

Centre County's Selection as the Site for the Farmers' High School

By Roger L. Williams

One hundred fifty years ago, a warm, sunny day in late June turned out to be profoundly significant for Centre County—indeed, the turning point to its future. On June 26, 1855, the site selection committee of the newly formed Board of Trustees for the Farmers' High School of Pennsylvania arrived at Centre Furnace to look over the lands offered by ironmaster James Irvin.

Headed by President George Boal, the Centre County Agricultural Society staged a gala welcome for the visitors. Irvin had offered three farms for consideration, which the committee inspected. Afterwards, "the Trustees and all the company repaired to the dwelling house of Moses Thompson of Centre Furnace where one hundred and fifty persons were entertained by a sumptuous dinner prepared by Mrs. Thompson," according to Linn's *History of Centre County*.

The three-person site selection committee included James Pollock, the newly elected Whig Governor of Pennsylvania; Frederick Watts of Cumberland County, a lawyer and leading agriculturalist who had recently resigned as founding president of the Pennsylvania State Agricultural Society to devote more time to the new school; and Dr. Alfred Elwyn, a Philadelphia physician, scientist, and agriculturalist. Four more trustees came as well—including attorney Hugh McAllister, the "local" trustee from Bellefonte who mustered the town's wealth and influence in support of the school.

They were joined by other Centre County luminaries: Andrew Curtin, secretary of the Commonwealth and superintendent of public instruction, later to become Pennsylvania's great Civil War governor; James T. Hale, president judge of Centre County's twentieth judicial district and soon to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives; Moses Thompson, Irvin's brother-in-law who at the time owned one-third of the Centre Furnace operation; and William Waring, a respected horticulturalist who would soon

be hired to superintend the school's farm. But it took more than a star-studded gala to seal the deal for Centre County.

The Farmers' High School of Pennsylvania, originally chartered in 1854 upon a plan outlined by Watts to then-

Governor William Bigler, had been re-chartered by the legislature and Governor Pollock on February 22, 1855. The reason? The 1854 charter called for some 60-plus trustees, one from each county, but a number far too large to ever convene in one place and time. So the state agricultural society asked that the charter be revoked and replaced with one specifying only 13 trustees—four ex officio and nine more appointed by name.

From the very beginning, the school was designed to be of collegiate grade, awarding baccalaureate degrees through scientific and practical coursework. The name "Farmers' High School"—which rings strange to modern ears—was chosen because the state agricultural society wanted to avoid the negative connotations that the word

"college" implied to the farming community: a place for idle "gentlemen" who disdained manual labor and hard work and who indulged in literary studies at the expense of more practical subjects.

The state charter of February 22 required the trustees to meet at Harrisburg on the second Sunday of June, 1855, to begin organizing the school and selecting a site. At the board's first meeting on June 14, Watts nominated Governor Pollock as chair. The board then began to consider the various proposals that had come in over the last few months.

There were lots of them. Offers to donate at least 200 acres came from Erie County, Blair County, and Centre County. Offers to sell land came from Perry County and Allegheny County. The board asked the site selection committee to quickly "view the lands" of the offers and examine "such other situations as to them shall seem advisable."



Top: Old Main in 1859. Bottom: Frederick Watts, James Irvin, Hugh McAllister. Photos are courtesy of The Pennsylvania State University Archives.

About the Centre County Historical Society

✧ Contact Us ✧

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www.instagram.com/centre.county.history

Public tours at the Centre Furnace Mansion continue to be delayed until further notice due to COVID-19.

The gardens and grounds remain open for strolling, but we ask that you use caution with repairs underway. CDC health protocols for wearing masks, hand sanitation and maintaining physical distancing apply.

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

Research at the Centre Furnace Mansion:
Research requests can often be handled remotely by email. 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 emailing info@centrecountyhistory.org.

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

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.

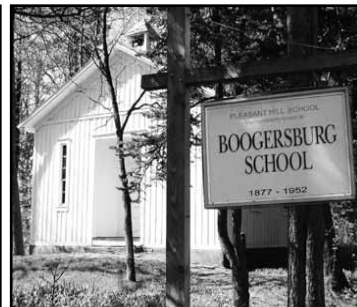
The Centre County Historical Society depends on financial contributions that help support our free public programs and educational opportunities for children, and provide necessary funds for the maintenance and operation of the Society's facilities and collections. Your membership and generosity are sincerely appreciated. Donations may be made at <https://centre-county-historical-society.square.site/> or by simply sending in the form on the back of this newsletter.

Society members and others in the community are also invited to support these activities 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.

Activity Calendar

History Talks are held online on the Zoom meeting platform for now. Please watch your email for updates and program links. CCHS Members will receive first opportunity to register for programs via email.

Pennsylvania: The Cradle of Cable Television
Virtual talk by Dr. Patrick Parsons
Sunday, February 28, 2:00 p.m.

George Washington's First Inaugural Address and Why It Still Matters
Virtual talk by Dr. Stephen H. Browne
Sunday, March 14, 2:00 p.m.

Nighthawk's Wing
Virtual talk by Charles Fergus
Sunday, April 18, 2:00 p.m.

New Deal Post Office Murals in Central PA
Virtual talk by David Lembeck
Sunday, June 6, 2:00 p.m.

Plant Celebration & Garden Sale
Plans are underway, stay tuned!

Please feel free to contact Mary Sorensen at msorensen@centrehistory.org or 814-234-4779 with any questions concerning about how to access virtual programming

Programs to See Again

If you were unable to attend any of our fall virtual programs, they have been recorded and are held on the CCHS YouTube channel. Many thanks to Rick Bryant for leading us in January on a walk down memory lane with his program *First Night Turns 25*. Search YouTube for Centre County Historical Society to see past programs. The John H. Zeigler Historic Preservation Awards ceremony is now available on C-NET.

Inclement Weather Reminder

CCHS follows the closings and delayed openings of the State College Area School District. While the Centre Furnace Mansion is not currently open for tours, staff are available by appointment and the grounds are available for strolling. But please use caution, as inclement weather may affect the walkways or parking lot. Please check CentreHistory.org, our Facebook page, or call the CCHS office at 814-234-4779 before visiting the Mansion.

President's Corner



Sherm Lutz goes to Washington

One of our more impressive exhibits at the Centre Furnace Mansion has featured pioneer local aviator Sherm Lutz. Sherm taught hundreds of men and women to fly and photos of many of them are displayed on the walls in our Exhibit Building. That exhibit is still on display by appointment.

There are many Sherm Lutz stories. This story is based on what Sherm shared with Elwood Homan, a local historian and pilot. Elwood earned his pilot's license in the spring of 1952. Although he didn't learn from Sherm, they were acquainted. On a visit with Sherm at his Air Depot, where CATO Park is today, Sherm told Elwood the following story. The story centers upon two brothers who were Presidents. One was the President of Penn State from 1950 to 1956, Milton Eisenhower. The other, his older brother, Dwight D. Eisenhower, the President of the United States.



One winter, Dwight had arranged for a trip to the Caribbean with brother, Milton. The day before, Dwight sent a plane up from Washington for Milton to fly back. It was an impressive twin engine Aero Commander with two pilots. Sherm did not have a large enough hanger for the large plane so it was kept outside overnight. The pilots probably stayed at Nittany Lion Inn that night.

The next morning, Sherm was at the airport early before the two pilots arrived. It was a bitter cold morning so the pilots intended to warm up their presidential plane. They primed an engine and cranked it only to get a single spurt. They kept on cranking and cranking, but with no success. So, they primed the second engine but had the same result. They cranked so much that they ran the batteries down. They then had Sherm send for more batteries. The batteries arrived, but they drained those as well.

The only option was for the pilots to ask Sherm if his plane might start and could he fly Milton to meet his brother in DC. Sherm knew that in cold weather, one could over-prime an engine but his 172 Cessna started rather easily. Soon after, Milton Eisenhower's car arrived at the airport. They loaded his luggage and off Sherm and Milton went. As they approached the airport in Washington, Sherm checked in on the airport radio frequency. Soon after checking in, he was startled to hear over the radio for all planes to clear the area except for him: he was to proceed. Sherm told Elwood that he didn't know what all the fuss was about as he had flown people to other airports for years.

Upon landing and unloading Milton's luggage, Milton must have thanked him and went off to a bigger plane where Dwight was probably waiting. Sherm returned uneventfully to his State College Air Depot.

~Bob Hazelton

Director's Message

Are we ready to get out of the house?

As the longer, milder days of spring arrive, I am sure we are *all* ready to get out! This column is dedicated to fun activities in Centre County to get us out safely and take a break from the news-feed.

- Visit CentreHistory.org/centre-county-explorers to find a printable Centre County Explorers Passport and driving map featuring county historic and cultural sites. Maps and Passport booklets may also be found in the parking lot kiosk at the Centre Furnace Mansion or the Centre County/Penn State Visitor Center.
- The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau at HappyValley.com has loads of ideas for exploring and eating including the new Happy Valley Takeout Trail at: happyvalley.com/eat/happy-valley-takeout-trail/
- Learn a little about the architecture and history of the State College Historic Districts: Holmes-Foster, Highlands and College Heights using printable walking tour maps found at: statecollegepa.us/464/Historic-Districts-Walking-Tours-Markers.
- Head to Historic Bellefonte and see extraordinary Victorian architecture and historic sites. A printable walking tour map and history of the Bellefonte Historic District may be found at BellefonteArts.org
- If you are going to Bellefonte, check out Matt Maris's walking tours at LocalHistoria.com
- Visit the Philipsburg Historic District, but first, go to Facebook.com/PhilipsburgHistoricalFoundation to learn about the history of Philipsburg, and remember to catch a movie at the historic Rowland Theatre!
- Millheim Historic District features restaurants, art and shopping and it is only a short jaunt to the beautiful Poe Valley State Park
- Boalsburg Historic District, the birthplace of Memorial Day, will provide good walking, restaurants, the and shopping, and plenty of early architecture to explore. Visit Facebook.com/boalsburgvillage for things to do.
- While you are in Boalsburg, tour the PA Military Museum 28th Division walking tour pamilmuseum.org/maps-brochures and check out the beautiful wooded trails at the Boal Mansion.
- Curtin Village at Eagle Ironworks in Howard is the most complete early ironmaking site in the area. While not currently open for tours, self guided tour brochures of the grounds are available for exploring.

This is by no means an exhaustive list! Centre County is packed with things to do. When you are planning, be sure to call ahead to check for hours and any safety protocols to make the most of your get-away. As weather gets warmer, also check CentreMarkets.com for farmers markets located around the county.

Enjoy your adventure!
Mary Sorensen

Upcoming Programs and Events

Pennsylvania: The Cradle of Cable Television

Virtual talk by Dr. Patrick Parsons

Sunday, February 28, 2:00 p.m.

Dr. Patrick Parsons, Professor of Telecommunications at Penn State and author of *Blue Skies: A History of Cable Television*, will discuss the beginnings of the first community antenna systems in the Keystone State, an important chapter in broadcasting history.

George Washington's First Inaugural Address and Why It Still Matters

Virtual talk by Dr. Stephen H. Browne

Sunday, March 14, 2:00 p.m.

Why do U.S. presidents give inaugural addresses? Because George Washington chose to deliver one upon the assumption of office on April 30, 1789. The festivities leading up to the big event, what the first president had to say about it, and the several legacies he thereby gifted to the American people. *Henszey-Pyle Distinguished Author Series.*

Nighthawk's Wing

Virtual talk by Charles Fergus

Sunday, April 18, 2:00 p.m.

Sequel to *A Stranger Here Below*, Charles Fergus will speak about and read from his historical mysteries set in the 1830s in fictional Colerain County, Pennsylvania. *Henszey-Pyle Distinguished Author Series.*

New Deal Post Office Murals in Central Pennsylvania

Virtual talk by David Lembeck

Sunday, June 6, 2:00 p.m.

David Lembeck, lead researcher for the the 2008 State Museum exhibition, *A Common Canvas*, will present this program about the New Deal Post Office Murals from Central Pennsylvania.

Virtual presentations are held on the Zoom meeting platform and last for about 45 minutes. There will be an opportunity to ask questions after the talks.

Programs are free and open to the public, and donations are appreciated. The programs have a limit of 100 registrants, but will be recorded and made available on the CCHS YouTube channel. Current CCHS members will receive advance notification of program link by email. Please let us know if you have any questions or are not receiving CCHS email updates by contacting us at 814-234-4779 or email info@centrecountyhistory.org.

Programs that are part of the Henszey-Pyle Distinguished Author Series are noted and underwritten by the Anne Hamilton Henszey Pyle and Kenneth B. Pyle Educational Fund for Regional Heritage Preservation (Henszey-Pyle Fund.) and coordinated by Ford Risley.

John H. Ziegler Historic Preservation Awards of the Centre County Historical Society

With enthusiastic cheers, we congratulate the 2020 recipients of the John H. Ziegler Preservation Awards of the Centre County Historical Society for their amazing efforts! As always, award recipients are people and projects that embody the spirit of preserving Centre County history, whether through publications, programming and volunteerism or through the preservation of historic sites and structures. This year's recipients include:

EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

Matt Maris, Local Historia: Inspiring curiosity and learning about local history through research, the Local Historia Facebook page, and historical walking tours of Bellefonte. Visit <https://localhistoria.com> for scheduled tours and additional information.



HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Ken Hickman, Executive Director ~ Penn State All-Sports Museum: For living the museum's mission "to honor the achievements of the men and women who have built the proud tradition of Penn State Intercollegiate Athletics through the preservation and promotion of their legacy for the education and benefit of the community."



PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION

Centre County Soldiers and Sailors Memorial and Curtin Monument - Centre County Commissioners, Sue Hannegan, Alan Popovich AIA, Alberto Romero M.A. and Alec Romero: For restoration work funded by the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission Keystone Historic Preservation Grant and the Centre County Government to restore the monument and memorial designed by Joseph M. Huston, who designed the Pennsylvania State Capital. It was dedicated in 1906 "To those who died to keep the nation whole, this memorial is dedicated in grateful appreciation."



SUPPORT AND VOLUNTEERISM

Rebecca Inlow: For long-term and ongoing volunteerism with and advocacy of the Rowland Theatre in Philipsburg and for authoring *The Rowland Story: Beauty from Ashes* to benefit the Theatre.



THE JACQUELINE J. MELANDER AWARD

CCHS Stocking Stuffer Committee: Committee Chairs: Deb McManus, Cathy Horner and Becky Dreese. For the committed and ongoing contribution of time, creativity, talent and resources since 2003 in support of The Stocking Stuffer Magical Holiday Market, now CCHS's largest fundraiser.



CCHS PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Alan Popovich: For outstanding and long-term advocacy of and commitment to historic preservation through preservation architecture projects in many of Centre County's historic structures including the Centre Furnace Mansion.



OUR SPECIAL THANKS TO:

C-NET Sponsor: Centre County Government



Photography: Will Yurman • Graphic Design: David Lembeck
Awards Program Committee • Co-chairs: Katie O'Toole and Ford Risley
Bob Hazelton, Jackie Melander, Dick Pencek, Mary Sorensen and Johanna Sedgwick

A recording of the ceremony is available on C-NET. Information for submitting award nominations may be found at CentreHistory.org/preservationawards, or contact Mary Sorensen at 814-234-4779 or email msorensen@centrefurnace.org.

Board News

The CCHS Board of Governors and staff extend its sincere gratitude to Lee Stout and David Panko for their excellent service on the CCHS Board of Governors. We are fortunate that, while they term off as Board members, they both plan to continue their involvement with CCHS.

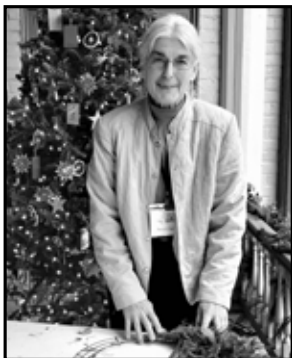
Penn State Special Collections Librarian Emeritus Lee Stout first served on the Board from 1981-1994, including terms as secretary and vice-president and again from 2011-2020. He was also on the Centre Furnace Renaissance Council from 1983-1987 during initial efforts to restore the Centre Furnace Mansion. Lee has been a longtime advocate of Centre County history and has contributed numerous public talks and articles on behalf of the CCHS. Our many thanks to Lee as he continues his role as chair of the CCHS Publications-Communications Committee and serves on the Collections Committee. For his long term commitment to the CCHS Lee has been awarded emeritus status by the Board of Governors.



David Panko has served as Treasurer of the CCHS from 2019. From the onset of his term, he has generously shared his expertise and guidance in every financial area. David is the chair of the CCHS Investment Committee and has contributed investment management services as Panko Wealth Management. As he leaves his role as Treasurer, we extend our gratitude for the many hours of time and talent he has graciously volunteered and for the professional services that Panko Wealth Management has contributed to safeguard and advance the Society's investment accounts.



We welcome Beverly Lipski as incoming CCHS Treasurer. Beverly is a name you may know as she has been on the Mansion Garden Committee since 2000 and now as its chair. What you may not know is that Beverly retired in 2007 from a decades-long career as a tax accountant and, most recently, as Manager of Cost Analysis and Property Inventory for the Office of Corporate Controller at Penn State.



CCHS Virtual Annual Meeting

Sunday March 28, 2:00 p.m.

Meeting will be held via Zoom

The CCHS Annual Meeting has traditionally been a part of the Historic Preservation Awards program, but will now be held independently. Annual report materials and a Zoom link for the meeting will be provided to members prior to the meeting via email.

The meeting agenda will include business information and an overview of CCHS activities during 2020 which was, as we are all too aware, a challenging year for everyone. We look ahead optimistically to programs and initiatives that are coming up in 2021.

After the business meeting, CCHS President Bob Hazelton will provide a talk about a special project involving the lost town of Scotia that he has been working on.

Most who hike at Scotia see the remains of the mining activities in support of the WWII effort. But more deeply hidden are the remains of a mining effort that was started by Andrew Carnegie. In support of his operation, he built the town. It has been researched for over 10 years. But in the past year the project has taken another direction - that of building an HO scale model of the town.

Look for a member email in the next weeks about the Annual Meeting and program with a meeting link and more information!



Scotia Main Street 1910 from the Koch Collection of the CCHS

Board News - continued

Roger Williams has served on the CCHS Board of Governors since 2017 to our good fortune. We are thankful for Roger's meaningful contributions as the chair of the CCHS Membership Committee and for his service on the Development and Publications-Communications Committee. Roger is an author and historian and retired executive director of the Penn State Alumni Association and Affiliate Associate Professor of Higher Education. We welcome Roger as the incoming CCHS Vice President.



Scotia Model Project Update

By Bob Hazelton

The HO scale modeling of the town and iron ore mining at Scotia continues with exciting progress. In the previous issue of Mansion Notes, we showed a photo of one of the company houses. It was a challenge to study the historical photos in order to accurately duplicate the building as a way to preserve the history of Scotia. The latest building model that has been completed is that of the superintendent's house. Thankfully, we have three historical photos of it. Again, thanks to Don Reed who has taken the photos and designed and built it. Note in the middle photo that it is sitting on top of a coffee cup in Don's shop, near Philadelphia. True to HO scale, that is how small it is. The third photo is one of the historical photos Don had to work from. Thanks to Don and Bryce Boyer it was transported to Gary Moyer's shop here in State College who added the scenery. Not surprising, that the superintendent's house was much more lavish than those of the workers.

We know exactly where the superintendent's house was located at the site based on the 1892 survey, which included the locations of all the buildings. Plus, at the site what remains is a very large hole in the ground which served as the root cellar. It sat on top of a hill within 100 feet or so of the Scotia store. The store location is depicted on the



1892 survey, plus its location is rather obvious as the front porch concrete slab is still there and rather well preserved. We do not have any photos of the store, but we did measure the concrete slab plus we have the Harry Williams model of the store. Harry's models were very crude as you can see in the photo, but he did see the store so it is our best guide. Gary is working on building the Scotia store.

It was not a company store, so John Haugh may have been more than the manager; he might have been the owner. Regardless, standing on the concrete porch takes my mind back to when John Haugh stood on that same porch. When Andrew Carnegie visited his Scotia, did he and John stand on that same porch and share some pleasant conversation? John was at a higher stature than the average Scotia worker so he and Carnegie could probably relate. Plus, they both came from Scotland. We will never know, but it could have happened.

If you have an interest in being involved either building or helping on deed research for a book on Scotia history, email Bob Hazelton, Rhazel4988@aol.com. I can put you in touch with Gary or Bryce for HO modeling aspects. or, see the previous issue of Mansion Notes.



Model of the Scotia store made by Harry Williams.

From Our Readers

Inspired by the following response to a recent Mansion Notes newsletter article, we are adding a "From Our Readers" section starting with this edition. We welcome your submissions. In the last newsletter we ran an article about State College's first high rise - the Glennland Building. Retired Magisterial District Judge Carmine Prestia shared the following memory.

"I joined State College Police Department in June of 1970. I knew about the Glennland but never had a chance to go inside except for hearings at the District Court when it was housed there.

Riding solo, I had completed my coach/trainee period when the dispatcher called me on the radio and said there was a fire call in the basement of the Glennland and the Alphas were being dispatched. SCPD did, and still does, respond to fire calls.

I went in the Pugh Street door and down the steps, the same ones you descended. The entire area was filled with smoke and I could not see but a foot or two. I was about to take another step when someone to my left called out, "It's over here."

Turning left I walked to the sound and found the janitor cleaning out the area behind a radiator or something

similar. Paper and debris in there had caught fire and though doing little or no damage caused the smoke. He got it out and the smoke started to clear. When I turned to leave, I realized that I had been standing on the edge of the pool. Had I taken that next step forward I would have fallen into the pool.

I'm not clear whether it was full or empty, empty I think, but either way I could have been seriously injured, killed, or drowned. The last because I can't swim either.

Years later when the district court, the precursor to my old court, was there it was amusing to testify before Cliff Yorks who was backed by aqua ceramic tiles with scenes of fish and bubbles."

Editors note: Now that the Glennland building is revitalized as a hotel and being promoted in a way that retains its history, we wonder what the pool area looks like now and if the tiles of fish and bubbles are still there. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places, so the tiles might have been retained.

Do you have a brief memory or photograph that you would like to share? Send by email or mail to: Mary Sorensen at msorensen@centrefurnace.org or mail to CCHS, 1001 E. College Ave., State College, PA 16801.

Aileen Homan's "I was here first."

By Bob Hazelton

Elwood Homan has contributed to our *Mansion Notes* about the history of Pennsylvania Furnace and also local aviation pioneer Sherm Lutz. Back in the late 1940s Elwood knew about Sherm but took his flying lessons from Terry Knowles at the old Bellefonte airport. The reason being that Elwood was using Charlie Campbell's plane and Charlie and Sherm were on "the outs".

Elwood married Aileen Homan in 1946 and they lived on the historic Bucher Ayers Farm in Pennsylvania Furnace, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. One of the long farm fields would soon become an airstrip. Elwood started his flying lessons in 1950. But work on the farm would prolong getting his pilot's license until the spring of 1952. He bought his first plane in 1953, a 65 horsepower Taylorcraft. His wife, Aileen "Cookie" got interested in flying, but the T-Craft was not a good plane to learn how to fly as it was particularly difficult to land. Meanwhile, Elwood and Aileen got acquainted with Hugh Wilson who had a farm and airstrip not far away in Halfmoon Township. Hugh was a "Flying Farmer." Flying Farmers were just that, an organization of farmers who had a barn to store their plane and a field long enough to take off and land and had a license to fly.

The Homans became members and about once a month there would be a fly-in to a member's farm, each bringing a pot luck dish to share. The hosting farm would supply the drinks.

Elwood and Aileen hosted fly-ins 5 or 6 times from 1953 to 1975. In the early years there would be many as 22 or 23 planes parked all over at the Homans' fields. To provide the drinks for one fly-in, Elwood and Aileen decided to fill a 10-gallon milk can with iced tea and put it in the milk cooler the day before. Next morning, it was gone along with all the other milk cans. Not knowing what to do they did nothing but made more tea and hoped they would not get in trouble with the milk company. The next day after the milk pickup they found a partly empty milk can with iced tea and a note "The tea was good."

Hugh knew another Flying Farmer member, Gail Kimmel, from the western part of the state who was also a flight instructor. He and his wife became frequent visitors to the Homans' farm. Kimmel knew someone who would trade planes, Elwood's T-craft for a Piper J3, which was a much easier aircraft to learn to fly. So with the J3, Aileen renewed her interest in getting her license.

Kimmel would work with Aileen during visits with Elwood helping between times. When Kimmel had determined that Aileen was ready to take her solo flight, one of the last steps to getting a license, he suggested going to the Mid-State Airport at Black Moshannon. The Homan's airstrip was too short for a solo flight and the longer paved runway at Mid-State would be better.

At Mid-State there was a concern about any other planes coming or going while she was doing her solo flight. The airport manager assured her that the transport plane that just took off was the last flight of the day and she had the sky to herself. The ceiling was low but high enough for Aileen to fly. She taxied to the end of the runway. Kimmel got out and Aileen was on her own and

was soon airborne. Suddenly the big plane reappeared having turned back because of the low ceiling. Elwood said the airport manager got anxious, lit another cigarette and stuffed two sticks of chewing gum in his mouth. Aileen kept her cool and thought to herself "I was here first, he will have to wait." The big plane did wait and circled around until Aileen had landed. She never did get her license as raising a family took precedence, though she did pilot at times when she and Elwood took flights together. Aileen was very active in several different community organizations. She not only joined the state organization of the Flying Farmers, she went on to become the first woman president of the International Flying Farmers.

Over the years, Elwood ended up owning six planes. All used, only one at a time, and each with a unique story.

One even involving a man who had been a missionary to India who in trying to land at Elwood's field didn't get it right and took out a fence at the end of Elwood's field. That left a very unhappy neighbor when the cows escaped. Besides the first Taylorcraft, and the Piper J3, there was an Aircoupe, another Taylorcraft, and lastly a Piper J3 which he still has, though hasn't flown for a few years. While Elwood decided to give up flying, the great memories of his flying days live on and we have the good fortune to share them.

The International Flying Farmers are currently based in Mansfield, Illinois, with a membership of 455 members.



IFF President Aileen Homan in front of Cub on family airstrip, 1998

Centre gives

Save the Date!

On **May 11 & 12** your gift of \$10.00 or more through Centre Gives helps the Centre County Historical Society compete for a larger share of the \$200,000 stretch pool provided by the Centre Foundation and Hamer Foundation as well as qualify for additional prize money! We hope you will consider support of CCHS this coming May 11 & 12. Details will follow by postcard and email.

Centre County's Selection as the Site for the Farmers' High School

continued from cover article

The site visits took ten days. They visited the sites in Centre and Erie counties first, followed by those in Allegheny and Blair counties. The trustees then convened at Harrisburg on July 17, electing Watts as chair. While they wanted to make the decision quickly, they also wanted to do so fairly and impartially, and so postponed any selection. Meanwhile, offers had come in from Franklin County, which the committee visited in September; Huntingdon County; Dauphin County, and Union County. Oddly, no offers came from southeastern Pennsylvania, the most agriculturally advanced region of the state.

But Centre County had prepared assiduously and sweetened its proposal. The groundwork was laid just after the annual meeting of the state agricultural society in mid-January 1855, a conclave to which Centre County sent delegates. On January 24, the Centre Countians passed a resolution endorsing the establishment of the Farmers' High School and urging the legislature to issue the second charter. Ironmaster Irvin spoke vigorously in support of the resolution, offering to donate 200 acres of Centre Furnace land. On February 22, he made his official offer to the executive committee of the state agricultural society, which passed it on to the school's new board of trustees.

Noting the value of the school to the state at large, Irvin observed that "It would be especially beneficial to the particular district in which it shall be established, and I therefore desire its location in Centre County—if we would add dignity to manual labor, if we should have it held in honor by the Community, we must associate it with Science, and if we would lessen the expense of acquiring Scientific Knowledge so as to bring the cost within the means of the farming community, we must connect its acquisition with labor."

Irvin was not a man to be trifled with. He had been talking about a "Farm School" for Centre County since 1850. In addition to his vastly successful iron-making operations, he was general of a state militia division, a prominent Whig politician (favoring internal improvements to develop and unify the nation) and one of the wealthiest men in Pennsylvania. As a former two-term congressman (1841-45) and unsuccessful candidate for governor (1847), he was well connected in state politics and highly influential. Not incidentally, his site offered some political safety, being far removed from the power centers of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Harrisburg.

In addition to his original offer of 200 acres, Irvin proposed to include an additional 200 acres of adjoining farmland, to be leased at \$600 per year and eventually sold to the institution for \$60 per acre or \$12,000 in all. That was followed by a guarantee—signed by Irvin, McAllister, and Curtin—providing an additional \$10,000 to be raised among the citizens of Centre and Huntingdon counties.

At the trustees' next meeting in Harrisburg on September 12, Watts made the committee's final report. Acknowledging the other bids that had come in over

the summer, Watts moved to adopt "the proposition of General James Irvin," noting that the Centre County site would "best promote the interests of the institution..."

Then things got interesting. Trustees James Gowen and Alfred Elwyn made substitute motions for the offers of Blair County and Franklin County, respectively, but both motions failed. Watts then moved for postponement of the vote, recommending instead a new selection committee of Gowen, Augustus Hiester, and John Strohm to examine the sites and propose a final location. Watts's fair-handed motion was voted down, however. Another motion was made to select the Allegheny County offer, but it too was defeated. Finally, Watts's original motion to accept the Centre County site was approved.

The trustees' site visit and gala dinner at Centre Furnace in late June apparently did not sway the decision after all. Consider Watts's impartiality in proposing a new site selection committee after his initial motion for Centre County was defeated. And then consider the subsequent motions by several trustees to accept other bids.

The decision incurred immediate and persistent criticism, however. The school's remote location, inaccessibility by rail, questionable soil quality, and lack of running water were cited as major drawbacks. Watts—elected as president of the board of trustees at that same September 1855 meeting—defended the site in an 1857 speech:

"Let there be no adverse feelings founded on local preference. What motive could there be to induce those who examined and determined the locality of this school to do else than right? With the approval of my associates, I could gladly have taken it into my own dear valley of the Cumberland, but in the exercise of a sound and clear judgment...the Board having looked over all proposed lands and considered all circumstances, believe the one chosen to be best. It is possible that we were at fault, yet I have ever believed the selection made combined more advantages than any other offered, and I ask for myself and my associates the credit at least of honest motives, and of all to consider how many of the most essential advantages of soil, surface, exposure, healthfulness, and centrality are combined in the ground we have met upon."

Criticism of the school's location would not abate during Watts's long tenure as board president (1855-74). But the die had been cast, the Rubicon crossed, and the stage set for the eventual emergence of one of world's foremost research universities—though it would be decades in the making.

Wish List

Thank you for considering wish list items.

- New air conditioner and installation for the Mansion's Hearth Room - \$800
- Tools - tools and toolbox, cordless drill, garden tools (gently used are fine!)
- Easels for displays
- iPads for sales
- Curtains for Master Bedroom

For more information, contact Mary Sorensen at msorensen@centrefurnace.org or call at 814-234-4779.

In Memoriam Remembering Friends

Thomas McKivison

Long time member, Tom McKivison, will be remembered at CCHS for his research and photo contributions for the *Story of Scotia* publication and as a resource for the history of Scotia. Tom's father worked for the Scotia iron ore mine and Tom had a treasure trove of stories about Scotia.



Mr. McKivison attending a program at the 2016 Boogersburg School Open House

We are also grateful for Tom's service as a Boogersburg School Docent and, more recently, as a regular at the open house programs held at the Schoolhouse.

William E. Metzel

Reenactors help to bring history alive in a unique and meaningful way. Best known for his work at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center, Bill was dedicated to his craft and interpreted many aspects of iron making including iron smelting and charcoal making as well as doing demonstrations at the Boalsburg Blacksmith Shop. Bill was also a professional storyteller. We will miss the energy and passion that Bill brought to public history.

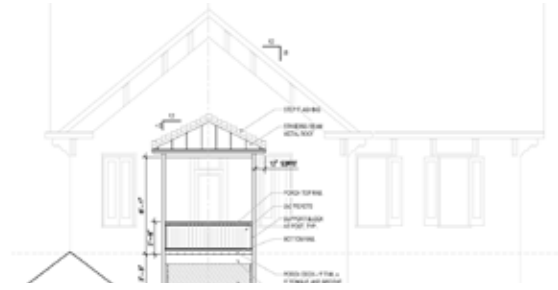
Philip Sieg

Philip Sieg was a lifelong Bellefonte resident, Distinguished Alumnus of Penn State, and fervent supporter of all things Centre County. Phil and his wife Judy were life members and donors to the Society and Judy served on the CCHS Board of Governors. Phil was the son of W.P. Sieg, the founder of Titan Metal, which became Cerro Brass. Phil was one of the founding partners of Federated Home & Mortgage Company and was perhaps best known for creating Toftrees, Pennsylvania's first planned residential development, designed in part by landscape architect and Society member Lynn Miller, on what had once been part of Moses Thompson's Centre Furnace land holdings.



The Centre Furnace Mansion after the early February snow.

Preservation Corner



With a matching grant awarded from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's Keystone Historic Preservation Grant program, the CCHS looks forward to moving ahead with urgent restoration and repair work on the Centre Furnace Mansion. The work includes replacement and repair of the mansion's 33-year old cedar roof and restoration of the porches.

Plans are moving forward for roof replacement and porch restoration projects at the Centre Furnace Mansion in the late spring. We are grateful to the following supporters for their generous leadership gifts since our fall newsletter:

Mr. & Mrs. Blake Gall
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Mr. & Mrs. George Henning
Mr. & Mrs. Richard L. Kalin
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Mr. & Mrs. Alfred Taylor
Dr. Roger Williams & Ms. Karen Magnuson
Mr. & Mrs. Cal Zimmerman

Tourism Grant funding for the Mansion Restoration projects has also been made possible by the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau and the Centre County Board of Commissioners.

As planning continues and progress begins, we look forward to keeping you posted of activities associated

Preserving Pennsylvania's Past



We are supported by the
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Thank You

Generosity takes many forms whether donating a service or needed item, providing program support, or helping out in any number of ways. For those who have contributed this Winter, we thank you! Donors are also listed throughout the newsletter.

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Memberships received 12/7/2020 - 1/31/2021.

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

