



Historic QUAKERTOWN

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December 2021 Newsletter

Dear Historical Society Members,

One of our goals with the monthly newsletter is to share with you writings that we have come across as we are recording the various documents and artifacts in our possession. It is our desire, in doing so, that you get a real sense of the rich history of Quakertown and how various writers at various times recorded that history. We recognize that some of you know most of what is in this article or have read it before but, for most of you, Quakertown is not a place in which you have lived your whole life and perhaps you are not particularly familiar with it's past.

The article included in this newsletter is a perfect example of that past. It is a real perspective of the unknown author and what was, for the writer, the past as known to him and the present in which the writer is living and experiencing. The writer is talking to us. And for us, it causes our imagination to consider what it was like "in the day."

The Board of Directors met on December 8, 2021 and have some plans in the works for 2022. As always, we ask you to consider being involved in some way. Please call us and leave a message on the answering machine. We will get back to you. But for now.....

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

History of Bucks County
Quakertown
Unknown Author
Circa 1886

The borough of Quakertown is situated at the center of an elevated elliptical plain (the basin of the swamp – the circumference being a belt of trap rock), the diameters of which are six and four miles, respectively. In the immediate vicinity, the owners of land, in 1715, were Morris (one thousand acres), Michael Atkinson (two hundred fifty acres), James McVaugh (one hundred acres), John Moore (two hundred acres); in 1737, John Bond (two hundred and fifty acres), John George Bachman (two hundred and thirty-four acres); in 1774, Hugh Foulke (three hundred and thirteen acres). The residents of this vicinity, in 1730, were Hugh Foulke, John Lester, John Adamson, Arnal Heacock, John Phillips, William Morris, John Richards, William Jamison, Edmund Phillips, John Ball, John Edwards, Thomas Roberts, William Nixon, Arthur Jones, and Edward Roberts.

Scull's map of 1770 located the public house of Walter McCool at the intersection of two well-known and much-travelled roads, one leading from Bethlehem to Philadelphia, the other from Milford to the southern part of the county, and within the present limits of the borough. The Friends meeting house completed the number of houses at that time, and little change was apparent before the close of the century.

But as must inevitably occur at a place combining the advantages of cross-roads, hotel, and meetinghouse, a hamlet eventually came into existence; and in 1803 it received a name and the appointment of its first postmaster in the person of William Green. For many years, its growth was scarcely perceptible, and such houses as were built were not at a greater distance than necessary from the Red Lion Hotel. The condition of the roads was not flattering; it is said that within the memory of persons now living the highway leading east from the village was almost impassable except in the summer months, and a dense forest lined it on either side.

And thus, until the middle of the present century, Quakertown was only a country village possessing few features of importance and almost without a history as far as material growth was concerned. In 1856, it comprised sixty-two dwellings, an increase of twenty-two in thirty-four years. The North Pennsylvania railroad was constructed in that year; and the impetus thus given to improvement and expansion may be traced in the subsequent development of the town.

However, old Quakertown was separated from the station of that name by a mile of mud road, thus modifying to a great extent the benefit it would otherwise have derived. The land about the railroad station was owned by John Strawn and Joel B. Roberts, by whom it was laid out into streets and building lots; and in a few years this was the site of a busy, active, and growing village. A post office was established in 1867 under the name of Richland Center, by which it is still known. In the meantime, a macadamized road has taken the place of the former indifferent highway to the old town. It is known as Broad Street between Main and Front; west of the former it becomes the Bethlehem Road, and east of the latter the Doylestown Road.

The intervening streets are twelve in number, and are named in order from Front, First, Second, etc. They are not parallel, a circumstance which should have been guarded against, as it prevents regularity in form and appearance. Juniper street is parallel with Broad to the south from it.

Quakertown was incorporated in 1854. The corporate limits were so extended in 1874 as to include Richland Center, so that both are now under the same municipal government. The population in 1870 was eight hundred and sixty-three; in 1880, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-nine, an increase of more than nine hundred persons.

Although the expansion so noticeable a decade ago has not continued in such a marked degree, the growth of the town at present time is fully sustained by the development of its business and industrial interests, and has, therefore, a character of permanence and stability. There are quite a number of manufacturing pursuits – cigars, tools, boots, shoes, clothing, harness, spokes felloes, handles, and stoves being the principal products of local industry.

The Quakertown stove works, operated since October 1881, by Roberts, Scyces & Company, have contributed more to the prosperity of the town than any other of its industrial establishments. The business was originated by Thomas, Roberts, Stevenson & company, in 1866, on a small scale, and gradually enlarged until

1882, when there were one-hundred and two men on the payroll. On the morning of November 2 of that year, the works were completely destroyed by fire. February 8, 1882, the new firm first operated their recently completed works, the firm name becoming Rodgers, Scypes & Company, and so continuing until the present style was adopted. Sixty-eight operatives are employed, the yearly disbursements for wages aggregating thirty thousand dollars. The annual product approximates in value seventy-five thousand dollars, and consists exclusively of stoves, heaters, and ranges.

The Quakertown harness works, established in 1878, are also of considerable local importance. A large brick building, one hundred and forty by fifty-seven feet in dimensions, has recently been erected to accommodate the expanding proportions of the manufacture. It was first occupied in December 1886. Similar particulars might be given concerning other establishments, but their relative importance is not sufficient to justify this.

Nearly every branch of business is represented. There are drug stores, but the vital statistics of the locality fail to explain whence they derive an existence. Business transactions, of every character, are greatly facilitated by the Quakertown National Bank, a well-sustained financial institution. It was organized June 27, 1877, and incorporated July 21, 1877, with one hundred thousand dollars capital.

The original organization was constituted as follows: president – Joseph Thomas; cashier – Charles C. Herring, Jr.; teller – Byron Thomas; directors – A.B. Walp, J.D.K. Rinehart, R.B. Delp, S.B. Thatcher, R.J. Linderman, I.H. Shelly, John S. Stephens, Charles Fellman, and S.F. Sheetz. The annual dividends have uniformly been six per cent, and the surplus is equal to fifty per cent of the capital stock. The predecessor of this was a state bank, established May 12, 1871. It paid enormous dividends, but was merged into the present concern, the usefulness of institutions of its character having become a thing of the past.

In social, as well as business circles, this place is second to no other in the northern part of the county. Quakertown Lodge, No. 512, F. & A. M., was chartered June 5, 1872, with Benjamin H Senderlin, W.M., Joseph Thomas, S.W., and Joseph Hartman, J.W. A list of successive past-masters is herewith presented: Benjamin Sunderlin, Joseph Thomas, Isaac S. Moyer, Charles E. Transue, John A. Ozias, James M. Shaw, Ezekiel Thomas, Joseph Hartman, Simon Singer, George W. Keeler, and Milton K. Erdman.

Quakertown Lodge, No. 714, I.O.O.F., was instituted June 17, 1870. The following were original members: Thomas T. Ochs, N.G.; Joshua K. Wise, V.G.; J.H. Fulmer, secretary; Henry F. Hager, A.S.; Henry U. Erdman, treasurer; F.H. Hausman, Lewis H. Walp, Milton F. Wolf, S.U. Singmaster, William H. Bean, H.B. Fellman, David L. Reimer, William N. Loux, Charles D. Walp, William H.B. Diehl, Henry Bean, David R. Jamison, R.B. Slack, and Joseph Thomas. The present membership is sixty-four.

Quakertown Castle, Knights of the Golden Eagle, was organized August 17, 1886 by C.G. Simon, G.M. of this state, with thirty-three members, of whom the following were incumbents of their respective offices: William H. Dengler, P.C., A.R. Eidell, N.C., Samuel Hoffart, V.C., Owen Guzman, M.R., A. Crouse, C.E., M.F. Miller, K.E., Elmer Jordan, V.H., Reuben Rupert, S.H., and Charles Wetter, H.P.

Secona Tribe, No. 263, Order of Red Men, was formed November 27, 1885, with fifty-five members, of whom Henry H. Miller, L.C. Raisner, J.S. Monroe, Thomas J. Ziegenfuss, and John M. Weidamoyer were the principal officers.

Marion Circle, No. 16, B.U. (H.F.) C. of A., was initiated January 1867 at the house of George Miller, in Quakertown, when the following members were initiated: T.P. Walters, Washington Snyder, John Laybold, Charles F. Miller, Elias Snyder, Charles M. Brunner, George Miller, Alfred Fackenthall, Thomas Morris, George Wolford, Everhart Fisher, Edward Roth, Michael Heitz, and Rufus Hoover. Two hundred and Eight members have been initiated in the twenty years of its existence. The amount of money paid in benefits aggregates nearly four thousand dollars; present assets, about three thousand dollars.

General Peter Lyle Post, No. 145, G.A.R., was mustered April 3, 1880. The following names appear on the roll for that evening: Jeremiah S. Fluck, Joseph C. Harmer, Edward Carroll, William Clements, Robert E. Patton, A.H. Harmer, Levi K. Moore, Henry Seas, Evan H. Strawn, Joseph Gerbrohn, Charles Sigman, and Francis K. Saylor. The present membership is twenty-one.

Considerable interest has always been manifested in education. The Friends established schools at an early day, which were also attended by Germans, and exerted a healthful influence. The Richland Library was established in 1789 and has continued in active operation until the present time. The first teachers' institute in the county was held at Quakertown in 1860. A classical and normal school of advanced grade was opened in

1858 by Reverends F.R. Horne, D.D., and H. Louis Baugher, D.D., and continued five years. The originators subsequently engaged in other work, and the school was not so successful in the hands of their successors as it had been with them. The local public schools are well sustained and compare favorably with others of a similar character elsewhere.

The oldest religious society at Quakertown and in the norther part of the county is the Friends' meeting, of which an account has been given. The present location of the meetinghouse was chosen in 1730; and more than a hundred years elapsed before a second religious body appeared. The Lutheran and Reformed pastors of the vicinity preached occasionally in the village schoolhouse, but no effort was made to effect organizations prior to 1860. In August 1858, the "Union Tabernacle," under the management of Reverend E.M. Long, was brought to Quakertown from Philadelphia, where it had been dedicated May 1, 1838. Services were begun in September and continued more than a month, and as a result a chapel was built for the use of the different churches, and dedicated November 7, 1858. Although not in the way intended, this effort effected much in arousing the latent religious activities of the people.

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran congregation of Quakertown was organized by Reverend F. Berkemeyer with about a score of members in the year 1860. The cornerstone of the present church edifice, situated on Roberts Street, and owned jointly with St. John's Reformed congregation, was laid August 19, 1860, by Reverends P.S. Fisher and F. Berkemeyer. The basement was dedicated April 7, 1868, and the audience room December 2, 1865. Having succeeded in establishing the congregation on a firm basis, Mr. Berkemeyer resigned the pastorate in 1867, and in August of that year he was succeeded by the Reverend George M. Lazarus, during whose ministry the congregation made great advances. The membership increased rapidly, the debt remaining on the church property was paid, a pipe organ purchased, and English services became more frequent.

In 1870 the Lutheran congregations at Applesbachsville and "Keller's" church, Bedminster, were added to St. John's, forming the Quakertown charge.

In the midst of his successful pastoral labors, Mr. Lazarus was suddenly called away under the most distressing circumstances. January 31, 1874, whilst in attendance at a funeral, he was violently thrown from his carriage by a runaway horse, receiving injuries from which he died in an hour. He was greatly beloved in the community in which he labored and exerted an influence for good in many directions. In addition to his pastoral work, he took a lively interest in educational matters. For several years he conducted a private academy in the lecture rooms of St. John's church, and at the time of his death was superintendent of the Quakertown borough schools. It was largely through his efforts that the high school was established.

He was followed by the present pastor, the Reverend J.F. Ohl, who has served the congregations without intermission since June 1874. During his incumbency, the church edifice has been twice remodeled and is now one of the handsomest places of worship in the county. There has been a steady increase in the membership, which now numbers more than three hundred. The congregation has a most promising future.

St. John's Reformed church was organized in 1861 by Reverend P.S. Fisher. It has experienced much the same history as the Lutheran, with which it is united in the ownership of the church edifice. The present pastor is Reverend F.J. Mohr.

Methodism was introduced into Quakertown in 1872 by Reverend B.L. Sanderlin, who formed a class of twelve members. The present membership is seventy; value of property six thousand dollars.

The first Evangelical class in the town was formed in 1879 by Reverend Anthony Ziegenfuss, then stationed at Kulpsville. He first held service, a prayer meeting, at the house of S. Horne, in 1878. There were at this time but two families of this persuasion in the town.

The frame church building on Juniper Street was dedicated November 15, 1880. Philip Kuntzman was the first-class leader. The following clergymen have been pastors: Anthony Ziegenfuss, David Lutz, F.D. Geary, Frederick Kucker, and G.C. Knobel.

The Evangelical Mennonite congregation originated in Haycock township, where in October 1859, the first church building of the denomination was dedicated. This was torn down and rebuilt at Quakertown in 1872. Reverend Abel Strawn is pastor.