



MANSION NOTES

CENTRE FURNACE MANSION

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 46, Number 4

Fall 2024

Centre County's Once-Booming Refractories Industry: Nearly Extinct, All But Forgotten

By Michael Bezilla

One hundred years ago, refractories production ranked behind only coal mining as Centre County's largest industrial employer. Today, the county's refractories industry has nearly vanished. Many local residents might be hard pressed even to define the term refractories, which are simply materials able to withstand extremely hot and corrosive environments

Abundant clay deposits intermixed with coal beds on the Allegheny Plateau proved ideal for making refractory or fire brick—brick capable of withstanding temperatures as high as 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit. As the nation rapidly industrialized in the second half of the nineteenth century, demand was nearly insatiable for refractory brick to line furnaces and kilns used in making steel, glass, cement, lime, and many other products, as well as coal furnaces used by

millions of Americans for home heating. Four Centre County brickyards were producing fire brick by 1900, increasing to eight a few years later.

Seven of the brickyards depended primarily on flint clay, more commonly called fire clay, a dense substance with a high concentration of aluminum oxide. The clay was so hard that to be molded into bricks, it had to be mixed with softer clays that were present in smaller amounts in the county's clay belt. The ratio of fire clay to soft clay in the mix determined how much heat the brick could withstand. (Building brick, which is not as heat-resistant, uses softer clays. Several brickyards making only building brick operated in Centre County but will not be discussed here.)

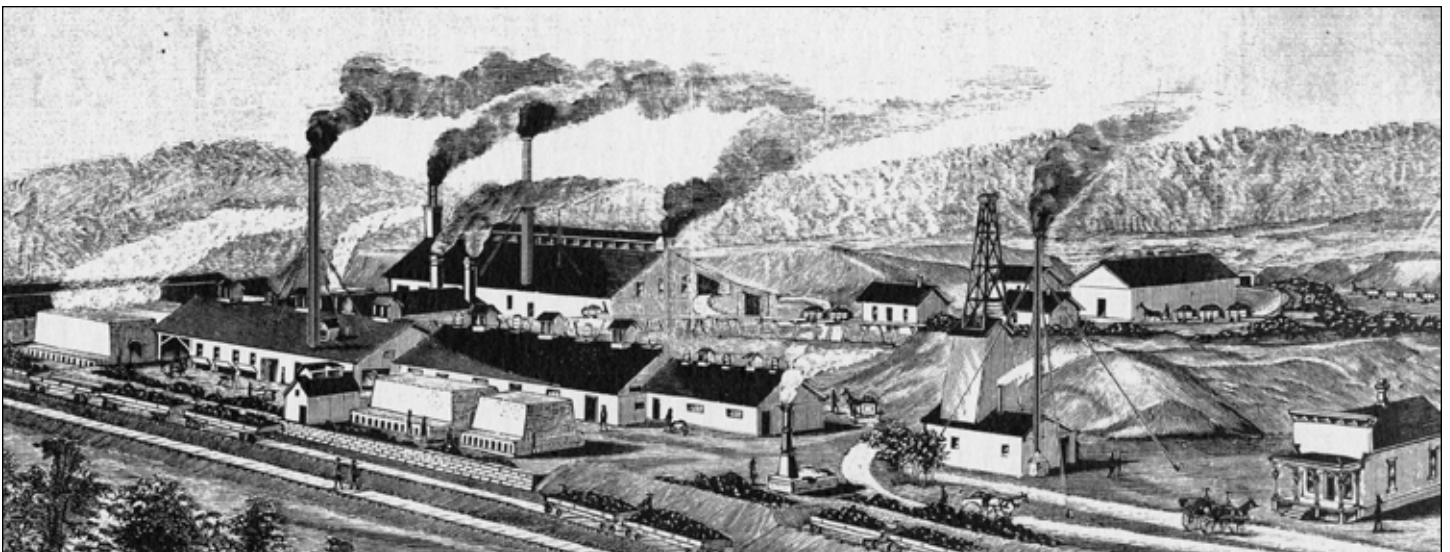
Flint clay was obtained from underground and shallow surface mines and transported to nearby brickyards on lightly

built narrow-gauge or "dinkey" railroads. At the brickyard, it was dumped into bins differentiated by the clay's hardness. A mix of hard and soft clays was then drawn from the bins into shallow circular pans 12 feet or more in diameter, where the clay was crushed to a granular powder. The exact proportion of hard clay to soft clay depended on the desired heat resistance of the final product. Water was then added to the dry mix, and the resulting "mud" was pressed into moulds by hand. The moulds were emptied by turning them upside down—again by hand—and the "green" bricks were set aside to dry before being loaded into coal-fired shaft or beehive-shaped kilns. After enduring sustained heat for a week or more, the bricks were removed to cool, then stacked between layers of straw in railroad boxcars for shipment to the customer.

The details of making refrac-

tories varied slightly from one brickyard to the next; but in every case, the process was labor-intensive and relied on a highly skilled workforce. For example the pan tender, the worker who controlled the valve that added water to the dry mix in the rotating pan, had no measuring devices to guide him. Instead, he intermittently rolled some mud in his hand until it had the proper "feel" to it, and then he adjusted the valve accordingly. Too much or too little water would result in deformed or cracked bricks even before they were fired in the kiln. Kiln firemen, charged with maintaining temperatures within a narrow range over many days, had only ceramic cones—each with a different melting point—to use as crude thermometers. Production skills gleaned from years of experience were often passed down

Continued on page 18



The Sandy Ridge brickyard as shown in John Blair Linn's 1883 *History of Centre and Clinton Counties*.

About the Centre County Historical Society

**Centre County Historical Society
Centre Furnace Mansion
1001 East College Avenue
State College, PA 16801, (814) 234-4779**

CCHS Office Hours: MON-FRI, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Research at the Centre Furnace Mansion:
Special arrangements for on-site research may be made by email or calling the office. For additional information, staff may be reached by calling 814-234-4779 or by e-mailing info@centrecounty-history.org.

Archives: By appointment during regular office hours.

Centre Furnace Mansion Tours:
Tours are available at the Centre Furnace Mansion on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. You may schedule your tour online at CentreHistory.org/visit/ or call 814-234-4779 for more information and to schedule group tours.

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The Centre County Historical Society (CCHS) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, under Section 501(c)(3) of the I.R.S. Code. Donations are tax deductible. Official registration and financial information about CCHS may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Founded in 1904, the Centre County Historical Society, the County's official historical society, is a non-profit educational organization that promotes appreciation and research of Centre County's historic and natural resources through its properties, collections, programs, publications, and advocacy.

History is an interpretive art, based on available evidence. Accordingly, the interpretations are, at times, controversial and contested. The Centre County Historical Society strongly supports freedom of speech and the First Amendment rights of our speakers, authors, and writers. The Society may not necessarily support the views, conclusions, and opinions expressed, yet believes they merit entry into the marketplace of ideas and the scrutiny it affords.

A community and volunteer-based organization, the Society is headquartered in the Centre Furnace Mansion, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This site includes the restored and furnished ironmaster's home, furnace stack, and landscaped grounds and gardens. Centre Furnace was home to the earliest 18th century industry: charcoal iron making. In the 19th century Centre Furnace played an important role in the beginnings of Penn State University. The Society also owns and operates the nearby Boegersburg one-room school.

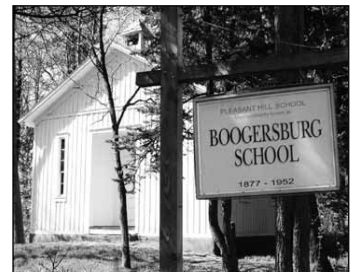
The Centre County Historical Society depends on financial contributions that help support our free public programs and educational opportunities for children, and provide necessary funds for the maintenance and operation of the Society's facilities and collections. Your membership and generosity are sincerely appreciated. Donations may be made by visiting CentreHistory.org and clicking on "MEMBERSHIP" or "DONATE NOW" or use the form on the back of this newsletter.

The Society also may be supported by contributing to the Centre County Historical Society Endowment Fund, managed by Centre Foundation at CentreFoundation.org.

Mansion Notes is published as a benefit of membership in the Centre County Historical Society and is made possible through the G. Harold Keatley Fund.



Funding for this publication is supported in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.



2024 Annual Business Sponsors

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I was finding it difficult to know where to start with this column. There has been so much good work being done over the last quarter. Articles written, restoration and repairs completed, gardening efforts, service days held, rich programming... all of this described in the pages that follow. So, I began forty years ago with the 1984 *Mansion Notes*. Jackie Melander was president of CCHS and was an active advocate and champion for the Centre Furnace Mansion restoration and historic preservation in the county.

In January 1984, the Mansion's Renaissance Campaign to raise funds for restoration had begun the prior year and was well underway. Jackie reported that removal of the paneling and other twentieth century additions would start in the spring with the improvement of mechanical systems and development of the ground floor (Hearth Room) and first floor period rooms. Plans for the grounds were being developed. The completion of a caretaker apartment was prioritized to provide a revenue stream to help a little with the daunting task of raising enough funds.

The early CCHS team managed to open the Mansion for business and, "kept the Mansion open each afternoon through December (1983)" and were offering programming - all while the Mansion was far from pristine. Knowing how challenging it was to host talks and activities during our recent restoration work (exterior only), I have a new appreciation for these early heroic all-volunteer efforts to save the Mansion and provide public access to it.



Hearth Room looking towards the Museum Store, c. 1984.

The newsletter included condolences to long-time member and past president Jane Beaver on the death of her husband James A. Beaver in January 1984. Beaver was the grandson of Gov. James Addams Beaver. Gov. Beaver was the first president of the Linn Historical Society in 1904, now Centre County Historical Society.

The March 1984 *Mansion Notes* describes the first phase of the Mansion's restoration, beginning with investigation and "demodeling" it of its twentieth century additions. The project architect was Bob Hoffman, who remains a friend today.

In the October 1984 *Mansion Notes*, Jackie reports that the "Historical Society Board of Governors voted unanimously at their October 4 meeting to begin the restoration and renovation work at the Centre Furnace Mansion with funds raised from the Renaissance Campaign." The Hearth Room rehabilitation work was projected to be done in the spring.

And meanwhile, programming was continuing to take place, collections acquisitions continued to come in, membership and fundraising efforts never ceased. How did they manage all of this with such a major restoration underfoot and no office or paid staff? It must have been exciting, but a little bit terrifying! We are grateful for the hard work of our early predecessors this season of thanks as our amazing Board of Governors, volunteers, members and friends continue to build on their good work.

Have a wonderful Holiday Season!

~ Mary Sorensen

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The National Leadership of Pugh and Atherton

By Roger L. Williams

Evan Pugh, Penn State's first president (1859-64), and George Atherton, its seventh president (1882-1906), are known locally as the institution's "founding president" and "second founder," and those descriptors are certainly merited. But their significance reached far beyond Centre County. Both played leading roles on the national stage in shaping the American land-grant college movement.

At Penn State, Pugh took an aborning agricultural college and within four and one-half years built it into the nation's largest and most successful such school—the American model—in the midst of the nation's greatest crisis, when men and money were going to war.

Pugh's vision, as he wrote, was "to develop upon the soil of Penna. the best Ag. College in the world for the ag. student of America." He accomplished exactly that before his untimely death in 1864 at age 36. He grew enrollment from 88 to 146, nearly twice the size of the average college enrollment of the day; He developed and refined a rigorous scientific curriculum and graduated, in 1861, the nation's first class of Bachelor of Scientific Agriculture students. And he completed the College Building (later Old Main), which housed everything and everybody.



Evan Pugh
Courtesy of the Pennsylvania State University Archives.

Most important, he advocated and organized allies to push for the passage of the 1862 Morrill Land-Grant College Act. As the only scientist in the effort, "Pugh led the Pennsylvania group with characteristic zeal and with effective if not determining influence on the final result," wrote Earle D. Ross, the original land-grant movement historian. Pugh then lobbied the Pennsylvania legislature to get the institution—renamed the Agricultural College of Pennsylvania—designated as the sole recipient of the land grant fund for the Commonwealth, which occurred on April 1, 1863. In early 1864, he vigorously defended efforts from other colleges and their political allies to wrest the land-grant fund away from the Agricultural College and split it among themselves.

In that battle royale to sway the legislature, Pugh wrote the nation's first master plan for how land-grant colleges should be organized. It was "the most complete and understanding contemporary statement of the financial and educational requirements of land-grant education...The most thorough and understanding early analysis, both informing and interpretative," Ross observed.

And then Pugh died, on April 29, 1864—the blackest day in Penn State history.

The greatest factor in Pugh's success is so short a time? He was the only leader-administrator-scientist in America who actually knew what he was doing: building a land-grant college to serve as the national template.

Continued on page 22

Upcoming Events

Please note that, due to limited seating, reservations are required for some programs by calling 814-234-4779 or reserving through the event listing at centrehistory.org.

Centre Furnace Mansion Tours are available on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday, 1:00-4:00 p.m. Please call us at 814-234-4779 or visit CentreHistory.org/visit-us/ visit for more information.

November 10, 2:00 p.m.
Encyclopedia Live: *Phil Hallock* by Laurin Goad Davis. RSVP required.

December 6-8, Stocking Stuffer Magical Holiday Market at the Centre Furnace Mansion. See page 5 for details.

December 17, 7:00 p.m.
The Dress: Restoration of First Lady of Pennsylvania Katherine Wilson Curtin's 1880s Dress. Civil War Round Table/CCHS Joint program. RSVP required.

December 17-22, 1:00-4:00 p.m. Special exhibition of Katherine Curtin's dress.

January 19, 3:00 p.m.
John H. Ziegler Historical Preservation Awards at the Match Factory in Bellefonte. RSVP requested. See page 6 for details.

Mansion Notes, 2009 through 2022 are available on our website at <https://centrehistory.org/research-explore/cchs-mansion-notes-archive>.

Stay Connected

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Instagram: instagram.com/centre.county.history
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JOIN US FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

Encyclopedia Live - Phil Hallock

Talk by Laurin Goad Davis

Sunday, November 10, 2:00 p.m., at the Centre Furnace Mansion

"Hallock's own home has been the subject of local curiosity and controversy since he began building it in 1947. With its many modern characteristics, it was viewed as too avant-garde for the financial institutions and contractors Hallock first approached when trying to build it. Banks were fearful that it couldn't be resold should they need to repossess it, and builders could not estimate the cost of a home that included built in furniture, a cantilevered dining room table and stone shelving." -From the 2006 exhibition "State College Artistry and Architecture: The Designs of Phil Hallock."

Laurin Goad Davis is an architectural historian working in the Architecture and Landscape Architecture Library at Penn State. She's written on school facilities and women in architecture. In her current role, she creates metadata for the Central Pennsylvania Architecture and Landscape Architecture Digital Collection and works on other local architecture projects for the Libraries.

Her illustrated talk will focus on Philip Hallock's efforts to bring modern design elements to Centre County. Discussion will include his houses as well as commercial buildings. The talk will also touch on his early training and later efforts to introduce students to Modernism and international trends.

This program is part of the *Encyclopedia Live History Talk Series* of the *Centre County Encyclopedia of History &*



Hallock house, 1947.

Photo provided by Bob Malcom for the 2006 exhibition "State College Artistry and Architecture: The Designs of Phil Hallock."

Culture, an online resource sponsored by the Centre County Historical Society. Laurin's article can be read at CentreHistory.org/encyclopedia.

RSVPs are required. Visit CentreHistory.org and scroll to "Upcoming Events & Programs" or call 814-234-4779.

The Dress: Restoration of First Lady of Pennsylvania Katherine Wilson Curtin's 1880s Dress

Presented by Sue Kellerman and the Katherine Wilson Curtin Daughters of the Union Veterans of the Civil War Tent 62

Tuesday, December 17, 7:00 p.m., at the Centre Furnace Mansion

Join the Katherine Wilson Curtin Tent 62, Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War to learn about the history of and the preservation efforts to restore Katherine's French-made purple velvet and satin dress ensemble to its stunning beauty. The dress, is on loan from the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg for conservation by Tent 62, under the mentorship of Shippensburg University's Fashion Archive and Museum.

The dress will be on display in the Centre Furnace Mansion for the public to view, **December 17 through December 22, 1:00-4:00 p.m.**

According to the Eagle Iron Works and Curtin Village web-

site, Katherine Irvine Wilson (1821-1903) married Andrew Gregg Curtin (1815-1894) on May 29, 1844. She was the daughter of a country doctor, Dr. William Irvine Wilson (1793-1883) and Mary Potter Wilson (1798-1861). Katherine's mother, Mary Potter Wilson, was the daughter of General Judge James Potter (1767-1818). Katherine's great-grandfather was Revolutionary War Colonel -- then Brigadier General -- James Potter (1729-1789), a Scots-Irish immigrant who had arrived in America in 1741.

This presentation and exhibition is a joint meeting and program of the Centre County Historical Society and the Central

Pennsylvania Civil War Round Table. Light refreshments will follow the presentation.

RSVPs are required. Visit CentreHistory.org and scroll to "Upcoming Events & Programs" or call 814-234-4779.



Beading work.
Photo provided by Karen Hazel

Stocking Stuffer

Magical Holiday Market
at the Centre Furnace Mansion

Friday & Saturday, December 6 & 7

9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 8

Noon–4:00 p.m.

\$5.00 admission



Artwork donated by Megan Elmer

The Centre County Historical Society began hosting the Stocking Stuffer 22 years ago to begin a holiday tradition at the Centre Furnace Mansion and raise critical funds. The Stocking Stuffer Magical Holiday Market has since evolved into the Historical Society's signature fundraiser raising more than 15% of the Historical Society's annual budget.

By attending this event, you are supporting local businesses and contributing to a meaningful cause. It continues to feature the finest quality work of local and regional artisans and antique dealers. Whether you're shopping for family and friends, or something beautiful for yourself, the Stocking Stuffer offers a festive holiday atmosphere to find unique, high-quality items while giving back to the community.

The investment of our event sponsors and supporters help offset expenses associated with this event and allocate a larger percentage of the profit to CCHS's mission work.



We are grateful to our 2024 Event Sponsors:

Scholar Hotel Group, LLC
McQuaide Blasko
Kish Bank
Rapid Transit Sports
Happy Valley Adventure Bureau



Stocking Stuffer Room Sponsors:

Candace and Robert Dannaker
Steve & Carol Gentry
Annie Hamilton Taylor, Marty Gutowski, & Libby Taylor
Mary Watson
Roger L. Williams & Karen Magnuson

Antiques and Treasures:

Philip & Eileen Stauffer
Marilyn Jenkins

2024 Stocking Stuffer Chair:

Deb McManus

There is still time to support and here are a few options:

Stocking Stuffer Room Sponsor: \$250. Supporter benefits plus your name/logo on the CCHS website and a panel in a period room for the duration of the Stocking Stuffer as hundreds of guests stroll through.

Stocking Supporter: \$100. Your name will go on the event website page and in the CCHS newsletter.

Volunteer! We have more than 280 time slots that we need to fill from preparing for the Stocking Stuffer and hosting it, to clean up afterward.

For information on contributing to the 2024 Stocking Stuffer, please contact: Mary Sorensen: msorensen@centrefurnace.org or Johanna Sedgwick: jsedgwick@centrefurnace.org, call us at: 814-234-4779, or scan the QR code on this page.



MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION DAY THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5

Current CCHS Annual, Sustaining, and Life Members are invited to a members-only day to shop the Stocking Stuffer on Thursday before it opens to the public on Friday. The admission fee is waived as a token of thanks for your support of CCHS.

As you shop, enjoy light refreshments and live music provided by the Whistle Tones and Fair Winds ensembles from Grace Lutheran Church. Watch your mailbox in November for a postcard invitation!

2024 Vendors

Thank you to the nearly fifty regional artists, antique dealers, and crafters that are joining us this year!

A Few of My Favorite Things
Art of the Egg
Ataraxiaowl Creative Mandalas & Florals
Au Natural
Brenda Horner Artworks
Chocolates by Leopold

Common Ground Farm
Connie's Antiques & Collectibles
CS Stangel Pottery
Denise Kaminsky, author
Diana & Kevin Griffith
Earlythings1776
Elizabeth Hay Designs
Festively Dressed
Flotsam & Jetson Jewelry
Heartburn Creations
Irish Hollow Patchwork
Ivy Reed
Jabebo Studio
Jackie's Vintage Collection
Jen just sews

Jim Byrnes Blown Glass
John Brezovec
Karen's Creations
KnittenKaboodle
Koo-Wah Nana LLC
Laureate Studio
Linden Hall Antiques
Lori Pacchioli
Marianne Fyda's Studio
Megan Elmer
Melissa Diamanti
Peaceful Pleasures
Peacefully Painting
Pearl Creations
Purple Door Bindery

Rivera Artistry
Second Season Mittens
Simply Sterling Designs by Suzette
The Common Thread
Ties to Nature
Triple Threat Arts
UniqueLee wood designs valleyepurl
Village Eatinghouse Handcrafted Sauces
Whitetail Lane Farm Goat Milk Soap
Wright Lettering Co.
Woodcarvings by Philip Stauffer

**John H. Ziegler
Historic Preservation
Awards of the
Centre County
Historical Society**
Sunday, January 19,
3:00 p.m., at the
American Philatelic
Society, Bellefonte

Congratulations to the following Award Nominees for the 36th annual John H. Ziegler Historic Preservation Awards ceremony that celebrates county-wide excellence in this endeavor:

Preservation and Restoration
Pine Grove Hall, Liz Grove

History and Heritage
Potter Township 250th Anniversary Festival, Festival Committee

Education and Advocacy
Bellefonte Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution

Support and Volunteerism
Renea Nichols

President's Award
Penn State Alumni Association, Penn State Historical Marker Program

Jacqueline J. Melander Award
Philp Ruth

Join us as we celebrate and learn about the amazing work and dedication of the award nominees. RSVP is requested.



Jim Pollock, Philipsburg Heritage Days, with Katie O'Toole, 2016 Historic Preservation Awards.

For more information about this program or to RSVP, contact Mary Sorensen at (814) 234-4779, msorensen@centrefurnace.org or visit centrehistory.org/awards.

Special thanks to the Centre County Government for C-Net sponsorship.



Centre County United Way Celebrates 30th Year of Day of Caring



The Centre County United Way celebrated its 30th year hosting the Day of Caring this year. It began in 1993 as Colonel Gerald Russell's vision for supporting area non-profit organizations beyond financially. The Centre Furnace Mansion has been a host site for most of those years.

On October 3, the Centre Furnace Mansion site hosted more than 120 volunteers from area businesses and Penn State. This was a highly successful and productive day, including much weeding, mulching, staining, trail work, Furnace Stack and other clean-up, projects inside and good cheer!

The Centre County Historical Society benefits tremendously from this special day at the Mansion. The impact on the maintenance and beautification of the sites, seen in the landscape and inside the Mansion and the Boogersburg School, has been immeasurable. This

year, we hosted our volunteers at the Centre Furnace only as restoration is underway at the Boogersburg School.

Thanks to **Centre County United Way and PNC Bank** for all of the efforts and support that goes into hosting the Day of Caring. We are grateful for the opportunity to be one of the many host sites over the past three decades. Through the Day of Caring, Centre County United Way has completed over 4000 projects, enlisted over 70,000 volunteers, and saved Centre County non-profit organizations over 10 million dollars since it began.

Oh behalf of the Board of Governors of the Centre County Historical Society, we extend our warmest appreciation to Centre County United Way and to all who have graciously donated materials and/or time from their busy schedules to join us on the Day of Caring and make it a highly productive day!

Businesses and Organizational Partners that donated materials and in-kind services:

Penn State Office of Physical Plant, Buildings & Grounds
Cafe Lemont

Volunteer Organizations:

To all whose leadership, community spirit and contributions have made the day's activities productive and memorable.

Centre County Historical Society
Volunteers

Penn State Office of Physical Plant, Buildings and Grounds

Penn State Naval ROTC

Penn State Women's

Lacrosse

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Vinnie Scanlon

Annie Taylor

Suzanne Thompson

Floyd Todd

Jan Villastrigo

Jane Whitaker

Paula Wilson



CCHS volunteers Ann Moellenbrock, Mike Husband, Lou Mayer



Students from Penn State Naval ROTC and Beverly Lipski.

PENN STATE FAMILY WEEKEND EXPERIMENT IS SUCCESSFUL FOR CCHS

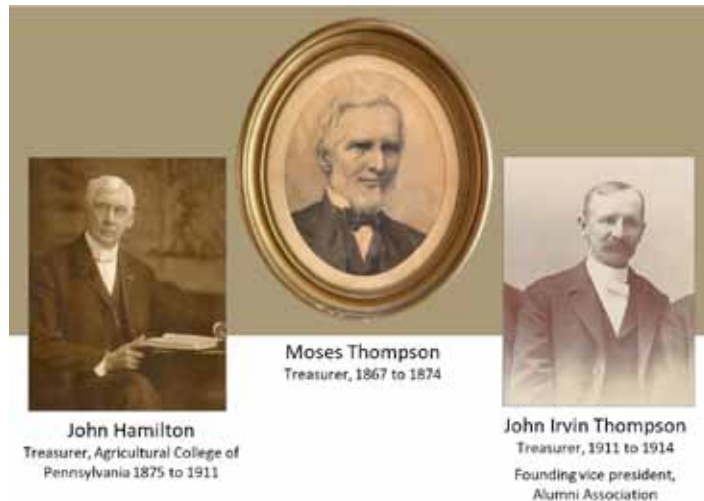
It started as an experiment.

Last spring, the Centre County Historical Society sought permission from the University to be part of its annual Family Weekend, held October 18-20. The Office of Student Affairs, which conducts the weekend-long event, enthusiastically granted permission, and so we were off and running; after all, Centre Furnace Mansion is the Birthplace of Penn State, and we surmised that Penn State families would be interested in visiting such a historic site—our “hallowed grounds” as President Neeli Bendapudi described it.

The overarching goal of this experiment was to draw the CCHS closer to Penn State by communicating the Mansion’s historical significance to the larger University community, in this case students and their families. The added hope was to generate some much-needed income for the CCHS’s operating budget.

The University started Family Weekend decades ago. It was first called Parents Weekend, then Parents and Families Weekend, and this year, for the first time, simply Family Weekend. Held on a non-home football weekend, it is a massive event. This year, more than 3,500 families registered totaling 12,828 total guests, the vast majority being families of first-year students.

They attend open houses sponsored by the 13 academic colleges on Friday, as well as other events on campus throughout the weekend. The largest at-



traction is Beaver Stadium tours, sponsored by the Penn State All-Sports Museum. This year, 1,760 individuals signed up at \$25 per person for one of 22 tour groups, each holding 80 guests.

Inspired by the Beaver Stadium tours, we designed a two-day affair on a much smaller scale, given our limited capacity: Tours began every half-hour from 12:00 to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday and from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Sunday.

Some 204 individuals—most all from Pennsylvania counties other than Centre and out-of-state as well—signed up to visit Centre Furnace Mansion, being charged \$15 per person.

The weekend’s heavy lifting was done by our superb docents, 18 in all, who signed up for shifts to talk about the particulars of the Mansion and its significance for Penn State and Centre County. Bill Blair of our Board of Governors and

professor emeritus of American History at Penn State, conducted research and wrote a new script for the docents, who absorbed it well and thus edified our visitors. In several training sessions, organized by Mary Sorensen and Johanna Sedgwick, the docents offered suggestions for the script and made recommendations

for tour logistics. The added benefit was that everyone from the CCHS who took part learned more about the Mansion and its history.

The CCHS will analyze the weekend and discuss what refinements need to be made for next year, assuming we take part again.

For now, however, we deem the weekend a success, as we introduced more than 200 Penn State students and their families to an important part of the University’s history, and generated more than \$3,000 for the operating budget in the process.

Thank you CCHS docents and volunteers: Elliot Abrams, Bill Blair, Bronwyn Flemming, Steve Gentry, Carol Gouty, Karen Hazel, Owen Jacobson, Jude Larkin, Patricia Mutzeck, Gloria Nieweg, Lynn Roysse, Katy Stager, Bonnie Walter, Roger Williams, Paula Wilson, Linda Witmer.



Linda Witmer, Patty Mutzeck, Roger Williams, Bill Blair, Jude Larkin, Lynn Roysse, Gloria Nieweg



Left: CCHS docent, Patty Mutzeck and guests in the period kitchen. Middle: A guest snaps a photo of the Thompson family tree. Right: Bill Blair shows the letter penned by James Irvin on February 22, 1855.

BOOGERSBURG SCHOOL RESTORATION UPDATE

Work at the Boogersburg School has been under way at a breathless pace this autumn with planned tree and landscape work, painting, and restoration projects. Selective tree and stump removal by Cutting Edge Tree Professionals took place in late August and early September to make way for landscape work.

New electric service was installed at the School in August by House Wire Electric.

General Contractor Veronesi Building & Remodeling carpenters repaired the pedestrian bridge, and began removing the window sashes for restoration by Homewrights Construction, which is doing the interior and exterior painting. Veronesi also worked with roof subcontractor Daniel Peachy to inspect the School's roof and paint it with a special elastomeric coating, Acrymax, formulated for metal roofs. Next on their list is design and installation of the wood shed – an educational element to show chopped wood and coal as fuel sources for the heating stove. The shed will also provide a bit of much needed storage for a wheelbarrow and a few tools.

Alex's ProScape set to work on the landscape in October to install a compacted aggregate trail from the front entrance and along the side of the school. Much work was also done to "smooth" the yard around the School before seeding grass and setting up a temporary irrigation system to ensure its success.

Work is expected to continue through the spring with tree and shrub planting and remaining punch-list items, but we are thrilled with the progress made thus far. Please stop by!



Boogersburg School landscape and building work as of November 1.

We extend special thanks to our contractors who have generously discounted or donated portions of their work allowing donated funds to go further.

Alex's ProScape
Cutting Edge Tree Professionals
House Wire Electric
Veronesi Building and Remodeling



Cutting Edge Tree Professionals conducting tree removal.



Exterior painting by Home Wrights Construction.



Trail work on the southeast side of the School by Alex's ProScape.

Campaign To Restore Boegersburg School Succeeds In Record Time

Thanks to our generous benefactors, the fundraising campaign to restore the historic Boegersburg School raised \$214,590 in record time—five months! The first gift was made on March 14 and the last was received on August 10.

A total of 111 benefactors stepped up to make this success happen, with 54 leadership gifts and 57 additional gifts from the wider campaign. We are especially grateful to The Hamer Foundation, which provided a grant of \$105,000.

The restoration work began in late August. Please see the story on page 8 for a complete update.

Again, we can never thank our generous benefactors enough for stepping up and making possible the restoration of this unique piece of Centre County history.

Thank you to Boegersburg School Restoration Donors

The Hamer Foundation

Robert Van Druff & Cynthia Dawso Van Druff

David L. Grove



Joan Hawbaker Brower
O. Richard Bundy III
Galen & Nancy Dreibelbis
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Marilyn & Dennis Gouran
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Sally & Paul Wangsness
Mary Watson
Maureen & John Welesko
Robert & Susan Wiedemer
Doyle & Ron Wilkerson
Linda Wilson



Donations will continue to be accepted for the Boegersburg Restoration Fund. These funds are held in an account dedicated to the preservation and restoration of the Boegersburg School. Donations can be made online at CentreHistory.org and click on DONATE NOW at the top of the home page or scan the QR code. Checks may be mailed to CCHS, 1001 E. College Avenue, State College, PA 16801.

GARDENERS' CORNER

The Centre Furnace Mansion Garden Committee wrapped up the 2024 garden season on October 17. Thank you to everyone who contributed throughout the year through time, money, and plant donations.

Held the last two Thursdays in September, the Fall Plant Sale raised a total of \$1,137. Thank you to Lucy Boyce, Mike Canich, Joyce Christini, Rina Eiden, Katie Frieden, Judy Heberling, Chris Igo, Beverly Lipski, Ruth Merritt, Mark Pishak, Rina Eiden, Jan Villastrigo, and Jane Whitaker for plant donations.

Many thanks to the Garden Committee members who come weekly to oversee the care of the Mansion gardens. We fondly self-describe these folks as “the regulars”—they

are anything but—and we are grateful for their dedication: Frank Barksdale, Mike Canich, Joyce Christini, Katie Frieden, Yvonne Gaudelius, Carol Gouty, Judy Heberling and Michael Husband, Chris Igo, Beverly Lipski, Lou Mayer, Ruth Merritt, Sharon Phillips, Jan Villastrigo, and Jane Whitaker.

Looking forward, on **Sunday December 1**, the garden committee will be decorating the Mansion exterior for the holidays. We are looking for materials for bouquets of greens to sell at Stocking Stuffer—spruce, fir, juniper, arborvitae, and other evergreens; holly (especially winterberry); boxwood; rosemary; pieris; etc. Also, dried flowers and interesting seed heads. If you are able to contribute but cannot attend the event, we can



The last Thursday Plant Sale during the United Way Day of Caring!

make arrangements for drop-off prior to the event. Please reach out to Mary Sorensen at

msoresen@centrefurnace.org or call 814-234-4779 for more information.

Kitchen Garden Landscaping Project Complete

In September, the professional team from Alex's ProScape completed work on the Centre Furnace Mansion Kitchen Garden. They re-laid the brick pavers extending from the back of the Mansion to the Kitchen Garden porch, as well as the path from the porch to the Ice House Archives building. Bluestone edging was installed to delineate the garden spaces, and recreated the original paths with a more accessible permeable compacted trail aggregate mix. The stone wall was shored up along the walkway and lovely stone steps now connect the garden to the walkway. A handrail was fabricated and installed by Mark's Welding at the steps from the porch to the walkway leading to the Archives Building.

This work created a lovely and accessible space that will beautifully soften with time and plantings. The CFM Gardeners have begun their magic planting herbs and flowers that may have been found in a Victorian Kitchen Garden. Planting will continue in the spring when the weather warms.

Thank you to Alex's ProScape for their insights and for doing an excellent job in executing a space that will be used and enjoyed for many years to come.



Above: Completed work in Kitchen Garden

Right: Installation of bluestone edging.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Cross-Hatched Letter

by Jackie R. Esposito

Before telephones, computers, and the internet, communication was focused on letter writing. Letters featured reports of daily life, updates on family, summaries of noteworthy events, descriptions of meals, and travel excursion details. Anticipation of receiving a letter was palpable since the connections between individuals were dependent on slim pieces of paper. The typical form of letter was a single or multiple sheets of paper sent through the postal system. "For some, letters were a way to practice critical reading, self-expressive writing...and a way to exchange ideas with like-minded individuals." The 18th century has been called the "Great Age of Letter Writing" with major figures publishing collections of their letters to expand the impact of literary

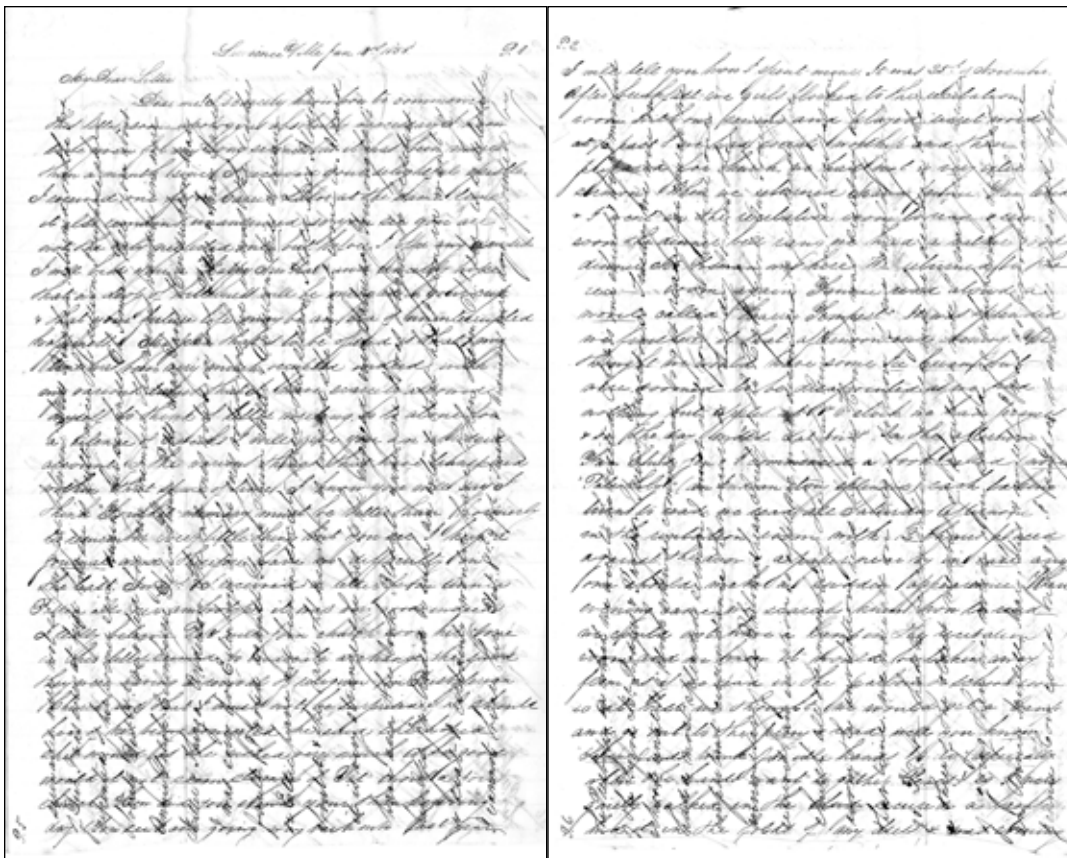
expertise, for example Alexander Pope.

From an archival collection perspective, hand-written letters provide a physical (and sometimes permanent) record of communication linking personal import to cultural historiography. Despite the challenges of having to read cursive, letters open a portal into the relationship between the writer and the recipient. Within the Hamilton Family papers, there are many letters between John Hamilton and his wife "Libbie." These letters document, among other topics, his travels as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture across the country including a January trip to North Dakota where he reports "horrific cold" and "blustery weather." One wonders what he was expecting. In his Valentine letters to Libby, he professes his love and adoration and draws a delightfully winsome heart insignia.

Among the most interesting letters in the CCHS Archives, there are two types of "cross-

hatched" letters. The letter below, from January 18, 1858, utilized a limited number of pages or space to fill the entire available open environment. The cross-hatch example has a pattern for the reader to follow: left to right, top to bottom, and around utilizing two pieces of paper for eight pages of information. Later examples of this type of space-saving device are seen on early postcards and most recently within World War II V-mail. Space to express one's thoughts is overcome by utilizing every possible inch of paper.

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat may have attempted to overshadow the personal letter but no matter how hard they try to, they do not contain the emotions, personal import, and significance of a personally written letter. There is a tangible emotion that resonates when receiving a personally written letter in the mail, even if it takes a minute to figure out the cross-hatch pattern.



Pages 1, 2, 5, and 6 of the cross-hatched letter. Notice the page numbering at the top of each page and at the lower left of each page to provide direction on how to read it.
CCHS Hamilton Papers Collection, 2022.12. Gift of Anne Hamilton Henszey Pyle and Kenneth B. Pyle.

Recent Acquisitions Feb. - Sept. 2024

2024.05 Local history items from the collection of Phil Klein.

Gift of the Estate of Philip S. Klein, J. Douglass Klein executor

2024.06 Sepia-tone postcard with photo of the Millheim Narrows on front.

Anonymous gift

2024.07 Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity memorabilia and 1952 Penn State commencement photograph.

Gift of David Doss

2024.08 Mary Leitzinger store sign.

Gift of Joan Brower

2024.09 1924 Centre Hills Country Club booklet with 1926 dinner ticket.

Gift of Patsy Cullen

2024.10 State College Area High School alumni directories, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016.

Gift of Sally Lenker

2024.11 Five issues of the *Poe Valley Ravin*, 1940 and CCC Camp S63 Coburn matchbook.

Gift of William Marcum

2024.12 Framed listing of members of the Board of Directors of the First National Bank of State College since its organization on December 14, 1904.

Gift of Galen Dreibelbis

2024.13 Ephemera including letters and envelopes related to Bellefonte.

Gift of Megan Elmer, in memory of Robert Knuth

2024.14 1889 ledger for the J. Irvin Ross & Son Dry Goods, Beta Theta Pi pledge manual, Chap Record, and Teacher's manual.

Gift of Kathy Liddick and Mary Jane Lytle on behalf of the Lytle Family Estate

2024.15 Fourteen photographs of Oak Hall taken in 1970s and 1950s.

Gift of Cathy Horner

2024.16 Three color Bellefonte Air Mail prints, B/W photograph of the State College Air Depot, and three plane photographs.

Gift of J. Michael Ishler

2024.17 Bottle from the State College Bottling Works.

Gift of Keith Barry

2024.18 Child size cruet set and miniature tea set.

Gift of Ron and Sue Smith



Danks Department Store sign. Bronze finished copper. Gift of George and Nina Woscob. 1999.25

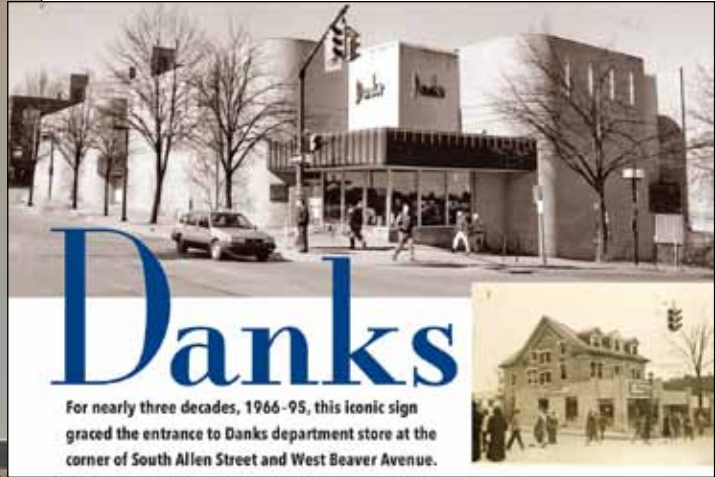
Courtesy of the Centre County Historical Society, the iconic bronze sign that graced the entrance to Danks department store from 1966 to 1995 has been returned to its former home. It is now on loan in the Woscob Family Gallery of the Penn State Downtown Theatre, 146 S. Allen St., along with an explanatory wall plaque.

When the Danks chain closed in 1995, George and Nina Woscob of State College purchased the store and transformed it into a multi-use facility, hosting the Penn State Downtown Theatre and Panera Bread restaurant, among other businesses. The Woscobs sub-

sequently donated the sign to the Centre County Historical Society (CCHS), which stored it at Centre Furnace Mansion until its recent installation inside its former home.

“With the many changes and rapid growth of downtown State College, we felt it was time to take it out of storage and put it on public view as a piece of historical nostalgia—a reminder of days gone by when Danks anchored the downtown retail district,” said Mary Sorensen, executive director of the CCHS.

“We are grateful to the Woscobs and to Zsuzsanna Nagy, director of the Woscob Family Gallery, as well as to



Stephen Carpenter, dean of the College of Arts and Architecture, which administers the Penn State Downtown Theatre,” Sorensen added.

Danks original presence in State College began in May 1943, when Danks President H.A. Robinson rented a small storeroom, which was part of a larger building complex at the corner of South Allen and Beaver. Robinson expanded the rental footprint over the years and in 1963 purchased the entire property from M.C. “Matty” Mateer and Charles T. Aiken. He then razed the property to construct the new Danks.

Opening to the public on March 2, 1966, the new Danks promised an era of retail luxury and convenience for a college town that was quickly growing

into a small city.

As Robinson put it, “Obviously, we have a tremendous amount of confidence in the bright future of State College. We felt that to be a part of that future, we had to build for it.”

Now housing the Danks entrance sign that once heralded that bright future, the Woscob Family Gallery is open to the public on Fridays from 12:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Thank you to Frank Barksdale and the Just Serve Elders for their assistance in moving the sign and base from the Centre Furnace Mansion to the Woscob Family Gallery.

Scan the QR code to share your memories of Danks.



The calorimeter in the early 1900s. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania State University Archives.

The online *Centre County Encyclopedia of History & Culture*, edited by Ford Risley and Lee Stout, continues to add two intriguing articles about Centre County’s past each month. We would like to express our gratitude to the volunteer contributors and interns, Connor Paul and Ela Garza, who have made the *Encyclopedia* a successful and expanding repository of knowledge.

Over the last 12 months, there have been over 51,200 total *Encyclopedia* article views. One website visitor commented “I explored your website last evening and was particularly impressed with your “*Encyclopedia of History &*

Culture”.....what a great gateway into Centre County history.”

The following articles were added since the last newsletter:

- *Eisenhower Auditorium* - Heather Longley
- *Millbrook Marsh Nature Center*
- *Andrew Gregg*- Lee Stout
- *Calorimeter* - Matt Swayne
- *Roopsburg Brewery* - John Dillon
- *James Irvin* - Roger Williams

Send your feedback and ideas to encyclopedia@centrecountyhistory.org.



Rethinking 322 Process Continues Apace

Since 2022, the Centre County Historical Society has been working with the Penn State Department of Landscape Architecture, Dr. Dan Marriott and his Larch 414 studio class, and the Hamer Centre for Community Design to host conversations and explorations about the State College Area Connector Project (SCACP). CCHS has advocated for historic and cultural resources along this sensitive seven mile stretch through the Penns-Brush Valley Rural Historic District since it was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 2002. This effort was led by CCHS president emerita Jackie Melander and Penn State professor emerita of history Sally McMurry.

The Larch 414 studio is in its fourth semester now using the SCACP as its case study

to understand the relationship and importance of landscape architecture in building safe and community-forward transportation projects.

Over 60 residents and organizational representatives attended the October 30 *Rethinking 322* public meeting. This public program featured Ian Lockwood, noted civil engineer and transportation visionary from Toole Design. Ian was joined by Toole's Alex McKeag, urban planner, and Cindy Zenger, landscape architect, to share ideas and examples from transportation projects they've worked on with Department of Transportation (DOTs) across the United States.

Toole Design Group was founded over twenty years ago with a simple mission: to support innovative streets and dynamic communities where



Penn State Landscape Architecture studio class and Toole Design Group team at the Centre Furnace Mansion.

people of all ages and abilities can enjoy walking, biking, and access to transit.

This program was sponsored by the Penn State Department of Landscape Architecture; C-NET filming sponsored by the Stuckeman School-Penn State College of Arts & Architecture; the Hamer Center for Community Design; and Centre County Historical Society, Jacqueline J. Melander Fund. Thank you to the Wyndham Garden State College for assisting with the program space.

The students of Larch 414 will present their final project on **Thursday, December 5, 7:00 p.m.** at the Boalsburg Fire Hall. RSVPs are requested. Visit

CentreHistory.org/connector/, or call 814-234-4779 to RSVP.

The *Rethinking 322* public meeting held on October 30 with Ian Lockwood and his team from Toole Design Group has been recorded by C-NET and made available to the public.

Visit centrehistory.org/connector/, call 814-234-4779, or scan the QR code below to access the video and to stay current with *Rethinking 322* activities.



Toole Design Group team, Penn State Larch 414 studio students, and Dan Marriott meet at Darlington Farm in Penns Valley.

DOCENTS' CORNER

CCHS Docents have been hard at work during the past quarter with regular public tours and special group tours.

Special tours to the Mansion included three classes from Penn State, Geosci 413-Techniques in Environmental Geochemistry, two First Year Seminar classes, and a home school group from Tyrone. We thank Bill Blair, Lynn Royse, Linda Witmer, and Jude Larkin for their time with these groups.

We thank the following Mansion Docents for their dedicated service this quarter: Elliot Abrams, Bill Blair, Elizabeth Dutton, Bronwyn Flemming,

Carol Gentry, Steve Gentry, Carol Gouty, Melissa Gundrum, Karen Hazel, Owen Jacobson, Jude Larkin, Patty Mutzeck, Gloria Nieweg, Lynn Royse, Joy Schon, Bonnie Walter, and Linda Witmer.

The docent committee undertook their largest assignment yet on October 19 and 20 for PSU Family Weekend, welcoming over 200 guests. Read more about this event on page 7.

Contact Mary Sorensen at 814-234-4779 or msorensen@centrefurnace.org for more information on becoming a docent.

We mourn the passing of CCHS Docent Nancy Wolf, who joined as a member in 2015 after moving to State College. She quickly became involved on the Centre Furnace Mansion Docent Committee. A long-time educator, teaching third and fourth grades in Greenwich Connecticut Public Schools, Nancy enjoyed nearly a decade of guiding tours of the Mansion. She was always eager to help with the Stocking Stuffer, United Way Day of Caring, and attending talks and activities. We will remember Nancy's quick wit and generous nature. She will be deeply missed.



Nancy J. Wolf (1936-2024) working with collections during the 2019 United Way Day of Caring.

CCHS REACHES RECORD HIGH OF 933 MEMBERS FOR 2024

Thanks to loyal members such as you, total membership in the Centre County Historical Society has reached an all-time high of 933. The final roster for 2024 is provided below.

One of our benchmark organizations is the Cumberland County Historical Society headquartered in Carlisle. The Cumberland County Society is 150 years old (we are 120), representing a much larger population (268,000 v. 158,000 for Centre County) and a much older county (f. 1750 v. 1800 for Centre County). The Cumberland County Society this year celebrated reaching 1,000 members, up from 800 two years ago.

Punching above our weight class by comparison, the Centre County Historical Society now views the 1,000-membership level as being well within reach, possibly in 2025. But that can happen only with your continued loyalty by renewing and encouraging your friends and neighbors to become new members.

If you would like to get the jump on renewing, the early renewing period is now open. Simply go to centrehistory.org/join-support/become-a-member and renew at the level you deem best.

Even better, please consider renewing as a Sustaining Member, which requires an auto-payment of \$25 per month (see story on page 16) and which allows you to forget about renewing ever again. Simply go to centrehistory.org/membership and click the Sustaining Member button.

However you renew, we are extremely grateful for your interest and loyalty.

Renewing Members

Jan Abelow Donahue & Bill Donahue	Joseph & Christy Clapper	Ron & Susan Friedman	Albert & Ellen Jarrett	Deb McManus
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Kent & Mary Addis	David & Lisa Coggins	Ed Galus	Kathy Johnston	Jo Merrell & Floyd Todd
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Keith Barry	Edward DeBrasky	Dianne Gregg	Larry & Patti Kenney	Teresa Mull
Ann Barton	Louis & Patricia Delattre	Barbara & Chenzie Grignano	Lisa Kerns	Lynda Mull
Henrietta Baylor	John & Donna Diercks	Chris & Lianne Groshel	Richard & Joy Killian	Ralph Mumma
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BOARD NEWS

We are pleased to announce that Alan Popovich has been nominated and unanimously approved as a Board Member Emeritus of the Centre County Historical Society for his exemplary service on the Board of Governors since 2015. As Property Chair, Alan was instrumental in guiding the Historical

Society through the restoration of the Centre Furnace Mansion and efforts to plan the restoration of the Boogersburg School. Alan helped lay the foundation for cyclical maintenance at our properties and we will be forever grateful.

Beyond CCHS, Alan's impact on Historic Preservation

can be seen throughout the County – restoration of the 1885 Granary in Lemont, the Centre County Courthouse, the 1887 W.F. Reynolds & Co. Bank Building in Bellefonte (now the Centre County Courthouse Annex). We extend our most sincere appreciation to an outstanding Board Member and friend.



Alan Popovich

CCHS Seeks Long-Term Financial Stability Through Two New Programs

Founded in 1904, the Centre County Historical Society is marking its 120th anniversary this year. Working to thrive for another 120, the CCHS is looking to two new programs to provide much-needed financial stability for the long term.

The newest is the **Sustaining Member** program. Launched in January 2023, the program encourages new and renewing members to become Sustaining Members by making auto-payments, via their credit card, starting at \$25 per month or \$300 per year. These funds provide a dependable source of operating income for the CCHS while allowing the Sustaining Member to forget about having to renew year after year. That said, Sustaining Members may withdraw from the program at any time, although we hope that won't be the case.

Our goal is to enroll 100 Sustaining Members. Currently, we have 34 such members, putting us one-third of the way toward that goal. Those 34 members are providing more than \$10,000 per year through their monthly infusions of funds.

Please give serious thought to renewing or joining as a Sustaining Member. Doing so is easy:

1. Go to the CCHS website at centrehistory.org

2. Click the "Membership" link at the top right of the home page.

3. On the Membership page, drop down to the bottom right and hit the Sustaining Member button.

4. Fill in the necessary information...

5. ...and the rest is history! You're now a Sustaining Member

You may also become a Sustaining Member merely by calling 814-234-4779 and asking for Johanna Sedgwick, who will gladly enter your information.

We thank our current Sustaining Members:

Betty Arnold
David & Ruth Bell
William & Mary Blair
David & Randi Blauth
O. Richard Bundy III
Joyce & Roy Christini
Stephen M. Copley & Judith A. Todd Copley
Patsy Cullen
Ronald Dotts
Rebekah Dreese
Stephen Engroff & Diane Ray
Jacqueline Esposito
Roger Geiger
Dennis & Marilyn Gouran
Irene Harpster
Richard Hayes
Beverly Hickey
Chris Hickey
Cathy & Dave Horner
William & Barbara Jones
George Moellenbrock III

Kathleen O'Toole & Gary Gray
David Panko
Lynda & John Powell
Lizette Reed
Beth Richards Kalenak
Kathleen Sillman
Laura Glenn Steifer
Ann Taylor & Marty Gutowski
Suzann & Vincent Tedesco
John & Barbara Vandenberg
Roger Williams & Karen Magnuson
Paula & Greg Wilson
Scott & Glenda Yocum

The second new program—albeit a few years older than Sustaining Membership—allows you to make a legacy gift that will last long after you shuffle off this mortal coil: **The Melander Society**.

It's easy to join. All you need to do is to notify the CCHS of your intention to make a gift by way of your will, bequest, or other deferred giving plan. You then simply need to give us written confirmation that you have done so; we can provide a simple form for you as well.

How and how much you provide for your legacy gift is a private matter for you to discuss with your attorney and/or financial adviser; the CCHS does not involve itself in the particulars. We only need to know that you have planned to do something...

The Society honors Jacqueline J. Melander, president of the CCHS from 1980 to 2015, whose leadership was foundational to the organization in its modern guise.

Legacy gifts may be made in any amount. They represent a meaningful way to express your values and strengthen a cause you care about into perpetuity.

The CCHS hopes to be that cause for you. For further information, contact Executive Director Mary Sorensen at 814-234-4779 or msorensen@centrehistory.org.

We thank our current Melander Society Members:

Jeffrey M. Bower, Esq.
Mimi Barash Coppersmith
Candace & Robert Dannaker
Steven & Carol Gentry
Robert & Janice Hazelton
Jacqueline J. Melander
Richard W. Pencek
Dolores Simpson Rose & Arthur Rose
Peter & Mary Sorensen
Leon & Dee Stout
Jo Merrell & Floyd Todd
David Panko
Gerard F. Jackson
Deborah Raykovitz
Katie O'Toole & Gary Gray
Ford & Mary Risley
Laura Glenn Steifer
Ann Hamilton Taylor & Marty Gutowski
Roger Williams & Karen Magnuson

VOLUNTEER NOTES & THANK YOU

Thank you to Katy Stager for her time as an intern with Penn-West Clarion University of Pennsylvania in the MSLS: Information and Library Science



2024 Fall Intern Katy Stager

program.

Katy completed indexes for the newspapers in the CCHS collections and the Centre County Heritage Journals this fall, and helped out in every way during the fall semester.

We are grateful for the speakers, writers, interns, and others that bring rich programs, articles, research, and care for our historic sites and collections.

Chuck Fong, October speaker
Dave Lembeck, graphic design
Liz Reed, office
Vinnie Scanlon, office
Lynn Padgett, graphic design
Katy Stager, intern
Cooper Wingert, September speaker



Ford Risley, Cooper Wingert, Bill Blair, Roger Williams at the Match Factory in Bellefonte

Organizations:

Just Serve
Penn State AURORA/URSA and Brian & Logan Sedgwick
Sigma Alpha Epsilon

REMEMBERING FRIENDS

Two of Centre County's local historians will be greatly missed, but their legacies will live on. Dee Wallace was a long-term volunteer with the Boalsburg Heritage Museum and was instrumental in curating the Boalsburg Blacksmith Shop that continues to host demonstrations annually.

Long-time CCHS member Connie Randolph advocated for local history through the State College Historical Resources Commission and State College Community Development Block Grant Commission.



Deloris "Dee" Wallace



Constance "Connie" Randolph

We offer our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those within the CCHS community who have recently passed away. Their absence will be deeply felt:

Frederick Ferguson
David Lee
Nancy J. Wolf
Constance D. Randolph
Jacob Fehl Jr.
Deloris A. Wallace

In Memoriam

Donations have been received in memory of the following:

Constance (Connie) Randolph from:
Sean Harvey and family and Kathleen Harvey
Ruth and Lisa Nichols
Patricia Smoczynski
Linda Domin
Paul and Marianne Karwacki
Brady Ripka

Our gratitude to the family of long time CCHS Member and friend Connie Randolph for designating the Centre County Historical Society for memorial donations.

Annual Fund Campaign is Now Under Way

The CCHS's 2024 Annual Fund Campaign is now under way. If you haven't yet made your contribution, we respectfully invite your participation.

Last year, you made possible a record showing—\$33,000—which enabled us to meet our operating expenses. The Annual Fund provides the money to cut the grass, pay our small staff of two, insure our properties, cover our bills, print our publications, advertise our events, and so much more—not terribly exciting, we admit, but essential nevertheless. This year, our operating budget is \$172,690. As of September 30, we had generated \$127,481. Thus we have \$45,201 to go. With your help, we'll get there.

We know there is intense competition for your time, attention, and finances—especially in a presidential election year. We know inflation has reduced your spending power. We also know we can never take your loyalty for granted and that we have to earn your continuing interest and support.

This year, our Annual Fund Campaign started on September 18 with letters and a return envelope being sent to all members and supporters. You may also give online by going to centrehistory.org/donate.

Thus far the response has been encouraging. As of October 25, we had received \$15,985, which is 46% of our \$35,000 goal. A complete list of donors will be published in the winter issue of *Mansion Notes*, but as of October 25 we have received contributions from:

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Joyce Adgate | Jacqueline Esposito | Cathy & Dave Horner | Patrick Parsons | Fritz Smith |
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| Frederick Bisbee | Patti Fisher | Gina and John Ikenberry | Robert Potter | Larry Jump |
| Anita Genger & | Ellen Foster | William & Barbara Jones | Donna Queeney | Margie & Doug Swoboda |
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| Pamela & Dennis Dunn | Chris Hickey | Mary Osborn | Joyce Gilbert Sipple | Penny Dry |
| Nancy Eaton | Susan Hochreiter | Henry & Sara Parks | Jean Slear | Cal & Pam Zimmerman |

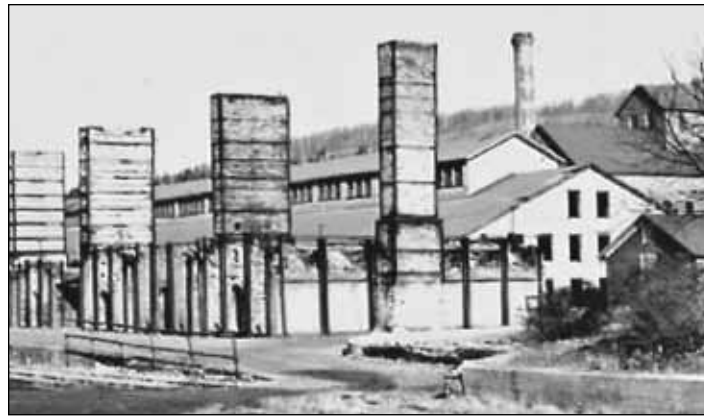
Refractories

Continued from cover article

from one generation to the next in the communities that took root around the brickyards.

The First Four Plants

Making fire brick began in 1866 at Sandy Ridge by John Miller & Son, who established their brickyard adjacent to the newly opened Tyrone & Clearfield Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Little is known about the Millers; the elder Miller, a Blair County resident, had previously been engaged in coal mining in Clearfield County. Over the years, the Millers boosted production capacity from 4,000 to 25,000 brick a day and shipped their output to customers in seven states. In 1881 the company erected 20 frame houses to rent to employees. By then John Miller had retired, leaving his son William in charge. A decade later both Millers were gone, and the company was under less capable management. The brickyard sat idle for much of the 1890s as a prolonged economic depression wracked the nation. Near decade's end the plant was sold to a group of local investors that included Philipsburg banker William P. Duncan. He soon bought out his partners. Under his leadership the Sandy Ridge Fire Brick Works became the chief supplier of locomotive refractories to the Pennsylvania Railroad at Altoona. Lena Duncan oversaw the company after her husband's death in 1904, until selling it in 1908 to Philipsburg residents Daniel Ross Wynn (1872-1965) and his brother-in-law, James H. France



Retort brickyard, a few years after its 1954 closure.
Photo provided by author.

(1865-1943). Wynn and France, then making fire brick at West Decatur in Clearfield County, bought the Sandy Ridge works to add production capacity in the face of skyrocketing demand. Both men were destined to leave a longlasting imprint on the refractories business nationally.

Along the railroad a mile or so north of the Sandy Ridge works, a fire brick plant was established about 1878 by William J. Jackson—another figure lost in the historical mists—on land leased from pioneer coal operator Robert Hare Powel. The plant sourced its clay from the same bed as Sandy Ridge. The little settlement that grew around it was named Retort, although the brickyard sometimes billed itself as being located in adjacent Powelton, a mining hamlet that preceded the establishment of the brickyard and where Jackson operated the company store.

Down in the Moshannon Valley, R.B. Wigton & Son began making fire brick just outside the borough of Philipsburg in 1882. Their 18,000-brick-a-day plant was actually situated a stone's throw across Moshannon Creek

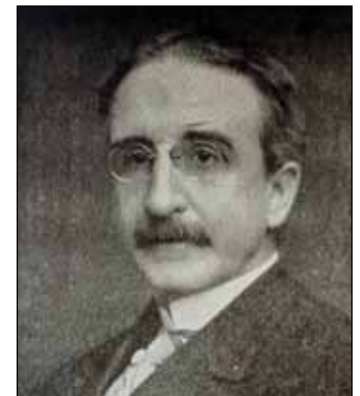
in Decatur Township, Clearfield County; but the Wigtons and subsequent owners referred to the brickyard's location as Philipsburg. In a departure from the usual practice, the plant was not located near a readily obtainable fire clay bed. Rather, it sourced its clay from an immense deposit around Morgan Run in Clearfield County, necessitating a nine-mile haul over the Pennsylvania Railroad to the brickyard. Philadelphia millionaire Richard Benson Wigton had been heading various coal-mining and iron-making ventures in Huntingdon, Centre, and Clearfield counties since the 1850s. Subsequent to his death in 1895, the brickyard was sold and renamed the Philipsburg Fire Brick Works.

The Pennsylvania Railroad provided the Sandy Ridge, Retort, and Philipsburg brickyards with an efficient, all-season outlet to reach markets hundreds of miles distant. The New York Central provided the same kind of efficient transportation conduit for brickyards along Beech Creek, the mountain stream that formed much of the boundary between Centre and Clinton counties. The first of those brickyards opened in 1900 near the confluence of Beech Creek and Monument Run under the ownership of the Clinton County Fire Brick Co, affiliated with Lock Haven-headquartered Fredericks, Munro & Co. In 1892 Fredericks, Munro had acquired 1,400 acres rich in fire clay on high ground on the Clinton County side of the creek. The company delayed opening the new brickyard until the depression of the 1890s had run its course. A three-mile dinkey railroad using a series of

switchbacks (soon replaced by a more efficient inclined plane) brought the raw clay down an elevation of nearly a thousand feet to the plant, where more than a hundred men produced an initial daily output of 20,000 brick, shipped in boxcars provided by the New York Central. The new community of Monument was so isolated that the railroad provided the only practical connection with the outside world for both freight and people.

The Later Brickyards

Three miles upstream from Monument, two more brickyards began to take shape, both partly the result of land surveys done by Ellis L. Orvis (1857-1936), a man of diverse talents and interests. The son of Centre County Judge John H. Orvis, the younger Orvis graduated from Penn State's classical course in 1876. He stayed on for post-graduate studies in chemistry and modern languages, then learned land surveying while studying law in his father's firm. The elder Orvis enjoyed statewide prominence as a surveyor and as a specialist in land titles and ejectments. Ellis Orvis, admitted to the bar in 1880, carried on the practice's specialized legal work after his father's death in 1893.



Ellis L. Orvis
Photo provided by author.

While doing surveys in the Beech Creek watershed for a client, Orvis took note of clay deposits similar in extent and quality to those sourced by the brickyard at Monument. In 1903 Orvis and several other local investors established the Hayes Run Fire Brick Co. and built a plant eventually having 200 employees and a daily capacity of about 50,000 brick. The



Postcard view of the Philipsburg brickyard circa 1910.
Photo provided by author.

community that evolved with the brickyard was briefly called Orvis before being renamed Orviston. The brickyard, clay mine, dinkey railroad, and most of the fifty or so company-owned houses were on the Clinton County side of Beech Creek, but a few structures and the railroad station were on the Centre County side. The company generally advertised itself as a Centre County industry and boasted that it shipped its product throughout the eastern United States and to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

On the upstream side of Orviston, Orvis and his associates established a second brickyard, this one to produce light-colored building brick, then popular for residential and commercial structures. A separate company, Centre Brick & Clay, was created to own the plant, which went into operation in 1908. Some refractory brick was also made, although when the company announced it was running at capacity—50,000 brick a day—it did not differentiate between building and refractory products. Employee housing and the brickyard were in Centre County, while clay beds 8 to 12 feet thick were in Clinton County. A dinkey railroad connected the two locations. The opening of a second brickyard at Orviston swelled the community's population to about 400.

Ellis Orvis was also a principal in the Snow Shoe Fire Brick Co., situated near the headwaters of Beech Creek in Centre County's Mountain-

top region. The brickyard was established in the Snow Shoe Township village of Clarence, which had gotten its start in the 1870s as a lumbering center. The plant began making brick in 1910 (coincidentally mid-way through Orvis's ten-year term as Centre County judge) and was the only refractories producer in the county to be served by both the Pennsylvania Railroad and the New York Central. Snow Shoe Fire Brick began with a lease of 25 acres of flint clay, but like other fire brick makers in the county, eventually came to depend on rail shipments of clay from Morgan Run and other distant sites.

The last refractories brickyard to be established was an outlier: it sourced ganister rather than clay. Ganister is an extremely hard, quartz-rich sandstone with a high silica content, from which silica brick could be made. The mining and manufacturing processes were more difficult and expensive, but silica refractories typically could withstand higher heat than fire-clay brick and consequently commanded higher prices. The ubiquitous Ellis Orvis and some of his partners from the Orviston and Snow Shoe works spearheaded the creation of the new plant in 1917 at Port Matilda, with Philipsburg coal operator James F. Stott a new addition to the group as majority shareholder. The brickyard—having an initial daily capacity of about 35,000 brick—sat adjacent to the PRR's Bald Eagle Branch. It obtained ganister from a



Centre Brick & Clay works at Orviston, looking west along the New York Central Railroad.

Photo provided by Jim Davy.

500-acre tract that ran longitudinally above the plant along the northwest slope of Bald Eagle Mountain. The mountain itself marked the approximate northern edge of the Tuscarora sandstone formation, which was most famously concentrated in southern Huntingdon County, where brickyards at Mount Union enabled that community to lead the nation for many years in silica brick production.

The Port Matilda brickyard was an outlier in a second way. Small population centers clustered around the brickyards at Sandy Ridge, Retort, Monument, Orviston, and Clarence. Each of those brickyards employed more than a hundred men and offered company-owned housing. Some even featured churches, schools, and other hallmarks of a permanent community. But all remained settle-

ments within their respective townships except Port Matilda. With 545 residents by 1925, Port Matilda petitioned the Centre County court for permission to incorporate as a borough. On January 2, 1926, Judge Arthur Dale approved the petition, paving the way for incorporation later that year. (The Philipsburg brickyard had been established long after its namesake community was incorporated, and one year before the Clearfield County borough of Chester Hill—in which the brickyard was actually located—was organized. But Chester Hill owed its population growth mostly to lumbering, coal mining, and its adjacency to Philipsburg rather than to refractories manufacture.)

Brickyard Ownership Consolidated

By the time the Port Matilda works began making brick in 1917, Centre County's refractories industry had already entered its second phase: merging existing facilities into larger companies whose reach and ownership extended well beyond the county's borders. Consolidation began with the purchase of the Retort brickyard in 1898 by Isaac Reese & Son. The elder Reese (who as a child resided for two years in Bellefonte) had gotten his start many years earlier in Armstrong County, where he pioneered the manufacture of silica brick. The new owners immediately began an addition to the Retort brickyard that was intended to make 20,000



A narrow gauge or "dinkey" railroad brought raw clay from the mine to the Hayes Run brickyard at Orviston. *Photo provided by Jim Davy.*

Continued on page 20

Refractories

Continued from page 19

silica brick daily. Reese & Son operated brickyards throughout western Pennsylvania and in 1902 sold them all to Harbison-Walker Refractories, organized in Pittsburgh in 1875. Samuel P. Harbison and Hay Walker did not have a brickyard beyond Allegheny County until buying one at Clearfield in 1884. From then on, the steel industry's ever-increasing demand for fire brick to line blast furnaces, Bessemer converters, and open hearth furnaces drove the company's steady acquisition of more plants



James H. France
Photo provided by author.

until Harbison-Walker became the world's largest manufacturer of refractories.

The company's 1902 acquisitions were spread across three states and brought a total of 33 refractories plants under one ownership. In addition to Re-tort, these included brickyards at Philipsburg and Monument. Harbison-Walker increased the Monument workforce by nearly a hundred, built ten new double houses for employees and their families, and opened a new bed of fire clay along with a new narrow gauge railroad to haul it.

Another series of consolidations—one that would give birth to Harbison-Walker's principal competitor—got its start at Sandy Ridge. In 1911 Daniel Ross Wynn and James H. France joined with Philadelphia investors in organizing the General Refractories Co. (Grefco), combining their Sandy Ridge and West Decatur plants with similar

sized facilities at Sproul in Blair County and Olive Hill, Kentucky. Both Wynn and France served in executive positions in the new company. More plants continued to be added in the following years, until by 1922 General Refractories—headquartered in Philadelphia—was operating a total of 15 brickyards: nine in central Pennsylvania and six in other states, having a total daily production capacity of 1.1 million brick.

A third step toward centralized ownership occurred early in 1919 when Ellis Orvis and associates formed Eastern Refractories as a holding company to unite three of their properties: Superior Silica Brick at Port Matilda, Centre Brick & Clay at Orviston, and Snow Shoe Fire Brick at Clarence. In addition, Eastern handled sales for the Hayes Run Fire Brick Co. at Orviston. Corporate offices were established on High Street in Bellefonte in what had been Mrs. Tanner's boarding house. Orvis served as chairman of the board. James Stott was president and held the largest stake in the new company by virtue of his holdings of Superior Silica. A team of mid-level Harbison-Walker executives was recruited to open and manage sales offices in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Accounts in newspapers and trade journals implied that Orvis, Stott, and their fellow investors aimed to have Eastern eventually take its place alongside Harbison-Walker and Grefco as major players in the refractories industry.

However, no sooner had Eastern been organized than it started to unravel. In August 1919, James Stott was killed in a coal mine accident. Soon after, Altoona entrepreneur Charles W. Albright acquired Stott's Eastern shares and thus control of the company. Albright then sold his Eastern shares to Orvis and associates and in exchange bought all of their shares in Superior Silica at Port Matilda, which then left the Eastern combine. But Albright was sailing in troubled financial waters. Apparently overextended, he failed to repay several bank loans and forfeited his ownership of the brickyard—which he had posted as collateral—to the lenders. They in turn chose an interim management team to operate the plant until a buyer could be

found. It 1926 Superior Silica was sold to the McFeely Brick Company of Latrobe, which would operate the brickyard for the next thirty years. (Company founder Fred McFeely was the maternal grandfather of children's television personality Mr. Rogers.)

In the meantime, Eastern continued to come apart. General Refractories bought the Hayes Run operation at Orviston in the summer of 1922. In May 1923 Columbus, Ohio-based Central Refractories purchased Centre Brick & Clay at Orviston and the brickyard at Snow Shoe, adding them to its existing fire brick plants in Ohio. In a situation analogous to the Albright debacle, Central almost immediately found itself facing bankruptcy and put its Pennsylvania properties up for sale. Centre Brick & Clay had no takers. By order of the bankruptcy court, the entire property was liquidated—the brickyard, company houses, railroad siding, dinkey line, tools, mules, and all other assets. James H. France intervened to prevent a similar fate at Snow Shoe. He left his executive job at General Refractories and, with help from a few other Philipsburg investors, bought the brickyard in 1924. Operating as J.H. France Refractories, the fourteen-year-old plant underwent modernization to better position itself as an independent manufacturer in competition with giants such as Harbison-Walker and Grefco.

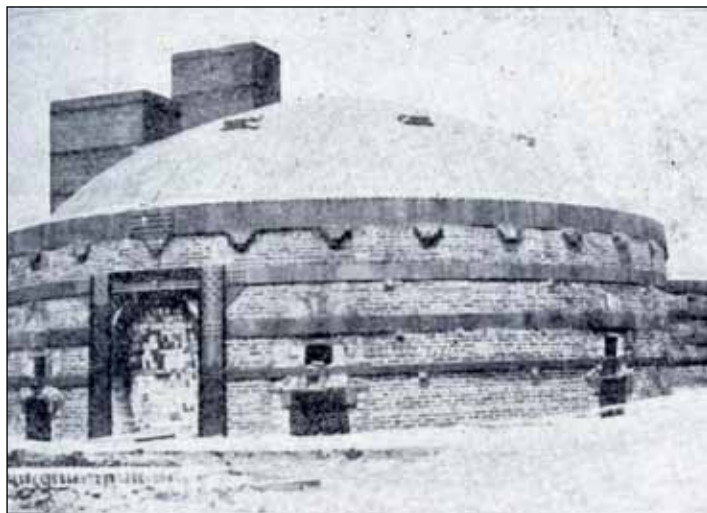
At the outset of 1928, Centre County's refractories industry counted 605 employees, down by about 200 since 1922. The

decline reflected Centre Brick & Clay's closure as well as the closure of Harbison-Walker's obsolete Philipsburg brickyard. Despite the dip, refractories still ranked as the county's second-largest industrial employer, behind coal mining (1,030 workers) and ahead of limestone quarrying and lime manufacturing (580 workers). The prosperity of the fire brick producers reflected the prosperity enjoyed by their largest customer, the iron and steel industry. Steel production in the U.S. surged to a record 48 million tons in 1929, more than double the tonnage at the decade's start.

A Thirty Year Decline

The county's refractories industry had reached its high water mark. The 1930s brought unparalleled economic depression. After a brief spurt of activity during World War II, a weakening demand for fire brick proved fatal for one brickyard after another.

Brickyards worked sporadically during the Great Depression, since two of their largest customers—steel mills and railroads—were themselves enduring lean times. For example, the McFeely brickyard at Port Matilda shut down in 1930, resumed production in January 1931, only to shut down again near the end of that year. It remained idle until April 1933, when about 100 of its 150 employees were called back to fill orders totaling about 600,000 brick. General Refractories' Sandy Ridge plant was perhaps most severely affected. It was



A beehive kiln at the Superior Silica works in Port Matilda.
Photo provided by author.

idled late in 1931 and remained shuttered until at least 1937. High production costs likely plagued the old plant, because Grefco permanently closed it in 1943 despite America's involvement in another world war.

Brick-making also proceeded intermittently at Monument and Orviston. At Monument, Harbison-Walker in 1938 closed the original clay mine and inclined plane, relying only on a mine opened some years earlier and served by a narrow gauge railroad that followed Monument Run as a gateway to the high ground in Clinton County. Nevertheless, there was reason for cheer during those bleak years. In 1937, Monument and Orviston received telephone service from a trunk line connection in the Clinton County town of Beech Creek. Monument had been without service, and Orviston previously had less than satisfactory service from a connection at Howard. The next year saw West Penn Power extend its electric lines to those remote communities in response to the overwhelming commitment of residents there to buy the alternating current that West Penn delivered. (The two communities then probably had a combined population of at least 600.) Both brickyards had long generated their own direct current for use by machinery, and a few company houses and other structures were wired for DC as well. Harbison-Walker and General Refractories agreed to buy West Penn's alternating current for illumination and lighter machinery applications.

World War II brought full



The Harbison-Walker brickyard at Monument, as seen from the Clinton County side of Beech Creek.
Photo provided by Jim Davy.

employment to the brickyards, followed by difficult times again when peace returned. Steel makers continued to thrive in the immediate post-war years, but improvements in the quality of refractories lessened their need for brick. Around 1910, the rule of thumb posited that 35 lb of brick wore out for every ton of steel made. Forty years later, that ratio was 20 lb. of brick per ton of steel. Other industries had less need for traditional fire brick. Railroads, for instance, were rapidly converting to diesel-electric motive power and no longer needed brick to line the fireboxes of thousands of steam locomotives. Specialty refractories made from such materials as magnesite (magnesium oxide) began to replace brick made from flint clay. A decline in demand turned into an oversupply, which depressed prices.

Consequently the refractories industry began to trim capacity. Older brickyards which relied on flint clay and labor-intensive production methods were the first to close.

In Centre County, Harbison-Walker suspended operations at Monument—then specializing in making arch bricks for steam locomotives—in August 1949. The company followed up by offering to sell the 70-odd houses that it owned in the community, with employees afforded first priority. Two years later, some workers were called back to convert the plant to manufacture silica brick, with ganister being trucked from Mount Union. The economics did not favor this modification, however, and brickyard operations ceased permanently in April 1953. Harbison-Walker's Retort plant met the same fate in 1954.

In 1956 General Refractories acquired the McFeely Brick Company. The Port Matilda brickyard was permanently idled two years later and 80 employees were laid off. Grefco closed its Orviston works in July 1962, and 120 jobs were gone forever. An inventory of some two million bricks there was dispersed over the next four years, followed by a near-total demolition of the plant. As at Monument, employees had the opportunity to buy company-owned houses, but that was small solace to laid-off employees who faced the proposition of long commutes to new jobs—assuming they were even able to find work, since the industrial skills they had honed over many years were no longer

in demand. By the 2020 census, the combined population of Monument and Orviston barely exceeded a hundred.

Unlike the local Grefco and Harbison-Walker plants, J.H France Refractories at Clarence successfully adapted its methods and products to meet changing customer needs. Technological advances in high-heat manufacturing of such diverse products as cement, glass, lime, pulp and paper, and petrochemicals required new kinds of refractories. Ownership changed several times in recent years; since 2007, the operation has been known as Snow Shoe Refractories. The company makes high-alumina refractory brick and also unshaped castables—premixed refractory aggregates that are pumped, poured, or sprayed on and then harden, preventing heat loss that can occur through joints and cracks when conventional bricks are used. The plant is the last vestige of what had been one of Centre County's most important industries.

The author thanks Orviston resident and local historian Jim Davy for his assistance in preparing this article.

Selected sources:

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The Snow Shoe brickyard at Clarence about 1949, showing the trestle where coal was unloaded to fire the kilns.
Photo provided by author.

Grant News

The Centre County Historical Society is grateful for recent support grant received from:

PHMC Cultural and Historical Support Grant

President's Corner

Continued from page 3

He had the requisite background and credibility. A brilliant polymath, fascinated by agriculture and chemistry in particular, he left his farmstead in Chester County, Pennsylvania, in 1853 to “fit” himself as a scientist qualified to create an agricultural college. He sailed for Germany, studying at Leipzig University and the University of Goettingen, earning his Ph.D. in 1856. He then did what today we would call a post-doctoral fellowship, joining the research team at the famed Rothamsted Experiment Station in England. There he conducted an experiment that settled a raging scientific controversy on how plants assimilate nitrogen (from the soil, not the air). His results got him elected by England’s greatest scientists to Fellowship in the London Chemical Society, a prized honor etched onto his footstone in Bellefonte’s Union Cemetery. His reputation won him the presidency of the Farmers’ High School of Pennsylvania. In October 1859, he arrived on campus—a stark landscape with only a barn and a main building one-third finished.

In the summer of 1860, Pugh presented his Rothamsted research results to the fourteenth annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1862, Pugh was elected to membership in



The College Building 1863, possibly photographed by Evan Pugh. Courtesy of The Pennsylvania State University Archives.

the American Philosophical Society, the nation’s oldest learned society, established by Benjamin Franklin in 1743. By this time, Pugh had four major publications to his credit.

In 1861, Pugh was asked by the U.S. Patent Bureau to write an article on agricultural colleges for the U.S. Patent Office (at the time, the U.S. Bureau of Agriculture was a division of the Patent Office). About this same time, Pugh was offered the post of chief chemist for the U.S. Bureau of Agriculture, which in 1862 became the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He declined. Two years later, the offer was made again and again he turned it down.

“I refused to accept the head

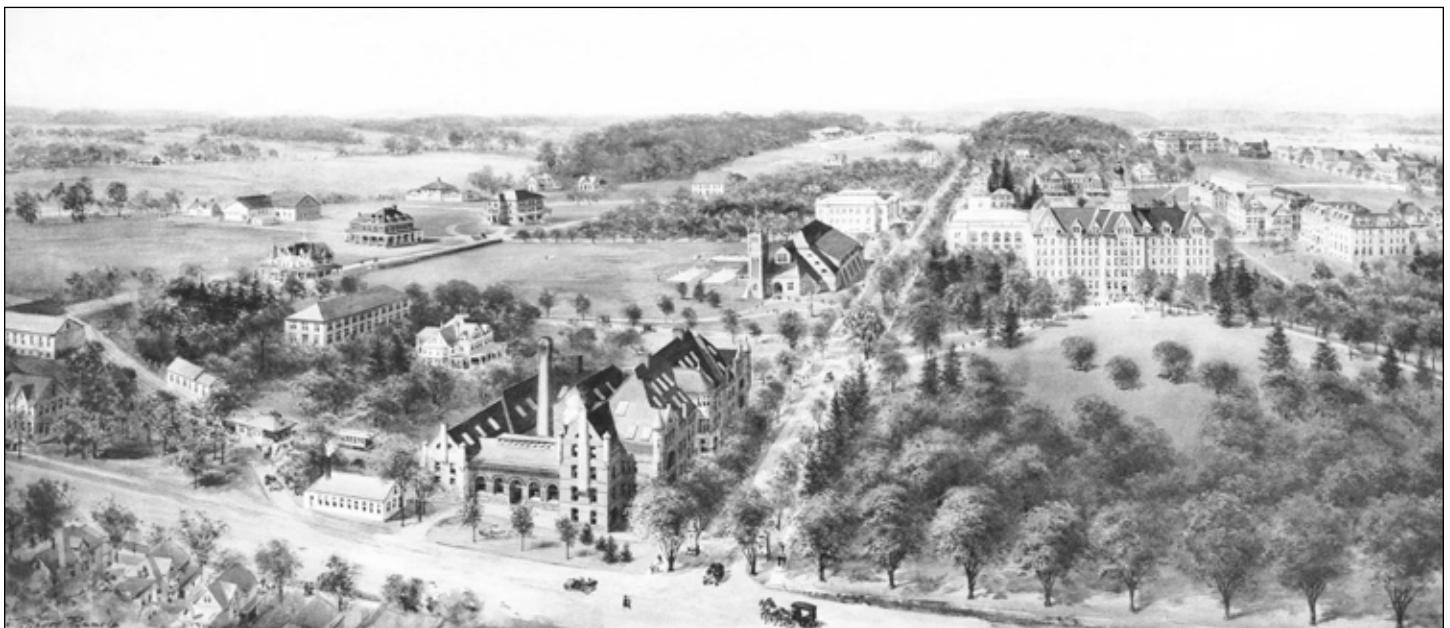
of that department when it was offered me two years ago—because I wanted to devote myself to agricultural education, in the State Agricultural College called or to be called into existence by the Congressional Appropriation. The best way to do this I conceive is to make our own college a model which other Agricultural Colleges will adopt... to do this I am resolved to stay with our College, while God gives me strength to perform my duties here, whatever may be the pecuniary inducements or prospects of honor elsewhere. It is my duty and my destiny to do so, and I shall seek honors in the path of duty and destiny rather than at Washington.”

Such a man was Evan Pugh.

His death ushered in an 18-year era of drift and retrogression through five troubled presidencies, each ending in failure. By 1880, the institution had strayed entirely from its land-grant college mandate in which agriculture and engineering were to be the “leading object.” Penn State had devolved into a backwoods classical college and was almost closed for good. A faculty committee, led by physics professor I. Thornton Osmond, took matters into their own hands and revamped the curriculum entirely, reconciling the college to the land-grant idea.

And then came George Atherton, in the summer of 1882

In his 24 years, he would move Penn State forward in all respects and set it on course for success in the Twentieth Century. He shored up agriculture and established the Agricultural Experiment Station (1889). He quickly rebuilt the neglected engineering disciplines: “The institution hopes to hold the highest rank as a school of technology,” he told the trustees in 1883. By 1900, Penn State ranked 10th in the nation in engineering enrollments (209 majors). He prevailed on the state legislature to begin biennial appropriations, starting with a \$400,000 grant to cover the years 1887-93. With that money, he started Penn State’s first major build-



1910 Richard Rummell View of Pennsylvania State College. CCHS Koch Collection

ing campaign, resulting in the massive Engineering Building and the Armory—spectacular examples of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture. He prevailed with the private sector as well, asking trustees Charles Schwab and Andrew Carnegie to provide large gifts to build their eponymous auditorium/classroom/chapel and library. In 1895, he reorganized the college into seven schools.

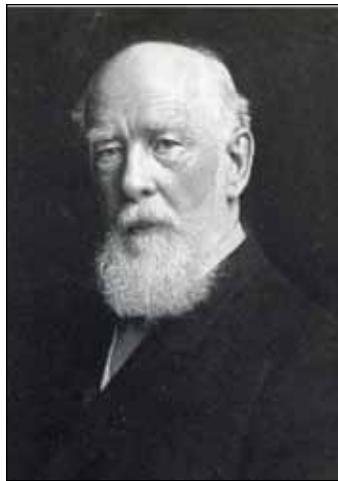
By the late 1880s, student activities began to flourish—athletics, fraternities, publications. Enrollments grew ten-fold, from 87 students in 1882 to 898 in 1906, the year of his death.

As Benjamin Gill, dean of the School of Language and Literature, eulogized:

“He came to this village with as much pride as if he had been assuming the presidency of Cambridge, or of his alma mater Yale, because he saw from the first not the college that was, but the college that was to be.”

For all that he accomplished for Penn State, Atherton’s most enduring contributions to the land-grant college movement came at the national level. He played the pivotal role in instigating and promoting the legislation that started the flow of continuous federal financial support to land-grant colleges—a relationship that set the precedent for more substantial federal support to higher education in the Twentieth Century.

Atherton was the prime mover and chief architect of the 1887 Hatch Act, which enabled the establishment of agricultural



George Atherton
Courtesy of The Pennsylvania State University Archives.

experiment stations at land-grant colleges and provided annual appropriations starting at \$15,000 for the stations’ work—heavenly manna for these cash-strapped colleges.

His role in the campaign for the 1890 Morrill Act was equally significant. As a professor at Rutgers (1869-1882), he had worked with Senator Justin Morrill to draft bill after bill, all of which failed in Congress after Congress, to generate additional land grants or appropriations to aid the colleges. To Atherton and his colleagues, it was not enough for the federal government to merely found the schools through grants of federal land, which were to be sold off with the proceeds used to establish an endowment to fund the schools. Their thinking was that the federal government incurred

an additional responsibility to sustain the schools it founded through annual appropriations.

The result came in the summer of 1890. Led by Atherton and Henry Alvord, president of Maryland Agricultural College, a large contingent of land-grant college presidents descended like locusts on Washington and lobbied hard to get the Second Morrill Act passed. Never was there anything like this. As one U.S. representative observed: “They have haunted the corridors of the Capitol; they have stood sentinel at the door of the Committee on education; they have even interrupted the solemn deliberation of that body by imprudent and impudent communications...My God, if there is any eagerness in the world it is possessed by these gentlemen who are presidents of these agricultural colleges.” Atherton himself made 11 trips to Washington totaling 36 days to help secure passage.

The bill passed overwhelmingly. The 1890 Morrill Act provided annual appropriations directly out of the U.S. treasury. The legislation provided for general educational support—from English to engineering—beginning at \$15,000 per year and increasing by \$1,000 increments annually.

The aforesaid presidential lobbying was mounted by a new organization, established in 1887—the first organization of peer collegiate institutions in America: The Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations. The

Association’s founding president? George Atherton, elected for two consecutive terms, 1887-1889.

With these two legislative victories and the permanent financial support they provided, land-grant colleges across the nation turned the corner from struggle to stability, thus accelerating their development into major research universities in the decades that followed

No one was more prominent in this work than George Atherton.

Oddly, no building on the University Park campus has been named for Pugh or Atherton. Their monument exists in the lobby of Old Main. Mounted on pedestals, their busts flank the central steps leading up to Henry Varnum Poor’s renowned land-grant frescoes. Their larger legacy, however, is best conveyed by the epitaph of the great London architect Christopher Wren: *Lector, si monumentum requiris, circumspice*. “Reader, if you wish to see their memorial, look around you.”

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Community Outreach

Thank you to the Penn State All-Sports Museum and the Bellefonte Area Rotary for inviting the CCHS to participate in their Fall community events.

The Penn State All-Sports Museum hosted its 15th annual Trick-or-Treat night, featuring Penn State athletes, on Tuesday, October 22. This event estimates seeing between 1000-1500 people and is great exposure for CCHS. Thank you to Linda Witmer for dressing up, bringing candy and inviting so many families to visit the Centre Furnace Mansion.

The Talleyrand Fall Fest was held on Saturday, October 26 at Talleyrand Park in Bellefonte. The event hosted hundreds of guests and raised funds to support local organizations through the Bellefonte Area Rotary Club.

Johanna Sedgwick wore the 1896 inspired walking dress, donated by Connie Randolph in 2023. Connie had the dress made for the 1996 State College Centennial celebrations. It caught the eye of many event attendees at both events sparking conversations on local history.



Linda Witmer and Johanna Sedgwick at the Penn State All-Sports Museum Trick-or-Treat event. Thank you to Carol Gouty for the photo.



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Your membership in the CCHS also makes the preservation possible for the Centre Furnace Mansion, Boogersburg School, and countless other explorations of our shared history and heritage – places that help us “get away” without even having to leave Centre County.

As we continue to schedule an engaging series of programs and events, we invite you to reconnect with the past and help preserve the beauty of the present through your membership. Your support means everything.

As our thanks to you for partnering with us on our mission to discover, explore, preserve, and interpret Centre County history, your membership benefits in CCHS include:

- 10% off CCHS publications (*Don't forget to mention that you are a member when purchasing books in our Museum Store. If purchasing books through our website, enter MEMBERS10 at the checkout.*)
- Lending privileges that allow you to check out books from the CCHS research library
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