



Historic QUAKERTOWN

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August 2020 Newsletter

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Quakertown Historical Society is scheduled for September 30, 2020 at 7:30 PM at McCoolle's Arts & Event Place, 10 S. Main Street, Quakertown, PA 18951. At this point it is planned as an in-person meeting but that could change between now and then considering the Covid-19 situation and restrictions. We will keep you informed.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Nominating Committee, composed of Steve Biddle, Victoria Blackmore, Danielle Bodnar, Christina Landis, Robert Roth and Jack Schick, met on July 14, 2020 and has nominated the following candidates for Quakertown Historical Board Seats at the Annual Meeting:

Bob Roth Three-year Term

Lyn Treffinger Three-year Term

Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the Annual Meeting.

FINANCES

The Quakertown Historical Society (QHS) relies heavily on the financial support of the membership of the Society and the community at large. The QHS is recognized as a Non-profit Organization by the Internal Revenue Service under Section 501 (c) (3). Would you please consider a contribution in any amount to help us finance our Mission Statement? "The Quakertown Historical Society is dedicated to fostering and perpetuating interest in the history of Quakertown. By collecting, preserving, interpreting, and celebrating Quakertown's history, we link the past with the present with the goal of inspiring future generations." It would be greatly appreciated. You can mail your contribution to the above address.

BURGESS FOULKE HOUSE, LIBERTY HALL & THE MUSEUM TOURS

Tours of all three sites are now available. The tour generally takes about 1 ½ hours and can be self-guided or guided by one of our Board Members in a safe manner. It can be for just a few people or it can be for a group of up to 50. We do ask that a donation be made to the Society in lieu of any charge for the tour.

If you or someone you know, would like to schedule a tour, you can contact us at quakertownhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or call us at 267-227-3864 and leave a message. We will get back to you quickly to arrange a date.

LOOKING BACK

We plan on including, in each edition of the newsletter, a look back in time on a variety of subjects that we believe are of interest. This month we are highlighting the Quakertown and Eastern Railroad by way of a reprint of an article that first appeared in the *Bucks County Life Magazine*, which is no longer in existence, and written by Roswell S. Eddy in June 1961. As you will see, the rail line existed from 1896 to 1939. Keep in mind that the article was written in 1961 and therefore some of the references are dated. For example, today:

- (1) This is now the site of the Univest Performance Center.
- (2) This business no longer exists. It is currently the site of Amerigas, Inc.
- (3) This business no longer exists. It is currently a private residence in the 1900 block of Old Bethlehem Road.

A Line to Be Remembered – The Quakertown and Eastern Railroad

**By Roswell S. Eddy
Bucks County Life Magazine
June 1961**

A short distance beyond the Reading crossing near the Krupp Manufacturing Company¹ plant in Quakertown are traces of an old railroad right-of-way turning northeast toward Richlandtown (not to be confused with the tracks of the former Reading Railroad, which still exist in Quakertown). Other nostalgic reminders of the line can be seen at many places between Quakertown and Riegelsville – a culvert in a field beyond the George W. Amey (2) business place at Richlandtown, ties still in place on the public road at Pullen, an old cross-arm near the Knecht covered bridge in Sleifer Valley, Springfield Township, and tracks still in the road at the end of the bridge beyond Springtown. At many places, glimpses of still-level over-grown stretches of the old roadbed may be seen from Route 212 below Pleasant Valley, along the banks of Cook Creek, and especially at Durham and beyond.

They are the last vestiges of a rail line which was started at a groundbreaking ceremony at Kulp's Farm between Richlandtown and Pleasant Valley on August 20, 1896. Chartered as the Quakertown and Eastern on July 6th of that year, the railroad, a standard gauge line, had the following officers: President, John Jameson; secretary, Henry Funk; and treasurer, James Shelly.

Funk's business was the Times Publishing Company of Springtown. Directors in addition to the above were: Dr. John Ott, who had his office and home along the line near what is now Weierbach's store and U.S. Post Office in Pleasant Valley³; Henry Souders, proprietor of the Bush House in Quakertown; H.C. Coleman; David Fluck, who conducted a shoe business in Richlandtown; and Henry Mill.

E.S. Whitney, railroad and general contractor, Allentown, had submitted an unsuccessful bid for "grading" stone ballast, bridges, drains, fencing, telegraph line, five small depots, 1000 feet of trestling, and extra track for siding, total cost per mile, ready for business, of \$12,500.00."

The road was eventually built by A.F. Baker whose name appears, as treasurer, on the business letterhead of Arizona Development Company, Philadelphia, "owners of 28 valuable claims as well as the wonderful rich Mineral Belt Mine in the Harqua Hala Mountains, Arizona." Quote is from letterhead of the company whose president was John Jameson, president of the Quakertown and Eastern.

A band of laborers with horses and wagons worked until winter weather set in. Starting again in the spring, three miles were completed and the first train – locomotive and coaches of the Philadelphia and Reading – made the trip from Quakertown to Richlandtown, arriving at 7:30 PM, August 12, 1897. A parade in Richlandtown followed with the Germania Band in the line of march.

The second completed section extended the line to Springtown on August 18, 1898. A schedule of five round trips daily and two on Sunday for passengers, plus daily freight service, was maintained. Completion of the nine miles of line – Quakertown to Springtown – was celebrated with a picnic at Funk's Grove.

Three months after the opening of the line to Springtown, the railroad had its first accident, a minor one which was caused when some boys released brakes on a car on a siding. There were no injuries or extensive damage.

The first train arrived at the village of Durham on August 11, 1899 and two weeks later the road was completed to Durham Furnace.

At one time or another, the following were listed as stops on the Quakertown and Eastern Railroad, which under four different names served the area from Quakertown to Riegelsville for most of 40 years:

Quakertown	Gehman	Witte	Durham Furnace	Richlandtown
Schlieffer	Durham	Hewitt		
Pullen	Mease	Morgan	Furnace Junction	
D. & E. Junction	Springtown	Riegelsville	Pleasant Valley	
Red Bridge	Slifer			

It was the anticipated business with the iron furnace of Cooper Hewitt that spurred the promotion of the Quakertown and Eastern long before the first spike was driven. Prior to the establishment of rail service, ore had to be brought in and pig iron shipped out by wagon to connect with the Delaware Canal or the Belvidere-Delaware Railroad.

In addition to the business with the Durham Furnace, considerable freight was handled for farmers, general stores, and other enterprises along the right-of-way. After five years, the Q. and E. reached its maximum length of 15 miles and the last spike was driven August 26, 1901 by which time there were passenger stations at Quakertown, Richlandtown, Pleasant Valley, Springtown, and Riegelsville. Colonel Jameson wielded the sledgeworker at the last spike ceremony.

The year 1902 was marked by several excursions, some to Menlo Park in Perkasio and others to Willow Grove where the attraction was often a band – John Philip Sousa’s and the Royal Marine Band of Italy being special favorites. Round trip fares were advertised by handbills for an excursion to Willow Grove on Thursday, August 21, 1902 as follows: from Riegelsville, Durham Furnace and Durham, \$1.15; Springtown, \$1.05; Pleasant Valley, \$.90.

The train left Riegelsville at 8 AM, Durham Furnace at 8:15, Durham at 8:25, Springtown at 8:40 and Pleasant Valley at 8:55. Returning train left Willow Grove at 10 PM and sometimes was in two sections of ten cars each. All rolling stock was leased from Reading.

Finally, in 1903, the Quakertown and Eastern accepted delivery of locomotive No. 1, purchased from the Baldwin Locomotive Works, Philadelphia. A trial run proved the engine to be too heavy. There was some damage to the roadbed and the engine was replaced by a lighter one. The second locomotive was also called No. 1.

Among interesting facts about the railroad was blockage of the line for three days following a blizzard in late November of 1898, flooding of the tracks by the Delaware River flood of 1903, and a strike of short duration in July 1904. Mail was first carried in May of 1904, soon followed by express.

The line continued to be called the Quakertown and Eastern until reorganization in 1907 when it became known as the Pennsylvania-Eastern. Schedules were maintained for a short time that year and then the railroad was idle until 1911.

Reorganized then and with extensive repairs to the trackage, the line ran until 1916 under the name of Quakertown and Delaware River.

In the meantime, the Cooper Hewitt operation at Durham Furnace had closed down resulting in considerable loss of business for the railroad. In addition, with the advent of the family car, railroad excursions were no longer popular.

In 1916 the property of the Quakertown and Delaware River were sold at sheriff’s auction to John M. Buckland of Allentown who operated the line until 1936. The last run of the “Quiet and Easy” as it was called was made on December 18, 1936. This nickname did not really fit though, as the line was operated under Mr. Buckland as the Quakertown and Bethlehem. The tracks and other equipment were removed in 1939.