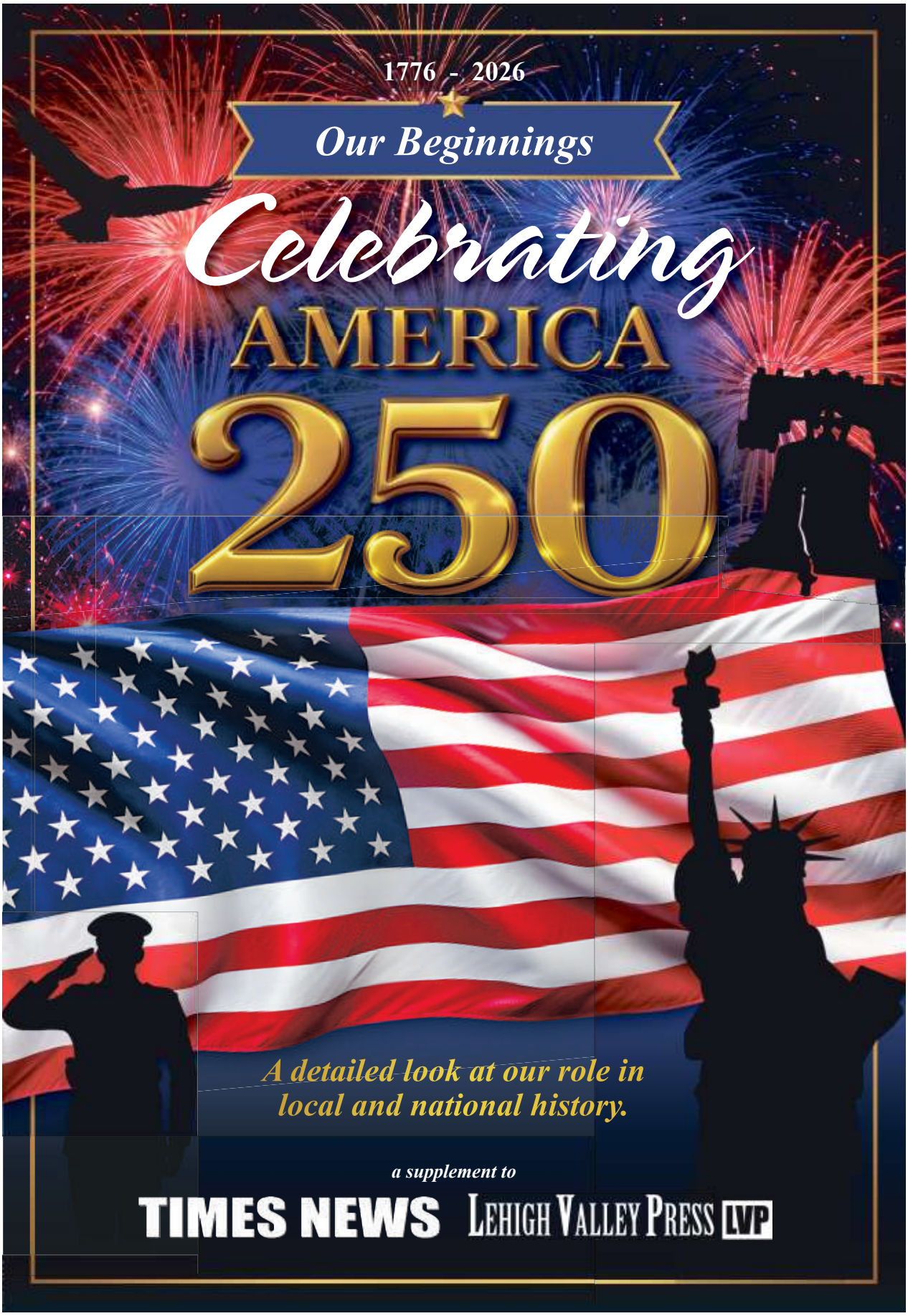

1776 - 2026
Our Beginnings
Celebrating
AMERICA
250
A detailed look at our role in local and national history.
a supplement to
TIMES NEWS
LEHIGH VALLEY PRESS
LVP

Ben Franklin slept here, erected forts

BY DONALD R. SERFASS
DSERFASS@TNONLINE.COM

Ben Franklin slept here — in Weissport.

Not for a night. But an entire week.

It was during construction of Fort Allen. And Franklin slept on the floor.

Franklin was in charge installing frontier forts during the French and Indian War. History books describe how the timetable unfolded.

On Nov. 24, 1755, Native American warriors destroyed Gnadenhutten near Bethlehem.

On Nov. 26, the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly authorized a grant of sixty thousand pounds for frontier defense.

On Nov. 29, Moravian Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg wrote to Gov. Morris that a fort was essential to the defense of eastern Pennsylvania.

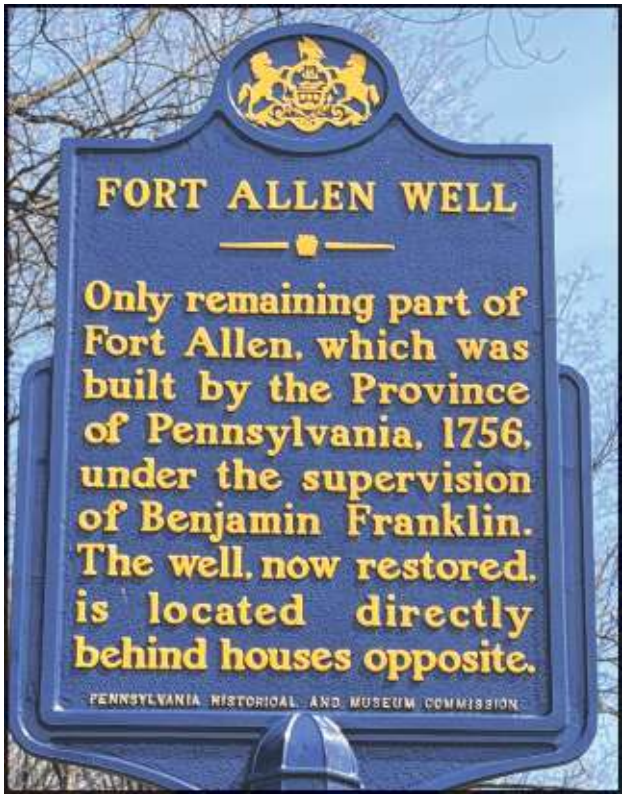
Franklin answered the call.

On Jan. 25, 1756, Franklin wrote to Gov. Morris:

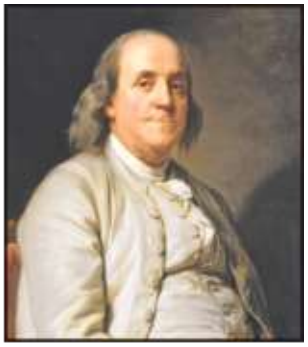
"This Day we hoisted your Flag, made a general Discharge of our Pieces, which had been long loaded, and of our two Swivels, and Nam'd the Place Fort Allen ... It is 125 Feet long, 50 wide, the Stocadoes most of them a Foot thick; they are 3 Foot in the Ground and 12 Feet out, pointed at the Top."

The fort featured two triangular bastions, a 12-foot high palisade, and a surrounding trench. Inside there was a well, a barracks for the garrison, a storeroom and a gunpowder magazine. Two swivel guns were mounted at opposite corners. The fort also contained a drinking well.

It was first of several frontier defenses erected by Benjamin Franklin for the Province of Pennsylvania during the French and Indian War.



A state historical marker acknowledges the existence of Fort Allen's original drinking well located in Weissport. But the town's growth obliterated the footprint of the fort itself and the well occupies private property.



Benjamin Franklin

A raised statue of Benjamin Franklin in central Weissport pays tribute to his time spent in the Carbon County town.

250 YEARS LATER, OUR STORY CONTINUES

The region now served by the Times News and Lehigh Valley Press may not have been at the epicenter of the American Revolution, but it played an important role in the story of our nation's beginnings.

In this special section, we look back at those early days and trace the origins of the towns we call home.

We've featured key moments that shaped our region's history — from Native American conflicts and early settlement to the rise of coal, the railroad and the industries that transformed our communities.

But like America's 250th anniversary itself, this journey is only beginning.

History lives in the stories we share, and we want to hear yours. We welcome your feedback, memories and local stories. Contact us at tneditor@tnonline.com.

It is believed the garrison was rarely more than 50 men, and the fort never saw combat.

However, it served as a center of contact and trade with Native Americans, providing a stopping point for Indians traveling to and from Bethlehem, Easton and Philadelphia.

Many Native American communities were wanted to maintain good relations with settlers and local authorities.

Delegations en route to Philadelphia visited Fort Allen regularly.

Traders visited the fort to sell rum, cloth, sugar and other goods, but no permanent trading post was established there until after 1758.

An Iroquois delegation led by the Seneca leader Kanuksusy arrived in May 1756, on his way to a peace conference in Easton. By July 1756, when the Lenape leader Teedyuscung arrived, the fort was surrounded by temporary Native American dwellings.

The fort was abandoned in 1761 near the end of the French and Indian War.

See **FRANKLIN** on Page 3

FRANKLIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Later, it was in use for a short time during the American Revolutionary War, when it was garrisoned in 1780 by 112 men under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Kern.

Finally, in 1785, the fort was dismantled by Colonel Jacob Weiss during the construction of Weissport.

Today, the well is the only remaining structure. It's located behind Jacobs United Church of Christ on Franklin Street and is on private property.

Other nearby forts included Fort Norris near Kresgeville and Fort Franklin at Snyders, both about 15 miles away in east and west.

The original Fort Allen drinking well, now on private property, is the only remaining trace of a frontier fort in present day Weissport. DONALD R. SERFASS/ SPECIAL TO THE TIMES NEWS

A marker at the stature of Ben Franklin describes Fort Allen.

Whitehall farmer helped Liberty Bell transport

BY STACEY KOCH
SKOCH@TNONLINE.COM

These two images are part of a collective narrative used to complement Whitehall Township's grant applications. CONTRIBUTED IMAGES

The time is September 1777. Our original 13 colonies are at war with Great Britain, and the Pennsylvania State House Bell is in perceived jeopardy from the British army. John Jacob Mickley Sr., a farmer and soldier from Whitehall, is traveling with the bell on his wagon from Philadelphia to hide it at Zion's Reformed Church in Northampton Town, saving it from the hands of our enemies.

We the People will keep our bell safe from the British, who would likely destroy it by melting it down for bullets and weapons.

At that time, Mickley did not yet know the historical impact he and many others would have on the outcome of the Revolutionary War and, furthermore, the creation of the United States of America.

"The most commonly accepted scenario is that Mickley and 7-year-old son John Jacob transported the State House Bell from Philadelphia to Bethlehem when the wagon broke down. From here, Frederick Leaser's wagon was used to transport the bell from Bethlehem to Allentown," said Jeffrey Warren, president of Whitehall Township Board of Commissioners. "For all intents, both men share credit transporting the bell. The best we can do is reference historic documents from the past. There were many other wagons and local farmers who assisted in the effort."

Allentown used to be called Northampton Town.

Mickley was born Dec. 17, 1737. He was one of seven children, two of whom were attacked and killed by Native Americans in 1763.

Mickley and Susanne Catherine Miller married in 1760 and had 12 children. Several died at a young age.

This building is believed to have been the first structure and living quarters on the property. It contains a hearth stove and a small staircase, which leads to the second level. There is also a cold cellar accessible on the side. PRESS PHOTO BY STACEY KOCH

Keith David Lane, of Bringhurst, Indiana, shares his certificate from the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. John Jacob Mickley Sr. is his sixth great-grandfather. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

In 1761, he purchased land from Adam Deshler to establish his own homestead farm in Whitehall. In 1762, he built a small stone ancillary house to be used until the main stone house was built in 1764. This main house was demolished in 1860, and according to local historians, it is believed the stone was repurposed for the construction of a barn. All that stands of the barn today is a single wall.

This area is the present-day Mickley-Prydun Farm property on Ruch Street in Whitehall Township. The township has owned the property since 2013 with funding from the National Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Lehigh County Green Future Fund.

"This 12-acre tract of land is located along the Coplay Creek and adjacent to the popular Ironton Rail Trail. (...) Since that time, the property was part of a riparian buffer project to meet the federally mandated MS4 requirements to remove sediment load from stormwater runoff. It is also host to the Whitehall-Coplay Hunger Initiative garden that supports the food pantry and (Whitehall) Environmental Advisory Councils butterfly garden," Warren said.

"The goal (now) is

See **BELL** on Page 5

BELL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

making this building accessible to the public for passive events/activities and further support the mission of WCHI and the WEAC's environmental educational opportunities," Warren added.

Completed in 2022, phase one of restoration included roof renovation of the stone house and brick home.

Phase two, currently underway and almost finished, includes window restoration and brick and stone repointing.

Phase three, of which the project start is pending via a grant, would include interior work.

In Bringhurst, Indiana, Keith David Lane, who shares lineage with Mickley, said, "I was very excited to have Sons of the American Revolution verify and certify my lineage to John Jacob Mickley. He is my sixth great-grandfather. My grandmother, Ida (Waldron) Lane, told us about the Liberty Bell as children."

The Meissenburg family, who lives near Lake Arrowhead, California, are related to Mickley's brother, John Peter Mickley. Jennie Meissenburg, wife of David Meissenburg, said she enjoys learning about her family history. They have two sons, Joshua and Daniel.

"I am an ancestry nerd. I have worked on my family tree off and on since before there were computers. I'm proud that America was born 250 years ago," Jennie Meissenburg said.

On July 4, America will celebrate its 250th birthday. Let us take the time to remember and honor all the patriots who looked forward, carried on and fought for what they believed in — a free and flourishing nation.

Mickley helped protect and save one of America's greatest treasures, allowing people to visit and admire it to this present day.

Mickley-Prydun Farm is located at 3540 Ruch St., Whitehall. The property consists of a 1762 stone house and a 1835 brick house. PRESS PHOTO BY STACEY KOCH

From left, Joshua, David and Daniel Meissenburg, who live near Lake Arrowhead, California, are related to Mickley's brother, John Peter Mickley. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Lehighton, Ohio both had tragic massacres

BY RON GOWER
TNEDITOR@TNONLINE.COM

A memorial to the victims of the Gnadenhuetten Massacre stands at the Lehighton Cemetery. RON GOWER/SPECIAL TO THE TIMES NEWS

Too often peace can be a mere illusion.

No better examples exist than what happened at two Moravian settlements in the 1700s. Both had the same name, meaning "huts of grace," with slightly different spellings. Gnadenhuetten is located in what is now Lehighton, and Gnadenhutten is located in Ohio about 60 miles west of the Pennsylvania border.

Although both settlements resulted in massacres, their sad history is contradictory.

Both sites involved the conversion of Native Americans to Christianity by the passive Moravians. At both locations, the violence that ensued bore direct connections to the faraway dispute between England and France.

The two massacres, as tragic as they were, had a direct role in the history of our country.

At the Lehighton site, a memorial contains the names of the 11 Moravian missionaries who died in the bloody and fiery assault.

In Ohio, a town now exists named Gnadenhutten (translated from German to mean huts of grace).

At that location, it was Native Americans — 90 in all — who were ambushed and killed by Pennsylvania militiamen who were supporters of the British and believed the Indians were providing aid to American patriots.

'Love feast' precedes massacre

The Moravians were a peaceful people. Like the Quakers or Amish, they avoided violence. Many of them didn't even carry weapons. They came here seeking religious freedom.

The first Moravian missionary in this country was established in Georgia in 1735. When England became involved in war with Spain in 1739, the Moravians followed their religious belief and refused to bear arms. They moved to Bethlehem in 1741.

Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf of Saxony, a staunch defender of the oppressed, became the friend and eventual leader of the Moravian brethren.

He saw the need for more outreach missionaries to convert Indians to Christianity. He then personally created one along the Mahoning River in what is now the Lehighton and Mahoning Township boundary.

He even created a "love feast" between the Natives and the Moravians, which won over many of the natives.

Count Zinzendorf returned to Europe and never saw the eventual carnage of his fellow brethren.

Many natives were converted to Christianity by the Moravians. The church purchased 120 acres in 1745 for the settlement what is presently marked as the massacre site.

By now England and France were at odds across the sea, and both countries pushed for colonial expansion in the New World. They used the colonists and natives to achieve this success.

Both the Mohegan and the Delaware tribes were befriended by the Moravians. However, the Shawnees, Mohicans, some members of the Delaware tribe and others eventually began organizing against the intrusion of the white man.

Another factor in the tension was that many white men — excluding Moravians — made clear their distrust of the natives, which contributed to the tension.

There were attacks in the western part of the frontier. Yet, the Moravian brethren declined to abandon their fort, believing their faith would keep them safe.

In 1979, during a 225th memorial service held at the Gnadenhuetten site, Dr. John Weilick of the Moravian Historical Society said, "The Moravian Brethren were eager, not for Indian lands, but for Indian souls. Twenty years of mission work has proved that the Indians were as responsive to the Gospel as people anywhere when approached to love."

The renegade attack occurred Nov. 24, 1755. The Moravians had no warning or suspicion of the violence that was to be inflicted.

There was a knock on the door and when answered, gunshots by the attacking natives began. When some of the victims fled to an upstairs room, the natives set the building on fire.

In all, 11 of the Brethren died. Five were consumed in flames. Two of the Moravians that were inside the building escaped — one by jumping from a roof and the other by leaping out a rear window.

Franklin brings peace

Benjamin Franklin is known for many accomplishments. One of his lesser recognized — but locally important — accomplishments is bringing peace and safety to settlements in Eastern Pennsylvania.

Following the attack on Gnadenhuetten, Gov. Robert Morris summoned Franklin, who had himself organized militias. He found 560 ready volunteers to accompany him to Bethlehem.

By now, the Moravians had also decided faith wasn't enough to keep them alive.

Franklin wrote in his autobiography, "In order to march, thither, I assembled companies at Bethlehem, the chief establishment of these people. I was surprised to find it in so good a posture of defense; the

See **STORIES** on Page 7

STORIES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

destruction of Gnadenhuetten had made them apprehend danger. The principal buildings were defended by a stockade; they had purchased a quantity of arms and ammunition from New York and even had placed quantities of small paving stones between the windows of their high stone houses, for their women to thrown down upon the heads of any Indians, that should attempt to force into them."

He decided three forts had to be erected to protect the settlers, one toward the Upper Delaware Valley, another in the lower part (not defined where) and, he writes, "I concluded to go myself, with the rest of my force, to Gnadenhuetten, where a fort was thought more immediately necessary."

Before leaving Bethlehem, 11 farmers requested a supply of firearms to regain livestock taken by the natives. He later writes that all those farmers were killed.

Benjamin Franklin writes in his book "The Life of Benjamin Franklin" of his travels to the site of the Gnadenhuetten Massacre in 1755, and personally oversaw the erection of Fort Allen, in what is now Weissport, to protect settlers. RON GOWER/SPECIAL TO THE TIMES NEWS

Franklin writes in his book, regarding arriving at Gnadenhuetten, "Our first work was to bury more effectually the dead we found there, who had been half interred by the country people."

In Ohio, 12 babies among those killed

Gnadenhutten was founded in 1772 as a settlement of German Americans and Lenape Indians affiliated with the Moravian Church. The community grew to about 200 people by 1775.

These pacifists remained neutral during the Revolutionary War. However, the British and their Native American allies suspected they were providing assistance to the American patriots.

The British tricked the Lenapes to the site of today's Gnadenhutten. These 96 men, women and children, all Lenapes, spent the night in song and prayer knowing they would be killed the next day. The massacre was carried out by a militia from Pennsylvania, who burned about 60 cabins in the process. Only two boys escaped.

A monument was erected for the native martyrs on March 8, 1872, as part of the centennial of the event. In 1963, a museum was established and there was a mound erected containing the graves of the natives.

In 1988, various Native American and First Nations people gathered at the site to dedicate a peace tree. The state of Ohio placed a memorial marker in 2003, calling the event a "day of shame."

The town's Native American heritage continues to be marked with its "Indian Valley" moniker and a Christian Indian Drive-Thru Display from Thanksgiving through December.

Northwestern Lehigh Veterans Memorial

Ontelaunee Park, New Tripoli, PA

Dedicated on Memorial Day 2022

A sacred place of remembrance, this memorial honors 2,624 veterans whose courage and sacrifice span 272 years of American military history, beginning with the earliest battles of the French and Indian War.

Visit this beautiful tribute to our local veterans, take the self-guided audio tour using your smart phone. Discover thirty patriotic quotations engraved throughout the memorial. Learn the meaning behind the powerful symbolism incorporated into its design by the veterans who serve on the memorial committee. Visit the memorial website at *nwlehighvetsmemorial.org* for construction history, veterans' personal experiences, committee members, events, time capsule contents, Hometown Hero Banners and more.

This enduring tribute is made possible through the steadfast support of the residents of Heidelberg, Lowhill, Lynn and Weisenberg Townships.

Bethlehem's 1758 Sun Inn sheltered members of the Continental Congress in 1777, as well as many other influential colonial leaders. MARTY MOYLE/ SPECIAL TO THE LEHIGH VALLEY PRESS

Working hands: Bethlehem's Moravians' many contributions to the Revolutionary War are shown in a free exhibit at the Luckenbach Mill in the Colonial Industrial Quarter. MARTY MOYLE/SPECIAL TO THE LEHIGH VALLEY PRESS

Pacifist Bethlehem played a key role

BY MARTY MOYLE
TNEDTOR@TNONLINE.COM

It's all there.

A multitude of reasons for the American colonies cutting ties with Britain in 1776 are written into the document known as the Declaration of Independence.

This document calls out the King of Great Britain for a plethora of charges, actions, oppressions, abuses, crippling taxes to finance British wars, and other intolerable acts against the colonists and sets the stage for the declared values and freedoms that we would fight for.

Oh, it's good trash talk against King George III. If you've never read the Declaration of Independence, or if it's been a while, take less than five minutes and read through this exciting document.

In fact, American colonists had already been pushing back against Great Britain since the British occupied Boston in 1768. War broke out in earnest in 1775, when shots were fired at Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts, followed by the Battle of Bunker Hill a few months later.

The War for Independence, or the Colonial Rebellion, depending on one's loyalties, continued until the Treaty of Paris officially ended what we now call the Revolutionary War in 1783.

The delegates who met to serve as the government of the 13 American colonies were known collectively as the Continental Congress. They created a united colonial fighting force known as the Continental Army in 1775 and named George Washington as the army's commander in chief. Their actions were considered treason by the British, with a penalty of death.

Sun Inn

While the Continental Congress met primarily in Philadelphia, it often had to flee to other locations in order to escape the British. Those locations included Baltimore. Maryland; Lancaster; York; Princeton, New Jersey; Annapolis, Maryland; Trenton, New Jersey; and New York City, with a stopover in Bethlehem.

In September 1777, the Continental Congress, as well as George Washington and his troops along with many citizens, retreated from Philadelphia in anticipation of a British occupation. One contemporary account recalled 700 wagons arriving in Bethlehem at that time.

The Continental Congress met that month at the Sun Inn in Bethlehem while moving from one location to another. The inn had a reputation for comfortable lodging, excellent food and famous Moravian hospitality.

John Adams, a delegate to the Continental Congress and later second president of the new United States, called it "the best inn I ever saw."

Besides the colonial leaders who passed through its doors, French nobleman and military officer the Marquis de La Fayette, who volunteered to join the Continental Army, spent some time at the inn recovering from a wound received at the Battle of Brandywine before removing to a private home to recuperate.

He eventually played a key role in the decisive Battle of Yorktown, which led to the British surrender.

You can visit the 1758 Sun Inn at 564 Main St. and take a free self-guided tour. Be sure to check the hours for the day you plan to visit.

Supplies from Moravians

Although the Moravians were pacifists, they did supply housing, medical treatment, leather goods, guns, provisions and other supplies from their nearly 50 flourishing crafts and industrial trades.

So prolific and efficient was their production that John Adams wrote, "They have carried the mechanical arts to greater perfection here than in any place which I have seen."

Yet with so many refugees and wounded coming into town, supplies were scarce and Moravian residents emptied their community stockpiles of linen and clothing, as well as products and provisions.

You can view the exhibit "Working Hands: Supplying a Revolution," which explores the complex and conflicted role of the Moravians during the revolution.

This is a free exhibit, located at the Luckenbach Mill, down the walking pathway behind the Hotel Bethlehem in the Colonial Industrial Quarter.

Brethren's House

At the end of Main Street is the iconic 1748 Single Brethren's House of the Moravian Community.

The Brethren's House was converted to a military hospital, with as many as 400 wounded inside at a time, and many more encamped outside.

Despite surgeons' best efforts, disease ran rampant. The Moravian carpenters who had been making coffins early on were soon displaced by soldiers carting away and burying dead bodies in trenches on a nearby hillside on the opposite side of the Monocacy Creek.

See **PACIFIST** on Page 10

PACIFIST

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

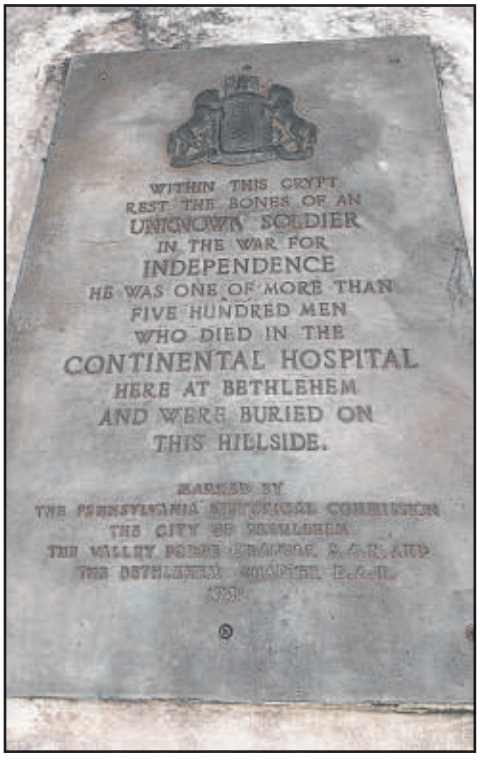
More than 500 people were buried along what is now 1st Avenue and Route 378 in unmarked graves.

You can view the 1748 Brethren's House at 99 W. Church St. (at the bottom of Main Street), opposite the Central Moravian Church.

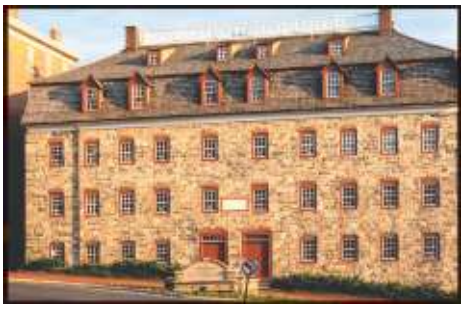
Tomb of Unknown Soldier

You can visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the intersection of West Market Street and 1st Avenue (a block off Broad Street on 1st Avenue if you are walking)

The locations in this article are all within easy walking distance of one another. While on Main Street, stop in at the Goundie House Visitors Welcome Center at 505 Main St. to gather information, check out guided tours related to Bethlehem's roles in the American Revolution, as well as other upcoming events.



The Tomb of the Unknown Revolutionary War Soldier consists of a group of several memorial markers and a crypt. PHOTO COURTESY HISTORIC BETHLEHEM MUSEUM & SITES



The 1748 Brethren's House was the site of a Revolutionary War hospital for several years.

The plaque shown is on the east wall exterior walkway, which leads to the rear of the building. MARTY MOYLE/ SPECIAL TO THE LEHIGH VALLEY PRESS

Washington's drummer boy settled in Schuylkill

BY JILL WHALEN
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A drummer boy for General George Washington's Continental Army made his home in Orwigsburg following his service in the Revolutionary War.

Frederick Hesser would become sheriff of the newly formed Schuylkill County and crier of Schuylkill County Court — and according to historical reports, he took a drum to work with him.

Hesser, who died in 1846, is buried at St. John Reformed/UCC Cemetery in Orwigsburg.

According to reports, Hesser was born in 1763 in Trappe, Montgomery County. He enlisted in the Revolutionary War when he was 13 years old. His brother, John, was 15 when he enlisted and served as a fifer.

"History reveals that both boys were with Washington on that eventful night, Dec. 25, 1776, when he and his little army of ragged patriots crossed the Delaware amidst floating ice on that stormy night, entered Trenton and surprised and defeated the British Army, largely Hessians," according to an article published by The Call of Schuylkill Haven in 1976.

According to the now-defunct newspaper, legend has it that a captured Hessian soldier taught Hesser how to play a military beat on a drum.

The newspaper wrote that Hesser was transferred to Washington's main force as a drummer and was involved in battles at Brandywine and Fort Mifflin.

"Frederick Hesser was injured in 1777 when one of his drumsticks was shot from his hand during the Battle of Brandywine," said Jennifer Bowen, president of the Orwigsburg Historical Society.

The tombstone of Frederick Hesser notes that he was a drummer boy during the American Revolution. JILL WHALEN/TIMES NEWS

A flag holder near Frederick Hesser's grave in the St. John Reformed/UCC Cemetery in Orwigsburg.

Records show that Hesser retired from the Army in January of 1778.

"As far as we can confirm, Frederick Hesser came to Orwigsburg around 1820," Bowen said.

By that point, the town — designed by Peter Orwig in the 1790s — had been incorporated for about seven years and had been serving as the county's seat since Schuylkill County was established in 1811.

"When word got out that Orwigsburg was being considered for the title of 'County Seat of Schuylkill County,' many quickly started businesses, moved to Orwigsburg, and worked in Orwigsburg. It was a booming town for a while," Bowen said.

While in Orwigsburg, Bowen said Hesser served as county sheriff, court crier, constable and choir director and vocalist at St. John's Reformed Church.

"He was a well-respected member of the community," she said. "He even called court to session by drumming."

According to The Call, "It was custom to call court together with the beating of the drum. It is said 'as a drummer he had few equals and no superiors.' "

Hesser lived in Orwigsburg until his death at the age of 83 on June 22, 1846. Pottsville became the county's seat in 1851.

When he died, the Miners' Journal of Pottsville, wrote, "Many anecdotes attest to his peculiarity; during the battle of Germantown he was discovered by some comrades sitting on the ground. Asked if he was frightened, he said, 'No,' but that the enemy had shot away his drumsticks and 'spoiled his business.' "

An artist's rendering of Hesser and Washington at Valley Forge was sold in 1886 to benefit the Valley Forge Memorial Monument Chapel. The rendering contains a poem based on Hesser's experience.

"Unfortunately, this fundraiser for the 'Drummer Boy Monument' never came to fruition," Bow-

See **DRUMMER** on Page 12

DRUMMER

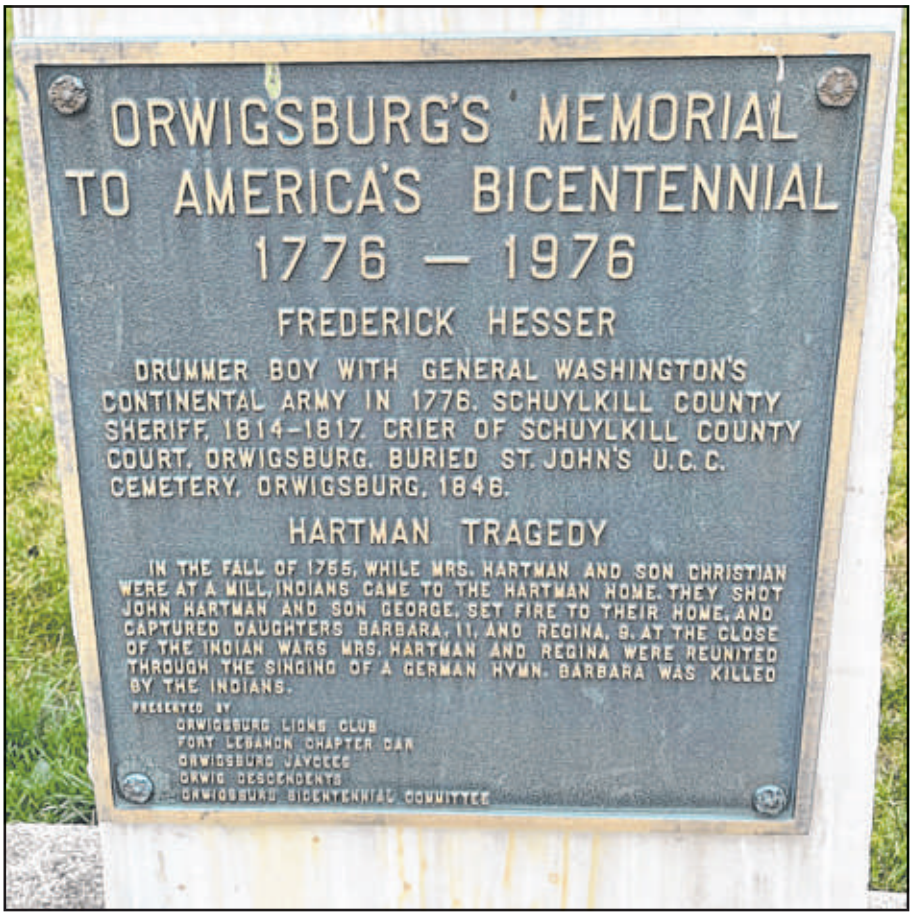
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

en said.

She said approximately 20 Revolutionary War veterans are buried in Orwigsburg; however, many are unrecorded and unnamed.

She said that dozens of Revolutionary War veterans are buried at the Zion's Red Church cemetery in nearby West Brunswick Township.

A monument in Orwigsburg's downtown dedicated in 1976 notes how resident Frederick Hesser served as a drummer boy during the Revolutionary War. It also tells of the Hartman tragedy, "In the fall of 1755, while Mrs. Hartman and son Christian were at a mill, Indians came to the Hartman home. They shot John Hartman and son George, set fire to their home and captured daughters Barbara, 11, and Regina, 9. At the close of the Indian Wars, Mrs. Hartman and Regina were reunited through the singing of a German hymn. Barbara was killed by the Indians.



America's story reflected in Horner's Cemetery

BY CHARLIE BAUDER
SPECIAL TO THE PRESS

On a small piece of land in East Allen Township, one can trace the history of both Northampton and America. The oldest cemetery in Northampton County, Horner's Cemetery can be found off Nor-Bath Boulevard in East Allen Township behind God's Missionary Church.

Visitors to Horner's Cemetery can take a walk back through time.

Those interred at the cemetery include people who helped found communities that we know today — places like Bath and Northampton boroughs and Allen and East Allen townships.

Horner's Cemetery sits at the center of the site of Craig's Scotch-Irish settlement, the first permanent settlement in what would become Northampton County, which settlers led by Col. Thomas Craig founded in 1728, 24 years before the formation of Northampton County and years before Moravian settlements in Nazareth and Bethlehem.

When settlers founded the community, they also built what was known as the Allen Township Presbyterian Church on the site near where the cemetery rests.

The cemetery is named for Jane Horner, a woman who was killed during the French and Indian War in 1763 during an Indian raid in the community.

However, interments at the cemetery began years before Horner's death, with the first interment in the mid-1740s.

Along with early settlers in the area, 19 veterans of the American Revolution are buried in Horner's Cemetery. They include Gen. Robert Brown, who served in the militia during the Revolutionary War and became friends with George Washington.

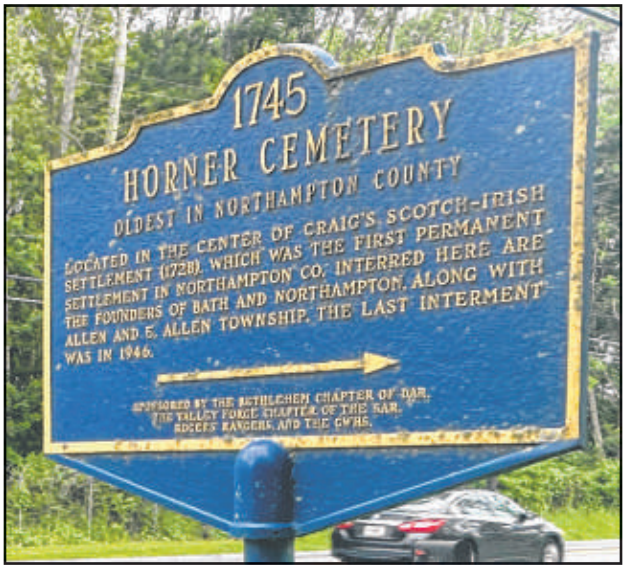
Among those laid to rest at Horner's Cemetery, East Allen Township, are veterans of the Revolutionary War, as well as other prominent early residents of the area. PRESS PHOTOS BY CHARLIE BAUDER

After the war, Brown returned to the area, living in what is now East Allen Township and serving as Northampton County's first Pennsylvania senator.

Brown also served in Congress and planted two horse chestnut saplings on his property given to him by Washington. One of those saplings became known as the Friendship Tree, which is a symbol of both Bath Borough and East Allen Township.

Many other people influential to the history and early development of the greater Northampton area also rest at Horner's Cemetery.

They include Hugh Wilson, an early settler of what is now the borough of Northampton and the man who built the Wilson Block House, which still stands to this day after being moved to Laubach Avenue, and James Ralston, who laid out the town of Bath.



A historical sign along Nor-Bath Boulevard directs visitors to Horner's Cemetery, the oldest cemetery in Northampton County.

The last interment at Horner's Cemetery occurred in the 1940s, but several area residents have not forgotten.

In recent years, volunteers led by Peggy Moser — a Northampton County resident — have formed

See **HORNER'S** on Page 14

HORNER'S

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

a nonprofit organization, the Horner's Cemetery Historical Society, to restore and upkeep the cemetery's memorials and educate the public on the cemetery and its history.

The organization's restoration work included repairing tombstones and stone walls at the cemetery, as well as cutting grass and removing dead trees.

According to information from the organization, volunteers also conducted research on the cemetery using old maps and books and other original documents from the Presbyterian Church archives center in Philadelphia. The organization has also raised funds to place name plates on unreadable tombstones, Moser told The Northampton Press in an earlier newspaper article.

Horner's Cemetery saw its first interments in the 1740s, with its last interment coming in the 1940s.

"Horner's Cemetery is among the most valuable of archaeological and historic resources," according to information posted by the organization at the cemetery.

"It shows evidence of settlement patterns, burial practices, cultural and religious influences, economic development, social relationships and provides family genealogy. Horner's Cemetery represents the only reminder of such an important and influential group of people."

According to the organization, the cemetery provides a public space where the community can reflect while also learning about local history.

People can learn more about Horner's Cemetery by scheduling a guided tour of the cemetery, which is available by appointment.

For more information on scheduling a tour or to get involved with the cemetery, call 610-984-4532.

4,000 join Sullivan's March through Monroe Co.

BY KRISTINE PORTER
KPORTER@TNONLINE.COM

Gary Snyder, a reenactor with the 24th Connecticut Militia Regiment, shows visitors at the Old Mill in Sciota how soldiers would make cartridges during the Revolutionary War. KRISTINE PORTER/TIMES NEWS

Three years into the Revolutionary War, General George Washington and the American Continental Army were struggling to win the war.

In 1778, raids by the Native Americans of the Six Nations confederation and Loyalists to the crown had destroyed settlements in New York and Pennsylvania, one of which was a region known as the Wyoming Valley. This area is now known as Luzerne County.

According to the National Park Service, the Six Nations consisted of the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk and the Tuscarora, with large settlements in the Finger Lakes area of New York. They referred to themselves as the Haudenosaunes, which means "the people of the longhouses."

The French referred to the Haudenosaunes as the Iroquois. During the French and Indian War from 1754 to 1763, which was really between Great Britain and France, the Six Nations had sided with the English, while the French had befriended Native Americans who were enemies of the Six Nations confederation.

The raids had left American Continental Army crippled due to a loss of manpower and food. And on July 3, 1778, patriot militia faced off against Loyalist soldiers and Iroquois warriors at the Battle of Wyoming, which ended in a significant defeat for the patriots. The settlers in the area fled south into the Pocono Mountains, Easton and other areas.

Come 1779, New York Gov. George Clinton told Washington that if the raids continued, his settlers would be pushed back to the Hudson River. That is when Washington decided the Continental Army would have to destroy the principal villages and food supplies of the Cayuga and Seneca people, so the Six Nations could no longer wage war on the Americans. Plans for what would become Sullivan's March were set into motion.

According to information about the Six Nations by the National Park Service, the confederation didn't want to have anything to do with the either side of the Revolutionary War when it first began.

In a message to the governor of New York, the Oneida leaders said, "We are unwilling to join either side of such a contest, for we love you both, Old England and New. Should the Great King of England apply us for aid, we should deny him — and should the colonies apply, we shall refuse. We Indians cannot find or recollect from the traditions of our ancestors any like case."

Due to pressure mainly by the English, they relented and agreed to fight for them. The Oneida and Tuscarora did provide support to the Americans.

On June 18, 1779, under the command of Maj. Gen. John Sullivan, about 4,000 men in the militia left Easton from an area now known as Lafayette Hill. The regiments came from New Jersey, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania, as well as a German battalion, and an artillery regiment.

"They stopped at Heller's Tavern in Wind Gap first from Easton," said Bruce Ecke, a member of the Old Mill committee at Brinker's Mill in Sciota. "They stayed overnight there and they left about 4 in the morning, came over the mountain and traveled on certain roads and got here. This was a storehouse. This is where they picked up provisions. They joined up with Col. Stroud then they headed for Tannersville. They stopped there before going up over the mountain."

The men encamped near a business called Learned's Tavern on June 19, 1779.

Ecke explained that the militia set off the next day heading for a fort near present day Wilkes-Barre.

"They went up through the woods kind of past Arrowhead Lake and that area. The woods were so thick the sun wouldn't shine through. They used to call it the Shades of Death. Before that, they started to get encounters with the Indians, until they finally got to Wyoming (Valley)," Ecke said.

A photocopy of a map at the Old Mill shows the Great Swamp lying in the area of Tobyhanna. The forested area called the Shades of Death lies between the swamp and Wilkes-Barre.

Gene Karney, a reenactor with the 24th Connecticut Militia Regiment, said at an encampment at the Old Mill on June 14, that Sullivan "gets up to Wyoming — Wilkes-Barre — and actually camps on the green outside of the courthouse in Wilkes-Barre and he waits there until the middle of August before he starts up again. Washington finally sends him a letter, saying, 'Look, your supply situation's only gonna get worse as your consuming supplies. Keep going."

See **4,000** on Page 16

4,000

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

Karney said Sullivan leaves behind soldiers who are sick at the fort and half the provisions before heading to the fort in Tioga, New York. This is when the 24th Connecticut gets involved.

Gary Snyder, also a reenactor with the 24th Connecticut, explained that the regiment was based in the Wyoming Valley. Before giving land to William Penn, King George referred to a large swath of land from the coast of Connecticut across well into Pennsylvania as Connecticut. After land was given to Penn, the settlers in his territory, formerly called Connecticut, still considered themselves to be citizens of that colony, not Pennsylvania.

According to the National Park Service, Sullivan met up with Gen. James Clinton on Aug. 22 at the fort in Tioga, New York. They began invading Native American villages on Aug. 26.

By the end of the expedition in October, more than 40 villages were destroyed, at least 160,000 bushels of corn and countless amounts of fruits and vegetables were destroyed. Having been alerted to invasions, many of the people had fled to the British-held Fort Niagara. By Sept. 21, there were 5,036 Native Americans at the fort. The loss of their food storage resulted in the death from starvation in the months that followed.

Because so many people left their villages before the soldiers got there, Sullivan did not take anyone prisoner. In that respect, he didn't complete his task.

"So there are those who tell you that it's a well-executed failure, but I would argue that vehemently," Karney said. Sullivan didn't have enough artillery or provisions on hand, "so he was never going to get to Niagara."

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Tamaqua, Coaldale share Revolutionary roots

BY DONALD R. SERFASS
DSERFASS@TNONLINE.COM

A 1999 historical marker on East Broad Street in Tamaqua tells visitors of the significance of the 1801 log home.

The post-Revolutionary War log house on Tamaqua's East Broad Street was erected by Burkhardt Moser Jr. in 1801, two years after he first settled the town by establishing his 1799 sawmill. DONALD R. SERFASS/SPECIAL TO THE TIMES NEWS

The Schuylkill County boroughs of Tamaqua and Coaldale might trace their roots to not only the American Revolution but its most famous protest.

According to legend, Tamaqua founder Burkhardt Moser Jr. was son of a Swiss-German man reportedly granted 6,000 acres as reward for his participation in the Boston Tea Party.

Moser, of Mosserville near New Tripoli, ventured north of the Blue Mountain and established a sawmill in 1799. The area was referred to as simply "Panther Valley."

The designated area remained inhabited by bands of Indians who refused to leave, even though the League of Six Nations had sold a large parcel of the territory to William Penn in 1736.

At that treaty, held in Philadelphia before the Revolutionary War, the Indians agreed to relinquish their land rights in exchange for 500 English pounds.

Still, while some Indians moved west in the famous Path of Tears, others stayed behind in the rich, fertile valley to which they had become accustomed — their disdain for the white man further heightened. And so hostilities were ever present.

Moser, son Jacob, and friend John Kershner most likely had no difficulty deciding on the location, a series of rolling hills nestled among four protective mountains.

The hills were divided by a small river, initially called the Tamaqua River. Later, it was renamed the Little Schuylkill, or "hidden river."

Also in the valley were two streams, the Panther Creek and Wabash Creek. At the valley's south end, the three waterways merged in a confluence and continued south through the water gap.

In that ideal setting, the settlers cleared land, logged, hunted and lived in the sawmill until Moser built the first house in Tamaqua in 1801.

The original cabin, minus a large section removed during later subdivision of the property, is the one visible on the north side of the 300 block of East Broad Street, with a side view around the corner at North Greenwood Street.

Moser's son John, born 1805, established a homestead 4 miles east in 1827, the foundation for the

See **TAMAQUA** on Page 19

TAMAQUA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

town of Coaldale.

His cabin was said to occupy land at the site of what later became Manila Grove Park, present-day St. Luke's Hospital – Miners Campus.

As for the fate of Burkhardt Moser, very little is known.

Legend says he hiked south over the dangerous Blue Mountain one day in 1828 to go hunting, or more likely, to deliver a small amount of coal. He never returned.

Much conjecture has been offered regarding his disappearance.

The towering Blue Mountain was still a refuge for remaining hostile Indians at that time, according to some reports, and the ever-present threat of wild animals are just two implied theories to explain why he vanished.

His disappearance was never solved, leaving historians to speculate that he was robbed, murdered, attacked by wildlife or taken captive.

The log home's interior maintains its pioneering look, shown here being tended to by volunteer Dale Freudenberger, Tamaqua Historical Society president. DONALD R. SERFASS/SPECIAL TO THE TIMES NEWS

At the time he disappeared, Moser was in full possession of his land, free of debt, and still paying taxes on the 300-acre to 400-acre tract he had originally settled in 1799.

Burkhardt Moser was 80 years old when he vanished.

Bethlehem and the American War of Independence

BY JASON REHM
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Bells rang throughout Philadelphia.

In New York, an ecstatic mob pulled down a statue of King George.

Large crowds gathered to hear the Declaration of Independence read in Easton.

As news of the Declaration of Independence made its way up and down the colonies, those in support joyfully celebrated the creation of a new nation, while others feared the consequences.

The July 3, 1776, entry in the Bethlehem Diary reads "Independence about to be declared. Decided we did not understand matter, would not discuss it with strangers nor among ourselves."

Bethlehem, a community closed to non-Moravians, regulated their contact with outsiders and attempted to avoid political controversies.

Instead, their concern was on the goings on in their own community, much of which was spiritually focused. If they were out of touch with their neighbors, Bethlehem's Moravians were even further out of touch with the events driving the political fervor of the day.

However, the American Revolution was an unavoidable conflict that demanded answers to two difficult questions: to which side did the Moravians owe their allegiance, and as Christians, what was their position on war?

Opinions on the matter weren't unanimous. In Bethlehem, some were English by birth, some were German, and many were born in the colonies. This created a variety of viewpoints when it came to politics.

There were even Tories among them. John Francis Oberlin, the storekeeper, declared that he had enough rope in his store to hang the entire Congress.

Although many Moravians were pacifists, this was not a central teaching of the church. Within Bethlehem there were differing attitudes on the morality of bearing arms.

John Ettwein, Bethlehem's principal leader during the Revolutionary War, proved to be pivotal in the stance the community took. Under his strong guidance it was decided that Bethlehem, despite its internal debates, would stand together in the matter as a whole.

The community's position was that they desired the good of the country and would not stand in opposition to the course of events, but they themselves would not would not participate in fighting or military training. At the same time, they were willing to bear their share of the country's burdens.

In 1777, the Militia and Test Acts were passed. These acts compelled nearly all men to serve in the militia or pay for a substitute, and required all males over the age of 18 to renounce allegiance to King George and to swear an oath of allegiance to the state. Punishments for refusal were harsh fines and even jail time.

Moravians held deep convictions against taking oaths. Even in the face of hostility, Ettwein urged Bethlehem to stand fast by their conscience, avoid violence and refuse the Oath.

Throughout Pennsylvania, Committees of Safety were formed, responsible for identifying those who didn't support the cause. Northampton County's committee, full of zealous patriots, seized this opportunity to harass the people in Bethlehem, whom they already disliked.

The worst of them was John Wetzel, who had grown up in the Moravian Church, but rebelled against the strict regimen placed on him by his parents.

Holding a fierce grudge, Wetzel took full advantage of the situation and charged the Moravians 10 times the normal sum of a substitute. His goal was to bankrupt the community and to make their lives miserable.

The burdens borne by the Moravians were not only financial. The location of Bethlehem brought the war directly to their door. Located near the King's Highway, Bethlehem became a constant thoroughfare of troops, prisoners and refugees. The Moravians furnished these strangers with food, clothing and blankets.

Throughout the war, many of America's Founding Fathers and important Revolutionary figures spent time in Bethlehem. Notables include George and Martha Washington, John Adams, Samuel Adams, Lafayette, Alexander Hamilton, Casimir Pulaski, John Hancock, John Paul Jones and even Benedict Arnold. John Ettwein ministered to many of them, utilizing his great command of the English language.

At times these visitors brought panic. After the defeat at Long Island, several thousand troops headed toward Bethlehem and it

See **WAR** on Page 21

WAR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

was reported that General Charles Lee threatened to end this "nest of Tories," and to offer his men amusement in the Sister's House. That night, upon request, General Horatio Gates set guard at each door of the Sister's House and the women remained safe.

The horrors of war could not be avoided. Twice the Continental Army commandeered the Brethren's House to serve as a military hospital. It became a "reeking hole of indescribable filth" and disease. Day and night, John Ettwein responded to the sudden summons of sick soldiers who yearned for final comfort and prayer before their death.

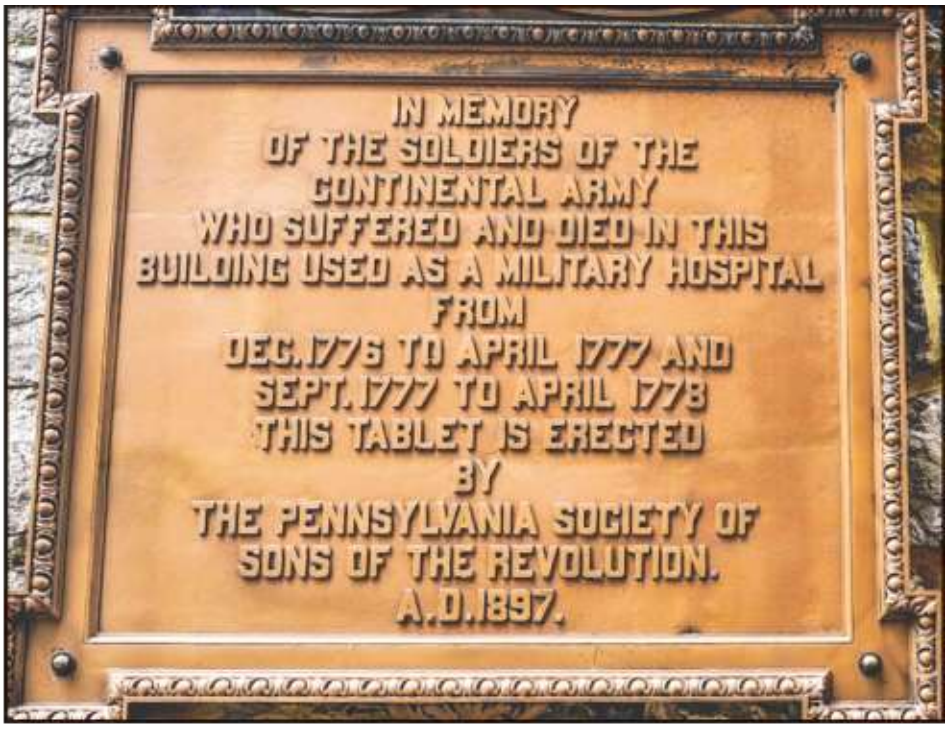
Men died at the rate of five, six and even a dozen a day. Carpenters couldn't build coffins quick enough. Finally, trenches were built and the dead were placed in them side by side in a mass grave.

Bethlehem serves as the final resting place for more than 500 Continental soldiers, names unknown, who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. In their final hours, it was the Moravians who knelt alongside them, tending to their wounds. Many of these caregivers fell ill and died, including the 19-year-old son of John Ettwein.

Bethlehem did not have to bear arms to make an impact during the American Revolution.

The Moravians endured great hostility and financial burdens for their beliefs, yet, out of love for their Savior, gave sacrificially to meet the needs of everyone - whether they were common soldiers or nobility, the sick and dying, refugees, or even British prisoners.

At America's 250th anniversary we can still learn from this chapter in Bethlehem's history.



The plaque shown is on the east wall exterior walkway of the Brethren's House, which leads to the rear of the building. MARTY MOYLE/SPECIAL TO THE LEHIGH VALLEY PRESS

American flags decorate the graves of three Revolutionary War veterans that are between two modern homes along Beaver Street in Beaver Meadows. KELLY MONITZ SOCHA/TIMES NEWS

3 Revolutionary War graves in Beaver Meadows

BY KELLY MONITZ SOCHA
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A soft summer breeze kept three small Americans flags waving above freshly mowed grass just off Beaver Street in Beaver Meadows.

The flags honor the service of three Revolutionary War veterans laid to rest on the eastern edge of town in the early 1800s.

Mike Baran walked across the soft grass toward the three seemingly out of place headstones set in a row in between two new homes.

Baran, who lives down the street and grew up in town, recalled the area being pasture-like years ago.

"When we were kids, we used to play ball up here, because none of these houses were here," he said. "I always remember we stayed away from here."

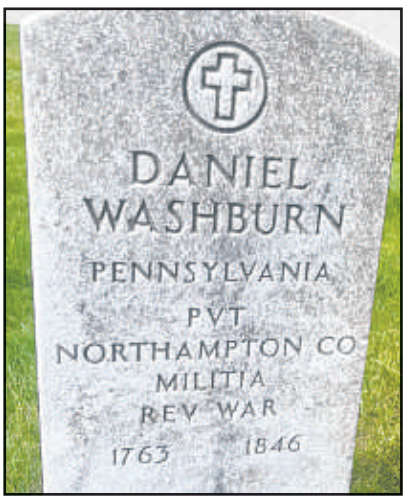
Baran's teachers from the Beaver Meadow school taught them about the nation's patriots buried there, Ephraim Ladd, James McGarvan and Daniel Washburn, he said.

"So, we always held this in reverence, this position, because they were buried there in 1836, 1830 and 1846," he said reading the dates on the headstones from the left.

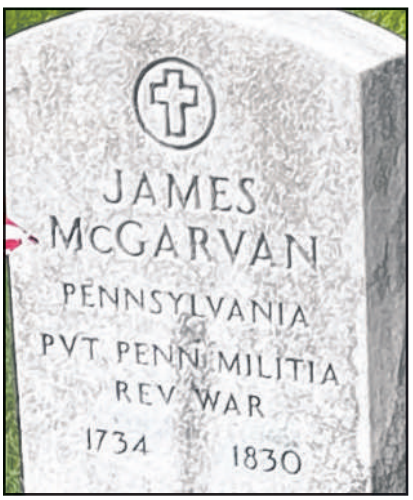
Historical accounts described the area, known as the Maple Grove Cemetery, as wet, marsh and

See **GRAVES** on Page 23

New Englander Ephraim Ladd was the first of the Revolutionary War veterans buried along Beaver Street in Beaver Meadows to answer the call to war, following the opening battles of Lexington and Concord in April 1775. KELLY MONITZ SOCHA/TIMES NEWS



Daniel Washburn enlisted in the Northampton County Militia after surviving the Wyoming Massacre in 1778 and fleeing on raft down the Susquehanna River, eventually making to present day Weissport.



Not much is known about James McGarvan, one of three Revolutionary War veterans buried off Beaver Street in Beaver Meadows, except his service in the Pennsylvania Militia and the year he was born, 1743, and died, 1830.

GRAVES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

overgrown with bushes and maple trees.

There's no sign of swampiness in 2026, some 239 years since the land that is now Beaver Meadows was deeded to Patrick and Mary Keene.

The borough wasn't formally incorporated until 1897 but marks its anniversary from 1787 when it was first warranted to the Keenes, who later sold to Nathan Beach.

Beach, who owned much of the northern anthracite tracts, first discovered coal near Beaver Meadows in the area of Leviston, later known as Coleraine, Banks Township, in 1812. The area is now known as the Village of Junedale.

Beach, who settled in Salem Township, Luzerne County, was a survivor of the Wyoming Massacre in 1778, joined the Continental Army at the age of 15 and served continuously to see the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.

Of the Revolutionary War veterans buried in Beaver Meadows, Ephraim Ladd was the first to answer the call, following the opening battles of Lexington and Concord in April 1775.

Ladd served as a private in Lt. Ezekiel Olcutt's company in the Connecticut Militia, marching from Bolton, Connecticut, to help relieve Boston, which was under siege by the British.

Afterward, Ladd migrated to Bradford and then Monroe counties before coming to Beaver Meadows with his wife, Lois Chapman Ladd, and son, Ephram Jr., in 1829.

The elder Ladd died May 4, 1836, — two days after his wife. His grave marker reads: "Ephraim Ladd Connecticut Pvt. Wolcott's Conn Militia Revolutionary War May 11, 1749 May 4, 1836."

Ladd was just shy of his 87th birthday when he passed away.

Daniel Washburn was also a survivor of the Wyoming Massacre with his father and brother. They floated down the Susquehanna River on a raft they crafted to Wapwallopen, according to his own historical account in 1846.

They traveled the Indian path past Buck Mountain to a place he called Graden head in Northampton County, or New Gnadenhutten, the present day Weissport.

Washburn served with the Northampton County Militia, helping to protect Pennsylvania border settlements throughout the remainder of the war.

Both Washburn's mother and father traced their roots to passengers of the Mayflower in 1620. His mother, Silence Washburn, was a fifth-generation direct descendant of Francis Cooke and Thomas Rogers, according to historical accounts.

Washburn died in Beaver Meadows shortly after completing his account of the Wyoming Massacre in 1846.

Much less is known about the third man, James McGarvan, with his marker noting his Revolutionary War service in the Pennsylvania Militia and that he was born in 1743 and died in 1830.

As time goes on, much local history begins to fade with the passing of those who kept oral histories alive, said Baran, who admits he didn't know the full history of his hometown either.

"The problem is all the people that did are all dead," he said, noting that his own mother at 96 no longer has a grasp on the history. "My cousins who were old enough have since passed. So, we kind of lost our link with history. It's sad."

Museum is base for LV's role in history

BY DOUGLAS GRAVES
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Lehigh Valley residents were central players in the war that established the United States as independent from Great Britain.

That's evident in the remarkable collection of paintings and artifacts depicting the Revolutionary War on display at the Lehigh Valley Heritage Museum on Walnut Street in Allentown.

Despite no known battles being fought in the area, men and women from the Lehigh Valley played important roles in the lead up to the Revolutionary War, conduct of the war itself and the subsequent government.

One of these men, George Taylor, was an unlikely leader. He started out in Colonial America an immigrant and indentured servant.

He started out shoveling coal into an iron smelting furnace — a hard and dirty job. He ended up owning the furnace and an ironworks factory.

The Lehigh Valley Heritage Museum is on Walnut Street in Allentown. DOUGLAS GRAVES/SPECIAL TO THE LEHIGH VALLEY PRESS

He is well known locally because he was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and because his house is in Catasauqua in Lehigh County.

Taylor was also a Patriot, which set him at odds with many of his business associates and neighbors who were Loyalist or they were people who just were waiting it out.

One of his principle contributions to the Patriot cause during the war was to provide munitions such as cannon balls from his factory located in Durham in Bucks County along the Delaware River.

Also manufactured at Taylor's Durham Iron Works were the Durham boats with which General George Washington used to cross the Delaware River on Christmas night in 1776.

However, he wasn't always fully paid for his services and ended his life in effective bankruptcy.

Another portrait is of a lesser known Patriot, Stephen Balliet from Whitehall Township then in Northampton County, later divided into Lehigh County and Northampton County.

Balliet was commissioned as a lieutenant colonel in 1776 and led a battalion at the Battle of Brandywine and later, in the Battle of Germantown

See **MUSEUM** on Page 25

MUSEUM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

(now a neighborhood in the northwestern part of Philadelphia).

Later, he served in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

The town of Ballietsville was established by Stephen's father Paulus Balliet.

After the Patriot defeat and British victory at the Battle of Brandywine, Stephen Balliet led the men who brought the Liberty Bell into Allentown (then called Northampton Town) from Philadelphia.

Part of the museum's exhibit is dedicated to the Liberty Bell and how it came to Allentown's (then) High German Evangelical Reformed) Church, later Zion's Reformed Church and now the Resurrected Life Community Church on Hamilton Street in Allentown.

The bell's trip from Philadelphia was an adventure in itself. What is now about a 45-minute automobile drive was then, by Conestoga freight wagon, an arduous 50-mile trip of one to two weeks.

Balliet's force of over a hundred cavalrymen in a secret mission escorted the wagon train with one of the wagons hauling the bell under a load of manure and straw on the trip from Philadelphia to Allentown with stops in Quakertown and in Bethlehem.

In Bethlehem, the wagon with the Pennsylvania State House bell broke down. Only later in history would the bell be christened "The Liberty Bell."

A painting depicts "The Shot Heard Around the World" when about 400 American militiamen defeated a British army detachment at Concord, Mass.

A portrait of a lesser known Patriot, Stephen Balliet from Whitehall Township then in Northampton County, later Lehigh County. DOUGLAS GRAVES/ SPECIAL TO THE LEHIGH VALLEY PRESS

That's where another local personality entered the story. Frederick Lesser (Lesser Lake in named after him) hauled the bell from Bethlehem to Allentown.

It was among 10 other bronze bells being escorted out of British controlled Philadelphia to keep the British from melting them down for ammunition.

The exhibit has a painting of workers lowering the huge bronze and copper bell into the basement beneath the church's floorboards.

It shows nine men with ropes and pulleys carefully maneuvering the massive 2,000 pound (more with the clapper and elm wood yoke) where it would be hidden from British troops.

It was hidden there from September 1777 until June 1778 when it was returned to Philadelphia.

Among uniforms, flags and paintings on display is a silver quill pen holder with tray, a replica of the one used to sign the Declaration of Independence.

LEHIGH VALLEY HERITAGE MUSEUM

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July 4: Join the Lehigh Valley Heritage Museum as it celebrate July Fourth and commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Website: https://www.lehighcountyhistoricalsociety.org.

Leiby family came to Tamaqua in 1733

BY JILL WHALEN
JWHALEN@TNONLINE.COM

One of the Tamaqua area's prominent families is the Leiby family, whose first ancestors, Friedrick and Maria Leiby, arrived in Philadelphia from Germany in 1733.

Tamaqua native and retired Penn State journalism professor R. Thomas Berner is part of the ninth generation of the family, which has spread across the area and beyond.

He is a great-grandson of Emma Leiby and Adolph Berner, who lived at the junction of Mountain Road and Wildcat and Valley roads in Walker Township. Emma was part of the sixth generation of the Frederick and Maria family.

According to a Leiby family history published in 1956 by Blanche Leiby, Friedrick and Maria Leiby settled in Oley, Berks County. Their first son born in America, Frederick, served in the Revolutionary War.

While early generations mostly called Berks County home, Frederick's son, Daniel Leiby, who was born in 1794, would settle in West Penn Township, just east of what is now Zion's Church.

"Later generations, viewing the countryside of northeastern Berks and northwestern Lehigh counties, with its productive farms and fine old homes, might well wonder what induced Daniel to make his home away from his family across the Blue Mountain where there were still many of the characteristics of a semi-wilderness," according to the Leiby history.

It was assumed that because Daniel was a wagoner and transported goods to and from Philadelphia, the West Penn location "was part of his territory in which goods were traded both with Indians and with new white settlers."

His son, also named Daniel, was a shoemaker and married Mary Steigerwalt. The two would move from West Penn to Walker Township.

During the Civil War he made shoes according to government specifications and delivered them to the procurement department at Summit Hill," according to the history.

Daniel switched from shoemaking to farming after purchasing land in Walker Township in 1873. It is thought that when machines began manufacturing shoes, Daniel sought a different livelihood.

A son, Elias B. Leiby, included memories of his parents in the Leiby history.

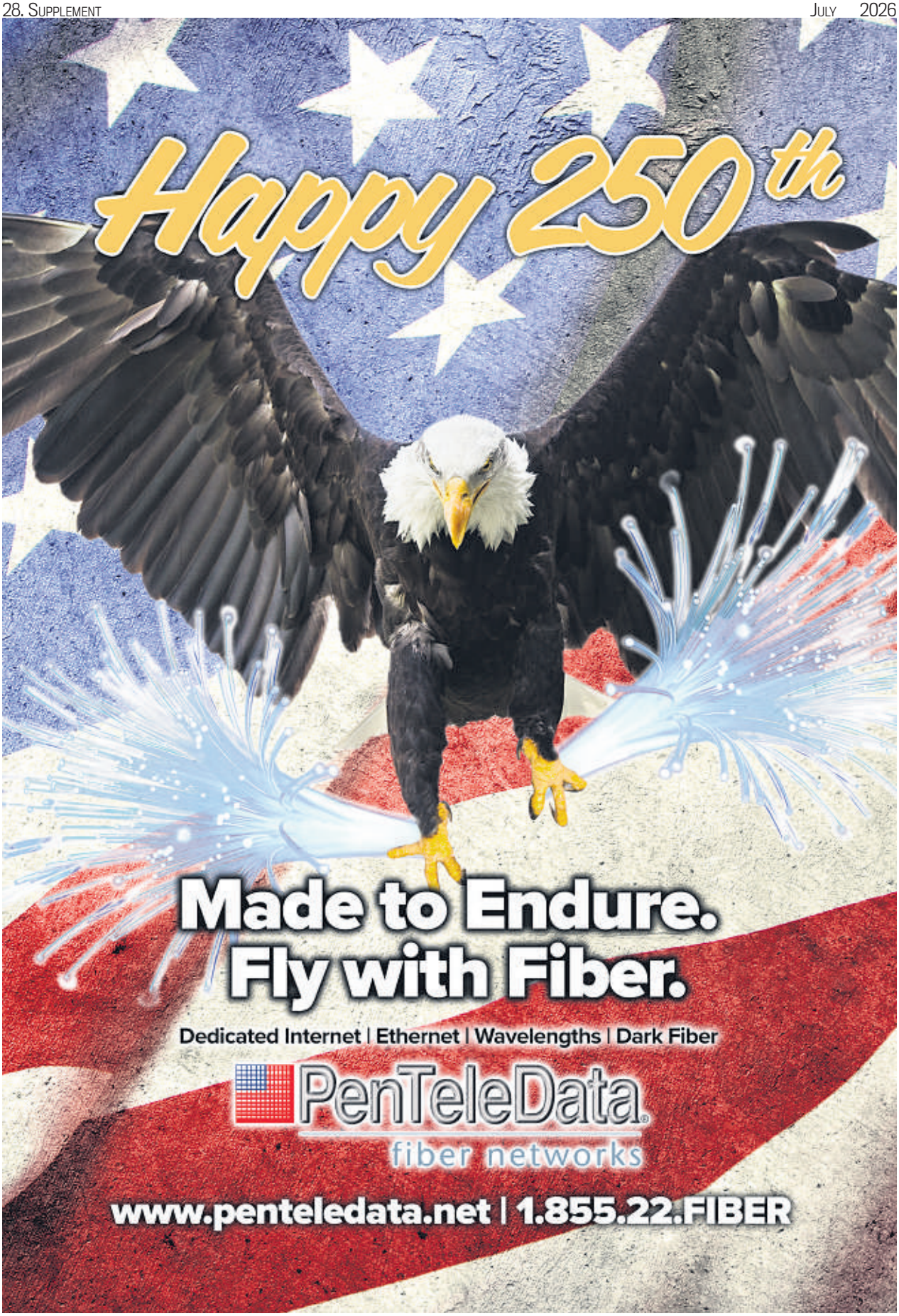
"Father in his youth made trips from West Penn into the Catawissa Valley to get roofing shingles, passing through where Mahanoy City and Shenandoah are now located. In one of those places there were then two houses and in the other three. He saw the building of the Little Schuylkill Railroad, now part of the Philadelphia & Reading, from Tamaqua to Port Clinton, and its two trains a day, loaded with coal," according to an account from Elias.

Daniel and Mary (Steigerwalt) Leiby had 10 children, including Emma Leiby. A photo taken of the family in Walker Township is included in the Leiby history book.

While many of Daniel and Mary's descendants remain in the area and the state, genealogy records also place them across the nation.

A photo from around 1910 shows the sixth generation of the Leiby family in Walker Township, as taken from Leiby Genealogy: The Ancestors and Descendants of Daniel L. and Mary Steigerwalt Leiby. From left are Alwena Leiby, Dennis Leiby, Mary Leiby Schock, Elias Leiby, Amanda Leiby Hunsicker, Daniel Leiby, Israel Leiby, Sarah Schaller Leiby, Jonathan Leiby and Emma Leiby Berner. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

The Walker Township home of Emma Leiby Berner and Adoph Berner is shown.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Our forefathers and their role in America's birth

(Editor's note: We asked readers to tell us about their ancestors in the Revolutionary War era. Here are some responses, compiled by reporter Jill Whalen.)

Related to Tamaqua founder

Ben Turrano of Tamaqua has been researching ancestors who served in the American Revolution.

While doing so, he discovered several other families with early origins in the Pennsylvania colony and American Revolution.

Elizabeth, a daughter of Private Thomas Nickum (1745-1827), married John Jacob Moser and both are buried in Easton, Turrano said. Moser was a cousin to Burkhardt Moser, the founder of Tamaqua.

Nickum is noted as a contributing builder of a Lutheran church outside of Hellertown that still stands.

Turrano said one of Moser's daughter's married Michael Brobst, who served in the Continental Army and may have served under George Washington's command at Long Island and Valley Forge.

His descendants made their way to Mauch Chunk, and later Summit Hill and Lansford. Three of his descendants were named George Washington Bobst, Turrano found.

Bobst (spellings changed) owned a manor house and trading post which became the settlement of Hynamansville in Lehigh County.

Michael Bobst's parents arrived in Philadelphia in 1732 as part of religious asylum seekers.

Bobst's great grandson, Jesse Bobst (1824-1902), was born in Summit Hill and is buried in the GAR Cemetery. Jesse served in the Union Army during the Civil War as part of the Pennsylvania 202nd Volunteers.

Jesse Bobst's great granddaughter is Turrano's grandmother, Fannie Cunning Cattivera.

"My Nana Cattivera's Cunning and Griffiths ancestors were noted as early pioneer families in Lansford before it was named Ashton," Turrano said. "There is even a 'Cunning Lane' named for the family in Lansford."

Though only a mapping street only, Turrano said the remaining houses have Water Street mailing addresses.

Turrano's great grandfather, William B. Cunning (1870-1930), was born in Ireland and came to Ashton in 1874 with his parents. He became a supervisor or mine foreman and worked nearly his adult life in the No. 9 Mine in Lansford.

Turrano said William B. Cunning owned the first automobile in Lansford — a 1913 Velie touring car.

In addition, Turrano noted that the David Griffiths family were fairly well settled in Ashton/Lansford by 1850.

"They are noted on the U.S. Census that year which indicates the settlement was still part of West Penn Township and a Summit Hill Post Office," Turrano said. "The Griffiths family were from Wales and seem to have been 'recruited' to map and drive mine shafts for the early Anthracite industry based on their experience doing so in the Welsh coal veins."

Turrano said the same type of geology runs under the ocean to Wales and Ireland.

Revolutionary ties

Area native Patricia Rohn, a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution now living in Wisconsin, has several Revolutionary ties in Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe and Northampton counties.

Rohn is a sister of James Logue Jr., a Times News freelancer.

Among their Revolutionary ancestors are:

• Johann "John" Serfass, who served as a private and a clerk in Capt. John Gregory's company, 4th Battalion, Northampton County Militia, under Col. Nicholas Kern. He was a resident of Chestnuthill Township in what is now Monroe County. He is buried in Salem Church Cemetery in Gilbert.

• Heinrich "Henry" Borger, who also served as a private in Gregory's company under Kern and was a resident of Chestnuthill Township.

• Jacob Hahn served as a first lieutenant in Capt. Christian Fisher's company, 2nd Battalion, Northampton County Militia, under Col. George Breinig in 1777. He also served in Capt. Jacob Heller's company, 2nd Battalion in 1778. He was a resident of Plainfield Township, Northampton County.

• Peter Phillip Hahn, father of Jacob Hahn, was not in the military but the DAR recognizes him for taking the Oath of Allegiance in Northampton County. His four sons, Jacob, Dewalt, Frederick and George, all joined the Northampton County Militia. He was born in 1715 in Germany and migrated to America in 1744 in Philadelphia on the ship, Phoenix, from Rotterdam. He was a resident of Plainfield Township and is buried in the Plainfield Cemetery.

• Jacob Bender, born in 1740 in Steinbach, Rheinland, served as a second lieutenant, 7th Company, 5th Battalion, Northampton County Militia, under Capt. George Engle and Col. Abraham Larabar. He was a resident of Plainfield Township, Northampton County.

• Leonard Frey, private in the 4th Company, 3rd Battalion, Northampton County Militia, under Capt. John Horner and Col. Michael Probst. He was a resident of Lowhill Township in what is now Lehigh County.

• Johann George Rau, was not in the military, but DAR recognizes him for taking the Oath of Allegiance in Northampton County. He was a resident of Lowhill Township.

• Leonard Hontz, was living in Lynn Township in what is now Lehigh County when he served as a private in the 2nd Pennsylvania Battalion in Capt. Thomas Craig's Company under Col. Arthur St. Clair. He took part in the Battle of Trois-Rivieres on June 8, 1776, near Quebec. He later acquired land in East Penn Township,

See **FOREFATHERS** on Page 30

FOREFATHERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

which is now Mahoning Township and resided there until his death in 1837.

Fought in the war

Carolyn Suzadail of Tamaqua noted that her fifth great-grandfather and his son both fought in the Revolutionary War.

Gideon Woodwell Sr. was born in 1720. He was captain of a company of men from Newberry, Massachusetts, who marched to Cambridge on the alarm of April 19, 1775, and remained there for six days when they returned to Newberry with leave.

He served as ships carpenter on Continental Frigate "Boston" beginning in July 1779, according to historical reports.

He died in 1790.

His son, Gideon Woodwell Jr., was born in 1750.

He was one of a party of 17 men who captured the British ship Friends" off Plum Island in 1776.

He served in the Navy during the Revolution and the War of 1812 as ships carpenter. In 1797, he helped build the frigate, "Constitution."

He died in 1840.

Early settlers

Dennis Pearson of East Penn Township shared information about the Kohler family and their descendants.

Pearson is a descendant of Peter Kohler, the son of Jacob Kohler, one of the original European residents who settled in Whitehall Township.

Jacob Kohler founded the village of Egypt and came to America from Mühlhausen, which is known today by the French name of Mulhouse.

"At first glance it appears to be an Alsatian city — and geographically it is — but its history tells a far more complex story. Mulhouse was a community shaped by German language, Swiss politics, and French geography, all at the same time," Pearson said.

He explained that for nearly three centuries, Mulhouse was not part of France.

"Beginning in 1515, it entered into a perpetual alliance with the Swiss Confederation, functioning as a free, self-governing city republic. Its people spoke German, traded with Swiss markets, and governed themselves independently of both France and the Holy Roman Empire," Pearson said.

During the upheaval of the French Revolution in 1798, Mulhouse voted to join France — long after many of its emigrants had already crossed the Atlantic.

"This layered identity explains why early Pennsylvania settlers from the region described themselves in ways that sound German, Swiss and Alsatian all at once. They came from a borderland where cultures overlapped, loyalties shifted and political boundaries were anything but fixed," Pearson said.

He noted that understanding Mulhouse's unique past helps illuminate why so many "Pennsylvania German" communities carried with them a blend of traditions, languages and loyalties that did not fit neatly into any single European category.

Pearson said that Peter Kohler married Juliana Guth, the daughter of Lorentz Guth, who was the head of the family on the homestead that the Associators met on May 27, 1776.

Peter Kohler was also the brother-in-law of Peter Roads, a Patriot from Northampton Towne. Kohler served in the Pennsylvania State Assembly under the new state constitution.

Pearson said the Kohlers married into many familiar surnames including the Frey, Guth, Steckel, Schwartz, Newhard, Schocch, Pearson and Daugherty.

Where history lives, where freedom began

Catasauqua's George Taylor House celebrates 250th

BY BILL LEINER JR.
SPECIAL TO THE PRESS

It took tremendous courage for the colonial leaders to foment revolution and challenge the greatest empire of the time, the British Empire. Celebrations of the semiquincentennial of the founding of the United States of America in 1776 will occur all over the United States on the July 4 Independence Day with the theme One Nation, One Anniversary, One Historic Celebration.

America's 250th anniversary takes place July 4, 2026, marking 250 years since the Declaration of Independence was signed. Major festivities are planned to have a five-day national celebration July 1-5, with signature events in Philadelphia, New York City and California, alongside smaller Main Street celebrations and gatherings nationwide.

The George Taylor House, located at Lehigh and Poplar streets in Catasauqua, is decorated to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. PRESS FILE PHOTOS

One such celebration will be held in Catasauqua Borough at the George Taylor House and its grounds located at Lehigh and Poplar streets. The celebration begins 10 a.m. and lasts until 2 p.m.

The George Taylor House is the mansion built by Taylor, a prominent ironmaster and politician who was a Founding Father of the United States and a signer of the American Declaration of Independence as a representative of Pennsylvania. He was born in Ireland.

Taylor entered public life as a justice of the peace. Later, he was elected to the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly and was appointed by the assembly to the Continental Congress. One of his first duties in Congress was to affix his signature to the Declaration of Independence.

Fifty-six men, including Taylor, signed the Declaration of Independence. Their signatures were a clear act of defiance and courage. Declaration signer Benjamin Rush said then the 56 were signing "our own death warrants."

President of the Continental Congress John Hancock wrote his name in the middle of the Declaration in larger print than the other signers. It is mythically noted Hancock signed his name that large

See **HISTORY** on Page 32

HISTORY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

so King George III could read Hancock's name without wearing his glasses.

The George Taylor House is a two-story Georgian-style stone mansion constructed in 1768 by carpenters and masonry for Taylor.

The house has a rich history of Independence Day celebrations and other scheduled gatherings honoring historical and, in some cases, religious gatherings such as the 12th Night.

On July 17, 1971, the George Taylor House was registered as a National Historic Landmark.

In recent years, it has developed a nonhistorical interest in reported paranormal activities occurring in the house. Volunteers over the years have reportedly experienced strange noises and walking sounds in the house.

Halloween gatherings have increased in recent years for those interested in the paranormal to perhaps get a glimpse of the supernatural.

The Catasauqua Independence Day celebration plans begin 10 a.m. with a welcome from dignitaries. Catasauqua Mayor Anthony Alcalde, council members and members of the Historic Catasauqua Preservation Association plan to attend the celebration.

The welcome is followed by a living history timeline presentation, house tours and a reading of the Declaration of Independence presented by the Bachman Players of Easton, beginning at approximately 11:20 a.m.

The Brandywine Colonials Fife & Drum Corps and the Catasauqua choir and bell choir will present songs. There also will be historical displays, demonstrations and more.

A goal of the celebration is to develop an understanding of the connection among all Americans and urge all to work together to keep the American democracy strong and vibrant.

George Taylor House volunteer leaders Candace Maxwell-Kern and Jason Kern dress in period-appropriate attire during an event at the house.

The celebration of the 250 years of American independence is a must-visit to Catasauqua on this special day.

For more information, visit georgetaylorhouse.com.

How slate shaped namesake town, our state

BY RON GOWER
TNEDITOR@TNONLINE.COM

Coal mining wasn't the only mining operation that helped shape Pennsylvania.

In a horizontal stretch expanding from Bangor through Slatington lies what is regarded as the Slate Belt. At one time, hundreds of slate mines existed producing the material for school chalkboards, roofing shingles, counter tops, pencil material and even turkey callers.

Today, only a handful of slate mines remain in operation: three in eastern Northampton County (Wind Gap, Pen Argyl and Bangor) and one in Slatedale, Lehigh County.

It was slate that was largely responsible for the discovery of Slatington and some surrounding towns.

Although independent quarries in the Pen Argyl area date back to the early 1800s, it wasn't until 1845 when Owen Jones and William Roberts opened one on land leased from Jonas Kern. Other quarries quickly followed and probably played a major role in the incorporation of Slatington as a borough on Sept. 20, 1864. At that time, no fewer than 20 incorporated quarries were developed around the local area.

One firm, Riverside Quarry, once boasted that it produced an annual capacity of 1.3 million school slates per year by 1884.

Today, the lone local survivor of that once booming industry is Penn Slate, formerly Penn Big Bed Slate Company. The firm has been family owned and operated for nearly a century.

Peter Papay currently is listed as the president.

Jacob Papay, Pete's grandfather, came to Slatington in 1903, fleeing the failing Austro-Hungarian Empire and looking for a livelihood. Jacob and his wife were just 17 at the time. They leased and worked for various quarries in the Northern Lehigh area.

Eventually Jacob, his son John, and son-in-law Steve Babyak pooled their resources and accumulated the great sum of $700. That enabled them to buy the land for the future Penn Big Bed Quarry.

In 1937 they formed the company Papay and Sons, revised to Papay and Babyak, and in 1942 to the Penn Big Bed Company. At the time, its main product was roofing slate.

When the Penn Big Bed firm was born, many other slate companies had already begun failing. John Babyak, who served as president of the firm in the mid-1980s, said back then that he had not missed a day of work in 40 years, not even for a vacation, attributing it to the dedication of the family and the determination to keep the firm operating. He said family members relied on hand tools and working long hours to stay in business.

The Great Depression and increased environmental and safety regulations had a detrimental impact on the slate industry, Babyak said.

Before the Depression, there were more than 100 slate companies in Lehigh County and 70 in Northampton County.

At one time, Penn Big Bed, with shifts working around the clock, turned out 10,000 square feet of blackboard slate every month.

By the 1950s, slate was barely used as a roofing material, and then schools eventually turned away from black boards.

Babyak said in that 1980s interview that the cutting of the slate is so precise that items can be made within one-sixteenth of an inch of the specifications.

He said the slate is often shaped into specific configurations including squares, triangles, circles, etc.

The firm, over the years, has handled some unique requests.

Penn Big Bed Slate Company built a winding stairway at Penn State University when Milton Eisenhower was president of the school in the 1950s.

The company also provided 32 trailer loads of slate in the 1970s when the veterans hospital in York was built.

And slate slabs, double the normal thickness, were ordered by the Bronx Zoo. The thickness was necessary because of large animals jumping on them.

Peter Papay wrote that World War II was a difficult time for all firms.

Mike, the younger brother of Jacob, enlisted in the Army. John and Steve Papay went to Boston to work in the shipyards. Jacob and his daughters, as well as other family members, running loaders and machinery. This was before Penn Big Bed was formed.

After the war, they purchased the present site of Penn Big Bed and grew it into the firm it is today.

Sara Cornell, left, and Joan Ressner are dressed in Revolutionary War period clothing with a reenactment group on June 14 at the Old Mill in Sciota. Cornell was portraying Deborah Sampson, who disguised herself as a man and joined the Army. KRISTINE PORTER/ TIMES NEWS

Cindy Lou Morris, who painted the keystone for Hamilton Township, sits next to Bruce Ecke, a member of the Old Mill committee, in the Old Mill in Sciota. Morris talked to visitors about the Keystone during a reenactment encampment on June 14. KRISTINE PORTER/TIMES NEWS

Women also served in the Revolutionary War

BY KRISTINE PORTER
KPORTER@TNONLINE.COM

Men weren't the only people on the march during the Revolutionary War.

Gary Snyder, a reenactor with the 24th Connecticut Militia Regiment, said that sometimes women followed along with the troops. Some of them had a husband in the regiment. They would do sewing, cooking and help care for sick soldiers.

Sara Cornell, who also is part of the reenactment group, said, "There were actually a lot of women from Pennsylvania that served in the American Revolution. People never think about it."

Cornell said some women were spies, and others actually were in combat. At the encampment on June 14, she was portraying Deborah Sampson, who disguised herself as a young man and fought during the Revolutionary War.

Sampson was born in 1760 in Clinton, Massachusetts, and was one of six children. Her father died when she was 10 years old. Her mother couldn't afford to feed all of the children, so Sampson became an indentured servant to a family. She helped on the farm and did things like gardening, and learned to use a variety of tools including a gun for hunting.

As an adult, she became a teacher, but when the Revolutionary War began she thought she might like to go, too. In 1782, she quit teaching, cut her hair short, bound up her chest, and dressed in men's clothes, she joined the Army. Sampson was assigned to the 4th Massachusetts Regiment.

"Nobody questioned whether she was a man or a woman. She was quite a manly looking woman, so it was easy to get away with. She was over 6 feet tall, which was very unusual," Cornell said. "They did tease her about not being able to grow a beard, but it never went any further."

Sampson was able to keep her secret even after being shot in the leg. She refused to be seen by a doctor, so she dug out one of two musket balls from her thigh with a penknife. The other one was left in her leg and caused her to walk with a limp the rest of her life.

After leaving the Army, Sampson married a farmer and had three children.

Cornell said that when she first started volunteering with a reenactment group, they said she could pick whoever she wanted to be. She had just read a book about Sampson and said, "I really felt connected to her, so I've been doing it ever since."

Cindy Lou Morris, who painted the Keystone for Hamilton Township, also was at the Old Mill event and dressed in period clothing. She wasn't portraying any particular woman from the Revolutionary War. Instead, she was talking to the visitors about the Old Mill, historic buildings in the area, her painting, and even how women would communicate with their fan.

"The fan actually tells people what you're feeling," Morris said. "If the fan is open and going very fast, it means you're available. If it's slow, that means you're married.

"If you drop the fan, it means you want to be a friend. If you take the fan to the left side of your face and move it, it means I want you to follow me. If you hold it to your lips, it means I want to kiss."

Bells rang, news spread about the Declaration

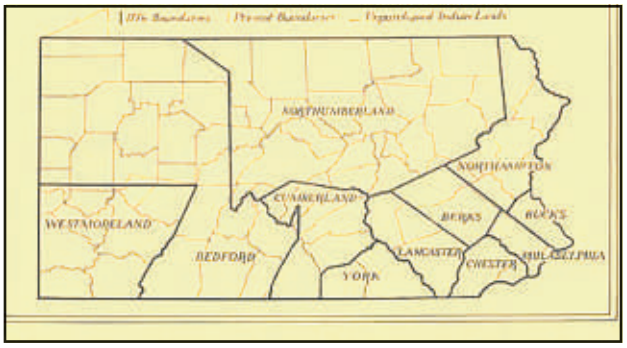
Historian Dennis Pearson of East Penn Township completed extensive research on what was happening in the region around the time of the American Revolution.

Pearson recently delivered his presentation to the Masonic Lodge in Lehighton and the Carbon County Council of Governments.

An excerpt from Pearson's "America 250" presentation tells of how word spread about the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

"The United States had been born," he said of the July 4, 1776, adoption. "But a declaration written in Philadelphia means nothing unless it is heard — unless it is carried into the towns, the valleys, the frontiers and the farms where ordinary people must decide whether they will stand with it.

"And that brings us home," he said, referring to the region.



A map shows the boundaries of counties in the Pennsylvania colony in 1776 (in bold) compared to the present day counties. Northampton County included all of today's counties of Northampton, Lehigh, Carbon, Monroe, Pike and Wayne, and the northern half of Schuylkill County.

Pearson said that four days after Congress adopted the Declaration, it was read publicly in Easton and Allentown — and on the very same day it was first read in Philadelphia.

"Bells rang across the region. Farmers left their fields. Tradesmen stepped away from their benches. Families gathered in the streets and squares," Pearson said. "And they heard the words — in English and in German — spoken aloud for the first time."

Pearson said historical accounts from the Morning Call newspaper describe a mix of excitement and fear.

"This was no longer a dispute. This was independence — and independence meant war," Pearson said.

News of the Declaration would soon reach into the frontier that would become Carbon County.

"In 1776, the Lehigh River was the main highway of the region. Messages from Easton traveled up the river to Walnutport, Slatington and Lehighton; through the Lehigh Gap into the Mahoning Valley; west toward Weissport, Franklin Township and East Penn Township, and north toward Mauch Chunk and the upper Lehigh settlements," Pearson said.

It was the same route used by traders, Moravian missionaries and frontier families.

He noted that Moravian communities at Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the Gnadenhuetten mission area were deeply connected to the frontier. They helped carry political news, hosted travelers and provided supplies and logistical support.

"Even though they were

See **SPREAD** on Page 38

Coal: A revolutionary fuel with deep roots

BY DONALD R. SERFASS
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Coal was a revolutionary fuel even before the Revolution.

Contrary to what many believe, anthracite coal was not unknown at the time.

Artifacts reveal that Native Americans used lumps of coal in their fires a century or more earlier.

A blacksmith in what is now Wilkes-Barre used it in his forge in 1769. There are records showing the use of anthracite in helping to make arms for the Continental Army at the government arsenal at Carlisle in 1775.

Still, it was a discovery of importance when, in 1791, Philip Ginder stumbled over some black rocks where Summit Hill is now located, when the area was still wilderness.

Ginder was returning from a hunting trip.

He collected a few pieces of his find and the following day carried them some 10 miles to Fort Allen, where Colonel Jacob Weiss had achieved recognition as the most prominent and knowledgeable settler.

When the anthracite industry boomed, coal castles dotted the region. Shown is the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company's Nu. 8 Breaker, Coaldale, in 1929.

Ginder likely believed coal deposits were plentiful and took them to Col. Weiss to verify.

And all of this, you might say, was revolutionary.

It's likely that nobody had ever used this coal, probably from outcroppings, to full potential.

Ginder's discovery is a headline in history mainly because it brought men of vision into the picture.

And it led to King Coal, mining and transporting black diamonds to fuel America's Industrial Revolution.

The coal industry had a profound impact on the birth and growth of communities in the Times News coverage area and the country.

Coal became a way of life and a culture.

It lured hardworking, freedom-seeking immigrants from every nation in oppressed Europe. It made and lost fortunes, it fed millions of Americans, it brought happiness and it brought deep tragedy to many thousands of families.

It helped forge steel to build bridges and skyscrapers, it forged cannons in the Civil War, powered ships and locomotives that expanded the nation on land and sea. It heated homes and provided the energy to produce electricity.

It also laid the foundation for America's great labor movement, where our region produced a hundred million tons per year of sorely-needed fuel during World War I.

And coal has been a survivor, before, during and after the Great Depression

See **COAL** on Page 38

A granite monument in Summit Hill honors Philip Ginder's 1791 discovery of coal. DONALD R. SERFASS/ SPECIAL TO THE TIMES NEWS

COAL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37

The industry stubbornly held ground, although losing its prominence, against newer, more convenient fuels of the post-World War Il era.

Coal is still being produced and shipped locally today.

Premium anthracite today is only a shadow of its former greatness.

But it survives.

And it will always be remembered as a mighty industry underpinning the breathtaking progress of a new nation — the fuel that helped to establish the United States of America as a new world power.

SPREAD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36

pacifists, their cooperation signaled broad regional alignment," he said.

Pearson said those in the frontier — the families in the Mahoning Valley and upper Lehigh region — remembered the terror of the French and Indian War, including the Gnadenhuetten Massacre, raids along the Lehigh and Mahoning, and burned homesteads and mills.

"So when word of British aggression and colonial resistance arrived, these frontier families reacted with urgency," Pearson said. "They knew what undefended frontier life looked like."

Deep in the frontier, taverns and mills served as communication centers. Weiss's Tavern in Weissport was one, and the Lehigh Gap had Levan's and Kern's taverns. Mills along the Mahoning and Lizard creeks and trading posts near Bowmanstown and Parryville also helped spread word.

"Riders would stop, read the latest resolves, and leave copies behind," Pearson said. "News became part of daily life — debated over cider, posted on doors, carried from farm to farm."

The townships of East Penn, Mahoning, Towamensing, Penn Forest and Lower Towamensing — which would become Carbon County — formed volunteer Associator companies. They elected their own captains, drilled in open fields and pledged their support.

"This was not a passive frontier. This was an organized frontier," Pearson said.

He noted that by mid-July, the Declaration was being read in taverns and churches throughout the region.

"And in that moment — in those readings, in those taverns, in those valleys — the people of this region stepped into the story of American independence," Pearson said.

Palmerton had an impact through the years

BY STEVEN SEMMEL
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES NEWS

Palmerton was established in 1898 and incorporated in 1912. Its impact is deep, rich with history, industry, development and community.

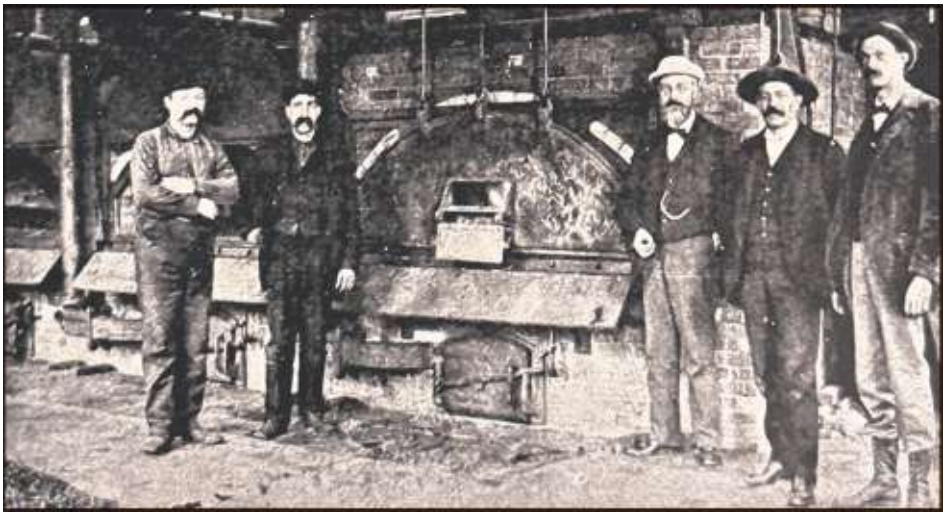
The area now known as Palmerton was called St. Andrew's Wilderness or the Lehigh Gap during the 1600s and 1700s. It was home to the Lenape people who settled along the Lehigh River and lived off its rich landscape. Moravian missionaries arrived around the 1730s, working to convert local tribes at the settlement of Gnadenhuetten, near present-day Lehighton.

After Braddock's Defeat in 1754, relations between the tribes and settlers worsened, culminating in the Gnadenhuetten Massacre of 1755. The American Revolution brought new settlers seeking land bounties and fresh starts as citizens of the new nation.

The first major industrial boom followed with the discovery of anthracite coal around 1791 and the establishment of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company in 1818.

The company pushed forward a canal system along the Lehigh River, with shipping beginning nine years after construction started.

With the steam engine increasing coal demand and the Lehigh Valley Railroad reaching the Lehigh Gap by 1855, the stage was set for greater development.



The New Jersey Zinc Company West Plant smelter. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

The Civil War drew locals away to serve in more than 10 different Union units. Afterward, the country entered another Industrial Revolution, and Stephen S. Palmer, head of the New Jersey Zinc Company, saw opportunity.

Seeking an ideal site for zinc smelting — a process requiring three times as much coal as zinc ore — Palmer identified the Lehigh Gap as perfect.

Over time, the company purchased land in Lehigh Gap and formally established operations in Pennsylvania in 1897.

The West Plant was built in 1898 and the first smelter was running by 1899. The growing town was named Palmerton in his honor.

Palmer set out to build a different kind of company town — one centered on the worker as a whole person. The Neighborhood House, now Borough Hall, offered English classes for immigrant workers, kindergarten for their children and community programming to unite a diverse population. Palmer invested in education, community life and infrastructure.

The town's population soared from 700 in 1902 to over 5,000 in 1904, largely composed of Southern and Eastern European immigrants, reflecting national trends.

By 1910, the New Jersey Zinc Company in Palmerton was the largest producer and consumer of zinc in the country.

Palmerton stepped up during World War I, producing shell casings, ointments for wounded soldiers and luminescent paint for airplane dials — making the town a strategic Allied asset. This propelled the community through the Roaring '20s, a decade of innovation and growth. When the Great Depression struck, Palmerton fared better than most due to the zinc company's vertical integration, which allowed it to keep workers employed even as hours were reduced.

World War II called on Palmerton again. The New Jersey Zinc Company secured government contracts for shell casings, sheet metal for Army and Navy aircraft, military vehicle paint, and more.

Over 1,700 of Palmerton's 6,900 residents (nearly 25%) served in the armed forces — a remarkable share of the population. The community also did their part by holding aluminum drives, growing victory gardens and organizing war bond drives.

Palmerton was able to raise tens of thousands of dollars during each drive. In the 1944 drive, the com-

See **IMPACT** on Page 43

Construction of Delaware Avenue.

The metal drive in World War II.

Switchback RR one of the first in America

BY JAMES LOGUE JR.
TNEDITOR@TNONLINE.COM

Switchback Railroad Summit Hill Station. PHOTOS COURTESY OF BERNARD KREBS

As the nation celebrates its 250th birthday, we look at how our local area contributed to the growth of the country.

One of the biggest contribution from our area is the Switchback Railroad.

The Switchback Railroad was and is an important part of the history of Carbon County and the United States.

Built in the early 19th century, it was one of the first railroads in America, playing a key role in the development of transportation technology and the industrialization of the nation. Its story reflects the innovation, determination, and industrial spirit that defined this era in American history.

Originally constructed in 1827 by the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, the Switchback Railroad connected the coal mines of Summit Hill to the canals in Mauch Chunk, now Jim Thorpe.

At the time, moving coal from the mines to the markets was a major challenge, and the new railroad provided an efficient and reliable solution. The railroad featured a unique "switchback" system that used gravity to move loaded cars downhill and mules to pull empty cars back up, which were later replaced by stationary steam engines.

The impact of the Switchback Railroad extended far beyond Carbon County. As the first operational American railroad, it inspired other engineers and entrepreneurs to invest in rail transport.

Proving that railroads were a practical means of moving large quantities of goods over rough terrain, it helped pave the way for the explosive growth of railroads across the United States.

The Switchback Railroad Mount Jefferson plane, Summit Hill, 1898.

This, in turn, played a huge role in the economic development of the country, making coal and other resources more accessible and fueling the growth of towns and industries along new rail lines.

The railroad also contributed to the technological progress of the time. Its success demonstrated the potential of rail-based transportation, encouraging innovations like improved track designs, more powerful locomotives, and safer braking systems.

Visitors from around the world — including such famous figures as Thomas Edison — were inspired by what they saw at the Switchback Railroad, and its popularity even made it one of America's earliest tourist attractions. People came to ride the cars for fun, claiming it was like an early roller coaster.

In 1976, a 47-acre area between Ludlow Street in Summit Hill and Route 209 in Jim Thorpe was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as "Mauch Chunk and Summit Hill Switchback Railroad."

Today, the legacy of the Switchback Railroad continues to be celebrated in Carbon County. Parts of its original route are now hiking and biking trails, and its history is preserved in local museums and historical markers.

The town of Jim Thorpe honors its connection to the railroad with festivals and events, highlighting its ongoing importance to the community and to railroad enthusiasts from across the country.

The Switchback Railroad is much more than a local curiosity; it is

See **SWITCHBACK** on Page 41

Switchback Railroad timetable, Mauch Chunk

Switchback Railroad sign. PHOTOS COURTESY OF BERNARD KREBS

SWITCHBACK

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

and an important part of the story of both Carbon County and the nation.

Its development changed the way goods were transported, inspired technological progress, and left a lasting legacy that is still recognized and appreciated today.

The story of the Switchback Railroad reminds us of the power of creativity and determination to change not just a local community, but a whole country.

Steam railroad powered the coal industry

BY KELLY MONITZ SOCHA
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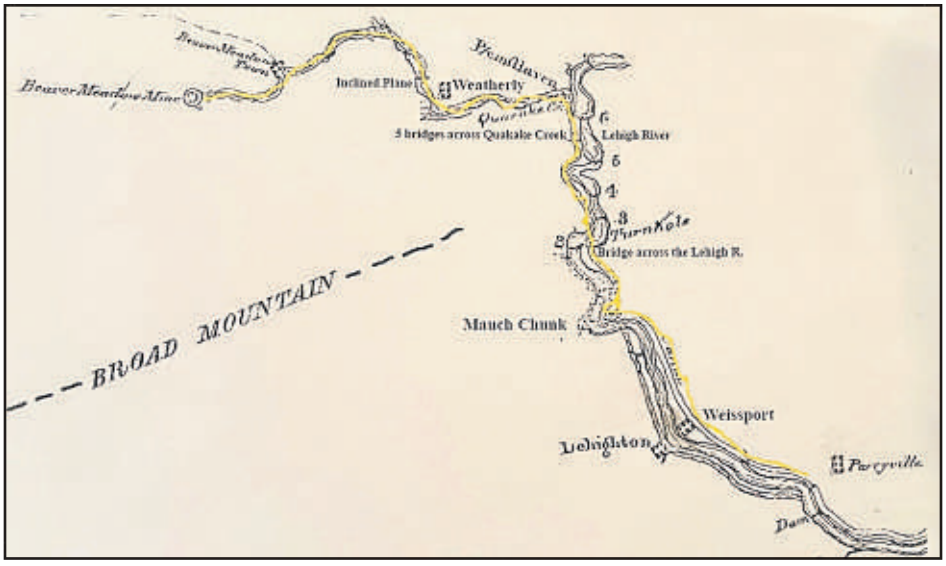
The Union Pacific Big Boy No. 4014 rolls out of the Pocono Mountains this week on its way south to Philadelphia for the Fourth of July and the celebration of the America's 250th.

The 4014 was designed to haul heavy freight trains through the steep grades of Wasatch Mountains and Sherman Hill out west, just as its locomotive predecessors, such as the Hercules and Nonpareil, carried coal through the Lehigh Gorge a hundred years earlier.

The Hercules was built by Garrett and Eastwick in 1837 for the fledgling Beaver Meadow Railroad and Coal Co., which had been chartered seven years earlier to bring coal to the Lehigh River and downstream to Parryville.

Nathan Beach discovered coal deposits in what is now Banks Township, Carbon County, in 1812, and a year later Beach opened a quarry, sending coal by horse and wagon over the Lehigh & Susquehanna Turnpike.



This map traces the path of the Beaver Meadow Railroad from the mines to the Lehigh River at Penn Haven Junction then through the Lehigh Gorge to Parryville.

Anthracite had already been discovered in Summit Hill by Philip Ginder 21 years earlier, leading to the formation of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, the late John S. Koehler of Weatherly wrote in a history of the BMRR.

Beach's coal deposits made their way along the turnpike to Landing Tavern in Lausanne at the junction of the Nesquehoning Creek and the Lehigh River, where it was loaded onto arks, or canal boats.

See **STEAM** on Page 43

IMPACT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

munity raised $186,000 to purchase a B-25 bomber.

The postwar years brought a shift to the zinc industry and Palmerton as a whole. The New Jersey Zinc Company gradually divested non-core assets (telephone/electrical company, hospital, sewer, home ownership) and merged with Gulf and Western in 1966, which transitioned to Horsehead Holding Corporation in 1981. In the 1980s, focus shifted from zinc production to zinc recycling.

The West Plant closed in 1986. By the time Palmerton celebrated its centennial in 1998, the town had forged an identity shaped by zinc but carried forward by its community.

Today, Palmerton has reinvented itself as a destination for outdoor recreation — fishing along the Lehigh River, hiking the Appalachian Trail, and cycling the Delaware & Lehigh Rail Trail. The town may look different than it did at America's founding, but its impact on American history remains lasting.

Palmerton helped supply two world wars, fueled an industrial economy and built a community that endures as a testament to the American spirit this 250th celebration honors.

STEAM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 42

The tavern, also located near a tollhouse on the turnpike, got its name from the pilots of the canal boats, according to Vince Hydro's "Outpost on the Lehigh River: The Lost Village of Lausanne."

The high-value anthracite was bound for markets in Philadelphia, where it sold for $8 a ton.

Jacob Weiss, an early settler, was already using the river for commerce as early as 1785, sending grain and lumber from his farming and lumbering businesses to city markets, Hydro wrote.

An associate of George Washington who served as a deputy quartermaster general during the Revolutionary War, Weiss had established the Union Sawmill in the area that became Lausanne.

In 1830, Beach sold 500 acres of his coal land to Judge Joseph Barnes of Philadelphia, and the Beaver Meadow Railroad and Coal Co. was chartered the same year.

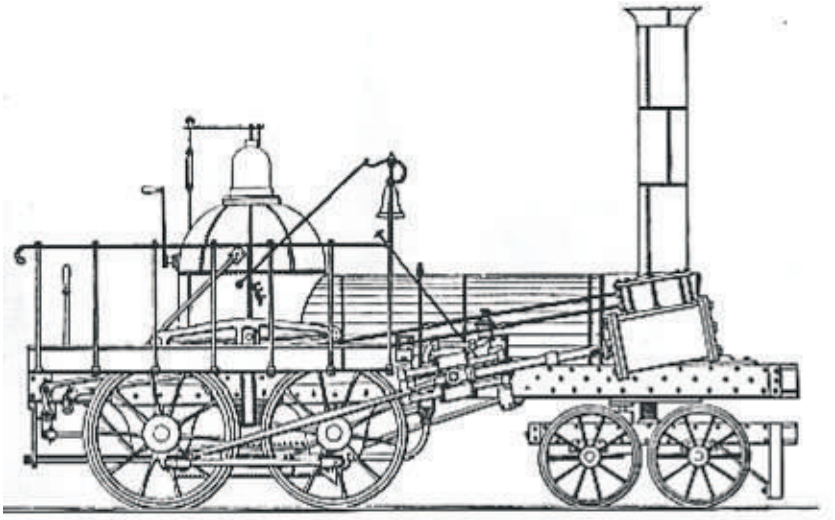
Company engineer Ario Pardee, who went onto become a wealthy industrialist and coal baron and is credited as the founder of Hazleton, surveyed the railroad's route along the Beaver, Hazle and Quakake creeks through present-day Weatherly and then to the Lehigh at Penn Haven and on to Parryville.

Pardee also became the first superintendent of the railroad after its completion in 1836 and remained until forming his own firm to mine coal in what became Hazleton two years later.

The railroad also needed to construct a series of planes to get down into Weatherly. The present highway into the borough is along this old railroad grade and is called Plane Street.

Steam power

The BMRR was the first railroad in Carbon County, which was then part of Northampton County, to use steam for motive power on Nov. 5, 1836, when two trains made the first test run hauling coal to Parryville. Other railroads in the county used gravity and mules to move coal.



The Hercules locomotive was completed by Garrett and Eastwick of Philadelphia for the Beaver Meadows Railroad and Coal Co. in 1837.

Those two steam locomotives — the Samuel D. Ingham and the Elias Ely — were built by Garrett & Eastwick in Philadelphia. The company's master mechanic, Hopkin Thomas, who was on that test run, was hired by the BMRR to help handle early issues with the engines.

Thomas pioneered a variable exhaust/draft system to regulate how hot the anthracite-burning engines ran and prevent them from burning out fireboxes. His former employer refined his design and patented it.

The BBRR shipped 31,500 tons of anthracite to the Lehigh Canal at Parryville in its first year ending 1837, and more than 44,000 tons the following year.

Thomas built a new six-wheeled locomotive named the Nonpareil at the BMRR shops in Beaver Meadows in 1837-38. It joined three other Garrett and Eastwick-built locomotives, the Quakake, the Beaver and the Hercules, on the tracks.

The 15-ton Hercules was the first locomotive to successfully combine a four-wheel guiding truck with an equalizing lever suspension, allowing the wheels to move up and down on bumpy tracks. The 4-4-0 arrangement became the standard for nearly every railroad in the nation.

Thomas' Nonpareil was built specifically to haul massive loads of anthracite using a powerful engine where all six wheels were driving wheels but was still capable of snaking through mountain curves without snapping or derailing.

Thomas solved the problem with flexible ball-and-socket joints on the wheel mechanisms that allowed the wheels to shift sideways through twists and bends.

Those engineering principles developed for moving heavy loads of anthracite along the rails from the mines in tiny Beaver Meadows laid the foundation for the design of massive engines more than a century later.

The Union Pacific's No. 4014, which steams out of Pennsylvania in mid-July on its way back west, is among those railroad pioneers' legacies.

Beer was a part of daily life in early times

BY JEFF MOELLER
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Pennsylvania beer historian Rich Wagner talks about the brews in the early days of America. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Was beer ever considered to be "bread in a bottle?"

Pennsylvania beer historian Rich Wagner said it was a part of the daily life in the early days of the new country.

"It was considered nutritious and part of their daily life," said Wagner, who has been researching beer and its history since 1980. "It contained 1 or 2% alcohol, and vitamins.

"There were the small, medium and large varieties. The medium beer is what we see today. It was a staple in their lives."

Wagner was present at the kickoff celebration recently for the county's 250th anniversary of "Brewing in America" at the National Museum of Industrial History in Bethlehem.

The presentation highlights the beginning of brewing in this country through to the current process. Museum executive director Andria Zaia said the exhibit took three years of planning to "bring the history and exhibit to life."

Beer and bread

In Post-Revolutionary America, beer and bread was a perfect combination. Early "small beers" were brewed with bran and molasses and packaged quickly in bottles to naturally carbonate while fermenting.

Because they were not filtered, the yeast-rich leftovers often served as a fermented staple for hearty "liquid bread" diets and starter doughs.

Bakers relied on surplus yeast or barm, the yeasty, foamy froth, directly from local ale breweries to raise their loaves. Because barm was a by-product of brewing, many bakeries and breweries operated right next to each other to share resources.

See **BEER** on Page 46

The logo for the 250th anniversary of "Brewing in America" at the National Museum of Industrial History in Bethlehem.

BEER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 45

"It was a natural combination," said Wagner. "People were careful to drink water back then because of the purity factor, and beer and bread were many times part of a daily meal."

Early start

William Penn, Pennsylvania's founding father, played an integral role in seeing beer become a necessity in the new colony. Breweries were among the initial businesses to be established in colonial America, and Penn encouraged its production as a means of economic growth. His plan was to help the colony establish their own identity and independence from England.

Penn granted land to William Frampton, a beer entrepreneur in 1683, just after the establishment of the state. A few years later, Penn opened a brewery at Pennsbury Manor, just outside the city.

Wagner saw Frampton as a trailblazer in his own right.

"Frampton had a 15-pound brewing kettle," Wagner said. "With his kettle, he could produce 50 to 300 barrels a year."

Wagner noted Frampton, like Penn, erected his one baking and brewing houses along with an ordinary, which was a tavern back in the day. It became a useful and profitable option.

"He (Frampton) was able to control two important commodities," added Wagner. "Women would come there to bake their bread for a fee instead of having the cost in their own homes.

"William Penn and later the Founding Fathers encouraged the development of a brewing industry because it promoted agriculture, commerce, tax revenue and temperance."

In the 1880s, there were roughly 70 breweries in Philadelphia.

Memorabilia of some of the beers though history. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

George Washington's impact

Fighting the British for a new nation, George Washington also was battling Congress for beer to have a permanent home.

Washington always worked to maintain that his troops would have a quart of beer with their daily rations. Again, this wasn't the bee that we think of today, but instead it was the "bread in the bottle" version.

However, as the Revolutionary War continued, beer supplies began to decrease. Washington waged a verbal war with the Continental Congress to have his troops' rations restored.

Washington's persistence can be traced to his own dabbling with brewing as he had his own in his Mount Vernon home. The president's version involved molasses.

Yet, Washington wasn't alone in his efforts.

Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams and James Madison also were early proponents of the new country's brewing industry. Thomas Jefferson reportedly was to have composed the first draft of the Declaration Independence over a cold draft at the Indian Queen tavern in Philadelphia.

"I know that rations for Washington's troops included a quart of spruce beer or cider per day," said Wagner. "Back in the day molasses was the home brewer's "can of malt extract" as the sugar was available and the mashing process was not necessary."

Women's role

Like in the major World Wars, women also played a prominent role in the process.

In the 1700s, beer brewing was viewed as a domestic task, and women were the taskmasters.

They would often take undrinkable water and transform it into beer for their entire family. A brew shed was often found behind family homes to make their task easier on humid days. Extra beer reportedly was sold to neighbors and local taverns as a way for women to bring in an income.

To complete the process for their families, women took the dregs of hops and beer to make bread.

North not south

Wagner cited how Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York became a major outlet for brewers simply based on their location.

"New Jersey and New York also have some very early beginnings when it comes to brewing," said Wagner. "But all three states were prime producers because of the weather. It was too warm down South to produce beer on a consistent basis. The Northern colonies were shipping to the Southern ones."

Local front

Wagner cited the Moravian and their opening of the Christian Springs brewery, located within 2 miles

See **BEER** on Page 47

BEER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 46

of Nazareth. The Moravians established one of the oldest breweries in 1749 and continued operations until 1796.

"They weren't producing large qualities, probably 100 to 300 barrels a year," said Wagner. "They had light ales, which were probably 1 to 4% alcohol."

Pottsville-based Yuengling opened its doors in 1829, and Wagner stated they initially produced 500 barrels a year.

By the Numbers

There were no exact volume statistics for beer produced in the U.S. from 1776 to 1780. National data was not officially recorded until 1810. During the Revolutionary War, most beer was brewed in small batches at home as a daily dietary staple rather than at commercial breweries.

According to statistics, there were approximately 180,000 barrels of beer produced in 1810, and that number skyrocketed to 39.5 million in 1990.

Beer trays are on display.

"The numbers continued to steadily rise," said Wagner. "Pennsylvania's numbers were always high. When Schmidt's in Philadelphia closed in 1987, their production was at 3 million annually."

Where it is today

According to PA. Gov, there are 530 licensed craft breweries in the state, making it one of the largest craft beer producers in the United States.

In the country, there are 1,994 microbreweries operating in the United States. They are part of a broader, maturing craft beer industry that includes 9,578 total small and independent breweries nationwide.

Wagner has relished playing his role in it, and he sees it as part of the Americana fabric, especially in the country's 250th birthday.

"The Anheuser-Busch facility in St. Louis is 62 city blocks long," he said. "That's a testament to the industry. It has survived through some ups and downs, and has played a role in so many lives.

The Cheers to America, Brewing in America, exhibit runs through March 2027. The museum is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.


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