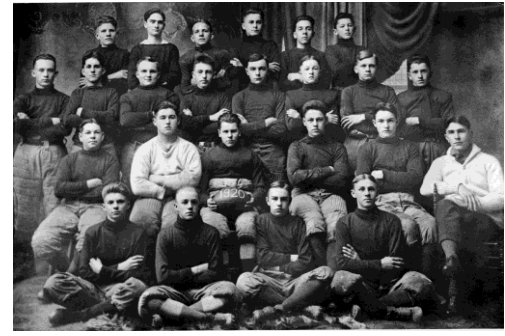




Historic QUAKERTOWN

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May 2021 Newsletter

Welcome to all the new members that joined the Society recently. We are happy to have you aboard. As was shared in our last newsletter, we still are unable to have membership meetings due to the ongoing issues with Covid-19. Restrictions are being lifted as this is being written. Thankfully, we can now clearly see the light at the end of the tunnel and hope we will be back to normal real soon.

The Society is still busy and can use your help. The Archives and Display Committee is still working at listing the many items found in the Burgess Foulke House, Liberty Hall, the Barn, and the Museum. The Events and Fundraising Committee is planning at least two events through the end of the year. And the Property and Maintenance Committee has scheduled the light cleaning of the buildings on June 15, 2021 at 9:00 AM. If you are interested in helping with any of these opportunities, please leave a phone message at the number above.

As part of this newsletter, you will find two articles that appeared in the Quakertown Free Press many years ago – one by a regular contributor and the other by the Executive Sports Editor. For some of you it will bring back memories of that time and the people mentioned and for others it will give you an idea of what life was like in Quakertown “back in the day.”

Local Trolley an Institution

**By Warren S. Buck
The Free Press circa 2000**

In those days it was the height of elegance to sit on the plush velour seats of the Liberty Bell Limited and wave to the spectators who were lined up on both sides of Main Street.

As the car approached, the people living on Main Street left their homes and stood on the sidewalks or sat on their porches to watch the movement of the magical car which traveled without a horse pulling it.

It made a lot of noise and the arcing of the trolley on the overhead wire added to the excitement. Some people were frightened by the electricity and predicted that someday all the passengers on the car would be electrocuted.

The motorman and conductor wore gaudy uniforms as they attended to their appointed tasks. The car stopped at all intersections for boarding and egress. The cars were brand spanking new and the paint shined in the sunlight. The tracks ran up and down the middle of Main Street and, when it approached a team, the horses would often bolt and sometimes run away. Perhaps they realized that this monster would eventually replace them.

The principal mode of travel at the turn of the (20th) century was by horse and carriage and to go to Allentown was considered an all-day outing. A picnic along the Delaware River or its canal was a big event. People took great pride in their horses and the ornaments on their harnesses. Most homes had a two-story stable in their back yard. The ground floor housed the horse and carriage while the hay was kept on the second story loft. The carriages were kept polished and waxed as cars are today.

The main roads were not paved and most of them were toll roads. People are still pointing out houses which once were toll houses. Tolls were considered expensive, and arguments often took place between travelers and toll collectors. Sometimes toll collectors had to arise from bed to collect a toll during the night. The blacksmith and the wheelwright were important people.

During a blizzard, the roads were sometimes closed for days and at points where high drifts formed it was necessary to make detours through neighboring fields.

All this changed when in 1919 the Lehigh Valley Transit Company built a railroad from Allentown to 69th Street in Philadelphia. It was a high-speed line which proceeded from Allentown to Philadelphia in less than two hours. In rural areas it is said to have reached a speed of 70 miles per hour. Its principal stop in Quakertown was at its station house and power generator across the (W. Broad) street from the Red Lion Hotel. The line kept fairly accurate schedules and people set their clocks by the passing of the trolley car. There were no radios or television sets to set their clocks by.

The rates were more reasonable than the tolls and a trip to Allentown became an afternoon of pleasure. While a banquet was in progress at the Red Lion, the speaker had to pause while the car passed because the car was so noisy. In the car there was a smoking section reserved for men. Women did not smoke in those days, so men had the section all to themselves and some of the stories told there were not for the ladies' ears to hear.

A long-time Quakertown resident named Herbert Knecht was a motorman and conductor on the line. He was the father of Edna Pfaff who rode the line to 69th Street, then took another line to get to West Chester. In one instance the car hit a deaf man who did not hear the whistle. Herbert would no longer serve as a motorman after that and became a conductor until cars used only one man. He then became a toll collector at the 8th Street Bridge in Allentown.

There was another serious accident just north of Brick Tavern in 1938 in which six people were killed on a July morning.

During World War II, gasoline was rationed, and few people were able to get more than a trickle of fuel. Several couples used the (trolley) car to have a party at the Forrest Lodge. It was a noisy group who had coffee and conversation at their tables while others danced or played the mechanical monsters. The orchestra was lively and was noted for its rendition of "Peanuts." Returning home, on the last car of the night, the group was even more noisy than they were when they arrived. Dirty old Joe Miller stood by the bar in the Red Lion and vociferously informed all present that he would give the line six months and the horses would be back.

The last run was made in September of 1951 and the Lehigh Valley Bus Company took over the line, but the business declined, and the bus company discontinued the service.

Non-Scholastic Football Teams of the 1930's 40's, and 50's

Take Another Look

"Remembering the 1928 Quakertown Blue Jays"

By George R. Fox

Executive Sports Editor, The Free Press

Circa 1988

Nostalgia, trips back to yesteryear, the Good Ole Days. People keep asking for it. Quakertown has been filled with various, monotonous hoopla concerning past eras. I keep waiting for it all to end, but some people still insist on getting dressed up like Fonzie – even though the wet head has been dead for more than 15 years.

When will nostalgia-mania stop? It may never. And hey, you've got to give the people what they want. In searching through old records and talking to old-timers I have been able to go back 60 years. The team of that time was the Quakertown Blue Jays.

The 1928 team was the first undefeated team known. It is said that some of the players used to wear covering over their legs to keep from being bitten by their opponents. Members of the 1928 Blue Jays were: Lou Pfaff, "Butch" Hillegas, Stan Weller, "Bots" Heller, Clarence Wenhold, "Rip" DeReiter, "Fats" Sorver, Jimmy Savaggio, "Ep" Smith, "Winnie" Derr, LeRoy Kline, Frank Shelly, Harvey Hartman, "Hap" Gerhard, Bill Wenhold, Cliff Kile, "Hap" Shelly, and "Lunz" Courtney. Dr. Stanley Moyer was the coach and Ernie Foltz was the manager.

After a scoreless tie with the Allentown Green Jackets, they beat Coplay C.C. 31-0, Clemens B.A. Allentown 13-0, Slatington A.A. 12-6, Schuylkill Haven 7-0, the 1927 Bethlehem City Champions 6-0, and the Bethlehem Blue Jackets 6-0. They then tied Lansdale A.A. 0-0, beat Sellersville A.A. 12-6 and finished with a scoreless tie.

In the early 30's the Quakertown A.A. sponsored a football team with Jacob L. Stoneback and Willard Moyer serving as coaches. Home games were played on Sunday afternoons at LuLu Park. I can remember, as a boy, seeing Charlie "Borrelli" Weisel heaving his helmet to the sidelines after about three plays. In those days players were not required to wear headgear. It was Weisel's way of letting the fans know he was ready.

In 1938 the Quakertown High School Alumni Association sponsored a team known as the Varsity Club with Orvil Jarrett serving as coach. Paul "Bots" Heller came out of retirement and was the team's oldest player. He was captain of the 1928 Blue Jays and then served in the same capacity for the Varsity Club. This team lasted just one year, as during the off season all of the equipment disappeared.

The next venture in Football was the Big Six Conference – the biggest thing going after World War II. It was initially staffed with six teams in 1946, including the Quakertown Hurricanes, The Sellersville Green Jackets, the Perkiomen Indians, the Lansdale Falcons, the Souderton HisNibs and the Doylestown Vets.

In 1948, after dropping the first three games on the schedule, Quakertown turned everything around and won the next eight games to take the title. Some of the players were Bob Kollo, Wally Neubert, Gene Lang, Slug Neamand, Ray Ackerman, Orin Fluck, Chet Foulke, Joe Kelly, John Stair, Junior Weitzel, Bob Barndt, Paul Thomas, Bert Shelly, Bob Schlicter and Moose Barndt. Joining these were John Marzec, Joe Flok and Carl Gerhab from Hellertown.

After suffering loses of 3-0 to Doylestown, 19-7 to Sellersville and 7-0 to Lansdale, the Hurricanes coach, Ted Mazza, resigned and Clyde Smoll took over for the remainder of the season. Smoll was fresh from managing the Rome baseball team where he did what no skipper had done since 1899 in the Class C Canadian-American League. He guided the Colonels to the 1948 championship, winning 79 and losing 57.

He promptly instilled his winning ways on the local Hurricanes. They went out and defeated Souderton for their first win. Gerhab grabbed four "Moose" Barndt passes and scored two touchdowns. Bert Shelly also scored on a 55-yard run.

Just to prove it was not a mistake, the Hurricanes went out and beat the Perkiomen Indians 21-2 at East Greenville before 2,000 fans. Gerhab scored the first TD on a 35-yard pass. Barndt added the extra point. Paul Thomas raced 54 yards after taking a pass from Barndt, who played two games a weekend. He played at East Stroudsburg State College on Saturday's and with the Hurricanes on Sundays. Joe Kelly scored the final touchdown on a pass.

The team registered its third straight win with a 6-0 decision over the Sellersville Green Jackets. In their next contest they edged the Lansdale Falcons 7-6 to move into second place.

The following week the Hurricanes nipped Souderton 20-19 to take over first place in the Big Six as Doylestown upset Lansdale 13-0. Then the Hurricanes went out and ripped Doylestown 14-6. Carl Gerhab, a whirling 180-pound end affectionately called "Bobo" by his teammates, scored all of Quakertown's points on passes.

Quakertown ended its famine for a football championship the following week with an 18-6 victory over Perkiomen. It marked the Hurricanes seventh straight triumph and left Smoll undefeated as a coach. The game was played in snow, rain and heavy winds as the Hurricanes blew their way to the title.

Then they topped the league season off by beating the top team in the Lehigh Valley areas as they registered a 31-13 victory over the Coplay A.A. Coplay had faced such leading semi-pro teams as the Northampton Busters, Mahoney City Brewers, Philadelphia Vagabonds, Washington Clippers, Nesquehoning Hurricanes and the Lebanon Vets.

The game gave the fans a lot of new looks. It showed Les Zetty handling the team in the absence of regular coach Clyde Smoll. Junior Weitzel ran a kickoff back. Paul Thomas tried a place kick for the first time. The Hurricanes also used the Open Door and the Wooden Indian.

The final year for the Big Six was 1953. Formed when the men came home from World War II until the men came back from Korea, the Big Six represented a lost breed – the men who performed for nothing. Every player was out there because of his love of the game – void of financial rewards.