

Worcester Historical Society

2021 Membership Newsletter

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Looking Back to Move Us Forward

This newsletter comes to you in the midst of the great pandemic; a phenomenon like no other. Nevertheless, we learned to adjust and learned what it means to be brave. Our Historical Society stands with us as the keeper of the past and the hope of a better future. We weather this storm together. Let's go back to the past and look at some of the highlights of the newsletters that provided us with pride and pleasure in being a member of Worcester's unique Historical Society.

2014: This newsletter told of a terrible disaster at our Hall. The hot water pipes in the building froze resulting in an icy flood upstairs. We had a great deal of support to help clean up and a wonderful response of donations through a Flood Relief Fund.

2015: Farmers' Union Hall came back better than ever. It had a renewal from floors to ceilings. During this time a new exhibit was added to the museum of the lifestyle of the first settlers in our area, the Lenni Lenape Native Americans. We welcomed a local Native American interpreter who told stories of the first settlers and brought his collection of Native American artifacts.

2016: Our stage in the hall had been occupied by a sleigh and falling-top buggy pulled by a life-sized horse. Now a setting was provided. Walls were added in order to create a beautiful mural of the 19th century village of Center Point. We had a wonderful program about the traditional foods of the Pennsylvania Dutch.

2017: The one room school house along with the history of Worcester schools from 1849 -

- continued on page 3 -



Greetings from Wilson Allebach, at Allebach's General Store in the Farmer's Union Hall.

Spanish Flu of 1918

I had a bird, its name was "Enza", I opened the window, and influenza.

Covid-19 was not the first contagious outbreak to hit the Township of Worcester. There is an article on our website about typhoid spreading through the area in 1914. (Found under Local History, Township Topics). But perhaps the closest to the current Coronavirus, was the Spanish Flu of 1918-1919. No one is certain exactly where it originated, but the outbreak took hold near the end of World War I. Spain was a neutral nation during WWI, with no restrictions on reporting illnesses. Other nations were not as forthcoming with the

- continued on page 2 -



Boys wearing bags of camphor.

Keeping Worcester's History Alive

Worcester Historical Society P.O. Box 112 Worcester, PA 19490

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Spanish Flu of 1918 cont.



spread of the disease, in hopes of keeping morale high during the stressful time of war - thus,

Spanish Flu. 1917 saw the U.S. entering the war and the implementation of the first draft. Troops were housed on 35 large bases with 25-50,000 soldiers per camp.

One of the first mentions of the flu was April 5, 1918 with 18 cases in Haskell Kansas, military base. Within one week the number quadrupled. As history repeats itself, communities reacted differently. Some imposed quarantines, and shut down public places, including schools, churches and theaters. People were advised to avoid shaking hands and to stay indoors, and libraries put a halt on lending books. Cities staggered working hours to avoid a crowded commute. A few unusual preventions were wearing bags of camphor around your neck (old wives' tale), gargling with saltwater, and posted signs "DO NOT SPIT ON THE SIDEWALK", hoping the elimination of exposed expectorate would curb the spread. There was even mask shaming.



Sign reads "WEAR A MASK OR GO TO JAIL"

It was the second wave of the influenza that struck our area. The first cases in the spring and summer caused chills, fever and fatigue, but fewer fatalities. As the second wave spread and mutated, it became more lethal, with victims dying within hours or days of symptoms, their lungs filling with fluid, and skin turning blue due to lack of oxygen. Philadelphia was hit particularly hard. They hosted a huge war bond parade and following, there was an

over-flow in the morgues, with 500 bodies awaiting burial. Local cold storage plants were utilized, and a trolley company donated 200 shipping crates to be used as coffins.

In October 1918 alone, the loss in the United States was 195,000 people. In Pennsylvania, 1918 saw a spike in deaths of over 600,00 from previous and following years. October was the month of loss for Worcester as well. From public records:
10/10/1918- Herbert Rudolph, 33 years 5 months,
10/13/1918- Jacob Kriebel, 29 years 3 months 19 days,
10/15/1918-Florence Hartzel, 11 months,
10/22/1918-Sarah Van Fossen, 50 years 11 months 9 days, and October 1918- Baby Markley, (unnamed).

Almost 90 years later, in 2008, researchers announced they discovered what made the 1918 flu so deadly: A group of three genes enabled the virus to weaken a victim's bronchial tubes and lungs to clear the way for bacterial pneumonia.

Corona Virus has yet to be conquered, but with the technology of today, and a look at the past, hopefully, the spread will be mitigated, and we can plan for a brighter future.

Join us for these events in 2021!

Open House at Farmers' Union Hall 2011 Valley Forge Road, Saturdays 9 to noon. Summer TBD.

WHS Annual Flea Market Saturday, **May 1**, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Worcester Township Community Hall Parking Lot, Fairview Village. To be a vendor call 610-613-3878.

WHS and Meadowood have decided to organize a series of programs for the residents of Meadowood showcasing Worcester's History. A Tribute to Bill Bourne kicks off this series. The tribute showcases decades of artwork by Bill and will be presented to residents over their proprietary Tv channel. Additional programs are scheduled for 2021.

The Board of the Worcester Historical Society wants to thank Susan Caughlan and John Gower for their dedication and work for the society as President and Vice President respectively. Their work and energy have been greatly appreciated. We will be in a position to announce their successors by the end of the first quarter.

2020 Highlights

Despite the Covid shutdown, we received some important donations at the beginning of the year. The largest donation came from **Dave and Sylvia Fermier**. Dave grew up in Worcester and graduated from Methacton in 1965. He

donated a single horse "Tread Power" machine #40, circa 1880, in excellent condition.



It was manufactured by J. Robison and Son Manufacturing, Curwensville, PA. It came with a New Holland "grain cracker", one rotary saw and a complete set of belts all circa 1880. Briefly, the Tread Power is a sort of tread mill which used one or two horses to generate power and run implements. A one-of-a-kind addition to our farm museum.

In late February **Dr. Strohecker** of Meadowood donated a model of the Kriebel Barn. The model is a scaled production of Claude Kriebel's "Stone Gabels" built in Worcester in the 1700s. It is painstakingly



crafted and is exquisite in detail. It will be a great showpiece for our elementary school, community outreach programs.

In October, we were gifted a wonderful,

walnut cradle that belonged to Leroy Frick (1866-1976). Leroy was the grandson of Henry Frick who donated the stone to build the Dutchie Church. Leroy was raised in Worcester, attended school and developed a successful carpentry business on Fisher Road. He and his wife are buried at Wentz's Church. The family believes the cradle was built by an itinerant craftsman using a walnut tree from the family property. This wonderful donation came from his granddaughter, **Stephanie Berk**, of Berk's Road.

We want to acknowledge and thank everyone for many smaller donations we received this year and we look forward to welcoming additional "Worcester" origin items in 2021.



2020 saw two major improvements. Over the years the historical society and local scout troops have come together to sponsor numerous Eagle Scout projects to maintain the church and grounds. Boy Scout Troop 152 of West Point has previously participated in three Eagle Scout Projects including the restoration of the iron cemetery fence, painting the interior of the church and repairing the shutters.

In August, Shane Harris, whose relatives were among the first interments in the cemetery, and his scout league of volunteers, completed a fourth Eagle project to straighten grave stones. Shane organized a project around the straightening of twenty-three stones which included removal, digging a new hole, replacing the stone, and refilling with stabilizing material. They completed the project by performing a total cleanup of the whole cemetery.

In December, Carl Allan of Lower Providence, donated funds to repair a window which was in bad shape and in danger of allowing water into the church. Kevin Gregory, a local artisan, restored two of the windows, with eight more to be repaired.

Looking Back to Move us Forward

cont. from pg1

1915 was a new exhibit. We were fortunate to have a presentation on education from a historian who discussed schooling before the advent of the public schools in the 1840's.

2018: The Spring program was a delight for our eyes. Quilts from the 1840's to the 1940's were brought to the hall by the curator of the Schwenkelder Heritage Center. The Fall program was War in Worcester and explored how wars from the Revolution to WWII affected the people of Worcester.

2019: The newest exhibit was an HO scale model of the Wogglebug trolley which made its way through the village of Center Point. The village is complete with buildings along the route.

2020: This newsletter shared our connection to John Falter and highlighted a Worcester school room that appeared on the cover of the Saturday Evening Post, April 4, 1959. From all these newly learned facts, a wonderful exhibit was created of John Falter and his Worcester Illustrations.

We had no Spring and Fall programs last year, no antique market. Very few visitors came to the Hall, but hope springs eternal. Therefore, we are moving forward and planning for the opening of the Farmers' Union Hall, hopefully this summer. "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." Desmond Tutu

“Ensure the Future by Preserving Our Past” by Burt Hynes

Through the years, Worcester Township’s historical society has focused its efforts on the preservation of artifacts that tell the story of the culture of the township’s past primarily during the 19th and 20th centuries, when Worcester Township was predominantly a farming community. With the passage of time, the implements that were once familiar to all, and had served to increase productivity, have become curiosities to 21st century folks. They are available today in our museum because historically-minded individuals had the foresight to save them from destruction/disposal.

Similarly, the developmental pressures of the 21st century have put our envied surroundings at risk of obsolescence and eventual disappearance unless there is an intervention focused on preserving the open spaces and the scenic roads in existence today. The Friends of Worcester group does just that, by making it part of their mission to protect Worcester’s rural and historic heritage, so that future generations can experience first-hand the beauty and natural vistas familiar to past and current residents, as well as those traveling through our township. So, what is the common ground shared between the Worcester Historical Society and the Friends of Worcester? It’s simply that each group aims to PRESERVE Worcester’s past—in the present—for the future. Whether it’s artifacts, open space, historic homes/ buildings, farms, or scenic views—all are irreplaceable!

Currently, there’s a historical ordinance initiative underway - supported by both the Historical Society and the Friends of Worcester. It’s intended to encourage developers to preserve historic buildings in the township and incorporate them into their development plans rather than tearing them down. With thoughtful and purposeful planning, our historic structures can be preserved too — along with our historic artifacts, peaceful trails, and scenic views. When asked, please say ‘yes’ to efforts to preserve the beauty and the history of our township. Future residents will thank you!


Worcester Historical Society
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