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Wallace Willard Keller

September 2022 Newsletter

Greetings Members,

By way of a reminder, the Annual Meeting of the Quakertown Historical Society will be held on October 19, 2022 at 7:00 PM at McCool's Arts & Events Place, 10 S. Main Street, Quakertown, Pa. At that meeting election of two Directors will be held to fill three-year terms. There will be two vacancies filled with the election. The Nominating Committee has nominated Daniel Bodnar and Steve Biddle for consideration. Nominations will be accepted from the floor.

Immediately after the Annual Meeting, the Board will convene to elect officers for fiscal year 2022-2023.

Tea on the Titanic has been cancelled; planning is underway for the 1st Class Dinner on the Titanic event that will be held April 15, 2023.

In this edition, we have included three articles. The first is one written by Carolyn Larsen that appeared in the Pleasure Hunt Magazine entitled Quakertown Past & Present. A good guess is that it was written sometime in the 1980's. As best we can tell, the magazine is no longer in circulation.

The second article tells the history as of 1972 of Wallace Willard Keller Post 242 of the American Legion in Quakertown written by Leon R. Lewis.

The third explains what a Witch Ball is. This is most relevant inasmuch as one hangs in the front kitchen window of the Burgess Foulke House on N. Main Street, home of the Quakertown Historical Society.

As always, hope you enjoy the reading.

Quakertown Past & Present **By Carolyn Larsen** **Pleasure Hunt Magazine (Undated)**

Located in upper Bucks County between highways 313 and 309, Quakertown grew up around its taverns. The Red Lion Inn on the busy Broad and Main intersection is a silent witness to the changes of time. Built before 1750, it was the town's first tavern and the center of the community for most of its existence. The Red Lion is the grand old dame of them all.

The style is typical of stagecoach inns, large, comfortable with an overhanging front porch. The driver would sound the horn to signal the arrival of passengers. One of the two front doors led to the taproom while the other opened into the more formal lodging area. If the driver didn't stop, the porch was a handy mail throw as the coach rumbled by.

Today the inn reflects a former glory as traffic, drawn to the lure of the interstate and four lane north and south Route 309, rushes by.

Yet a stop to investigate Quakertown yields pleasant surprises. One is William Amey, history buff, current chairman of the Bucks County Historical Tourist Commission and founder-president of the Quakertown Historical Society for the past 17 years.

His historical passion becomes apparent as you enter the Liberty Bell Restaurant, 1313 W. Broad, owned and managed by Bill. The prolific, plant-filled front by windows open to a large dining room with colonial chandeliers and a wood burning stove originally made in Quakertown during the 1800's. Hundreds of

collectible plates, bowls and kitchen artifacts line the wallpapered and paneled walls. Candles in the white frilly curtained windows complement the motif.

Downstairs the visitor is treated to an old-fashioned delight, a replica of a 19th century general store, most of which is Bill's personal collection. His hobby began quite innocently when he went to an auction and picked up a wooden counter for eight dollars. He's been collecting ever since.

The 15 by 30-foot store features antique toys, dry goods, clothing, and even a post office. Mason jars, mid 19th century, and bottles from a now defunct Quakertown brewery are displayed in the grocery department. The store is open during restaurant hours. There is no admission charge, however, any donations go directly to the historical society.

A stack of brochures describing Colonial Quakertown's Walking Tour are available in the store. There are 35 places listed. Bill feels eventually the area will be designated by the planning commission as an historic zone. "As more new people come into the area, more of them want the historic zoning. It's the younger generation really pushing the thing forward."

Let's visit three of the sites. Just behind the restaurant at 26 N. Main is Quakertown's "jewel," the three-story fieldstone Burgess Foulke House. It was built in 1812 by Edward Foulke and home of the first burgess of Quakertown. By the 1970's, the house, situated on Route 309 and surrounded by stores and gas stations, was scheduled to be demolished for a parking lot.

Bill and the remaining eight members of the recently formed historical society decided to act. Encouraged by a petition signed by 300 residents plus loans from local banks, they planned to move the house.

It was hoisted on iron beams that ran through knocked out spaces where the basement windows used to be. Three trucks using pulleys and cables pulled the 350-ton home which rolled behind on a 58-wheel, steel beam flat carriage. It took two and a half days that July, 1974 as the caravan literally inched along the six block distance to its present location.

The society worked throughout the summer. General remodeling was done by volunteer craftsmen while carpentry and masonry students from Upper Bucks Vo-Tech School removed an upper bathroom and constructed the front steps. Curtains and braided rugs were handmade by society members. The house opened in September with restoration continuing. The four fireplaces were restored to working condition, the chimney repaired, and a new roof was installed.

The home is open on weekend afternoons May through September or by special arrangement. In addition, the society opens the house for Christmas tours. The festive greens, red bows, and lit fireplaces offer a welcoming look at a house of yesteryear.

Restoration costs money. As a fundraiser, the society sponsors the Quakertown Market Day and Festival, scheduled annually for the second weekend in August. Originally advertised as an Arts and Crafts Fair 14 years ago, continued expansion has necessitated the name change.

Continuing our tour, we return to Broad Street to Liberty Hall built in 1742 and the Walking Tour lists it as the oldest house of all the Historic Places. Restoration has been proceeding for the past three years and, hopefully, will be finished within another year when it will be opened for tours.

Verbal accounts passed down through generations of Quakertown residents have attested the Liberty Bell was hidden in this very home during its removal from Philadelphia to Allentown in 1777. It is speculated that the bell, along with several others, were removed secretly from the State House Tower during the evening and hidden in the farmers' empty carts as they headed north to Allentown. It is also believed that John Jacob Mickley, driver of the wagon, also stayed in Quakertown just across the corner at the Red Lion Hotel.

The inn again achieved rather dubious prominence in 1800 when it was intended to be the site of an execution – the hanging of rebel John Fries.

President Adams, in an attempt to raise money for a potential war with France, authorized a property tax based on the assessed value of houses and slaves. Since Pennsylvania was essentially a free state, the tax fell on property.

A home was assessed by counting windows. However, the assessors were met in Bucks County with irate housewives who not only beat them with broom sticks but also stood in their upper windows and poured hot water over them as they stood below counting.

John Fries, a 50-year-old father of 10 and very popular auctioneer, spearheaded the revolt as he influenced the normally peaceful Pennsylvania Germans with cries of “Damn de President, damn de Congress, damn de Arischdokratz.”

Escalation continued until Fries, fearful he had passed the bounds of the Sedition Act, attempted to apologize. It was too late. He was arrested for treason and sentenced to die. Evidently a large crowd was expected for the gallows were built on the main road, the Red Lion Inn crossroads. Two days before the execution, Fries was pardoned. Labeled a hero, he returned to Bucks County. Little is known about the remainder of his life.

Rebellion surfaced again in Quakertown in the mid 1800’s when Richard Moore, a local potter, operated the last important underground railroad station in Bucks County. The idea of slavery had long been repugnant to the Quaker and German pacifists. As early as 1774, Quakers who owned slaves were excluded from monthly meetings. This attitude paved the way for passage of the Pennsylvania Land Act in 1789, the first abolition law ratified by a state legislature.

Moore’s home was a haven for the fleeing slaves. He, as well as his friends and neighbors, employed many who wished to go no further. Others were often hidden in wagons and sent to sympathetic Friends’ homes along the way to Canada. After aiding slaves for numerous years, Moore began keeping a record. The final count showed he helped 600 to escape.

Interest in Moore revived in 1980 when Lyle Rosenberger, Professor of History at Bucks County Community College, began excavating the former pottery, the third site on our tour. Forgotten for nearly 100 years, Moore’s shop at one time was the most prosperous of three potteries in the area.

Expecting to find only common items such as jugs and bowls, Rosenberger and his students gave unearthened over 6,000 items of which more than two dozen are museum quality. One of the most significant finds is a decorated octagonal dish dated 1794.

At this point the basement floor and stone foundation walls of the drying shed have been unearthened five and a half feet below ground level. While the kiln itself has not been uncovered, stones from its walls have been found. Rosenberger intends to nominate the site to the National Register.

At the turn of the 19th century, Quakertown was a self-contained community. Main Street was the center of growth while Broad was simply known as the “thicket.” The advent of the railroad in the 1850’s changed that. Cottage industries gave way to the Quakertown Stove Works, the Durner Organ Factory, and one of the largest harness works in the country.

The Red Lion Inn, “a large and convenient house and suitable for the reception of travelers and a public house of entertainment” now had the grand total of fourteen beds.

But the most important borough industry from the Civil War to the 1940’s was cigar and box making, Tobacco, grown mainly in Lancaster County, was shipped to Quakertown by rail. From there it was delivered to the factories by horse and wagon. During the peak of production, 30 factories existed. Demand died when the machine-made cigars became available. Many of the empty factories gave way to clothing and textile manufacturing.

This town and surrounding area is a factory outlet bonanza. One of the early factories was the Eagle Silk Company. Other clothing manufacturers such as the Quakertown Shirt Factory followed. It was inevitable that the outlet store would soon appear.

One of the first outlets was the Corner House Plaza which sold women’s clothes in a small, corner Quakertown house. Since then, it’s moved to a modern, multibuilding complex on Route 663. Villager, Ship and Shore sportswear and men’s clothes such as Pierre Cardin, Eagle, Shiaparelli are available. Since many of the clothes continue to be manufactured in Quakertown, savings of 50 to 75% are common.

One of the more prestigious outlets is David Crystal, Main and Juniper. Both factory and outlet were located originally in Quakertown but later moved to Reading, Pennsylvania. However, area following was so strong that while the factory remains in Reading, the outlet has returned home to Quakertown. The store is open four times a year for special sales only.

Outlets run the gamut. Interested in kids’ clothes? Try the Kids Stop, owned and operated by the manufacturer and located in the Trainer’s Corner Shopping Center. Prices are advertised as at least one third off and brands include Doe Spun, Calavash, and Diane Furstenberg.

Also, at Trainer's Corner is a mattress outlet and men's shop plus a fun hodge-podge of variety items called the Dollar Store Outlet.

Sears Roebuck makes its appearance with its surplus store in the Country Square Shopping Center. Prices are 20-50% off.

A unique combination is found at the Q-Mart, 201 Station Road, where an old-time farmer's market, flea market, and modern discounts are all under one roof. Open on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

If the idea of super fresh produce sounds appealing, try the Auckland Farm Market on Route 309. Produce is fresh from the farm – when in season. The atmosphere of an open-air market pervades as the bountiful fruits and vegetables are supplemented with flowers, plants, unbleached flour, brown rice, dried legumes, teas, and preserves.

Getting hungry by now? Fast food chains are numerous along Route 309. Those who are interested in a more leisurely meal can head north on 309 where Meyers, Sawbucks, Cloisters, and Benetz Inn are located. Sandwiches, platters, and tempting desserts are available at the Liberty Bell in Quakertown.

If there's still time, what a better way to end the day than with a drive in the country. Five miles east of Quakertown on Route 313 is Nockamixon State Park with over 5,000 glorious acres. Picnic tables, some with encompassing views of the seven-mile lake, are available year-round. Other activities include fishing, sailing, bicycle paths, and a large swimming pool open from Memorial to Labor Day.

Another intriguing and totally unexpected sight are the Rosicrucian pyramids at the Clymer estate, just a short distance from Weisel County Park, three miles east of Quakertown. Azalea and rose gardens surround the three pyramids built in 1905 by Dr. R. Swinburne Clymer. Red and white roses are planted in memory of deceased members of the Rosicrucian order.

Yes, Quakertown is filled with surprises. From the nostalgia evoked by the rows of 19th century homes, fascinating with their columned porches, gables, and towers, to the modern bustle of the shops and outlets, Quakertown continues its march through time. Who knows what events the Red Lion will witness during the next 200 years?

History Of Wallace Willard Keller Post No. 242

American Legion

Quakertown, Pennsylvania

By Leon R. Lewis

1972

It was a little back room on the second floor of the old Wiedner building, above what was the original 5 & 10 cent store in Quakertown, owned and operated by Howard B. Sine, that this American Legion Post came into being on August 27, 1919.

There, in that meagerly furnished room, with but a few chairs, a desk, and a pot-bellied stove, a small group of veterans of World War I met to organize with Joseph Cavanaugh as temporary chairman.

After several meetings and many evening visits to veterans throughout this area, a sufficient number of men were enrolled to apply for an American Legion charter.

The Department of Pennsylvania, in granting the charter, assigned the number 242 to the Quakertown Post. Then came the question of an appropriate name for the Post. From the many suggestions this one was agreed upon, that it should be named after the first man to be killed in action in France.

From the records it was learned that it was Pvt. Wallace Willard Keller, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Keller, of Main Street, Quakertown, hence the adoption of the name Wallace Willard Keller for Post 242, American Legion of the Department of Pennsylvania.

Twenty-two men signed as charter members.

With membership on the increase, the Legion was obliged to look for larger quarters and a more suitable meeting place. Permission was granted to use the Masonic Hall on the 3rd floor of what is now the Quakertown Free Press Building. Our next move was to the building now occupied by the New York Store. From there we moved to the second floor of the Hinkle & Biehn Building. At the time our main source of income was from the sale of newspapers. The townspeople gave us considerable support and eventually the fund grew to a sizable amount.

The old oyster shell mill on Mill Street was purchased to store newspapers and eventually we remodeled the building for meeting quarters. This was in 1930 and it provided a kitchen, meeting room, and storage.

A Bugle and Drum Corps was formed and participated in parades throughout the area.

World War II came on and members of the Post became active in Civil Defense and other means of furthering the end of the War. In 1945, as the War's end was nearing, it was decided to start a fund-raising campaign to erect a new home. A campaign to canvas the town proved very successful. Land was purchased at the location of 14th Street & Park Avenue, our present home. Ground was broken in the fall of 1949 and in July 1950 the new building was dedicated. The old building on Mill Street was sold to the Borough and is now the location of the swimming pool. Throughout the years the post raised funds by conducting carnivals, flag sales, and turkey dinners.

In 1963 the 1st floor of the building was leased to Bucks County for use as a library. Our quarters were moved to the basement and all our activities were conducted there.

In 1969 the building was purchased by the Y.M.C.A. with final settlement being made in July 1970. The Y.M.C.A. permitted us to meet here until other quarters were located.

In January, 1971, we set up a meeting place at the Red Lion Hotel. We remained there until July 1972. From July 1972 until the present time our meetings are being conducted at Twin Gables.

In April 1971 a parcel of land was purchased from Charles E. Foulke, Sr. located on East Broad Street in the 3rd ward. It was decided to erect a new post home.

Ground was broken in May 1972 for our new home. Since funds were limited, it was decided to have a builder erect a shell with the finish work to be done by the members.

Such then is the progress and growth of Wallace Willard Keller Post 242. Now 53 years old.

Witch Ball

The witch ball probably originated in the 17th century, in the European countries such as England, France, and some of the Celtic countries. They were made by gaffers at the end of the day, when the production glass had been made. Small pots of left-over glass were often used by the glass blowers to make trinkets for their sweethearts. There are no glass catalogues that we have reference to which depict the witch ball as an item for sale to the public. Most often they were sold at fairs, or fests, if not given as a token.

Often times, herbs, hair, yarn, or small bits of feathers were put inside as they were blown to protect their owner. If one was lucky enough to have one ball, it went into your home. This was hung in a front window so that a witch who would want to inhabit your house, would see her own reflection in the window and assume that it was another witch. Not wanting two spirits dominating one roof, she would leave.

Many of the early glass houses were in New England. These produced some of the most beautiful, patterned witch balls. Some were swirls, some end-of-day, some coin-spot, some solid colors such as cobalt blue, amber, cranberry red, and emerald green.

Earlier witch balls had a rough pontil, and also a rather small opening, of course depending upon the diameter of the ball. Later, Victorian balls had smoothed, ground pontil and larger openings. While later, in time sequence, these also had a great variety of patterns and colors.

It is thought that the witch ball had its origins in the "salt ball," a ball of glass suspended at the fireplace. From that form, the neck lengthened a bit, the hold grew smaller, and the next evolution had a rather large ball with a narrow neck that could and often was hung in a barn to ward evil spirits and disease away from the animals.

Finally, the neck was eliminated, and the hole enlarged, and the witch ball as we know it today evolved. Regardless of the validity of the superstition, it is most interesting to note that as with most glass curses, (broken mirrors etc.) this form of folk art has persisted from the 1600's. A painting by Van dermer shows the reflection of a witch ball in a mirror. It was painted in the early 1700's. Other forms of the witch ball that are more familiar to some may be the boat floats, which do not have an open hole; and the lightning ball which stood on many barns to ultimately break if it was struck by the fire. Glass target balls also may be familiar to some before clay balls became popular.

None of these, however, can boast the magical history of the "witch ball" and its evolution...wherever that might be.