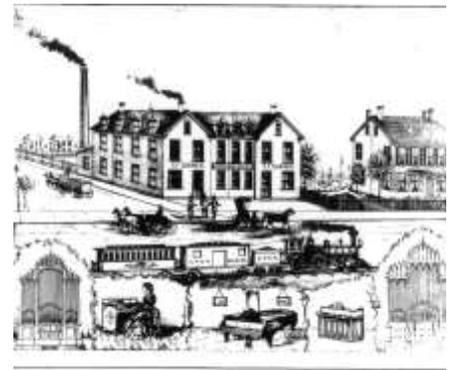




Historic QUAKERTOWN

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July 2022 Newsletter

Greetings from the Quakertown Historical Society! In this edition, we are reprinting a supplement found in the Free Press in September 1980 highlighting individuals that impacted the community in special ways. Hope you enjoy it.

On September 24th we will be hosting a family friendly “Tea on the Titanic” fundraiser. Tickets include tea, tea sandwiches, photo, and much more! Tickets are \$65 and go on sale on our website September 6th at 10am.

100 Years of People Making Our Town Excerpts taken from the Free Press Supplement September 1980

William G. Dietz

The local bakery was a welcome addition to any community of the late 1800's. Bread was a staple food, served at every meal. The advent of a quality bakery released the homemaker from the responsibility of bread-making that was a seemingly endless chore in the large families of that time.

The baker offered fresh breads, rolls, cakes, and pastries at the bakery, local shops, or delivered to the home.

William Gottlieb Dietz was a prominent local baker. He was born in Baden, Germany in 1841 and came to the United States when he was 11 years old.

In 1876, Dietz settled here in Quakertown with his wife Philopena. They ran a bakery for many years where Sine's Five and Ten is now located, on West Broad Street. Through hard work and the combined efforts of the Dietz's and their many children, the family was able to build up a large and profitable business.

It was known as the best bakery between Allentown and Philadelphia, quite a reputation for that time.

A son, William G., conducted the business in later years.

William Senior was one of the organizers of Bethel Evangelical Church, now known as Bethel Methodist on South Eighth Street.

The Dietz family resided at Eighth and Juniper Streets for many years, in what is now the Richard Wisneski home.

Charles Frederick Durner

Charles Frederick Durner was born in Wurtemberg, Germany, in 1838. At 14, he began a five-year apprenticeship with his father to learn the family trade of organ-building. When the Durner family emigrated to America in 1859, they set up a small shop in Zion Hill. But since organ building was considered a waste of time in this part of the country, they encountered opposition and were not popular.

Charles persevered, though, and in 1861 moved to a two-story factory in Quakertown. In a short time, he was considered a “top quality organ builder.”

Durner received highest honors for an organ of his construction at the 1876 Centennial Exposition, and First Premium honors in the 1878 State Fair. Soon, his business had expanded to range all over eastern Pennsylvania and to other states.

It has been written that “the Durner organ excelled other makes in tone and workmanship, and before the end of the 19th century the organ factory at Quakertown was the largest, best equipped in the State.”

A Durner organ, made in 1870, is presently on view at the Mercer Museum in Doylestown.

The Durner factory at Front and Juniper Streets began with foot-power, then acquired horsepower, and finally moved to a ten-horsepower and then 20-horsepower engine to power the factory's tools. The large building that still stands, though renovated as the B & O Market, housed the equipment to construct church, chapel, and other parlor organs that are even now in use at various churches and schools in the surrounding area.

In 1862, Charles F. Durner married Mary Spyker. They had three children, Charles E. born in 1863, Anna E., a schoolteacher in Quakertown, and Mary C.

Charles E. Durner joined his father's business, taking over at his father's death in 1914, and continuing until his own death in 1932.

Jonas S. Harley

Jonas S. Harley, a successful businessman and prominent citizen, has often been called "Quakertown's Millionaire."

Harley was born in 1857 and began harness making at 18 years. In 1878 he came to Quakertown and started the Quaker City Harness Company in a small building near the Red Lion Inn, where he made horse harnesses and fly nets.

He moved to a new site in 1881, purchasing the Continental Hotel at the corner of Main and Juniper Streets. It was in 1886 that he tore down that structure and built a large new factory on the same location. The new building was constructed of brick, three stories high, 140 feet by 60 feet, with basement windows that rose above ground level.

Harley was a director of the Quakertown National Bank, and in 1904 helped to organize the Quakertown Trust Company, serving as its first president until his death.

In 1886, he married Helen Sargeant Baylies of Baltimore. Their daughter Irene later named J. Howard Ozias an employee in the harness factory.

In 1917, Harley became involved in his other activities, such as his earnest Liberty Bond efforts, and he turned the responsibility of the harness factory over to Ozias.

The Quaker City Harness Company at one time employed over 200 men, a remarkable number for the size of the town. But progress, in the form of automobiles and other mechanized means of transportation, spelled the end of the horse and carriage days and the demise of such manufacturing firms as this. The building still stands at Main and Juniper, a tribute to its fine construction if nothing else.

Jonas S. Harley died the day after Christmas in 1931, after a lengthy illness. He left an estate estimated at one million dollars.

Aaron & Frank Ball

Aaron Ball & Sons was once known as the largest furniture and undertaking establishment in Bucks County.

Aaron Ball was born, a birthright Quaker, in Richland Township in 1826. He was educated in the Friend's School and later apprenticed to his father to learn the cabinetmaking business in the Old Orphan's School block on South Main Street. The move to Broad Street was accomplished in 1879, and in 1884 Aaron started up the business in the new building at No. 322 built by Evan H. Strong. By this time, he was also engaged in selling furniture.

Ball married Rebecca Strawn. Their sons Joel and Frank joined their father in the furniture and undertaking business in 1887. Later, Frank turned the furniture portion of the firm over to Joel and continued alone with the undertaking establishment until he retired around 1928.

Aaron lived until 1909. He was a member of the borough council and treasurer of the Union Cemetery. Aaron also served as treasurer of the Richland Library for 30 years.

Frank Ball was well-known as the founder of Chautauqua, a summer educational and social activity. He also served as president of the movement in Quakertown.

He was a student of natural history and left a collection and an extensive library on that subject. In addition, Frank was actively involved in a number of civic associations and was a school director and board president. Frank died in 1929.

Anthony Goldsmith

Anthony Goldsmith, a captain in the Civil War and a jeweler by trade, settled in Quakertown in 1866. For a short time, Goldsmith had a shop in the side yard of 730 W. Broad St. This shop, relates his granddaughter, is now “across the street as a wash shed.”

Goldsmith married Mary Stryker from outside of Trumbauersville, of the Stryker family who was involved in the Christopher Dock School in Lansdale.

From 1874 to 1886, Goldsmith ran a store and residence on Tenth Street in a building across the street from St. John’s Lutheran Church and next to the old schoolhouse that is presently Bingham Hall.

In 1886, the store was relocated at 242-244 W. Broad Street near Sine’s Five & Ten. The business continued at that location until 1976, when it was sold.

Anthony Goldsmith died in 1899, after which his son William ran the establishment. William’s daughter Gladys, now Mrs. Russell Allison, continued the business for its remaining years.

“We were 110 years in the business,” she boasts. “I wanted to make it one hundred, and I did a bit better.”

Mr. & Mrs. Allison live at 730 W. Broad Street and have many fine, crisp memories of Quakertown in its formative years.

Edward W. and William E. Knauss

The Knauss meat processing and packing company was begun by Edward W. Knauss in 1902. Edward, born in 1870, had a retail store at No. 103 E. Broad St. known as the People’s Meat Market. The abattoir, meat packing and wholesale house was located on East Broad Street near the borough limits.

Edward was also a director of the Best Maid Silk Hosiery Company and at one time director of the Saucon Valley Trust Co. in Hellertown. He married Ella M. Saylor and they had three children: William E., Mae (Mrs. Paul Deaterly), and Martha (Mrs. Ray Peters).

William E. Knauss was born in 1896 and attended Quakertown public schools. He was graduated from Bethlehem Business College in 1912 and later attended Mercersburg Academy.

William entered his father’s business in 1916, and was given an interest in 1920, when E.W. Knauss and Son was formed. Four years later, William’s brother-in-law Ray Peters was admitted to the firm.

After several years of experimentation, William Knauss perfected a process for producing home-style curing on a commercial scale, this enabling the company to expand their production and open distribution outlets throughout southeastern Pennsylvania and handle the increased volume of business.

William was married in 1920 to Florence Tice and they had one son, Donald T., who took over the business at the sudden deaths of William, in 1949, and Raymond Peters in 1948.

William had an abiding interest in music and directed the Trinity Lutheran Church choir for ten years, and the St. John’s Lutheran Church choir for three years. He was a member of several popular male quartets.

He also served as director of the Quakertown National Bank from 1941 until his death and was a veteran of World War II. Through his interests, he was involved with various civic and fraternal organizations.

E. William Knauss, son of Donald and Ruth (Willauer) Knauss, is now associated with his father in the family business.

Tobias Hinkle/Milton A. Biehn/Harry Hinkel

Hinkel and Biehn was one of Quakertown’s most prominent firms, operating continuously from the late 1800’s until recent years.

Tobias Hinkel founded the business. He had learned the shoemaking trade with Jacob Fellman and made boots in his spare time on his farm.

In 1859, he set himself up in Bunker Hill, but moved to Quakertown where, in 1870, he had his first store on Front Street. The business was then moved from Front to West Broad Street around 1873. In 1909, when larger quarters were felt to be necessary, the building was jacked up and removed from the site on soaped 14-inch beams drawn by horses and placed on Branch Street. A new structure was then built, and still stands.

Tobias Hinkel took his brother-in-law into partnership around. Milton A. Biehn was employed by Hinkel for one year between 1873 and 1874. He then left for Philadelphia but returned to resume the partnership in 1885. Biehn has been called “an active businessman familiar with all branches of business.”

Biehn retired in 1902, with no Biehns continuing, although the name was retained. Tobias Hinkel died in 1899.

Harry Hinkel, son of Tobias and his wife Maria Biehn, was born in 1863. He took over the business from the two original partners, and later passed it on to his son, Tobias. Harry was an amateur composer, as well as a violinist and orchestra director. He died in 1932.

John Nicholas

John Nicholas was the owner of the Nicholas Buggy and Carriage Co., which was located on the corner of Juniper Street and Green (now 11th) Street.

He is credited with inventing a gas-powered, four-wheeled car in 1902. This early automobile is now in the possession of the Quakertown Historical Society, stored in their renovated barn on North Main Street and brought out for display during fairs and bazaars. The society purchased the car from a descendant, for \$3500.00 in 1979.

The car has spoked wheels with narrow hard rubber tires and is sprung much as a buggy or carriage of that time would have been. The driver, with perhaps one passenger, sat on a red upholstered carriage seat over the enclosed motor and battery, and steered using a stick rather than a wheel.

No lights, a hand brake, and full visibility in all directions are characteristics of the 78-year-old machine. It looks very much like its predecessors, justifying the nickname "horseless carriage."

William Amey, president of the historical society, is pleased with their acquisition and feels that the Nicholas car is a valuable addition to the society's collection of Quakertown memorabilia.

Joseph S. Neidig

Joseph S. Neidig is remembered in Quakertown with deep affection by those who worked with him and by the many who benefitted by his efforts in the community.

As supervising principal of Quakertown Schools from 1924 until his death in 1958, Neidig was instrumental in the growth and development of the school district. During his tenure, two major building proposals became a reality: the junior-senior high on Seventh Street in 1929, and the new Quakertown Community Senior High School at 600 Park Ave. in 1956.

In 1958, the new elementary school building was dedicated as the Joseph S. Neidig School in his honor and "as a permanent tribute to his faithful service to his hometown and for the major part of his life."

Neidig was born in Quakertown in 1898 in Quakertown. He graduated from Quakertown High School in 1915, from Muhlenberg College in 1924, and in 1928 he was awarded his master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

As an educator and school administrator, he gained a reputation not only in Pennsylvania but-throughout national associations in the field of learning. His initiative and thoroughness were recognized by many, and he was frequently called upon as a consultant by state and national leaders in education.

Neidig taught educational administration and finance at Lehigh University on Saturdays. He served as president of the Bucks County Teachers Association, was the first president of the Philadelphia Area School Study Council, and from 1948 to 1950 he was a member of the executive council of the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA).

He participated in many state and national educational conventions both as a speaker and as a member of many committees.

He chaired the committee to develop the park of Quakertown as a living memorial to the community service men and women and served eight years as director of the annual appeal for the Quakertown Community Hospital.

In addition, Neidig was an active member of many fraternal and civic organizations, serving in a number of capacities and receiving many honors.

Manassah Biehn Fellman

One of Quakertown's merchants at the time the Free Press began publication was Manassah Biehn Fellman, proprietor of Fellman's General Store on Main Street.

Fellman, born in Richland Township in 1833, began at a young age to outfit himself to enter the mercantile business. He clerked for four years for Sam Scheetz, a merchant in Bunker Hill. After that, he spent another three years working with his uncle, Charles Fellman, in his store in Richlandtown.

In 1860 he owned and operated a store in Bunker Hill. This property he had obtained by using borrowed capital. He continued there until 1866, at which time he relocated in Quakertown at the Main Street site.

Old histories of the early 1900's write Manassah B. Fellman as "one of the substantial merchants of the county...and most successful."

In 1859, Fellman married Ellamande Headman, and they had three surviving children.

Fellman's General Store was later owned by A.G. Moyer. The old building still stands on South Main Street and is used for residences.

Adolph & Mamie Klein

Klein's Variety Store at 116 E. Broad Street was begun in 1904 by Adolph and Mamie Klein. It continues to this day, a well-stocked and well-run establishment offering just about everything that a general merchandise store could offer – in the 1980's or the 1910's.

Old stock from many years past rests on laden shelves with contemporary items. For this reason, residents will say, "If you can't find it at Klein's, you probably won't find it anywhere."

When Mr. Klein died in 1940, Mrs. Klein continued the store. After her death in 1963, the responsibility passed to their daughter, Ethel Klein Lippman, who runs the establishment at the present time.

Mrs. Lippman remembers when the store was laid out differently than it is now, with "a sort of 'L' shape to the main room."

"There was a Chinese laundry for a time in the back," she also related, "until about 1930."

"We sell all kinds of things," she said. "We call it a house furnishings store."

Klein's Variety Store will celebrate 76 years of continuous business in Quakertown in October of this year.

Henry Sommer

Quakertown was the home of many cigar factories during the 1800's. Cigar making was a popular and profitable enterprise in this area at the time since the operations were often carried on as cottage industries with families doing the work within their own homes.

One of the foremost cigar manufacturers was Henry Sommer, who built a business that grew to include 113 of these family-style factories at its peak. In fact, Sommer was a pioneer in the cigar-making industry and the first one to operate a large factory in Quakertown. This factory was located at Tenth and Juniper Streets.

Sommer was born in Baden, Germany in 1837. He came to Pennsylvania in 1859 and worked for another company before the Civil War. In 1860, with a capital of only \$15, he began cigar making. He served in both the army and the marines during the war and began again in cigar production in 1867.

In 1885 the factory burned with great loss, but Sommer rebuilt. As of 1887 records, the largest annual production was 10,500.00 cigars.

The family-owned business remained active for a total of 70 years. In 1906, Henry's sons Edmund and Ferdinand took over. Then, in 1910, Henry died, and Ferdinand purchased Edmund's share. Ferdinand bought the "El Paxo" name in 1919, producing this brand until 1937, when the name and company was sold.

Richard E. Strayer

Richard E. Strayer, who served as superintendent of Quakertown Community Schools from 1962 until 1971, also gave many more hours to this town's youth than his position required.

Strayer served as assistant principal beginning in 1956. In 1958, he was appointed principal, and he took over duties of superintendent in 1962.

Previous to his posts within the administration, he had taught science and physical education in the district starting in 1939.

Nineteen years of service as a rifle coach, 12 as the advisor to the sophomore class, and five as a junior high basketball coach gave Strayer an opportunity for very close association with the students. He devoted himself in addition to such tasks as the organization and supervision of the senior class trip to Washington D.C., which he did for 13 years.

Recreation and the young seem to have been Strayer's chief interests.

He worked for the Works Progress Administration in Quakertown during the Depression, in the recreation program. He played an important role in the planning and creation of Memorial Park, and administered the summer recreation program for 21 years and the winter program for 18 years.

"Dedicated, loyal, honest," are some of the adjectives used by his admirers to describe this man who "worked unceasingly for the young in Upper Bucks."

In 1971, just a few days before his death, the new junior high building on Ninth Street was dedicated, named for this teacher and administrator who had given so much to his town and its youth.

Dr. Raymond D. Tice

The family doctor is always an important figure in any community, and Quakertown has had more than its share of outstanding general practitioners and specialists. Dr. Raymond Tice comes immediately to mind as one of the town's foremost physicians, his dedication to the inhabitants and the field of medicine having spanned 43 years.

Raymond D. Tice was born in 1899 in Quakertown, attended Quakertown High School, Bucknell, and later Jefferson Medical College, from which he graduated with his M.D. in 1922. He interned at Allentown Hospital for one year before opening a practice in September 1923 at his home at Third and Juniper Streets.

During his student years, he married Miss Hazel Ruhl of Lewisburg. In 1922 their son Walter R. was born in Philadelphia.

Dr. Raymond Tice always felt that it was a benefit to be practicing in his hometown. He spoke German and Pennsylvania Dutch at a time when these were frequently the most common languages of many of his patients. He also had the advantage of knowing the customs and manners of these people he doctored, for his great-grandfather had settled in the area many years ago and the family has been here ever since.

Dr. Tice's dedication displayed itself in many ways. At one time, Tice drove patients who required hospitalization in his own car to Allentown Hospital, where he examined others while they were admitted and then drove any discharged patients back home to Quakertown. He completed this route each day of his practice for many years.

From 1923 to 1927 Dr. Tice was assistant surgeon at Grandview Memorial Hospital. He assisted the chief surgeon at Allentown Hospital until 1930, when he left to assist Dr. Delbert K. Santee, chief surgeon at Quakertown Community Hospital.

When the Emma Gehman Nursing Home (or Lying in Hospital, as it was also known) was the only place caring for convalescents and serious maternity cases, the Kiwanis Club, of which Dr. Tice was a charter member, started a movement to build a hospital. Land was donated by Sallie Thomas and the Kiwanis spearheaded a drive that included every organization in its aim to raise \$150,000. In 1930, the Quakertown Community Hospital was built.

Meantime, Dr. Tice had purchased the Gehman Home, located across the street from his home and office, and ran it with his mother as supervisor until the hospital opened. Later, the home became the Tice Clinic, offering 24-hour care and a permanent staff. The clinic continues.

For many years Dr. Raymond served as Bucks County Coroner, also as head of the Bucks County Health Department. During World War II he was medical director of the Upper Bucks Civil Defense which carried a great number of varied responsibilities which were ably carried out by Dr. Tice. He also was a member of both the Bucks County and Philadelphia medical societies and civic organizations. He served as company physician to several large businesses in the area, and as chief of the Pennsylvania Health Clinic.

Dr. Willard H. Tice, Dr. Raymond's brother, joined the clinic in 1931. The clinic, which is run as a general practice, continues today under the guidance of Dr. Raymond's son, Dr. Walter R. Tice.

Dr. Wilson S. Erdman

A leading Quakertown physician and surgeon in the early 1900's was Dr. Wilson S. Erdman.

Dr. Erdman was born in Limeport, Lehigh County in 1867. He was educated in the Quakertown schools, the Pennsylvania State Normal School at West Chester, as it then was called, and the Medico Chirurgical College in Philadelphia. He graduated with the degree of Doctor of in 1893 and remained at the college for ten years before returning to practice in Quakertown.

Dr. Erdman was a member and active in a number of fraternal orders and civic groups. He served as a member of the Quakertown School Board and as Chief of Staff of the Quakertown Community Hospital. He was also a director of the West End Improvement Association.

In 1895, he married Mary Jane Johnson. They had one son, Johnson Stewart Erdman.

Dr. Joseph Thomas

Dr. Joseph Thomas was a prominent Quakertown citizen, director, and financier. He served as the first president of the Quakertown National Bank.

Thomas was born in New Britain in 1830. He left his parents farm at the age of 17, after having received a classical education, and taught school for five years. It was not until he was 23 that he decided to go into medicine for his career.

After graduation from the University of Pennsylvania, he set up practice in Applebachsville, where he continued in this endeavor until Civil War threatened. During the Civil War, he experienced military action and was injured in combat. He resigned his commission during his recuperation but served later as a field hospital surgeon.

As assessor for the Internal Revenue after the war, he sold his Applebachsville practice and moved to Quakertown in 1866. Here he began a practice with Dr. R.J. Linderman. They probably shared a lot of interests besides medicine and their practice, because they were together in the incorporation of the Quakertown Savings Bank in 1870. Because of the demands made on their time, the two sold the practice to Dr. Isaac Moyer in 1870.

Thomas was then able to devote himself more fully to his favored enterprises, one of which was the accumulation of land. Foreseeing the development of the area around the railroad, he became heavily involved there as well as elsewhere along Broad Street.

Dr. Thomas was an active Freemason and was one of the organizers of the Quakertown Masonic Lodge that was established in 1872.

In 1878 Thomas was elected to the state senate on the Republican ticket. One year before, the Quakertown National Bank was formed when the Quakertown Savings Bank was dissolved. He was elected president of the newly formed bank and held the post until his death in 1908.

In later years, Thomas also held interest in and positions on the boards of such institutions as the Bucks County Trust Co., the Quakertown Trust Co., and the Union Trust Co. of Philadelphia. He served as the superintendent of the Norristown State Hospital.

An amateur ornithologist and student of natural history, Thomas contributed several articles on the birds and animals of Bucks County for W.W. Davis' History of Bucks County.

Ella Reeve

A history of Quakertown's outstanding residents cannot be considered complete without including one of the world's foremost women.

Her real name was Ella Reeve, and she was born in Staten Island in 1862, the daughter of a druggist who fought in the Civil War. Her ancestors settled in America in the 1600's.

All this does not make her seem particularly unusual, for many of Quakertown's early citizens had similar backgrounds. But Ella Reeve was famous for her interest in causes that made her unpopular to some, a champion to others. She was a suffragette, fighting for women's right to vote, and a speaker for the uniting working men around the world. She was strongly and firmly against Hitler and any other force that sought to control or to enslave others.

Ella Reeve's uncle Dan Ware was an abolitionist and a stationmaster of the Underground Railroad. Perhaps it is from him that she inherited her sympathy for the oppressed of the world. She became a member of the National Executive Committee of the Communist Party and was active in many efforts for social reform. In her early days she was a writer, authoring exposes of such corrupt conditions as the Chicago stockyards of the early 1900's. It was there in Chicago that she was given the name of "Mother Bloor," for she went with a protector to gather information at the stockyards and assumed his name of "Bloor."

During the 30's, Mother Bloor lived in the Bush House Hotel. A newspaper clipping from the Free Press of 1937 tells of an upcoming reception to be held for this famous woman, noting that she "worked untiringly for the cause of labor, campaigned to the farthest stretches of the country to organize workers, and has been on more picket lines than any other woman in America."

She was closely associated with Eugene V. Debs, the United States labor leader who said of her, "Ella Reeve Bloor, brave, eloquent, and inspiring, is and inspiring, is a true champion of the working class."

To her family and her many dear, devoted friends, she was witty, sympathetic, with a warm and generous personality. An impressive woman, true to her convictions, she managed to maintain a gentle humor and merry look.

Ella Reeve died in 1951, after living for nearly 20 years in the Quakertown area. She had three children, a daughter who was a concert violinist and two sons. One of her boys took tractors to Russia after the

Revolution, in an effort to help the starving people build up their lives again. He was awarded a citation by Lenin.

With the birth of the women's movement, there is a resurgence of interest in this brave and mighty spokesperson for reform who lived in our midst for a short time. Whether one agrees with her causes or not, one must admire the strength and purpose of this woman who campaigned wholeheartedly for her beliefs.