



Hellertown Historical Society

Dedicated to Preserving the History and Heritage of Hellertown and its People

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Upcoming 2016 Events

Harry Rinker Collectible Appraisals
October 15 - 12 Noon-4PM

Holiday Open House – December 2
Doors Open 6:30PM

Santa's Visit/Holiday Shopping at the Mill –
December 11 Noon-4PM



Chris Fiegel Photography ©2016

Donors Receive Prints of Joseph Sofka's Original Water Color Painting of the
Heller-Wagner Grist Mill

L-R Earl Hill, David Heintzelman, Ron Horiszny, Skyler Kelly, Cathy Hartranft,
Mark Walters (Photo Courtesy Chris Fiegel Photography)

Former Problem Pond is Newly Dedicated Park

By Andrea Danner

History Day 2016 was a very special day for us and not only because we were kicking off Hellertown Historical Society's 35th anniversary. After years of planning and hard work, our new park was formally opened with a dedication ceremony. In addition to the general public, our audience included invited guests, or their representatives, who helped complete our park. Our invited guests were treated to a reception, prepared and donated by Springtown Inn, prior to the ceremony. Thank you to Rep. Robert Freeman, Mayor Richard Fluck and first HHS President, Bud Prosser, for being a part of the ribbon cutting! After several attempts at cutting the ribbon, our park was opened! It was a long road to get here.

To review, the decision to drain and fill-in the lower pond area was not made impulsively. In fact, the idea was presented to the HHS Board of Directors and the pros and cons discussed at length. When the proposal was made to the Hellertown Borough Council by Board Member Earl Hill and President Stacie Torkos, the Council Members debated the issue during

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Feedback is essential for any publication to improve and grow. We welcome readers to provide their opinions, suggestions and comments about the content featured in our newsletter. Please send your feedback to the Editor at the email address below.

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Submit Articles or Stories

Hellertown Historical Society

Newsletter seeks any stories or news articles pertaining to Hellertown's History and its people. Anyone is encouraged to submit articles, stories or news to the

newsletter Managing Editor for consideration in upcoming editions. Submissions may be edited for content and/or space requirements. Please use the contact information on this page to submit your entry.



President's Message:

This year, we are celebrating our 35th anniversary as a historical society. In the spirit of this milestone, I spent some talking with Harry Boos, a long-time member and dedicated volunteer. I asked him to share with me how the Historical Society and the Heller-Wagner Grist Mill site have changed over time. In the early days of the organization, members, volunteers, and community support were abundant. Meetings and events were packed. Most people who lived in town were born and raised in Hellertown and had a natural interest and investment in HHS. In the early 80's, the restoration of the Grist Mill took 6 years to complete and was made possible by volunteers, donations, and community support. The gentlemen who volunteered at the mill were skilled in many disciplines and were able to contribute their trades to the restoration efforts. The Borough helped. Businesses, like the hardware store- helped. Lehigh University students helped.

Today, it takes a bit more work for our organization to connect with and obtain support from those who are new to our community. Our society works hard to promote and practice its mission through tours, special events, Tavern Room rentals, school group visits, outreach efforts, collections and archives management, research, and more. We appreciate your support and hope that you will help spread the word about Hellertown Historical Society and all that we have to offer!

Stacie Torkos, President
Hellertown Historical Society

PS: Have you renewed your membership for 2016? Are you considering joining the society as a new member? Please look for the 2016 membership form on our website. Download/print the form and renew/join today!

Meet Our Newest Volunteers

By Gil Stauffer

"Volunteers Do Not Receive a Salary...Because They Are Priceless!"

I have no idea where that quote originated, but we have it posted in the kitchen of the Miller's House where we gather for meetings, social time, and just plain ordinary kibitzing. I look at it often, and many of our volunteers comment on the power of those 10 simple words. Everyone agrees, the statement is true, oh so true!

Volunteerism is the cornerstone that holds together a nonprofit organization. When you analyze "volunteerism" it becomes self-evident that volunteers bring together their passion for charitable service and hard work. This is true across the nation and the world, and it is true in Hellertown.

Welcome to our Newest Volunteers

Since the dawn of 2016 we have been blessed with four very capable, enthusiastic, and hard-working new volunteers. They are helping with outgoing mailings, filing, organizing, research, the Tavern Room and challenges yet to be discovered. Meet...

Kay Gilbreath – Kay was raised in Corpus Christi, Texas, and came to Bethlehem in 2000 from Fort Worth. She became a Hellertown resident in 2005. Kay's job

before retiring was in the Information Systems department of a hospital, working with both computers and scanners. She has four children...three boys: Jim (deceased), Joseph, and Jeffrey. She also has a daughter, Dorothy. She has extensive volunteer experience. She volunteered at a pet food bank for seven years and at a facility for troubled children (ages seven to seventeen) for three years.

Mary Pierce – While Mary was born and raised in south Bethlehem, she married a local Hellertown boy in 1951. She later joined him in England (in 1952) for the next two and a half years while he was in the Air Force. They moved back to Hellertown in 1954. She has two children, David and Susan. Mary is probably very familiar to many Hellertownians...she worked at Brown's Cleaners (in Hellertown) for thirty years! She too is an experienced volunteer. Mary was a key volunteer at the Pennsylvania Play House for twenty-five years, and at Lehigh University's Zoellner Theater.

Jean Lawrence – Jean was also born and raised in Bethlehem's South Side, but has lived in Hellertown since 1965. She has three children: Norman, James, and Margaret. Jean worked at the Bethlehem Steel, then at Gold N Things (in Hellertown) for 18 years. She also worked at Sure Fit in that company's Customer Service Department.

According to Jean, she is exploiting her retirement by living a life of leisure.

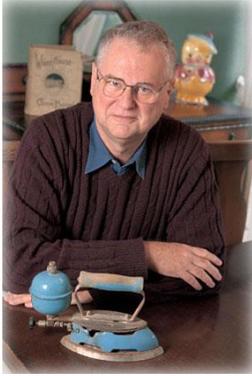
Larry Sutton – Larry and his wife Kathy have lived in Hellertown for two years. Before moving to Hellertown they resided in Western Pennsylvania, where they raised one son and three daughters. One of their daughters married a local boy and lives in the Flint Hill area. When Larry and Kathy came to visit, they checked out the Hellertown area and decided it was where they wanted to live, too. A retired Chief Financial Officer, Larry is actually "semi-retired" and keeps busy as a business management consultant.

Larry is very pleased to be living in Hellertown and says it feels like home...and community matters to him. He thinks preserving history and preserving community are very important!

We are very, very pleased to welcome these volunteers. For their efforts on behalf of the Hellertown Historical Society are truly "priceless!"

Special thanks to HHS member Dolores Di Paolo for contributing to this article by taking time to interview each of the new volunteers.

Please Visit Our Website
www.hellertownhistoricalsociety.org
Over 15,000 Visitors Can't Be Wrong!



Consultant and Appraiser,
Harry Rinker

(Courtesy www.harryrinker.com)

Harry Rinker to Visit Historical Society, Offer Appraisals

By Gil Stauffer

Harry Rinker, editor, author, lecturer, consultant, and appraiser of antiques will hold an appraisal clinic at the Society on October 15, 2016.

Mr. Rinker, who is also widely known for research and education in the antiques and collectibles fields, is a graduate of Hellertown High School and recently received the *Hall of Fame Award* from Saucon Valley Alumni Association for his outstanding accomplishments.

Here are just a few...

"Rinker on Collectibles" is a weekly syndicated column, which appears in antique trade papers and daily periodicals from coast to coast. Mr. Rinker celebrated the column's 25th anniversary in December 2011. Rinker also hosts a nationally syndicated radio call-in show called *Watcha Got?* which airs Sunday mornings between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m.

He is a frequent television and radio guest. His credits include *Oprah*, *Home Matters*, *Martha Stewart Living*, *Inside Edition*, *NBC-Today Show*, *CBS The Morning Show*, among many, many others. Rinker is often quoted in the nation's leading magazines and newspapers such as *Business Week*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Newsday*, *New York Times*, *US News and World Report*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post* and *USA Today*.

And, at the invitation of Postmaster General Patrick Donahue, Mr. Rinker serves on the Citizens' Stamp

Advisory Committee which recommends postage stamp subjects that are contemporary, timely, and relevant.

In a few words...Harry Rinker is considered to be an antiques and collectibles expert! His clinics are very well attended and are generally sold-out. This is an opportunity to interact with an individual who really knows the value of that item you found in the attic. Is it valuable or is it just clutter? Harry Rinker will tell you.

Bring your Items - You are invited to bring items to the clinic to be assessed by Mr. Rinker for their antique/collectible value. The cost is only \$10 per item (net proceeds benefit Hellertown Historical Society).

The maximum number of items Mr. Rinker can assess during the four hour period that he will be in Hellertown is 140. Because of the anticipated demand, and to guarantee that you will be able to visit with Mr. Rinker, a ticketing system will soon be established. Please visit our website at www.hellertownhistoricalsociety.org to download a ticket request form when available or call our office at 610-838-1770 and leave a message and a form will be mailed to you.

Ticket(s) will be promptly forwarded when the completed form is returned.

In Memory of a Hero

By Andrea Danner

We at Hellertown Historical Society would like to note the passing of a recent speaker at our WW II speaker series, Mr. Leon Wohlbach. In our last newsletter we spoke of how Leon choked up when recalling his twin brother's death in WW II, nearly 70 years ago. We encouraged our members to stop by HHS to get Leon's miraculous story of survival. In honor of his passing, we would like to share his story again with all of our readers.

The following is an excerpt of his story as told to Joshua Ackerman, from Moravian Academy, several years ago.

"In late December of 1944, Leon was knee deep in snow, somewhere in France. He was part of the 17th Airborne. His group was being shelled by German artillery and Leon was thrown

face down into the snow by an explosion. He said, "I did not see any blood, so I got up, grabbed my helmet and rifle and went for shelter." He felt a burning sensation in his inner left arm, so he went to the medics who tended to his arm and sent him back to his unit.

He did not think any more about his near miss until several days later when amidst the fighting he and several others found shelter in a bombed out church. Upon removing his gear he found that his coat was ripped and his shirt was shredded. He removed his Bible from his breast pocket only to find that a piece of shrapnel had pierced it halfway through. His cigarettes had been turned to powder. It was truly a Christmas miracle.

Sadly, several days after Leon's miracle, his twin brother, Lester, was killed in action at the Battle of the Bulge. Leon was awarded the Purple Heart, WW II Medal, Good Conduct Medal, E.T.O. Medal, Army of Occupation and the Bronze Star."

All of us at Hellertown Historical Society send our condolences to the Wohlbach family and thank both these heroes for their brave service to our Country.



Leon Wohlbach speaking at the Grist Mill last November

You Can Reduce Our Cost and Help Keep Planet Earth Green

By Don Mills

This newsletter is printed in house at the Hellertown Historical Society's facility. While the Society was fortunate to obtain a professional color

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laser printer for our office area, greatly reducing process costs for this newsletter, more savings can be gained.

By providing the Society with a valid email address, the newsletter and other announcements from the Society, may be delivered directly to you in a PDF formatted attachment. PDF is a formatted text standard for documents that is used by most computers and is easily read or printed with *Adobe Reader Software*, usually included with your computer. However, it can be downloaded and installed free of charge online. These attached documents may be read and printed at your convenience and it costs the Society nothing to send them to you. There is no risk of computer hacking, viruses or other damaging issues, it is completely safe. You may delete the entire file when you have finished with it. No inks or toner are used, saving the Society these processing costs and no paper used so you help save additional costs in disposal fees.

Other benefits of receiving these attached documents is when a website or email address is used within a document, it is shown in blue text which you can click on with your mouse to visit that site immediately. Also the entire document can be enlarged simply by changing the zoom for easier reading.

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The Society will never give out or sell your email address or other information to other organizations. That information is kept confidential at all times.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this cost savings.

Newly Dedicated Park...

(Continued from Page 1)

multiple meetings before the final approval to proceed was granted.

The list of reasons that prompted the proposal and ultimate decision to drain and fill the lower pond were:

- The bank that separates the upper pond from the lower pond was eroding. It was only a matter of time until a severe storm would cause a breach in the bank and the water would cascade from the upper pond to the lower pond area. The potential for damage was real and could have been expensive.
- Because the bank was so narrow from erosion, machinery could no longer be driven onto the bank to maintain weeds, etc. Maintaining this area was becoming more difficult.
- During the warm summer months, the water in the lower pond would become stagnant and the resultant odor was objectionable. While there were some fish in the lower pond, there were no trout. Because of the putrid state of the water, eating fish caught from the lower pond was not recommended.
- The drain for the pond would block, causing flooding problems.
- Liability was always a big issue.

Once approval was granted, everyone involved agreed the process had to adhere to local and state regulations. As a result, permission to drain the pond was obtained from Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and from the DEP. In addition, all ground used to fill the drained pond area had to be tested to assure the material was free from harmful chemicals and other contaminants. The Hellertown Borough used the opportunity to reduce their piles of excess ground fill as did Lower Saucon Township (LST). These donations comprised most of the fill used for the project. LST also covered the cost to test the ground for usability.

Estimated cost for this project was \$115,000 to \$120,000! But due to LST and Hellertown Council working together and the following donations, cost was kept to around \$10,000! As with any project, there were many meetings and unnoticed hard work to make this park happen. From covering the cost of building a temporary

roadway to allow truck access to the former pond site, to grading and seeding the new area and donation of equipment and manpower, we owe a big debt of gratitude to Walters Paving and Excavating. Thanks to Cathy Hartranft, Hellertown Borough Manager, who spent hours helping us behind the scene. Thanks to Roger Rasich and crew at LST's Public Works Department and to Tom Henshaw and crew at Hellertown's Public Works Department for their contribution to the completion of the project. Thank you to the generous donations of money and grass seed from our friends at Neighbors Home & Garden Center in Hellertown. To HHS, LST and Hellertown Councils, thank you for your part. For your unwavering support of our mission and vision at HHS, thank you David Heintzelman. Thanks to Skyler Kelly, a young man who stopped to help catch fish from the old pond and move them to the big pond. Thanks to Pondelek's for our ceremonial ribbon for the dedication ceremony. Our music and sound system were donated by Linda Norris-Fiegel, Gary, Faith and Chris Fiegel. To my fellow volunteers at HHS who do all of the heavy grunt work week in and week out, Fran Hudock, Bob Zito, Joe Sofka, Harry Boos, Bill Frey and Earl Hill, THANK YOU! The pond was becoming such a problem and to your credit, you dreamed of a solution and we now have a beautiful park! To the office and event planning crew at HHS comprised of Jeanette Boos, Stacie Torkos, Dorothy Freeman, Erika Hill, Dolores Di Paolo, Gloria Michael, Don Mills, Marissa Lewicki and Gil Stauffer: thank you for keeping us moving forward throughout this project. And lastly, thank you to our community for supporting our vision....but we aren't done yet!

HHS board has begun the process of finding an architect or landscape artist to decide where future enhancements, such as shrubs, a gazebo or memorial benches should be placed. Please support us in our efforts to make this a beautiful, clean park for all to enjoy.

Need info about us?

We have an email address for that...

info@hellertownhistoricalsociety.org