



SCHUYLKILL HERITAGE

A Newsletter of the Schuylkill County Historical Society



Volume 17, Issue 6

"To discover, procure and preserve ..." November-December 2022

From the president

Please celebrate the holidays by giving

By J.R. Zane

Quoting Dr. Suess, *"How did it get so late so soon?"* Yes, this is the last newsletter for the year. I hope you enjoyed them all, as well as our many programs. The Society is always looking for more topics, so your suggestions are welcome.

Our window replacement project is progressing through a labyrinth filled with red tape. Until one more grant application is reviewed, we cannot sign a contract to place the order. An approval would be a great Christmas present!

At the same time, we are moving forward on building a Coal, Canal and Railroad Museum and on featuring our diverse ethnic heritage in the Schuylkill Gallery. All of this requires your help.

When I give my walking tours of Baber Cemetery, I often point out the coal barons' graves and ask, "How much wealth was left behind?" The answer is obvious: All of it!

So many good nonprofits are asking for donations at this time of year, but please join me in donating to our Annual Appeal. Your gift will go a long way to inspire future generations to learn about our history and the role our ancestors played in the state, the nation, and the world. Yes, mistakes were made, but they are not hidden; history is not just a nostalgia act. The Society honors the past and explores the present to shape the future.

I believe that the study of our past unites us and gives us a sense of place and belonging...a sense of community that crosses many generations, past and yet to come. Your donation will help us continue to build our county's historical "story."

Other ways to help is to name the Society as a beneficiary in your will or on your IRA or life insurance policy. Thanks to a generous bequest



Society President J.R. Zane and Executive Director Diana Prosymchak in a holiday mood.

from retired nurse Carol Ann Fey, we insulated our building to minimize utility bills.

Many people are unaware that charitable donations made from an IRA may meet all or part of the required minimum distribution requirements and may also be tax-free. Talk to your financial advisor for more details.

The Society is also looking for volunteers to devote a few hours per week at the building. Also, if you have photos or items of a historical nature, please consider donating them to our collection.

Again quoting Dr. Seuss, *"What if Christmas... doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas ... perhaps ... means a little bit more?"* So, on behalf of the board of directors, happy and healthy wishes for the new year to all our dedicated volunteers, loyal members and those who believe that history is still important.

Lastly, if you do get coal in your stocking, then may it be anthracite!

Schuylkill County Historical Society

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Society Hours

Wednesday-Friday 10-4

Saturdays 10-2 (except January
and February)

*Our purpose is to discover,
procure and preserve the
historical records, data and
other relevant materials of
Schuylkill County.*

Programs for the holidays

We are moving ahead with our fourth annual **Christmas tree-decorating competition**, which is open to local historical societies and other nonprofit organizations in Schuylkill County.

Beginning on Wednesday, Nov. 16, you can vote for your favorite tree as many times as you want. Each of your votes costs \$1, and the proceeds will go to the group that decorated the tree you voted for.

In previous years, the decorators' creativity and imagination have wowed us. (Last year's winning tree, from the Minersville Area Historical Society, is shown on the right.) So come see what original ideas they come up with this year!

The Society is a stop in the **Schuylkill County Elf on the Shelf Scavenger Hunt**, which runs from Nov. 26 (Small Business Saturday) through Saturday, Dec. 10. Santa will do a live drawing on Thursday, Dec. 15.

For more details, check out this event's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/events/658933325935055>).

The holidays are also the time for **boilo**, so we are bringing back Amy Dougherty to teach two classes on how to make this traditional coal region beverage yourself.

The classes will be from 6 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 9, and on Friday, Dec. 9.

The fee is \$30 for Society members and \$35 for the general public. And as an added bonus, there will be samples of the final product!

Space is limited, so call today to make your reservation.



Where to go for a holiday bash in '72

Test your knowledge of popular venues for Christmas and New Year's Eve festivities 50 years ago.

Answers are on page 9.

1. In Donaldson

A. The Brown Jug B. Pick & Shovel Inn C. Trade Winds Hotel D. Hilltop Inn

2. In Llewellyn

A. The Inferno B. Rhinoceros C. Lame Goose D. The Warm Up

3. In Deer Lake

A. Fedora Lounge B. Trapper Hat C. Top Hat D. Coonskin Cap Café

4. In Orwigsburg

A. Viennese Villa B. Liederkrantz C. The Wurst Haus D. Deutsche Haus



5. In Pottsville

A. Sharp Mountain Lounge B. Con Ja Ka C. White Horse D. Johnny B's

6. In Shenandoah

A. Paskey's B. Em & Kay's Cafe C. Carousel Bar D. The Mrs. T House

7. Route 61-South

A. Wedgewood B. Longo's Roma Room C. Inn 83 D. Smith's Country Inn

8. Route 61 – North

A. Amor Club B. Deer Lake Inn C. Smokey Joe's Café D. Hillcrest Hall

9. Not in Minersville

A. The Globe B. Tellup's C. The Sage D. Rokosz's

10. Hank's Cafe

A. Tuscarora B. Frackville C. Ringtown D. Clamtown

Meet authors of books with local angles (and you can pick up some copies to read and gift)

Authors of three fascinating books about the many aspects of Schuylkill County are visiting the Society in November and December. Besides being able to ask them questions, you might get some great gift ideas.



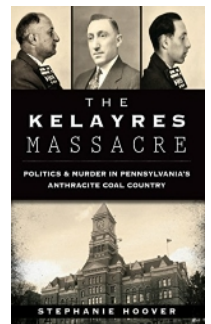
Saturday, Nov. 12, noon to 2 p.m. - Environmental photographer Sandy Sorlien, author of *Inland: The Abandoned Canals of the Schuylkill Navigation*, will show slides and discuss the past,

present and future of those local waterways. She'll also sign copies of her illustrated book.

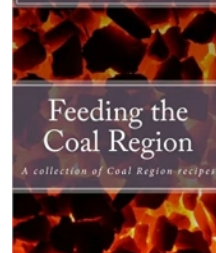
The focus of the program is on the Schuylkill Navigation system, which ran from Port Carbon through Port Clinton to Philadelphia. Admission is free for Society members and \$5 for the general public.

Wednesday, Nov. 16, 6:30 p.m. - The Society and radio station T102's Local Reads book club has will host *The Kelayres Massacre* author Stephanie Hoover as a virtual guest.

This true-crime book tells the story of a Republican political boss who went on the lam after he and family members were sentenced for killing five people and wounding two dozen others during a Democratic parade on Election eve 1934.



Wednesday, Dec. 14, 6:30 p.m. - Local cuisine is the theme for this Local Reads meeting.



Jennifer Reiner will be on hand to talk about some of the recipes in her popular *Feeding the Coal Region* cookbook series. To get you into the holiday spirit, she'll bring delicious samples.



Society sponsors Harrisburg Then and Now event for Sen. Argall, Chamber of Commerce

The Society was the proud sponsor of the Sept. 15 Harrisburg Then And Now panel discussion with all four Schuylkill County legislators.

The panel also included seven former state representatives whose combined time in office spanned the 1960s through the 2010s.

The panelists stressed that the county delegation has worked well together, regardless of party differences. But they agreed that politics has generally become more partisan and less collegial.

Society Executive Director Diana Prosymchak, who began the program, said people she's talked to blame much of the hostility on the media and negative campaign ads.

Candidates are so busy bashing their opponents that voters don't even know what

they stand for, she said.

They also didn't know what redistricting is, despite media coverage and campaigns to promote awareness of the once-in-a-decade process of drawing congressional and legislative district maps.

Diana also discussed how things have changed over the years. Women couldn't vote before 1920, and when they could, polling places were moved out of saloons.

Women got the vote in 1920, but they couldn't serve on juries in all states until 1968. A woman wasn't elected a jury foreman in this county until 1972, but now Christina Hale is a judge and Jacqueline Russell is president judge.

Unfortunately, the county, as a whole, has seen declines in its population as well as its wealth and influence.

In 1920, when coal was still king, the county had 217,754 residents. That number fell to 160,630 in 1980 and to 141,935 in 2020.

Despite that, "we can pull through if we all stick together and fight as a team, not as separate groups," Diana said.

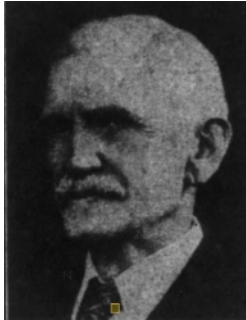
"With change, there are always doubters, but there is always someone to help you make the change."

The program was presented by the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce and Sen. Dave Argall, who was also on the panel. The other panelists were former state representatives Bob Allen, William Baldwin, James Goodman, Neal Goodman, Tim Seip, Mike Tobash and George Uritis, as well as current state reps Joe Kerwin, Jerry Knowles and Tim Twardzik.

The last of our county Civil War vets

On this Veterans Day we remember some Civil war veterans.

JOHN J. KOHLER (1846-1944) was the last known surviving veteran. Documentation is difficult, but apparently he first enlisted as a drummer boy. According to Society records, he was in the campaigns of 1862 and 1863. Records show that when he was almost 18, he reenlisted. Veterans Administration records say he was a private in Company C of the 194th PA Volunteers Infantry Regiment.



Kohler died at 97 on April 21, 1944, a few weeks before D-Day. County newspapers said he participated in the battles of Antietam, Petersburg and Gettysburg and that he was the oldest active fire policeman in the state, affiliated with the Humane Fire Company. He was also a fixture at Memorial Day ceremonies held at Garfield Square into his nineties.



CHARLES W. HORN (1847-1941) was born near Brockton on March 15, 1847. He was the last surviving member of the 48th. He began work as a breaker boy, but when the Confederates invaded Pennsylvania in 1863, he ran away from home and enlisted in

Company A, 39th Infantry Regiment at Port Carbon. Later he reenlisted in Company I of the 48th, which destroyed more of the Confederacy and punished more of its soldiers than any other Union regiment.

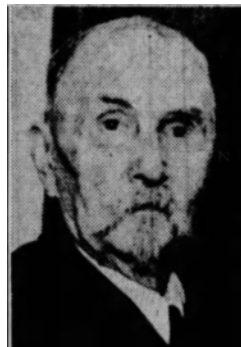
Horn participated in many major battles, including South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg and Petersburg. During the Battle of Spotsylvania, he was wounded in both legs and lost a finger but soon returned to his regiment. He died on Aug. 4, 1941, in Northampton County.

FRANCIS A. STITZER

(1840-1939) was the last survivor from the First Defenders. He grew up in Schuylkill Haven and was a paperhanger in Pottsville when the war began. He immediately enlisted and went to Washington to protect our Capitol. Later he was in the 48th Regiment and fought in the battle of Petersburg.



After the war ended, he participated in Indian campaigns out West and became a general in the Wyoming National Guard. In July 1938, at age 98, he traveled to Gettysburg to attend the 75th anniversary of the famous battle; afterward he visited relatives and friends in the county. He died in Denver, Colorado, on Oct. 16, 1939, with burial in Arlington National Cemetery.



NAPOLEON B. BICKELMAN

(1844-1937) was the last surviving member of the 96th Infantry. Born on the Broad Mountain, he was living in Tremont at the outbreak of the war. He enlisted in Company H of the 96th and marched with his comrades to Gordon from Lawton's Hill in Pottsville

to train. Wounded at Salem Church and later at Cold Harbor, he also was a prisoner of war.

After his discharge he became a carpenter but participated regularly in veterans' affairs. On the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Antietam, he sat on the grandstand three seats away from President Franklin Roosevelt, the guest speaker. A few weeks later, on Nov. 17, 1937, Bickelman died at age 97 at his home in Wyomissing, Berks County. He was buried in St. John's Lutheran Cemetery, Pine Grove.

With great pride we salute these and all of our veterans.



GIFTS TO CELEBRATE THE COAL REGION



Boilo-making kit, \$10, and Amy Dee cookbook, \$15.



Tree sculpture made of wire and coal, \$15.



Wooden Christmas tree ornaments, \$3 apiece.



Robert McCormick print, \$20. Many of his and other local artists' works are also available.



Paperweights, \$4 each, and key ring, \$3.



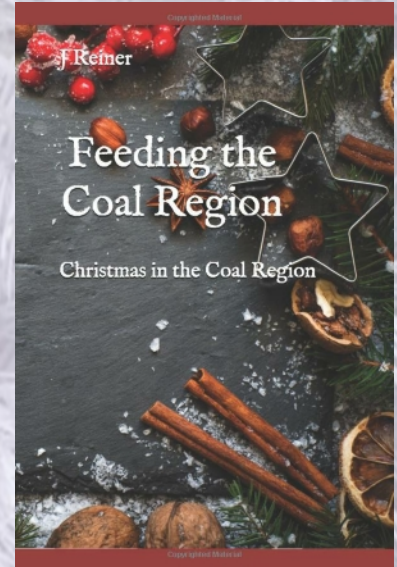
'FEEDING THE COAL REGION' BOOKS AND MORE



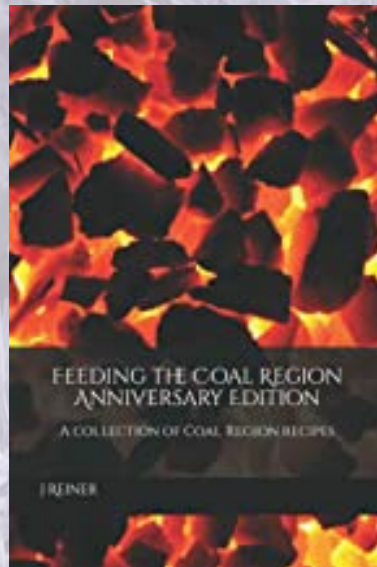
'Feeding the Coal Region' apron, \$15, and tea towels (draped across shoulders), \$6 each.



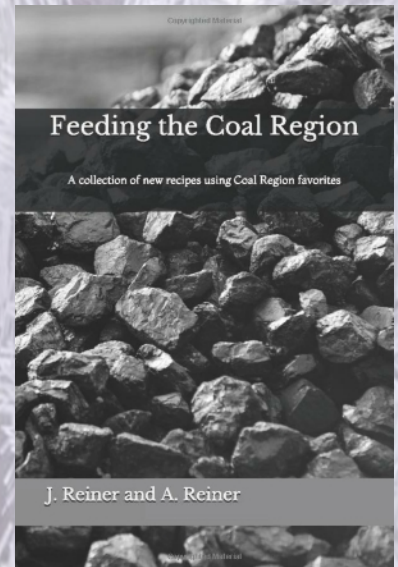
Spoon, \$5, and cutting board, \$20.



\$16.85



\$19.99



\$17.85

For more gifts for the holidays or any time, drop in at our gift shop or check out our online store at <https://www.schuylkillhistory.org/store>

Here's what's been going on recently



We had another great series of Haunted History Tours in October, with Society Assistant Director Steve Young leading them in downtown Pottsville and President J.R. Zane conducting them at the Charles Baber Cemetery.

The top two photos show Steve taking the downtown tour to a rousing finale.

In the photo on the right, Boy Scout Troop 621 in Orwigsburg is shown building display cases and renovating one of our rooms to house our new Coal, Canal and Railroad Museum. The work is part of troop member Cole Swick's Eagle Scout project. Many thanks to all involved!



WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Margaret Bain
Brad & Suzanne Leinheuser
Robert McCormick
Shirley Smith
Janet LaCross

Grace Wever
Darla Troutman
Paul Androshick
Greg Jonezake

Cathy Muscavage
Melissa Scott
Lisa Moosic
Tom Morba
Mary Ann Fields Whyne

Quilts and Maroons memorabilia are just some of the treasures we've received



The Society gratefully acknowledges the very special gifts we recently received.

The **Schuykill County Quilters Guild** presented us with six beautiful quilts at a special program on Oct. 12 by Susan Paul, who heads the organization.

The above photo by Pottsville Republican Herald reporter Ron Devlin shows Susan explaining the squares of a quilt she said Kathleen Ebner Leh made in the 1970s.

We also got a trove of memorabilia from the **family of Howard "Fungy" Lebengood**, half-back and punter for the Pottsville Maroons in 1925, when the team won the NFL championship. Howard's son John and his wife, Shirley, who are shown seated with Society Executive Director Diana Prosymchak, shared their memories with us during an Oct. 15 visit.

We also appreciate the following donations:

Jim Phillips - Red Cross nurse's hat and certificates that belonged to Pauline Morrell.

Thomas and Kathleen Schreck - paperwork from Schuykill Haven Knitting Mill.

Dr. Peter Yasenachak - military honors, awards



and diplomas given to Col. Mary E. Wallace.

Charlotte Foran - collection of antique hair care equipment.

Debra Saltzer - Jean Ehlers Waters' wedding dress; nursing cape, hat and pin; and photos of wedding and nursing school graduation.

Beth Smith - bicentennial coloring book.

June E. Bricker - wedding and prom dresses; Cressona High School pennant, beanie, and patch; stereopticon with slides; and photo of Arline Herner Black.

Catherine Pearce Bolich - Book, *Andreas Bolich Coming to America with Brothers Johan George and Johan Adam*.

Bradley Miller - photo of Tower Manufacturing Co. employees, Tower City, July 1946.

Tom Bosack - eight ledger books.

John and Mary Ann Bedway - program from 1960 Army-Navy game.

Delaware County Historical Society - copies of Ashland daily newspaper.

Answers to the quiz on page 3: 1. B; 2. B; 3. C; 4. D; 5. A; 6. A; 7. A; 8. B; 9. C; 10. B

10 Questions/ 10 Answers



Jean Dellock, the Society's librarian, genealogist and longest-serving volunteer, answers the 10 questions.

Q. Describe where you grew up.

A. Early years in the Yorkville section of Pottsville but moved to Mahanoy City when I was six for about seven years. There we mainly played in the streets, as the row homes had no yards, or else at East End Park a block away. I then returned to Pottsville.

Q. Do you have any favorite novels connected to the county?

A. Conrad Richter's *The Trees*, *The Field* and *The Town*. The Pine Grove author's trilogy is about an early

pioneer family moving west with many challenges along the way.

Q. Who inspired your interest in local history?

A. My mother. She'd tell interesting stories of her ancestors. Her father was a rail-roader who had the first telephone in the section of Pottsville above North Third Street so he could get calls to work.

Q. Have you done any genealogical research?

A. Yes, quite a bit. Tracing my ancestors is what first brought me to the Society. I then met up with a second cousin, Philip Rice. We ended up compiling numerous church, court and cemetery records. I hope they were helpful.

Q. Can you tell us about an interesting ancestor?

A. My third great-grandfather Jacob Seitzinger, a veteran of the War of 1812, came to Pottsville in 1816. He was a magistrate and operated a tannery, sawmill and brickyard. He erected the three-story brick Exchange Hotel at 119 North Centre Street in 1830 and was one of the founders of the Pottsville Water Company.

Q. Can you name a teacher who made a positive impact?

A. Miss Sarah Alter, who taught at Pottsville from 1931-

1971. She was a world traveler who was in Europe in 1939 when World War II broke out. She made history come alive.

Q. What is your favorite county food?

A. Halupki. I have learned to make them, but they are a lot of work. I look forward to the block parties in the summer to have them and halushki, bleenies and pierogies.

Q. Any county store of the past that you miss?

A. The Grace Shop. Abraham and Sadie Breit opened the store in 1922 at the corner of Centre and Norwegian Streets in Pottsville. It was one of the finest women's clothing stores in the area. I remember one of my first purchases there, a green wool shirtwaist dress.

Q. What is an early memory of participating in a local historical event?

A. When I was a junior in high school, my class ran across the football field during a Pottsville Sesquicentennial pageant dressed in 1890s costumes. It was a lot of fun.

Q. Why do you volunteer at the Society?

A. I enjoy assisting the many visitors we get from all over the country researching their ancestors. Our library has lots of helpful materials; it's part of your membership benefits.

Help the Society with a 'Smile'; stay up to date on Facebook



If you shop on Amazon, you can donate to us by buying on Amazon Smile. You just have to go to smile.amazon.com and designate the Historical Society of Schuylkill County as your charity of choice. We'll receive 0.05% of the purchase price. And don't forget to like us on Facebook so you can stay informed about our news and upcoming events!

Remembering Bill Webber

We at the Society were deeply saddened to learn that William E. Webber, our longtime archivist, died unexpectedly on Oct. 11 at the age of 76.

Bill came to us in 1998 when Marty Hupka, a family friend and loyal supporter of the Society, asked him to help create our Civil War Room. “After that, I got hooked on local history,” he said.

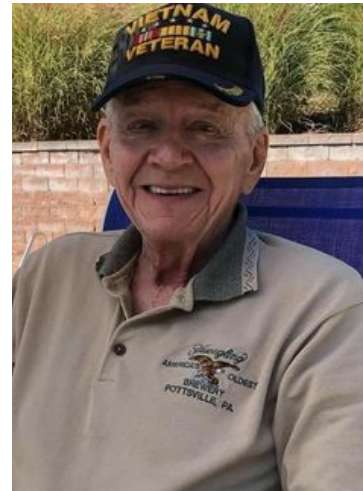
He became instrumental in documenting and storing most of the archived items you see in our museum today. Years later, he still marveled at what he’d find. “I get to see everything that comes through the door,” he said. “There are so many discoveries, I cannot select just one.”

Bill’s childhood in New Philadelphia and Kaska centered on Scouts and Little League activities. After he graduated from Pottsville Area High School in 1964, he was drafted and served in the Army during the Vietnam War as part of a team that upgraded operations at three of the war-torn country’s largest storage depots. Before he retired, he worked in logistics at Fort Indiantown Gap.

When Bill walked into what he fondly called the Hysterical Society, he’d have a cup of coffee in his hand and a smile on his face. He was a constant source of good cheer and playful humor. We miss him very much, and we send our deepest condolences to his family.

Bill’s family members say they prefer remembrances in the form of donations to the Society. We are grateful to them and to everyone who has contributed.

Diana Prosymchak and Larry Vinskie
Barbara and Stephen Conage
Linda and Robert Stock
Joann Chuba
Karen and Ronald Phillips
Frances Martin



Allen and Rose Frantz
Deborah Reed
Beth Boyer
Rebecca Hornberger
Jean Dellock
Lisa Von Ahn

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Here's What's Inside

President's message	1
Upcoming programs	2-3
1972 holiday venue quiz	3
Harrisburg Then and Now	4
Our last Civil War veterans	5
Holiday gift guide	6-7
Recent activities	8
New members	8
Donations	9
10 Questions/10 Answers	10
Remembering Bill Webber	11

OR CURRENT RESIDENT

Put a little of the coal region spirit into your holidays!

No matter where you live, you and your loved ones can celebrate Schuylkill County in a multitude of ways, whether with home decor, coal region cuisine or a key ring attached to a lump of anthracite. And we have numerous T-shirts that proclaim our heritage. (This one is \$15).

See our gift guide on pages 6 and 7, check out our online store at <https://www.schuylkillhistory.org/store> or stop in at our gift shop to say hello!

