



MANSION NOTES

CENTRE FURNACE MANSION

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 45, Number 2

Spring 2023

Butting Heads in Centre County: Pennsylvania Railroad vs. New York Central

By Michael Bezilla

In the era when railroads ranked among America's largest and most powerful corporations, two carriers stood out—not only for their size, but for their keen rivalry. The Philadelphia-based Pennsylvania Railroad and the Manhattan-headquartered New York Central System served much the same territory, from the New York metropolitan area in the Northeast to Chicago and St. Louis in the Midwest. Their rivalry reached legendary proportions in long-distance passenger service, best exemplified by the PRR's luxurious Broadway Limited and the Central's equally well-appointed Twentieth Century Limited.

Less visible to the public but equally intense was their competition for freight traffic, serving as they did the nation's industrial heartland. For example, after being shut out by the PRR from the burgeoning coal and steel market around Pittsburgh, the New York Central in 1887 secured a controlling interest in the cheaply built Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad and eventually turned it into "The Little Giant," a heavy-duty line stretching from the storied Connellsville coke region through Pittsburgh to a connection with its parent company in Ohio.

Just prior to the P&LE acquisition, the New York Central and the Pennsylvania first went head to head as freight haulers. Their battleground included Centre County.

PRR Rescues Tyrone and Clearfield RR

The Pennsylvania Railroad had gotten to Centre County well before the Central. In 1854 a group of investors that included several Bellefonte influentials obtained a charter for the Tyrone and Clearfield Railroad. The T&C aimed to build a line from the PRR's main east-west route at Tyrone up the steep face of the Allegheny Front and down to the Moshannon Valley. Bellefonte attorney (and future Congressman) James Tracy Hale was named president of the company. James E. Montgomery, a grandnephew of Philipsburg founder Hardman Philips, laid out the steeply graded alignment. However, the money ran out before track-laying was completed. The T&C's principals appealed to the Pennsylvania Railroad for assistance. The larger road agreed to help but drove a hard bargain: 75 percent of the T&C's gross revenues and control of the company. The PRR expedited the process of laying track down to the bottom of the grade along the Moshannon Creek. The town of Osceola Mills was established across the creek in Clearfield County, and a rail yard in Rush Township

on the Centre County side soon became the hub for Tyrone-bound shipments of coal and lumber.

Bellefonte entrepreneurs played key roles in organizing companies to own land, mine coal, and harvest timber. In addition to Hale, they included former county sheriff Joseph J. Lingle, building contractor David Pruner, and attorneys Andrew Curtin (elected Pennsylvania's governor in 1860) and Edmund Blanchard. The Clearfield Branch, as the PRR eventually denominated the T&C, was extended to Philipsburg in 1863 and Clearfield, 40 miles from Tyrone, in 1869.

PRR Acquires Bald Eagle Valley RR

Meanwhile, a similar drama was unfolding in the Bald Eagle Valley. Investors from Centre County (including ironmasters James Irvin and Moses Thompson) and surrounding areas in 1853 had set out to build a railroad linking Tyrone and Lock Haven. "The great object of this road is to connect the main thoroughfares of Pennsylvania in the middle of the state," explained the company's chief civil engineer, John M. McMinn. By "thoroughfares," he meant the PRR's main line at Tyrone and the rail line then under construction (and soon to become part of the PRR) that would connect Harrisburg and Erie via Lock Haven. Work proceeded haltingly on the railroad that McMinn surveyed, its progress dogged by mounting debt.

In 1861 the company was reorganized as the Bald Eagle Valley Railroad, and the Pennsylvania Railroad—cognizant of the route's strategic value—lost no time in securing control of it. When the line was finally opened to traffic over its entire 54-mile length in May 1865, it was simply another arm of the PRR, ultimately becoming its Bald Eagle Branch. Although sources of revenue along the branch were sparse, it did give Bellefonte-area shippers and receivers of freight, as well as travelers, a convenient outlet both east and west.

PRR Buys Bellefonte and Snow Shoe RR

Trains ran to and from Bellefonte on 2.7 miles of track that joined the Bald Eagle Branch at Milesburg. That track belonged to Centre County's first railroad, the Bellefonte and Snow Shoe, which sought to provide access to the rich coal and timber lands of Centre County's Mountaintop region. Financed by a cadre of local and Philadelphia investors, the railroad began operations in 1859. Until the Bald Eagle Valley

Continued on page 9



A postcard view of the Big Fill on the PRR's Clearfield Branch. The massive earthen fill enabled trains to cross the valley Pleasant Run on the Allegheny Front. Provided by author.

About the Centre County Historical Society

☞ Contact Us ☞

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@centrecountyhistory.org.

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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 by simply sending in 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.



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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.

Upcoming Activities

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:

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.

THUR 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. Weekly gardening at the Centre Furnace Mansion. All are welcome. As weather permits. as the weather warms, we switch to a 9:00 a.m.-noon schedule. Call 814-234-4779 for more information.

TUE May 2, 7:00 p.m.: Lay This Body Down. Book signing and talk by Charles Fergus at the Centre Furnace Mansion. RSVP required.

WED May 10 - THUR May 11: Centre Gives: online fundraiser at CentreGives.org.

SAT May 13, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.: 28th Annual Plant Celebration & Garden Sale at the Centre Furnace Mansion.

SUN June 4, 2:00-5:00 p.m: Centre County Explorers Day at the Centre Furnace Mansion. Featuring demonstrations, Mansion open house, light refreshments and information from Centre County Passport partners from around the county.

THUR June 8: Volunteer Appreciation Reception at Centre Furnace Mansion

SUN July 30, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.: Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps at Poe Valley State Park

SUN September 12, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.: Boogersburg School Open House

Programs to See Again

See recordings of some past CCHS talks on our YouTube channel at: <https://rb.gy/sfxzk7>.

Stay Connected

www.centrehistory.org

E-Mail: info@centrecountyhistory.org

Facebook: facebook.com/centrefurnace

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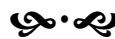
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YouTube: <https://rb.gy/sfxzk7>



President's Corner

By Roger L. Williams



The Amazing Dales of Centre County

In the winter 2023 *Mansion Notes*, I wrote about my friend Lynn Herman and his familial connection to John Herman—the first employee of the Laboring Farmers' High School of Pennsylvania to actually live on campus, in what later became Oak Cottage, from 1857 to 1859.

To continue my interest in searching out contemporaries who have ancestors from long-ago Centre County, I turned to a dear friend and former colleague of many years' standing: Heather Dale Ricker-Gilbert of State College.

It's the ubiquitous name Dale—as in Dale Summit, site of today's Nittany Mall; Foxdale, situated on what was once a Dale farm; the Dalevue subdivision; Dale Street in Lemont; and on and on—that has always intrigued me. Heather's Centre County pedigree is ancient. She is a direct descendant of Christian Dale, one of the original pioneers who came to Centre County in 1790 and settled between what became Oak Hall and Lemont—at the western "End of the Mountain."

There Christian acquired much land, built a gristmill, sawmill, woolen mill, and inn, and quickly prospered. He sired nine children, eight of whom came with him to Centre County along with their mother, Rachel. They and their many descendants acquired thousands more acres of Centre Region land over the years around State College, Boalsburg, Oak Hall, Lemont, Houserville, Bellefonte, and, of course, Dale Summit. Over the centuries, the hundreds if not thousands of Dale descendants have made vital contributions to building up today's Centre County.

Heather Dale Ricker-Gilbert

Let's start with Heather, seven generations out from Christian. A State College native, she is the younger daughter of Virginia Dale and Ralph "Dutch" Ricker, a well-known couple whose relationship with Penn State and State College goes back to the 1920s.



Heather Dale Ricker-Gilbert

Heather graduated from Penn State with a bachelor's (1969) and master's (1970) both in speech communication, and a later doctorate in higher education (1992). She started her career as director of special events for the Office of the President, under John W. Oswald, from 1972–77. She became assistant executive director of the Penn State Alumni Association from 1977–86, where she was responsible for all special programs and events and served as liaison to college and campus alumni societies.

I had the pleasure of working closely with Heather when she was appointed as event director for The Campaign for Penn State opening gala at Rec Hall in September 1986. It was a spectacular evening and a game-changer for Penn State. I recall Alethea Ulerich, wife of Clearfield, Pa., media magnate and former University Trustee Bill Ulerich, commenting as she exited the event: "I guess we're not a cow college anymore."

Heather went on to work as an instructor for the Speech Communication department. In the early 1990s—200 years after Christian Dale's arrival in Centre County—the family uprooted from Centre County and moved to Tolland, Connecticut. Husband Harvey Gilbert, a department head at Penn State, became head of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Connecticut at nearby Storrs. The move was bittersweet for Heather. "You hear about all these people looking for their roots, and I'm leaving mine," she told *Centre Daily Times* columnist Nadine Kofman.

Heather worked at UConn as director of community and campus relations and then taught for 16 years as professor of communications at Manchester Community College. Heather also operated her own

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Director's Message

Flowers and activities at the Centre Furnace Mansion this spring are in full swing. After seeing window sashes and doors coming and going throughout the winter and spring, the anticipation of seeing exterior painting begin on the Mansion is at last in sight!

In February, we hosted students with the Penn State Thespian Society at the Mansion for a photography session for their production of *Sweeney Todd*. When I mentioned to them ahead of time that several of the windows would be boarded when they were scheduled, they were thrilled - it was all the better for the sinister mood they were trying to create!

As summer nears, instead of boarded windows and doors, scaffolding will be installed and exterior work at the Mansion will be under way. It will be a hopeful sight indeed, and a long time coming, but will be worth the wait.

Since our last *Mansion Notes*, we hosted our CCHS Annual Meeting virtually with over forty in attendance. And Ford Risley provided a well attended and fascinating talk *Reporting the Civil War*, about the history of journalism in the North and South during the Civil War Era.

The Centre Furnace Mansion Garden Committee began working on potting plants in mid-March and have been working overtime ever since. The selection and quality of plants get better every year, and this year is no different. We hope you plan to stop out on May 13 for the 28th annual Plant Celebration! Details are on the following page.

Docent led tours are picking up during tour hours (Wednesday, Friday and Sunday 1:00-4:00 p.m.) This is an interesting activity to do with house guests, or just yourself on a Sunday afternoon. If you haven't been on a tour of the Mansion in a while, there are several new items in the collections to see and our docents would love to provide a tour.

We wish you the best for the summer season and hope to see you soon!

~ Mary Sorensen



Notice the absence of shutters and windows - soon to change!

Upcoming Programs and Events

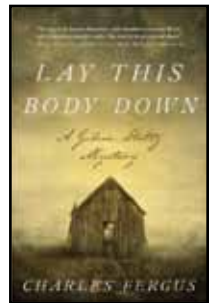
Lay This Body Down

Talk and book signing by Charles Fergus
Tuesday, May 2, 7:00 p.m., Centre Furnace Mansion. RSVP required.

State College native Charles Fergus writes mysteries set in Pennsylvania in the Jacksonian Era of the 1830s. He will present a talk and book signing about his third Gideon Stoltz Mystery, *Lay This Body Down*.

Books will be provided for sale at the talk by Webster's Bookstore & Cafe. RSVP at CentreHistory.org or call 814-234-4779. Limited seating.

This program is part of the Henszey-Pyle Distinguished Author Series underwritten by the Anne Hamilton Henszey Pyle and Kenneth B. Pyle Educational Fund for Regional Heritage Preservation (Henszey-Pyle Fund.)



Centre County Explorers Day

Sunday, June 4, 2:00-5:00 p.m. at the Centre Furnace Mansion

Centre County Explorers Passport program of the Centre County Historical Society will kick off for the summer season at the Mansion with an open house, light refreshments, Passport partners to talk with guests about several other Centre County historic and cultural sites, demonstrations featuring Jackie's Joinery Tool Exhibition of 19th century building tools and more!

The Passport program printed materials are made possible in part by grants from the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau and the Centre County Board of Commissioners as well as from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2), Environmental Stewardship Fun, under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Recreation and Conservation administered through the Lumber Heritage Region.

Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps: Company 1333 – Camp S-63, Poe Valley

Sunday, July 30, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Poe Valley State Park

CCHS is pleased to partner with the Pennsylvania DCNR and William Marcum, local historian and research authority on the Poe Valley CCC Camp, to host a day-long program about the CCC.

A collection of memorabilia will be on display for you to enjoy and you may bring any mementos that you wish to share. Attendees will also learn how events brought about the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps program that included the construction of Poe Valley State Park. An original rare film featuring the Poe Valley Camp will also be shown.

Enjoy a lunch inspired by authentic CCC menu boards. While there is no set cost for lunch, donations to help cover costs are appreciated.

The Foreman's Boys: The Story of Civilian Conservation Corps, Company 1333, Camp S-63, Poe Valley by William Marcum is available for sale on our website and at the Centre Furnace Mansion

For full details and to RSVP for lunch, visit CentreHistory.org/CCC or call 814-234-4779.

Centre Gives

May 10, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. May 11

The Centre County Historical Society has participated in Centre Gives since its first year in 2012. We could not have imagined its impact at that time for CCHS and so many other area non-profits.

Donations that have come from the generosity of Centre Gives donors have helped us through lean and challenging times and we cannot begin to thank Centre Foundation and all of our donors who participate in this amazing giving event.

Your contributions to CCHS through Centre Gives provide critical funds that help support the many ongoing programs and activities that the Historical Society hosts and the historic treasures that it owns and maintains.

If you have attended talks or exhibitions, volunteered as a docent or gardened in the Mansion's period-inspired gardens, been an intern, helped with collections or data entry projects, volunteered for events, written for a newsletter or publication, then you are familiar CCHS's mission. You probably already know that through these and other activities, we work in collaboration with local, regional, county and state organizations and individuals to help preserve and promote Centre County's historic, cultural, and natural resources.

There are many items on the daily do list to make the Centre Furnace Mansion, the Boogersburg School and the activities at these sites and beyond available to the public. Your donations help us to accomplish these mission goals.

DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS: Anyone who holds a Donor-Advised Fund at Centre Foundation may recommend distributions to participating organizations prior to the event. These grant distributions will qualify for the stretch pool through Centre Gives. Centre Foundation will also accept Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) from IRAs prior to the event. Please contact our office at (814) 237-6229 or info@centre-foundation.org for more information.

PRIZES: Your donation to the Centre County Historical Society through Centre Gives will not only qualify CCHS for a larger share of Centre Foundation's \$300,000 stretch pool, but for additional prize money during the event as well. Power Hour Prizes are awarded to the organization with the most number of donors during that timeframe.

**DONATE TO CCHS BETWEEN
8:00-9:00AM
WEDNESDAY, MAY 10
FOR THE NESTLERODE & LOY
KICK-OFF POWER PRIZE OF \$500!**

We can help you make a donation by phone! Call us at 234-4779 on May 10 and 11 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. if you would like help by phone or would like to stop in.

28th Annual Plant Celebration

Saturday, May 13, 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Centre County Historical Society will hold its 28th Annual Plant Celebration at the Centre Furnace Mansion to benefit the gardens and grounds. Hosted by the CFM Gardeners, the sale will take place on Saturday, May 13, from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. rain or shine! We enthusiastically welcome the public for this annual CCHS tradition to celebrate the Mansion's gardens and all who keep them beautiful.



Plant Sale: Plants and garden-related items for sale by the CFM Gardeners and a number of returning and new vendors.

Book Sale: Gently used garden books and CCHS publications will be for sale in the Mansion Hearth Room.

Open House: Centre Furnace Mansion will be open for visitors to explore.

Ask a Master Gardener: Penn State Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners of Centre County will answer questions, identify and evaluate plant samples.

Coffee, tea and baked goods will be available from **Standing Stone Coffee Company**, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Parking: Parking is available in the grass lot off E. College Avenue and in the parking lot off Porter Rd. Please be aware of parking attendants!

Volunteers are still needed!: Call us at 814-234-4779 or sign up online at CentreHistory.org/plant.

2023 Participating Vendors

Centre Furnace Mansion Gardeners
Backyard Forest
Brenda Horner Artworks
Common Ground Organic Farm
Deb's Flower Farm
Go Native Tree Farm
Notecards by Esther Del Rosso
Rose Franklin's Perennial s
Shuey's Market and Greenhouse
Sinking Valley Studios
The Rock Garden

Read More at CentreHistory.org.

Other Local Plant Sales

May 13 - Lemont Village Association annual Plant Sale, 9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. on the Village Green Details at lemontvillage.org.

May 6 - Central Pa Native Plant Festival, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at Millbrook Marsh Nature Center. Full details at panativeplantsociety.org.

May 20 - Centre County Master Gardener Plant Sale, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Penn State's Ag Progress Days site.

Mansion Restoration Phase 2

Work on the Mansion's second phase of restoration is well under way with off-site work completed over the winter. The shutters are finished and in storage waiting for the remainder of the exterior work to be done. Window sashes were restored with great care, replacing broken panes with antique glass, and are near completion with most having been re-installed. After a meticulous process of measuring windows to make sure our custom storm windows will fit as intended, the order has been placed.

What remains is to complete restoration and repairs on the Mansion's 13 doors, prepare and paint the exterior brick and wooden surfaces, put the final coat of paint on the window sashes, replace hardware that is missing or requires replacement, and re-install the shutters. Work continues to be on track for completion this fall.

We invite you to stop out any time to see the progress. If you would like to schedule a time to learn more, please reach out to Mary Sorensen at 814-234-4623 or email msorensen@centrefurnace.org.



Haven Tucker with Anders Olsen Construction and Renovations preparing to re-install restored window sashes.

We extend our gratitude to Phase 2 Mansion Restoration Fund Donors:

David L. Grove
 Thomas Smith
 Charles H. Smith
 Gift in honor of James B. Smith
 Anne Hamilton Henszey Pyle and Kenneth Pyle
 Linda and Blake Gall
 Robert Van Druff and
 Cynthia Dawso Van Druff
 Roger Eisinger
 Karen Ross
 Robert Veronesi
 George and Ann Johnstone
 Thomas and Sara Songer
 Henrietta Baylor
 Christine Allgood

Carnegie House Exhibit

A new display featuring images from the Scotia Barrens and Centre County's past has recently been installed at the Carnegie House.

Thank you to Bob Hazelton for his extensive research and work on this project and to Dick Hayes for his help.

Bob Hazelton worked with Kathy Davies from the Old Main Frame Shop to bring the images from digital format to beautifully framed art for guests at the Carnegie House to enjoy. Room design is by Susan Brown, Spaces Design.

Thank you to The Poole Foundation for its donation to the Centre County Historical Society toward this project.



Scotia images in the Carnegie House were provided Bob Hazelton.

Docents' Corner

Many thanks to Dick Pencek for providing a Docent Committee educational talk about his "What is It?" display in the Mansion's period kitchen. And many thanks to docents and greeters.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, May 25, at 1:00 p.m. Mary Sorensen will be doing a talk after the meeting about the restoration efforts at the Centre Furnace Mansion starting in the 1980s to present.

Tours are picking up as the weather warms! We invite you to join us for a tour on Wednesday, Friday or Sunday between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m.



CCHS Docent Committee at February meeting talk by Dick Pencek.

Gardeners' Corner

Just as it became warm enough to garden this year, it was time to start potting for the Plant Celebration! Needless to say, we have been thankful for student volunteers from Penn State Circle K, The Bridge Initiative, JustServe volunteers and students Grant Hughes and Kenneth Ojeikere who have helped with gardening duties this spring



Example of fossilized stromatolite on the Mansion grounds.

Gardener and geologist Mike Canich is always on the watch for unusual rocks and, while edging one Thursday gardening day, found a rare example of fossilized stromatolite on the grounds. It is unknown whether it existed here or was brought to the grounds at one point.

Many thanks go out to our Garden Committee for their work to plant, weed, water and learn!



Garden Committee Co-Chair Beverly Lipski leading a tool maintenance workshop for the Garden Committee in February.

If you have an interest in gardening at the Mansion, our regular day is Thursday 1:00-4:00 p.m. and, when the weather becomes too warm, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Please contact Mary Sorensen at 814-234-4779 or email msorensen@centrefurnace.org if you would like to attend or receive emails about gardening. You will learn a great deal from seasoned gardeners, most of whom are Master Gardeners. We also warmly welcome you to simply join us any Thursday!

Students and Interns

Megan Kelby will be finishing up her internship at the end of the spring semester. She volunteered in the fall of 2022 and has been working with Jackie Esposito's guidance to process the Nadine Kofman collection that includes much material relating to Paul Dubbs as well as the Hamilton papers donated last fall by Anne Hamilton Henszey Pyle and Kenneth Pyle. Megan has also written an encyclopedia article about Nadine Kofman that will be featured on the *Centre County Encyclopedia of History and Culture*.



Intern Megan Kelby and Professor Mike Milligan

Earlier in the spring, Jackie Esposito nominated CCHS intern Megan Kelby and University Club intern Lauren Mazzatesta for an AAUW (American Association for University Women/State College Branch) award. AAUW sought nominations of women students from Penn State to sponsor for the National Conference for College Women Student Leaders to be held at the University of Maryland at the end of May <https://www.aauw.org/resources/events/nccwsl/>. The branch is

sending two students to the conference and Megan and Lauren were both deservedly selected. Congratulations to both and many thanks to Jackie for making this happen!!

We are thankful for the many things that people do every day to help out with CCHS. Whether through service, donated items, or providing program support. We thank the following for their contributions:

Betty Arnold

Amandeep Cheema

Paula Wilson

JustServe Volunteers

Many thanks to Ford Risley for his March program *Reporting the Civil War*.

Volunteer Appreciation Reception

Tuesday, June 8, 5:00 p.m.

@ The Centre Furnace Mansion

As an expression of our appreciation, CCHS is hosting a reception on **Tuesday, June 8, at 5:00 p.m.** to celebrate all of you who have contributed your time and talent to CCHS. Please RSVP by e-mailing Johanna at jsedgwick@centrefurnace.org or call us at 814-234-4779.

Alpha Fire Co. Eyes 125th

By Bob Hazelton

In 2024, the Alpha Fire Company of State College will celebrate its 125th anniversary. Plans are under way to celebrate the event of this all-volunteer organization, which boasts more than 100 active members. But it is more than just an organization that works to save lives and property. It is part and parcel of the unique history of State College; as the town and campus grew, so did the Alphas.

The company's beginnings can be traced to George T. Graham, born in Fillmore, Benner Township, in 1873. His family moved to Philipsburg where George, at age 14, quit school to become a barber's apprentice. George married and moved to State College in 1896 to open his own barbershop. In 1899, still working as a barber, George and some 30 citizens formed the Union Fire Company. The next year, the name was changed to the Alpha Fire Company and George was elected as its first president.

As such, George was appointed to ask Penn State President George W. Atherton for permission to use the campus Armory for an Alphas fundraising fair. Graham was not an educated man, compared with President Atherton, and thus dreaded the meeting. Atherton congenially welcomed him, however, and granted the use of the Armory. The event was successful, enabling the Alphas to purchase a hand-drawn hook-and-ladder truck, their first piece of firefighting equipment. The two Georges became good friends, with Graham regularly visiting Atherton on campus to cut his hair and trim his beard.



George T. Graham
First Alpha President

The Alphas held additional fundraising events over the years to build a fire station. In 1908, the new facility opened its doors on Fraser Street between College and Beaver avenues, centrally located to serve the town.

The Alphas were not the first fire company in State College, however. That distinction belonged to the Student Fire Company, organized in 1862 and equipped with ten buckets and one ladder. With the formation of the Alphas 37 years later, a rivalry developed which often resulted in turning hoses on each other while fighting a fire.

The rivalry continued with the Alphas buying their first motorized vehicle in 1922. The Student Fire Company—by then known as the P.S.C. Fire Company—responded by buying a fire truck the next year. In 1924, the College and the Alphas reached an historic agreement: Penn State would discontinue the student organization and instead provide funding for fire protection to the Alphas. The College also would allow the student firefighters to join the Alphas.

If George Graham had done nothing more than to organize the Alpha Fire Company, his place in State College history would be secure. But he did so much more to build up his adopted town.

He had closed his barbershop in 1911 and in 1916 opened the first restaurant in State College. At some point George became a confectioner and dispenser of sundries—newspapers, magazines, tobacco, ice cream and candy at what became a State College institution on South Allen Street.



The Alpha's Reo tanker truck on the left with Penn State's Autocar on the right—the result of the 1924 agreement when the Penn State operation merged with the Alpha Fire Company. Surprisingly, George Graham was not in the photo. But his 21-year-old son, Robert, stands in the back in the black suit coat.

In addition to being involved with organizing the Alpha Fire Company, Graham helped organize the Chamber of Commerce, the Grace Lutheran Church, and the first Red Cross drive. He did well for someone who finished only two years of high school. If you have been around for more than a few years in State College, you may recall the popular Graham & Sons store that existed well into the 1970s.

A dapper man, George was typically seen around town, dressed to the nines, wearing spats, and carrying a cane. He soon became known as “The Duke of Allen Street.” By 1930 he owned his own home and was the first person in State College to own a radio. In his 92 years George Graham witnessed a small town and campus grow from 600 to 50,000 by the time of his death in 1965.

He also witnessed three major fires in State College's early days, one of which destroyed his business. The first occurred in August 1917—before any significant firefighting equipment existed—when the Snyder Building near the corner of Allen and West College burned to the ground. All that could be done was to keep neighboring buildings from catching fire.

The next year, in November 1918, the pride of the campus—the large Romanesque-style Engineering Building, built in 1893 at the corner of College and Allen—was destroyed in a spectacular blaze. With the building no longer salvageable, the firefighters directed their efforts toward the rooftops of the buildings across College Avenue, which were threatened by flying embers.

The third major fire occurred on New Year's Eve 1924. Ironically, it was the Litzell Building and adjoining structures at the corner of College and Allen. The Alphas were severely hampered as the nearby fire hydrants were frozen. Hose lines had to be run from Pugh Street. The fire destroyed about a dozen businesses including Graham's. It would be rebuilt in 1926 and George would carry on his business at the same location for nearly 40 years.

These three terrible fires—occurring in the same area within a span of seven years—no doubt had a big impact on the importance of the Alpha Fire Company in the State College community.

I personally became aware of the Alpha Fire Company in the early 1960s, when the fire siren would wail and my firefighting engineering graphics professor, Bill Arble, would bolt for the door. Knowing he would probably not be back before class was over, students began to trickle off, but I stayed, hoping for a false alarm.

For this Penn State student leaving his rooming house in the mid-1960s, the Fraser Street Fire Hall was a familiar

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Butting Heads

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The Beech Creek Railroad's viaduct across the Moshannon Creek. This view looks toward the Centre County side. Provided by author.

Railroad reached Milesburg in 1862, the Bellefonte and Snow Shoe's only connection to distant markets was by way of the Bald Eagle and Spring Creek Navigation, a 25-mile canal linking Bellefonte with Lock Haven. Remarkably, the Bellefonte and Snow Shoe evaded the PRR's grasp until 1881, when the larger road bought it and renamed it the Snow Shoe Branch.

By that time, coal overshadowed all other natural resources coming from the Mountaintop and the Moshannon Valley. The latter by the mid-1870s was the PRR's largest source of bituminous coal traffic. As much as three million tons annually was shipped from Osceola to Tyrone. From there it was forwarded over the main line to East Coast destinations or sent east over the Bald Eagle Branch, bound for the Lake Ontario docks or New England consignees. Often marketed as "Moshannon Coal," it was more properly termed the Lower Freeport seam, laying in beds up to six feet thick. The coal was prized for its high BTU and low ash content and was especially favored as fuel for steamships. The Snow Shoe Branch yielded far less coal—175,000 tons in 1890, a typical year—but it usually found a ready market as well.

A Branch Line Empire is Born

From the main stems of both the Clearfield and Snow Shoe Branches, a host of shorter branches sprouted as new coal mines were developed. By 1892, for example, the Clearfield Branch and its tributaries were serving more than a hundred mines and numerous mining hamlets. Branches on the Centre County side of the Moshannon Creek included the Ghem, Trout Run, M&C, Beaver, and Leskie—names almost forgotten today, but from these obscure lines came the fuel that powered the nation's industrial economy.

About the time that lumbermen were harvesting the last of the major forest stands, exploitation of flint clay deposits began along the eastern edge of the Allegheny plateau. Flint clay was a hard material relatively free from iron and alkalies, ideal for making firebrick that lined blast furnaces, locomotive and steamship fireboxes, and kilns of all sorts. By the 1890s, the Sandy Ridge brickyard was producing more than 15

million bricks a year and had become the Pennsylvania Railroad's largest source of firebrick.

The New York Central Stirs

The treasure of natural resources being hauled by the Pennsylvania Railroad did not go unnoticed by the New York Central. While the PRR's east-west main line ran through central Pennsylvania, the Central's main line traversed upstate New York, far from important coal and clay reserves. The Central procured much of its locomotive coal from the Blossburg area in Tioga County, where it was mined and shipped by an amalgam of firms under the umbrella of the Fall Brook Coal and Railway Company, headed by George Magee of Watkins, New York. By 1880 Blossburg coal was thought to be nearing exhaustion. Alarmed, Magee and William Henry Vanderbilt, whose family ruled the New York Central, joined with a few of their associates in forming the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Company to acquire coal fields in central Pennsylvania.

To access these fields, the Fall Brook first secured control of a newly built railroad extending from Tioga County south to Williamsport, where it connected with the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad. From a point on this line at Jersey Shore, a new company eventually known as the Beech Creek Railroad (BCR) was formed to build west toward Centre and Clearfield Counties. Both the Fall Brook and the Beech Creek were in fact if not in name subsidiaries of the New York Central. Among the principals were Magee, Vanderbilt, and S.R. Peale, a prominent Lock Haven attorney who oversaw land acquisitions for the new companies.

The Beech Creek Railroad

Veteran surveyor Samuel Brugger of Unionville laid out the Beech Creek Railroad's alignment. Instead of assaulting the Allegheny Front head on in the manner of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Brugger followed the course of Beech Creek (the waterway) from the floor of the Bald Eagle Valley to the high ground near Snow Shoe. Where the PRR struggled with grades approaching 3 percent (a three-foot rise per 100 feet of length), Brugger kept the BCR's ascent to about 1 percent. The route was also flanked by rich deposits of flint clay. Brickyards were soon established in the town of Beech Creek and at the new towns of Monument and Orviston.

Coal, too, was plentiful, beginning just below the North and South Forks of Beech Creek, where the village of Kato sprouted in the valley and a mine bore into the hillside high above. Another new coal town along the railroad was christened Peale. The Clearfield Bituminous Coal Company established the settlement to provide housing for miners

and their families attracted to the area by the opening of nearby mines and coke ovens. Farther west, after diving into the 1,277-foot Peale Tunnel, the railroad emerged to cross the Moshannon Creek from Centre to Clearfield County on a mammoth iron viaduct. It then paralleled the Moshannon as far as Munson, from which point the main line headed for more coal deposits in Clearfield County while a branch continued up the creek to Philipsburg.



Passenger station at Monument, one of the "brickyard towns" created with the coming of the Beech Creek Railroad. Provided by author.

The Vanderbilts Visit Philipsburg

Excitement in that community reached fever pitch at the prospect of
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Butting Heads

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a new railroad that would bring relief from the perceived ills of the PRR's monopoly. On November 20, 1884, a few weeks before regular service began, a special train arrived in Philipsburg bearing corporate royalty: Cornelius Vanderbilt II, who had succeeded his father William Henry Vanderbilt as head of the New York Central, and Cornelius's brother, William K. Vanderbilt. They were feted that evening at a Potter House banquet, where the oratory no doubt flowed as freely as the brandy. At length, the honored guests retired to their train for the overnight journey back to Jersey Shore and ultimately New York.

The Beech Creek Railroad spun a web of short branches and spurs to serve coal and clay mines that was only slightly less dense than the PRR's network. In 1887, the BCR reported hauling 1.3 million tons of coal and in a few more years exceeded 2 million tons annually, surpassing tonnage that the PRR was originating in the Moshannon Valley. The Beech Creek even captured some coal traffic formerly routed over PRR rails from Osceola Mills—as much as 200,000 tons a year, according to one mine owner. Many businessmen claimed that the BCR's service in general was superior to that offered by the PRR. Rail cars laden with freight ranging from fresh produce to livestock to dry goods often made the trip from Philadelphia to Philipsburg (via the Philadelphia & Reading as far as Williamsport) in 24 hours. (It is worth noting that so far as is known, no Philipsburger nor any other Centre Countian had invested in the Beech Creek Railroad. The absence of such financial commitment calls into the question the extent to which communities were actually being ill-served by the PRR's monopoly.)



A gondola belonging to Berwind-White, one of the nation's largest coal mining and marketing companies. The firm got its start in the Moshannon Valley in the 1870s. Provided by author.

PRR's "Indifference" to NYC

The Pennsylvania Railroad made little attempt to bar its competitor from territory it had previously claimed as its exclusive domain. When the New York Central, through its Fall Brook and Beech Creek affiliates, first cast eyes on central Pennsylvania, reports in the trade press attributed the move to the Central's critical need for locomotive coal. The PRR's senior executives, probably the most adept railroad managers of that era, surely were not deceived. They must have known where the Vanderbilts were headed and why.

One possible explanation of the Pennsylvania's indifference is hinted at in an 1883 report by C.S. D'Invilliers, the PRR's chief of branch line construction. He pointed out that the fabulous seam of Lower Freeport coal was nearing exhaustion in the Osceola Mills area; the PRR should turn its attention to providing rail access to reserves further up the Moshannon Valley. The coal in the lower section of the valley—the Kittanning seams—was thinner and deeper and considered in most ways inferior to the Lower Freeport. Let

the New York Central and its Clearfield Bituminous Coal Company satellite have it, D'Invilliers recommended.



A passenger train departs Osceola Mills for Tyrone in this postcard view. The station is at right, a railroad office building is seen at left. Provided by author.

J.P. Morgan Intervenes

As events continued to play out, a means to neutralize the Central's incursion presented itself in an unlikely way. For several years prior to the formation of the Beech Creek Railroad, a syndicate of industrialists that included Andrew Carnegie and William Henry Vanderbilt had bankrolled an effort to build a railroad—the South Penn—from a connection with the Philadelphia & Reading at Harrisburg west to Pittsburgh. Their objective was to break the PRR's near-monopoly on rail shipments to and from the Steel City and thus reduce freight rates in general and in particular for Carnegie's companies. The PRR retaliated by supporting a projected railroad—the West Shore—that would parallel the New York Central's main line north along the Hudson River to Albany, then west toward Buffalo.

Not long after construction began on the South Penn, financier J. P. Morgan intervened. He feared the railroad network would grow beyond the needs of the marketplace; subsequent cutthroat competition might send rates plummeting to a level where no carrier could earn a decent return on investment. Morgan brokered a private settlement whereby the South Penn for all practical purposes would be abandoned, the West Shore would be folded into the Vanderbilt empire, and control of the Beech Creek Railroad would be ceded to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

While the Vanderbilts had few qualms about losing the Beech Creek, Magee and Peale were mortified. Magee vented his displeasure in private. In public utterances, he was the good soldier and supported the plan, although without enthusiasm. Peale, on the other hand, went so far as to give an interview to the New York Times in which he denounced the PRR takeover and insisted that "freight rates are 20 to 50 percent less than a year ago, owing to Beech Creek competition."

The matter came to a head at a public meeting in Bellefonte in September 1885. Representatives from mining companies and other shippers elected General James A. Beaver to chair a committee charged with petitioning Governor Robert E. Pattison to block PRR control of the Beech Creek. (Beaver himself held interests in mining properties in Beech Creek territory.) The Pennsylvania Railroad had openly opposed Pattison in the recent gubernatorial election, so there was no surprise when he allied himself with the state attorney general in obtaining a temporary injunction halting the takeover. The attorney general argued that the state constitution prohibited a railroad from taking over a parallel line. On appeal the state supreme court agreed with this flexible interpretation of "parallel," and the Beech Creek Railroad remained a New York Central property. In 1899

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the Central formalized its control of the BCR by leasing it for 999 years.

Passenger Service Rates Low Priority

There was little competition between the PRR and the Beech Creek for passengers. The railroad industry at large regarded branch-line passenger trains as marginal business, to be operated as a public obligation and to carry mail and express, which usually accounted for any profit the trains earned. Passenger service on both railroads was strictly a no-frills, day-coach only proposition, with one exception. In 1885 the Beech Creek inaugurated the Philadelphia & New York Express that ran nightly between Philipsburg and Williamsport and carried a sleeping car that ran through via the Reading to Philadelphia. Conversely, Philipsburg-bound passengers could board a sleeper in Philadelphia, which was switched to the Philipsburg Express upon arrival in Williamsport. Those trains constituted the only scheduled sleeping car service ever operated in Centre County. The demand for such service was weak. Within a few years, the western origin/terminus was changed to Clearfield; by 1897 the sleeper was eliminated altogether.



Beech Creek Railroad engine No. 1. The lettering on BCR locomotives was changed to "New York Central" when the Central leased the Beech Creek in 1899. Provided by author.

The 20th Century Turns the Table

The nineteenth century was a time of expansion and competition for the PRR and the Central; the twentieth century was an era of contraction and alliance. The two railroads faced common economic headwinds as petroleum and other sources of energy began to supplant coal. Technological advances made blast furnaces, steam locomotives, and the like obsolete, not only reducing the need for coal but also decimating the firebrick industry. Competition from trucks using publicly funded highways presented yet another problem for the railroads. How they dealt with those and other challenges is a long and complex story and constitutes a separate chapter in the history of the Pennsylvania and the New York Central railroads in Centre County.

Source:

Bezilla, Michael (with Luther Gette), *Branch Line Empires: The Pennsylvania and the New York Central Railroads*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017.

Read about the Bellefonte Central Railroad at CentreHistory.org/encyclopedia and search "Railroad."

Alpha Fire Company History

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Leitzell Building in 1926, rebuilt after the 1924 fire at the corner of East College and South Allen Street.

landmark to walk by on the way to class. Many who have lived in the State College area will remember the Fourth of July Carnivals and the parades that wound through campus and town. In 1974, nearly a half-century ago, the Alphas moved to their present location, known as Station 5, at the corner of West Beaver and South Atherton. Since then, much has been added in the way of new technology and ever more sophisticated equipment, as well as satellite facilities at strategic locations.

At root, however, the history of the Alpha Fire Company is a long list of dedicated men and women who have risked their lives in this demanding occupation. The training is extensive and time consuming, a big commitment for unpaid volunteers. Between fire calls, much energy is spent in maintaining the equipment. And every Christmas, the Alphas load Santa Claus onto the truck and, with lights flashing and horns blaring, escort him through our wonderful community to the delight of young and old alike.

The Alphas' contributions to State College and the Centre Region are certainly impressive. In 2021, a much busier year than pandemic-restricted 2020, they responded to 1,255 incidents—that's an average of 3.4 incidents per day. These incidents run the gamut: from 372 automatic alarm calls to 98 hazardous condition incidents; 77 rescues; 58 building fires; 43 other fires (brush, etc.) and 12 vehicle fires; 42 police assistance calls; and numerous false alarms. The Alphas also provided mutual aid to other fire departments—126 times in 2021.

Beyond the statistics, the sense of safety and security the Alphas lend our larger community day in and day out is simply incalculable. Whatever happens, we can rest assured the Alphas will always turn out in force.

That dependability is made possible in large part by the Centre Region Council of Governments, which is the primary funding and administrative force for Alpha. Paid COG employees provide administrative support for the Alphas, taking that load away from the volunteer firefighters. And several years ago, the Alphas started a "live in" program. Members can apply for a room at any of the fire stations in exchange for being at the station and responding to calls.

So there's a lot to celebrate next year. The Alphas' 125th anniversary celebration committee has started meeting and some exciting plans are being considered. The Centre County Historical Society is looking forward to sharing in the celebration of this great protective force throughout the history of our community. We can never thank the Alpha Fire Company enough for what they do for us, the residents in and around State College.

President's Corner

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college selection and admissions counseling firm, College Gateways. She and Harvey retired and moved back to State College in 2009, especially to care for Heather's aged mother Virginia who had passed her 100th birthday. They moved into Virginia's house, which is a veritable museum of Penn State and State College memorabilia. Since their return, Heather has done much community volunteerism and currently serves as chair of the board of the Boalsburg Heritage Museum.

Virginia Dale Ricker

Heather's mother, Virginia Dale Ricker (sixth generation), died in 2012, at 104 years of age. Long before then, however, she was renowned as a Grande Dame of State College and "Mrs. Hospitality," as *Town&Gown* writer Jo Chesworth dubbed her in 1988.



Virginia Dale Ricker

Virginia's life story has been the subject of numerous articles and profiles. She was born in 1907 on Shady Dale Farm, along Slab Cabin Run in a house built by her great-grandfather. She was the daughter of Mary Fry Dale and Charles Milton Dale. She graduated from Penn State in 1929 with a degree in English (the only one of her siblings to attend college) and earned an M.Ed in English in 1936. Her teaching career began in Hublersburg and later at Abington High School. There, in 1935, she met Ralph "Dutch" Ricker, a history teacher and coach.

Virginia and Ralph had a Penn State connection. A Carlisle native, Ralph graduated in 1930 with a degree in history. He played football as center for coach Hugo Bezdek and was a team captain through Bezdek's last season in 1929. After graduation, Ralph was hired by West Chester State Teachers College as dean of men and later as the assistant football coach under his mentor and friend Glenn Killinger, a Walter Camp All-American halfback at Penn State under Bezdek in 1921.

Virginia and Ralph were married in 1936 at Zion Lutheran Church in Boalsburg. In 1946, with Ralph teaching history and coaching football, the couple moved to Dickinson College and then to Lebanon Valley College. They moved back to Penn State in 1952, when Ralph was hired as special assistant to new athletics director and dean of the College of Health and Physical Education Ernie McCoy. Ralph earned his Ph.D. in history in 1955—the year U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower awarded the diplomas. During his tenure at Penn State, Ralph was instrumental in the establishment of the Levi Lamb Fund, oversaw athletics admissions and eligibility, and served as associate professor of sports history, retiring from the University in 1970.

In 1952, upon their return, Virginia became a full-time faculty member in the speech department at Penn State and later the English department. One of her courses, "Careers for Women," became foundational to the later Women's Studies Program. She taught for 40 years in various places and retired from Penn State in 1970.

Virginia combined a full-time career as a faculty member with active participation in many community and professional organizations, while cultivating and nurturing a wide network of friends, colleagues, and younger academic

women. With an effervescent, enthusiastic personality, she served as hostess for numerous groups and welcomed countless guests into the family home (built by her father as a home for his retirement in 1929) at the conjunction of East Whitehall and Old Boalsburg roads.



Charles Dale

Charles Dale

Virginia's father, Charles or "Charley" Dale (5th generation), was a lifelong farmer, his former farm now partly occupied by Foxdale Village Retirement Community. Charley was born in 1866 in College Township, where he received his education and helped his father Henry Dale on the farm and in the family store. He married Mary Fry in 1890 and took over the farm. His old farmhouse house still stands behind CVS Pharmacy at University Drive and South Atherton Street. In 1929 he moved into the "retirement home" he had built previously and what later became "Ricker Manor," where Virginia and Ralph eventually lived and where Heather and Harvey live today. Charley Dale died in 1940.

A news item from Bellefonte's *Democratic Watchman* of September 27, 1907, noted that "Charley Dale says he can't finish seeding for a few days at least, not on account of the weather, but because a little black headed girl came to his home Monday evening to stay." That little black-headed girl was Virginia, born September 21, 1907, the last of his five children. Virginia was delivered by a cousin, Dr. J.T. Dale of Lemont, a great-grandson of Felix Dale, one of Christian's children.

Charley's father, Henry Dale (4th Generation), was born in 1828 and died in 1896. Henry's father was Christian Dale (3rd Generation), born in 1806, deceased in 1885. Christian's father was Henry Dale (2nd Generation), born in 1758, deceased in 1844.

And Henry's father was the family patriarch, Christian Dale, born in 1733 in the German Palatinate, deceased in 1805, and buried in the Old Dale Cemetery in Lemont. How the names Christian and Henry persisted through the generations!

Of course, this simple genealogy belies the larger complexity of hundreds if not thousands of Dale descendants in Centre County and beyond. It is meant only to trace Heather's direct lineage through seven generations to the Patriarch Christian, born nearly 300 years ago. Although Virginia had two children, (Heather and Jenny) her father Charles had five; his father Henry likewise five; his father Christian, fifteen; his father Henry, five; and the Patriarch Christian, nine. Some of the issue were stillborn, or died in infancy or childhood, but most lived on, not a few of them to ripe old age.

Christian Dale's Story

The progenitor of this line, Christian Dale (his surname Anglicized from the German "Diehl"), left the Palatinate at age 16 on the ship Edenburg and landed at Philadelphia in 1749. During the first half of the eighteenth century, many German young men realized they had no opportunity to rise in the German states, and, in any event, would likely be conscripted by the military, never to return. The fierce religious wars of Protestants vs. Catholics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and even into the first decades of the eighteenth century added great stress and danger to everyday life.

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President's Corner

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Germans were enticed to leave by the advertisements of William Penn and his heirs as well as the testimony of family and friends who had emigrated earlier. Pennsylvania promised rich farmland, personal and religious freedom, and a fresh start to life in Penn's tolerant, "peaceable kingdom." Germans immigrated to Pennsylvania in droves, threatening to overrun the original English and later Scots-Irish. By the nineteenth century, Germans were comfortably in profusion in the fourteen "distinctively German counties" in the populous southeast quadrant of the Commonwealth.

In 1754, Christian married Rachel Krebs, who also had also been born in Germany. In 1772, the couple moved to land outside Lewisburg, in the Buffalo Valley. In 1790—a year after John Patton arrived from Philadelphia to begin building Centre Furnace—the Dales moved to the western end of Nittany Mountain. He had sold his Lewisburg farm to buy his "Plantation" as he called it—on the Boalsburg Road between Lemont and Oak Hall. He originally bought 326 acres costing 406 English pounds. He first built a log cabin, housing wife Rachel and many of his nine children born between 1756 and 1774. He then built a sawmill and gristmill, and later a woolen mill, damming Spring Creek as a power source.

In 1792, Christian with his sons Henry and Felix started to build a handsome stone house, still standing along Spring Creek, on the same site as the cabin—which was preserved for years to remind his descendants of their humble origins. The stone house was soon added on to, so that his sons could use it as an inn and tavern. He received a license in 1803 to keep a hotel and to dispense "Spirits." After several stages of development, the house was finally finished by son Felix in 1823.

Today the Christian Dale home, located off the Boalsburg Road between Lemont, and Oak Hall, stands beautifully restored and preserved by owners Harold and Susan Parks. Harold,



Christian-Felix Dale House

an alumnus of George School in Quakertown, earned his B.S. at Dartmouth and Ph.D. at Princeton. An emeritus professor of mathematics at Oregon State University, Harold and Susan moved back in 2017 to his boyhood home, previously owned by his late father, Dr. L. Raymond Parks, Jr., a well-known physician, and mother Marjorie.

Listed on both the Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places (1982) as the Felix Dale House, the home is a fitting monument to the pioneering Christian Dale, as enduring as the generations he beget. Through hard work and enterprise during the 15 years he lived in Centre County, Christian "was able to amass a considerable fortune," according to the *Commemorative Biographical Record of Central Pennsylvania*. "He was one of those sterling old Germans to whom Pennsylvania owed so much, and whose walk in life was measured by the rule: Be just and fear not."

Christian, age 72, died in 1805, followed by wife Rachel, age 76, in 1808. They are interred on the old Dale burying ground—the oldest cemetery in Centre County—on the mountainside in back of Lemont. But the line they created went forth and multiplied, contributing to the growth and prosperity of Centre County through the ensuing two centuries.

And contributing to the nation's founding as well: Christian's son Henry, born in 1758, fought in the Revolution. He was one of the soldiers who crossed the Delaware with Washington that bitter December night in 1776 when American fortunes were at their lowest ebb—fortunes redeemed by the victories at Trenton and Princeton. It is through Henry that the Boalsburg Dales—including Virginia and her daughters Mary Virginia and Heather—trace their line, which in Heather's case continues with her adult children Jacob, Rebecca, and Alexander, and Jinny's children Burch, Christopher, and Cabell.

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Remembering Friends

We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of CCHS members who have passed away. Their involvement with CCHS has been a gift and their presence will be missed.

Roger Balmer
William Wild



Member and volunteer
Roger Balmer

CCHS Membership Again Exceeds 800

As of April 21, the 2023 CCHS membership campaign enrolled 840 members in four categories—new, renewing, sustaining, and life. This marks the second consecutive year that membership has topped the 800 mark. Last year, the final member count on September 30 was 879, a total we are working to surpass this year. Our new Sustaining Membership program was introduced in January and already has enrolled 17 members. We thank you for your interest, enthusiasm, and support in belonging to the CCHS family!

Renewing Members

Jan Abelow Donahue & Bill Donahue
 Elliot & Bonnie Abrams
 Ellis & Lynn Abramson
 Joyce Adgate
 Carolyn Anderson
 Anonymous
 Patricia Antoloso
 Frank Archibald
 Betty Arnold
 Debbie Arnold
 Dan & Wendy Azzara
 Clarence & Darlene Bachmann
 Charlie & Don Bainbridge
 Scott & Sandy Balboni
 Roger Balmer & Kathy Johnston
 Rich & Kathy Barrickman
 Keith Barry
 Ann Barton
 Henrietta Baylor
 Kirk Behrer
 R. Thomas & Paulette Berner
 Michael & Deborah Bezilla
 Frederick Bisbee
 David & Randi Blauth
 Anita Genger & Eric Boeldt
 Ned & Inga Book
 Ian Boswell
 John & Marolyn Boswell
 Blannie & Cathy Bowen
 Steve Bowman
 Barry Bram & Laura Perry
 Joshua & Michelle Bram
 Nancy Burch Brassington
 Scott & Gisela Bresler
 Gloria Briggs
 David & Virginia Brown
 Jane & Dennis Brown
 Charles Brown, Jr.
 Richard Bryant
 Tannis & Steve Bugaj
 O. Richard Bundy Jr. & Christine Bundy
 O. Richard Bundy III
 Kathy & Rod Burnham
 Gary & Marilyn Byers
 Pam & Chris Calkins
 Elisa Campbell
 Jim & Ellen Campbell
 V. Star Campbell
 Lee Ann & James Candor
 Mike & Katherine Canich
 Amy & Nick Caputo
 Dr. Fred Carlin & Robin Stevens
 Robert & Marge Carline
 Dr. Richard Carlson & Lori Forlizzi
 Nancy Chiswick & Art Patterson
 Monty & Connie Christiansen
 Joyce & Roy Christini
 Drs. Joseph H. & Christy A. Clapper
 Ronald & Hope Coder
 Ellen Coffman
 David & Lisa Coggins
 Catherine Cohan
 John Collins & Mary Brown
 Ted & Carla Conklin
 Lee & Joan Coraor
 Anne Cornell & Tom Houseknecht
 Connie Cousins
 Patsy Cullen
 Debra Daggis & John Walls
 Tom Daubert & Nancy Crane
 Evelyn Davidowski
 Edward DeBrasky
 Dave & Nancy Dewalle
 John & Donna Diercks

John & Janet Dillon
 Rich DiMarcello
 Connie & John DiNunzio
 Joann Dornich
 Ronald Dotts
 Vicky Droll
 Marty & Joan Duff
 Polly Dunn
 James & Gay Dunne
 Mary Dupuis
 Mary Eagleton
 Nancy Eaton
 Michele & Walter Ebaugh
 Shari Edelson & Scott Dennison
 Tomas & Katie Ellis
 Terry & Janice Engelder
 Stephen Engroff & Diane Ray
 Julia & Todd Erdley
 Jacqueline Esposito
 Carl Evensen
 Diane & Jim Farr
 Benjamin Fehl
 Jacob Fehl
 Linda Feltman
 Robert & Marcy Fenza
 Renate Ferree
 Joe Fiochetta
 Pat Fisher
 Michael & Clare Fitzgerald
 Heidi Nicholas & Bruce Fleischer
 Rod & Casey Fletcher
 Vicki Fong & Greg Grieco
 Ellen Foster
 Wayne & Lenore Foster
 Tom & Tamra Fountaine
 Lydia Fox
 Donald Franson
 John Frantz
 Jeffrey Frazier
 Bob & Ellen Frederick
 Ron & Susan Friedman
 Dale & Melissa Fritts
 John & Marilyn Furry
 Elizabeth Galbreath
 Ed Galus
 Roger Geiger
 Joe & Nan Geise
 Louis & Judy Geschwindner
 Luther Gette & Thomas Gette
 Megan Gilchrist
 David Glossner
 Judith Goetz
 Amos & Casey Goodall
 Dennis & Marilyn Gouran
 Carol & Lee Gouty
 Mary Alice Graetzer
 Robert & Ann Graves
 Bill & Ann Gray
 Dianne Gregg
 Barbara & Chenzie Grignano
 Chris & Lianne Groshel
 Melody & Barry Grubb
 Anonymous
 James Hackman & Alan Finneccy
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Jacqueline J. Melander Society Reception



Marjorie and Wayland Dunaway, chairs, and Judge Roy Wilkinson, honorary chair, of the Centre Furnace Renaissance Campaign and Jackie Melander, CCHS President during the 1980s restoration of the Centre Furnace Mansion.

The Melander Legacy Society recognizes all those who have notified us that they have included the Centre County Historical Society (CCHS) in their will or other deferred giving plan. The name honors President Emerita Jacqueline J. Melander, who led the CCHS from 1980 to 2015 establishing the Centre Furnace Mansion as a public historic site and the CCHS headquarters.

The Melander Society's purpose is to encourage and recognize those benefactors who want to leave a legacy ensuring that the CCHS can perpetually strengthen its

mission of discovering, collecting, preserving, interpreting, advocating, presenting, and promoting Centre County's history and culture to present and future generations.

A planned gift to the Melander Society can support the Society's mission of advocacy, outreach and education in the area historic preservation. This fund will support such historic preservation efforts as state and national level speakers, efforts such assisting with nominations for the National Register of Historic Places, and fund internships in this field.

If you have already designated the CCHS in your will please let us know so we can add your name to the growing ranks of the Melander Society. If you have not, please consider taking this significant step and let us know by contacting us at the Centre County Historical Society at 814-234-4779, or email msorensen@centrefurnace.org.

An annual reception will be held for Melander Society members and those interested in joining. Our recent reception was in March at the Centre Furnace Mansion and was attended by over 40 guests.

We extend our gratitude to the following members of the Jacqueline J. Melander Society for their support:

Jeffrey M. Bower
 Mimi Barash Coppersmith
 Steven and Carol Gentry
 Robert B. and Janice Hazelton
 Richard W. Pencek
 Dolores Simpson Rose and
 Arthur Rose
 Peter and Mary Sorensen
 Jo Merrell and Floyd Todd

Deborah B. McManus
 Katie O'Toole and Gary Gray
 Alfred H. Taylor Jr. and
 Elizabeth Turner Taylor
 Ford and Mary Risley
 Laura Steifer
 Roger L. Williams and
 Karen Magnuson



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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
- *Mansion Notes* Newsletter
- Advanced notification of upcoming programs via email

Join or renew at <https://centre-county-historical-society.square.site>, or fill out this form and send to CCHS, 1001 E. College Ave., State College, PA 16801 or call us at 814-234-4779. The annual membership period is January through December.

Increase your impact by becoming a Sustaining Member through an ongoing monthly contribution of \$25 per month. To join, visit our website at CentreHistory.org and click on “Membership” at the top of the home page.

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- I would like my membership / donation to remain anonymous.