a copy. Good Luck!

The Iconic Fischel Home

A few weeks ago, the Editor received a message from a family member who once stayed in this home at 103 Main Street. For those who don't know or remember which home this is, here's a photo...



and one from around 1920...



It's found on the NE corner of Main and Walnut Streets.

According to Jeni Lynn Fischel-Toner, great, great granddaughter of the home's original owner, Jozsef Fischl, this home offers a storied past. Thanks to Jeni, the author is sharing what surprising information was provided about this family and this iconic home.

Jozsef Fischl arrived at Ellis Island in 1902 from Germany at the age of 23. Prior to that, he attended college in Budapest Hungary, later attended Leipzig University in Germany to study engineering and become a contractor, he then served for two years in the Austrian Calvary.

Jozsef's future wife, Hedwig Ottenbacher, was a cook at her family's bakery in Philipsburg, NJ, Ottenbacher's Bakery. Their family also arrived in the US from Germany. Her Father was the baker, her Mother kept the financial records. Hedwig would cook meals for the family and employees.



Hedwig Ottenbacher

Hedwig and her Mother traveled to Hellertown to pick apples for the bakery. There Hedwig met Jozsef who helped at the orchard to earn extra money doing seasonal work. As the saying goes, it was love at first sight for Jozsef and Hedwig.

Not surprisingly, Hedwig's Mother didn't think Jozsef was good enough for her daughter. Jozsef promised to prove himself to the family as a hard worker. He married Hedwig in 1914 and built the iconic home we see today around 1915-1916 as a gift to his new wife, who he nicknamed "Happy" due to her smile. Together they had three children, Robert (Bob), John (Jack) and Dolly. As is often the case, the

surname spelling changed to Fischel as some point in time. Their son, John (Jack) Fischel also became well-known in Hellertown as an area contractor and is Jeni's grandfather. It is believed he was the last of the original family members to live in the home until it was later sold.



*Jozsef and Hedwig's Children
John (Jack), Dolly and Robert (L-R)*

Unknown to most anyone today, the iconic home featured an inground swimming pool, the first inground pool in Hellertown. Before the current Hellertown Public Pool was built, most of the kids in Hellertown between the 1920's through 1940's learned to swim there. While it is unknown why, it was later decided to remove the pool. This was accomplished in the mid 1950's by having a crew break down the edges and fill it in with dirt hauled by wheel barrow. Hedwig refused to allow dump trucks to drive on the lawn. The pool area then became Hedwig's beautiful rose garden.

The style and architecture of the home was so loved by Jozsef's in-laws, that he helped create an identical home for them at 195 Hagerty Street, Lopatcong County, NJ.



Jozsef and Hedwig's grandchildren, Patti and Linda in the rose garden June 1955



Hellertown's original "public" swimming pool at the Fischel residence 103 Main Street

The Original "Public" Pool



the concrete pool at the Fischel's house Hellertown

The Original "Public" Pool

More Photos on the Next Page...



The Ottenbacher Family – Hedwig in Center



The Ottenbacher Bakery in Philipsburg, NJ



The Ottenbacher Family Bakery Philipsburg, NJ Today

Hellertown Historical Society extends our gracious appreciation to Jeni Lynn Fischel-Toner for providing this story and these photographs.



*The Ottenbacher Bakery in Philipsburg, NJ
Their Home in Front and Bakery at Rear*

HHS Volunteer Appreciation Event Held

The Second Annual Volunteer Appreciation Day was held on Sunday, September 15th in the Tavern Room in the lower level at the historic Heller-Wagner Grist Mill.

Thirty volunteers and their guests enjoyed two and a half hours of drinks, snacks and camaraderie.

Taking a break in the mingling of the gathered guests, HHS President Larry Sutton, took time to honor some special HHS volunteers.

Long-term volunteer, Francis Hudock, (Fran to us) was honored with a well-deserved plaque for twenty-four years of dedicated volunteer service to Hellertown Historical Society.

Fran handles many of the

day-to-day activities, repairs and maintenance necessary to keep the Society running.



HHS volunteer Fran Hudock

Also honored were Harry and Jeanette Boos for their long-term dedication and service to the Society. The “husband and wife Boos team” were charter members since the Society began in 1981.

Harry took a very active part in both the restoration of the Grist Mill building and the Walnut Street bridge. They are still active today, offering museum tours and helping at various HHS events.



HHS Volunteers Harry and Jeanette Boos, President Larry Sutton (Left)

Fran, Harry and Jeanette have superior knowledge of the Grist Mill site and its history as well as the contents found at the site.

Hellertown Historical Society greatly appreciates the dedication, time and services that these wonderful volunteers offer.

A Historic Timeline of Heller-Wagner Grist Mill Owners

On October 3, 1746, Thomas and Richard Penn grant 25 acres of land to Simon Heller, son of Christopher Heller. In 1761, Simon was once again granted land enlarging his property to 215 acres. In the years between 1761 and 1764, it is believed Simon constructed a sawmill on a small portion of his property. In 1764, Simon Heller moved to Plainfield Township, Blasius Beyer acquired the land from the 1746 grant. Then Blasius Beyer added to his property land from the 1761 grant becoming part owner with Michael Heller and Christine Bachman. Less than a year later, March 16, 1765, Blasius Beyer became the sole owner. During this time, the mill was referred to as Beyer’s Mill-Seat until Blasius Beyer sold a portion of property to Isaiah Jennings. He then sold the rest of his property to Jennings on February 19, 1768. The land would switch hands once again in 1768 when Jacob Overpeck purchased the mill and two tracts of the land. Finally, on October 20, 1772, Christopher (Stoffel) Wagner bought the mill and property. Wagner had previously acquired more land through another grant in 1752. Wagner then purchased more land from Michael Eberhard in 1758. During the time of Wagner’s ownership, the mill contained a tavern that Lafayette is rumored to have visited after the Battle of Brandywine on the way to Bethlehem. Wagner in his 1803 will and an 1806 deed offered the tracts mentioned previously in addition to the land and mill purchase from Overpeck to his grandson, Jacob Wagner. When Jacob passed away in 1842, his son Charles received the mill and several acres of land. On April 3, 1845, Charles Wagner acquired more land that had been part of his father’s property from his sister Elizabeth. In 1867, Charles Wagner sold the mill and three tracts of land to his sons James and Jacob. The land would not change hands again until 1903 and during this time, the mill was modernized with the addition of turbine wheels in 1875. In 1903, James Wagner sold his share of the land to his brother Jacob. One year later, July 14, 1904, Jacob sold the mill and land to George Keck. Keck would own this property using the flooding of the millrace to create a pond near the mill used for a community skating pond. In 1945, he later sold the property to John Wagner and Walter Parsons. Then in August the same year, the widow of Walter Parsons, Catherine, and John Wagner sold the property to the Borough of Hellertown. In the 1950’s, the skating pond was expanded into two fish hatchery ponds that served as recreational fishing ponds. In 1984, the Borough of Hellertown granted a 99-year lease to the Hellertown Historical Society which now uses the site and structures as their office and headquarters and they maintain the site through their own fund-raising programs.

(Reprinted from a Narrative from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau of Historic Preservation)

The “Lost” Tavern

For the longest time, there have been rumors of a “lost” tavern. The one people spoke about was one built around the mid 1700’s by Christopher (Stoffel) Wagner somewhere near Leithsville. While no records or evidence could be found to substantiate such a structure, some thought that perhaps a section of the historic Heller-Wagner grist mill might have housed a tavern. This is why a section of the lower level of the grist mill was restored for such use. At one time, a Smithsonian Museum Curator sent a letter to the then President of HHS affirming that the north addition was designed more so as a tavern than a mill area which only added more excitement to Hellertown Historical Society membership.

We learned recently though that the original Stoffel “Lost” Tavern has apparently been found. A local realty company posted a property for sale in Lower Saucon Township that was supposedly built in 1752 and it mentions that it is the former Stoffel Wagner Tavern. Certainly, the photos in the posting appear authentic for the time period as is the layout of the site with home and outbuildings. It would seem the “lost” tavern mystery has been solved. The only regret is that our local historical groups are unable to obtain this site for its historical and cultural value.

