



Historic QUAKERTOWN

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July 2020 Newsletter

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

As we consider the events of the past four months, we are reminded of the line adapted from the poem “*To A Mouse*” by Robert Burns – “The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry.” In one way or another we can all relate. And, so it is with the Quakertown Historical Society. Needless to say, all Society activity has been on hold.

We were hoping to have a Membership Meeting sometime in June and were looking forward to the speaker we had lined up to be followed by another Membership Meeting sometime in August with another fine speaker. Obviously, the June meeting will not take place and the August meeting is somewhat in doubt. At this point we are still planning on having our Annual Meeting sometime in September. We will keep you informed.

BURGESS FOULKE HOUSE, LIBERTY HALL & THE MUSEUM TOURS

We hope to, at some point this summer, offer, by appointment, tours to all three sites that are under the auspices of the Historical Society. The tour generally takes about 1 ½ hours and can be self-guided or guided by one of our Board Members. 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 and schedule it once current restrictions are lifted.

SOCIAL MEDIA

We have added a new group on Facebook called Quakertown Memories. In this group everyone is encouraged to share memories, photos, or even just ask a question. We want to hear from you!!

YOUR SUGGESTIONS

Are there any particular speakers or topics you would like to see as part of a membership meeting? Do you have any suggestions on how the Society can raise funds? Would you like to become more involved? Do you know of someone that would like to become a member? We would like to hear from you. It is, after all, your Quakertown Historical Society. Contact us by sending an e-mail to quakertownhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or leave a phone message at 267-227-3864.

LOOKING BACK

The most important industry in Quakertown from the time of the Civil War into the early decades of the 20th Century was handmade cigars and cigar box making. It employed more people than any industry in the area.

Many of the older brick factories in Quakertown at one time were cigar or box factories. Not only Quakertown, but most of the outlying areas were involved in the business.

Much of the tobacco was grown in Lancaster County. Prior to the Civil War that county produced some 6 million pounds of tobacco. Production tapered off during the war years but returned with even more strength after, producing some 12 million pounds in 1871. Tobacco was also grown in Sellersville, Perkasie and the Richland areas.

In the Quakertown area alone, it was estimated there were some 30 cigar “factories” at the peak of the industry. Factories constituted some “Ma & Pa” operations done at home, around the kitchen table, as well as large factories.

Cigar making was done by hand, being a trade. Apprentices paid a fee of \$25.00 to learn and were not paid for the first three months of training. About a pound of filler tobacco was needed to make 100 cigars. A large leaf would wrap two to four cigars. An accomplished cigar maker could make about 500 cigars during a ten-hour day and was paid from \$5.00 to \$7.00 per thousand.

After the cigars were made and sorted by color, they were packed in boxes of fifty. After the “packer” had sorted and packed the cigars, they were put in a press overnight. The next day they were removed and banded.

Until just after World War I, cigar making had more employees than any other local industry. But with the advent of machine-made cigars, much of the home industry disappeared, Cigar box manufacturers were the last remnants of a once powerful industry, closing in the 1940’s.

Quakertown Cigar Factories in the Early 1900’s

By Bill Muehlhauser

November 1970

Jacob Boltz Company (Boltz & Clymer) This company conducted a factory at Perkasie and in Quakertown where they were located at 104 S. Front Street in a factory which had been built by Messrs. Ozias and Thomas, and Milton H. Biehn, the contractor. The last manufacturer of cigars in this building was Charles A. Binkley who discontinued about 1950. After that time the building had several different owners who made dresses, and at the present time it is owned by The Great Valley Mills, Inc. a company which grinds different kinds of flour, and they also have a sizable mail order business selling various meat products. (2020 update – the building has been converted into apartments)

Blanco Cigar Company This company occupied a factory on North Fourth Street which had been built by the local Fire Company. This building has been converted into a church and is presently used for that purpose. (2020 update – the building no longer exists)

Theobold & Oppenheimer Company This company was located at Belmont Avenue and Erie Avenue in a factory which had been built by the Belmont Realty of Quakertown. This building is presently owned by John L. Renninger, a clothing manufacturer. (2020 update – the building is now being used for storage)

Amos Kern This company had a factory on East Broad Street between Belmont Avenue and Hellertown Avenue and was operating before 1900. This building had various tenants later; David Heist with his pool room; William Boyer, the bootblack; Eng Chang with his Chinese laundry. David Neidig also occupied the basement at one time with his restaurant before building his new place, now occupied by the Quakertown Moose Lodge. The building also had some apartments on the upper floors but was finally purchased by the Moose Lodge who razed the building and put in a parking lot.

Jarrett & Steinhauer This company operated a comparatively small factory on South Main Street in a building next to the Dengler Metal Shop. This building has since been converted into a private residence.

Marshall Brothers (Graham & Ernst) This company was located on New Street in a building, one end of which had four or five semi-detached dwellings, and the other contained the factory. The building had been built by the Belmont Realty Company and was later occupied by the H.B. Grauley Company. At present the dwellings are individually owned, and the factory is owned by the R.M. Taylor Company, a manufacturer of furs and fur coats. (2020 update – the building is now being converted into apartments)

General Cigar Factory This factory was also built by the Belmont Realty Company and was located at Belmont Avenue and Erie Avenue. It is presently owned by a private individual and tenanted by a company operating a dye works. (2020 update- the building is being used by Lepko Finishing)

Henry H. Ruth Mr. Ruth operated a small factory, individually owned and located in the rear of property situated at 33 N. Hellertown Avenue in Quakertown. (2020 update – the building no longer exists)

Samuel Schoup Mr. Schoup operated a small factory which was individually owned and located in the rear of a lot adjoining the Jacob Gerhart store property at Ninth & Juniper Streets. Later he moved to a building located in the rear of a lot on Eighth Street. Both these buildings have since been converted into private dwellings.

L. Scholl Company This company was really owned by William Scholl who operated his factory in a building on East Broad Street between Belmont Avenue and Hellertown Avenue, where he also conducted a cigar store. The business was purchased by A.F. Muelhauser, and later the property was converted into apartments, and what had been the cigar store is now occupied by William Kollo's Barber Shop. (2020 update – converted into a private dwelling)

A.F. Muelhauser Sometime after purchasing the Scholl business, moved same to Third & West Broad Streets where he had erected a new building, containing a residence, store and factory. This building is presently owned by his son, William W. Muehlhauser. The factory, however, had been moved to North Third Street where he had erected a factory building, which has since been converted into several apartments and warehouse facilities and is presently owned by Dimmig Electrical Appliances, Inc. (2020 update – the building no longer exists)

Smeal & Stoudt This company occupied a privately owned building located at Franklin Street and Hellertown Avenue, and had four or five semi-detached dwellings at one end, and the factory at the other end. Entire building has since been converted into apartments.

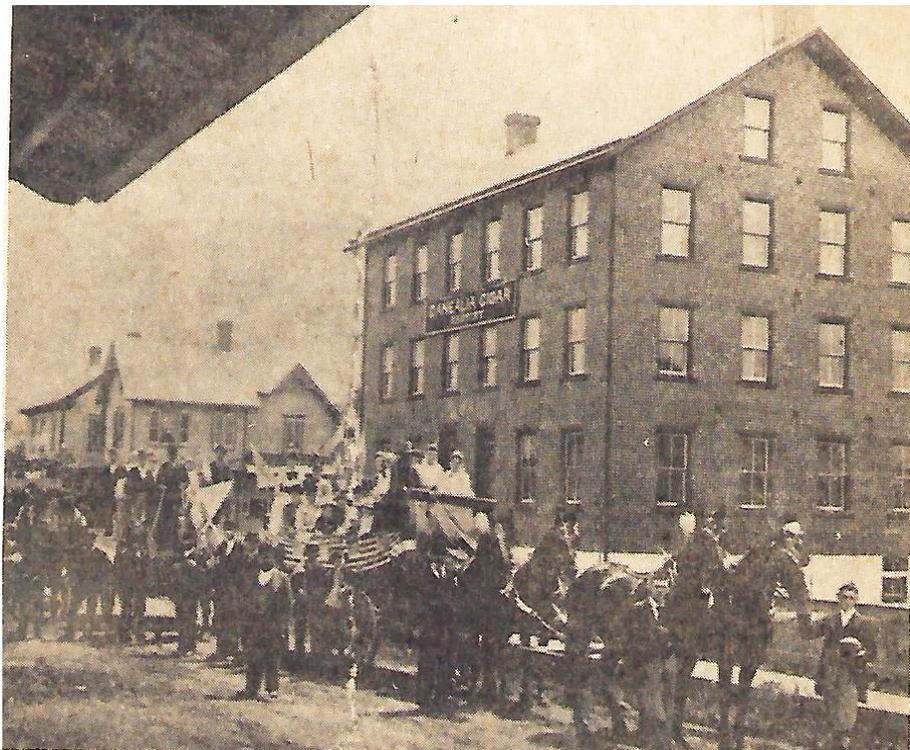
William Stoudt & Son This company operated a cigar box factory in a privately owned building situated along the alley in the rear of the Smeal & Stoudt factory. This building has since been converted into apartments.

Roig & Lansford This company also operated in Perkasio, and their Quakertown factory originally had been located at Fifth & Juniper Streets in what was known as “Saylor’s Hall.” That building has since been razed and the Bell Telephone Company erected a new building on the site. Mr. Wilson K. George, along with some local merchants, promoted the building of a new factory building for the company on Fifth Street. This building is now owned by the Eagle-Freedman-Roedelheim Company, shirt manufacturers. (2020 update – it has been converted into office space)

H. Sommer Company This company had a factory at Tenth & Juniper Streets, which is presently owned by the Imrod Clothing Company, manufacturers of men’s clothing. (2020 update – building no longer exists)

William Suelke Mr. Suelke operated a factory in a building located at South Front Street & Park Avenue and was later purchased by Suelke and Bedford. Ferdinand Sommer, formerly a partner of H. Sommer company, also conducted an individually owned factory at this location for some time. The building is presently owned by K & L Company and being used for warehouse purposes.(2020 update – the building has been converted into apartments)

J. Vetterlein & Company This company was located in a building on West Broad Street which had been built by the West End Improvement Company, and is now owned by the Allegheny Ribbon Mills (2020 update – the building is now being converted into apartments)



Former Dengler Cigar Factory at the corner of Park Avenue & Front Street