



Historic QUAKERTOWN

26 N. Main St. P.O. Box 846
Quakertown PA 18951
www.QuakertownHistoricalSociety.org
QuakertownHistoricalSociety@gmail.com
Phone: 267-227-3864



May 2022 Newsletter

Dear Members,

Our Dinner on the Titanic held on April 23rd was a huge success. We had over 90 guests attend, at full capacity. The 7 courses were absolutely amazing thanks to the amazing chefs at McCoolle's at the Historic Red Lion Inn. Everyone had a great time, taking photos, meeting new people, and listening to the wonderful music played by the string quartet. It was what everyone could use after the long shutdowns caused by Covid19. We had local guests as well as from New Jersey, Maryland, and the Pittsburgh area. We look forward to having it again, and also having a kid friendly event.

We are pleased that we can have our first membership meeting since November 14, 2019 on May 19, 2022 at 7:00 PM at McCoolle's Arts & Events Place. The speaker for the evening will be Dick Helm, a life-long resident of the Quakertown community. His presentation will center on what it was like shopping in downtown Quakertown Borough in the 1950's. If you grew up in the community, you should find this program very interesting and if you moved here at some later point, it will give you an idea of what an important part of the Borough shopping was in the downtown area back then. For others that live outside the area, it will give you some insight of what Quakertown Borough was like in its heyday of shopping.

At this point, we currently have 242 registered members in the Society. As you know, there are currently no dues charged for membership, which could change at some point, but there is no plan to incorporate dues as of now. We do, however, encourage you to make a contribution to the Society.

Along the lines of membership, we need your help! There is a range of ideas we have to improve what the Society has in its possession as far as artifacts are concerned and how we can do a better job of promoting the rich history of Quakertown. Maintenance, especially in the area of cleaning, is always necessary. Would you please contact us with your willingness to help?

We don't have "open" hours currently, but we would like to conduct tours. Please get in touch with us to schedule a tour. We would be glad to do it.

In anticipation of the presentation of the upcoming membership meeting, we have included in this newsletter what the business (at least those who advertised in the Bucks County Traveler in November 1950) community looked like in the 1950's.

Also included is an article that appeared in the Montgomery County Record in 1986 about the Horseless Carriage and particularly the Nicholas Car, which is on display in the "Museum" of the Historical Society in the front part of the restored barn across from the Burgess Foulke House.

We hope you enjoy these two articles.

**Quakertown Businesses Advertising In The Bucks County Traveler
November, 1950
By Bob Roth**

Quakertown Ice & Storage	Belmont Avenue
Winston W. Lindes Real estate and Insurance Broker	321 E. Broad Street
Strunk Funeral Home	821 W. Broad Street
William C. Heise, Realtor	6 Front Street
Neuberts' Store	No Address Given but was probably on Juniper Street
Genevieve Yarn Shop	303 W. Broad Street
Quakertown Memorial Works	140 N. Ninth Street
Repa's – Television – Appliances	217 W. Broad Street
Red Lion Hotel	W. Broad & Main Streets
Bush House Hotel	W. Broad & Front Streets
Twin Gables	1222 W. Broad Street
Bartholomew's – Radio Repair	526 W. Broad Street
Eagle Hotel	E. Broad Street & Hellertown Avenue
Quakertown Laundry	115 S. Second Street
Hartman Insurance	211 W. Broad Street
Charles E. Foulke, Sr. – Hauling Contractor	Belmont Avenue & E. Broad Street
E.W. Knauss & So	No Address Given but was located on East Broad Street
Sernoff Bros.	216 W. Broad Street
Hubers – Self Service Market	9th & Juniper Streets
West End Market	11 S. Main Street
Walter's Electric	404 W. Broad Street
The Ideal – Confectionary & Lunch Room	E. Broad Street & Hellertown Avenue
Klein's Housefurnishing's Store	116 E. Broad Street
Miriam K. Steeley – Insurance	207 S. 11th Street
Quakertown Drug Co.	219 W. Broad Street
Quakertown Coal & Lumber Co.	E. Broad Street & Reading Railroad
Deaterly's	215 W. Broad Street
Dr. Irene & Dr. Ben Lobdell	Palace Theatre Building
Wrigley Music Store	7th & W. Broad Streets
Bill's Electric Shop	114 E. Broad Street
Arthur F. Peters – Insurance	1217 W. Broad Street
Evelyn Ruth Shop	Bush House Building
Hinkel & Biehn	No Address Given but was located on the 200 block of West Broad Street
K & L Company	Front Street
L. Martin Jeweler	308 W. Broad Street
Holsinger's	523 W. Broad Street
LeRoy N. Cassel – Real Estate	608 W. Broad Street
Arthur W. Treffinger & Son	20-22 N. Ambler Street
Nicholas Hardware	No Address Given but it was located on the 200 block of East Broad Street
Wolfinger's	334 W. Broad Street
Weiss' Men's Store	No Address Given but was located on the 300 block of West Broad Street
Landis & Landis	Quakertown National Bank Building

**Rock Hill Materials Co.
Re Lloyd Fronheiser
Meck's Taxi Service**

**223 N. Penrose Street
28-38 Eighth Street
No Address Given but was located on Erie
Avenue**

**LeRoy A. Hillegass
R.H. Hager
The Record Shop
Towne Kitchen Restaurant**

**213 W. Broad Street
16 S. Main Street
307 W. Broad Street
125 E. Broad Street
633 Juniper Street
240 W. Broad Street
Rt. 309 & W. Broad Street**

**Russel Allem
Dimmig Electric
Quaker Display Mart
B. W. Randall
Mrs. Florence Sames - Typewriting
Main Street Restaurant**

**32 Front Street
128 Park Avenue
9 S. Main Street
406 W. Broad Street
6th & W. Broad Streets/214 W. Broad Street
123 S. 11th Street
1010 W. Broad Street
112 E. Broad Street**

**Johnny Smoll's Sportsman's Shop
Quaker Cleaners & Tailors
Harold D. Reed – Fuller Brushes
York Road Real Estate Co.
The Children's Shop**

Horseless Carriage Survives Into The Modern Era

By Glenn Kaup

As appeared in the Sunday Intelligencer/Montgomery County Record

April 20, 1986

It was a strange sight for many people at the turn of the century.

The vehicle moving through the streets of Quakertown looked similar to a horse-drawn carriage. But the buggy moved under the power of a one-piston gasoline engine and did not need to be hitched to horses.

During rainstorms, the occupants frequently climbed out of the carriage to help push the vehicle up slight inclines. The smooth, round tires on wire-spoke wheels provided no traction on the muddy streets.

While Henry Ford and Ransom E. Olds became household names for their contributions to the automobile industry which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, few people remember the "homemade" horseless carriages built by private inventors.

One such businessman who could have become lost from automotive history was John Nicholas of Quakertown. Nicholas built several automobiles from his factory, The Quakertown Auto Manufacturing Co., at the corner of Green (now 11th) and Juniper Streets.

A vehicle built by Nicholas was purchased by the Quakertown Historical Society which is in the final phases of restoring the automobile.

William Amey of the Historical Society said no one really knows how many vehicles were built by Nicholas, who originally was a carriage-maker.

According to an advertisement for Nicholas Buggy and Carriage Co., the company manufactured carriages, buggies, phaetons, and surreys. "We present our annual circular before the public of having an experience over 128 years in the business," according to the ad.

Amey said he knows of only two vehicles which were built by Nicholas. He said one was in Allentown and the other owned by an individual in Perkasie.

The Historical Society purchased the Nicholas automobile for \$3500.00 in 1979 from Robert Nicholas, a descendant of the automobile builder. The former Quakertown Business Association donated \$1000.00 toward the purchase of the car when it voted to dissolve and join the Upper Bucks Chamber of Commerce.

The vehicle looks like a horse-drawn, four-wheeled carriage.

Passengers sat in an open carriage seat over the engine. According to Amey, the engine was powered by a single piston which was cooled by a radiator located underneath the carriage.

A letter written by Robert Nicholas in 1978 said the automobile was built prior to 1906.

“It was during the summer of that year that my father took me along for a visit to the Milton Johnson farm south of Quakertown where the Station Road abuts the Allentown Road.”

“The reason for the trip remains firmly in my mind in that in turning the car around at the rear of the house, my father failed to avoid running into a large pile of ground by applying the foot brake too late.”

Robert Nicholas was enrolled in the primary grade of the Quakertown Public Schools the following September.

Amey said the restoration of the Nicholas vehicle was undertaken by two individuals in Coopersburg in Lehigh County.

The restoration has taken a lot of volunteer work, according to Amey. “It’s hard to put a value on it.”

In order to finish the restoration, Amey said new tires have to be made for the vehicle. He said there are several companies in the country which can make the tires, but it will cost about \$300.00 for each tire.

He said the car will not be driven until new tires are made.

The vehicle has been on display during the Historical Society’s annual Market Days. In addition, it was on display in the lobby of Quakertown National Bank during the Christmas holidays.

Amey said the vehicle was used for the Upper Bucks Chamber of Commerce and the Nicholas Hardware car shows.

During the Historical Society’s annual banquet, David Bousch, a former administrator of the Quakertown Community Hospital, spoke on the history of the self-propelled vehicle.

As early as the 1770’s, individuals have attempted to make self-propelled vehicles. Nicholas Cignot is credited with constructing the first true automobile. The Frenchman built a heavy, steam-powered tricycle which was said to have run for 20 minutes at 2 ½ mph.

A similar vehicle powered by steam was built in Philadelphia in 1775, according to Bousch.

The early efforts of steam-driven vehicles were met with resistance in England. “The farmers didn’t like them,” Bousch said. He said every effort was made to dissuade the owners of the vehicles.

Rows of stones were placed across the roadways to break the axles of the automobiles. In addition, the operators of toll roads would charge as much as 20 times more for the use by automobiles than for horse-drawn carriages.

“The ‘Red-Flag Law’ in 1865 put England out of the automobile business,” said Bousch. According to the law, if a horse refused to pass the vehicle, the carriage had to be taken apart.

The automobile could drive no faster than 4 mph with a man walking in front with a red flag and a Roman candle which had to be shot off at each intersection.

Bousch said the first use of a carburetor in the gasoline engine was in 1875 in Germany by Siegfried Marcus. He was arrested the first day he drove the vehicle and it was placed in a barn where it remained until 1886.

The first commercially produced car was built by Carl Benz in 1886.

Frank and Charles Duryea were credited with building the first American gasoline-powered automobile in 1893. It consisted of a one-cylinder gasoline engine with electrical ignition.

Frank Duryea won the first automobile race in America in which more than two cars competed. Bousch said many automobile builders competed in races as a way to advertise the vehicles. The races were designed more for durability than for speed.

The first commercially successful American-made automobile was the curved-dash Oldsmobile, according to Bousch. Everything in the vehicle was custom-made.

Organized in 1903, the Ford Motor Co. produced 1700 cars in its first year. The first vehicles took more than 12 ½ hours to build and cost \$850.00. After refining the production system, an automobile was completed every 40 seconds. The cost dropped to \$300.00.