



# Historic QUAKERTOWN

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## July 2021 Newsletter

The Board of Director's met on July 6, 2021, and at that time set the date and time of September 22, 2021 at 7:00 PM for the Annual Meeting. It will be held at McCool's Arts & Events Place at 10 S. Main Street, Quakertown, PA 18951. All are welcome to attend.

Also at the meeting, a fundraiser has been scheduled for September 11, 2021 at the Burgess Foulke House grounds. More about this in the next newsletter.

The Quakertown Historical Society has large amounts of memorabilia concerning the history of Quakertown. As we work our way through all the things on hand we are coming across essays and articles that relate to another time. The following article about Trainer's Restaurant is a perfect example.

For some of us, growing up included Trainer's and, as the article suggests, it was a very sad time when it was demolished. For others, they only know that there is currently a Trainer's Corner without any idea from which the name came.

If you have a particular memory that you would like to share, please send it to one of the above addresses.

We hope to share many more memories like this one in the months and years ahead. We hope you find this one enjoyable.

### **Trainer's Restaurant Had Rich History** By Keith Herbert, *The Morning Call*, July 16, 1995

The wrecking ball last week leveled what once was Trainer's Restaurant in Quakertown. But fond memories of good food and old friends continue to thrive in the hearts of the people who made Trainer's regionally know. "In its heyday, it was the place to go," said Mary Lou Sommers, who worked at the popular eatery in the late 1960s.



The building at Routes 309 and 663 was demolished to make way for a new shopping center. Those who worked and dined at Trainer's no longer have a structure or the familiar giant lobsters on the exterior to trigger memories. Seeing the bulldozers and dump trucks made people such as Sommers emotional. "It's quite sad to see such a landmark go," said Sommers, a waitress who lives in Spinnerstown. "I was very depressed by the whole thing."

The Trainer's Restaurant that most people recall ended in 1985. That's when Trainer's was sold to Seafood Shanty. However, the restaurant has a rich history, starting in the 1930s. "Well, they started out as a truck stand," said Emma Hartman, 66, of Quakertown, who worked at Trainer's on and off between 1953 and 1977. "They were noted for their hot roast beef sandwiches. It just grew in spirits. It was the best restaurant around not only because of the food but because of the prices, which was important back then," Hartman said.

Marguerite and Raymond Trainer bought a tiny truck stop on Old Route 309 in 1932. It was called the Red Diamond. There were two gas pumps and about 10 stools at a counter, plus a potbelly stove. The Trainer's daughter, Doris, was 5.

Doris Trainer Hilmer, now 68 and living in Coopersburg, explained: "We slept at the restaurant for a year before we moved into a rented home in Quakertown." The old highway and the new were on different sides of the Trainer's building. Route 309 as it's known today was not yet opened. "I used to skate down it," Hilmer recalled.

Hilmer said her family sold fruit and pumped gas. They drove to Philadelphia to buy cheap produce. Finally, they earned enough to have a dining room added. The restaurant became popular with truck drivers using Route 309, the main artery between Philadelphia and the Poconos. Hilmer said the truckers grew to like the home-cooked food and large portions.

The late 1950s was the restaurant's boom period. While the truckers were always welcome, the dining room allowed more upscale service. Celebrities dined at Trainer's, including actor Joseph Cotton and basketball great Wilt Chamberlain. "Bob Hope was in," said Hilmer, who worked as a manager until 1976. "He ordered a hot meatloaf sandwich and said it was the best he'd ever had."

The coffee shop, dining room and banquet hall together could serve as many as 900 customers at a time.

Fire struck in 1975. Ninety percent of the restaurant was destroyed by a blaze started by a torch as a worker removed paint from a wall. The restaurant reopened two years later. "I went up there and watched that roof cave in," said L. James Roberts, 50, of Quakertown, about the fire. "That was incredible."

Roberts, whose mother worked at Trainer's, said he has a menu that survived the fire unscathed. Included in the 112 offerings were a Royal Hamburger with cheese, bacon, onion and relish for 75 cents. Also included was a Trainer's Seafood Dinner for two, which came with a "huge" lobster in the center for \$28. "That was the genius of the place," Roberts said. They had a blue-collar menu. They wanted to make sure there was a price range that made everybody happy.

Hilmer said she turned her share of the business over to her brother Donald of Coopersburg in 1976. Demolition crews made her feel sentimental, "I have a lot of memories," Hilmer said. "I just feel like the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Trainer. They started a business that became popular and famous. I enjoyed my life there and the good memories. A lot of good people came through the doors," she said.

APPETIZERS		
Deviled Egg	Half Grapefruit, Marshmallows	Chilled Assorted Juices
Fresh Fruit Cup	Marinated Herring	Tropical Fresh Fruit Juices
Chopped Chicken Liver on Lettuce	Cottage Cheese with French Dressing	
SOUPS		
Cup, Turkey Rice Soup	Cup, Onion Soup, Souffler	Cup, Home-Made Clam Chowder
ENTREES		
Grilled Loin Lamb Chops on Toast	3.90	4.50
Broiled Fresh Carolina Shad, Lemon Butter	2.85	3.25
Fried Long Island Salt Oysters	1.45	2.35
Roast Cornish Game Hen, Wild Rice	3.40	4.00
Grilled Chopped Sirloin Steak, Fried Onion Rings	2.40	3.00
Broiled North Carolina Sand Hog, Crisp Bacon	3.85	4.45
Roast Prime Rib of Beef, Au Jus	1.45	4.25
Fried Half Spring Chicken (1-lb.) Filling, Giblet Gravy	2.25	2.85
Trainer's Meat Outlet, Supreme	2.65	3.25
Fried Deep Sea Scallops, Tartar Sauce	2.25	2.85
Fried New England Clams, Tartar Sauce	2.40	3.00
Roast Native Turkey, Filling, Giblet Gravy	2.40	3.00
Fried Butterflied Steaks, Tartar Sauce	2.60	3.20
Trainer's Deviled Crab, Supreme	2.00	2.60
Diced Venetian Cold-Meat, A La Dutch	2.85	3.45
Grilled Sirloin Steak, French Fried Onion Rings	4.65	5.25
Choice Cut Double Thick Sirloin Steak for Two	10.00	11.00
Broiled Half (3-lb.) Lobster, French Fried Potatoes, Creamed Cabbage	4.25	4.85
The above Entree prices include Vegetables and Coffee only		
VEGETABLES		
Garden Peas	Brussels Sprouts, Hollandaise	Whipped Potatoes
Stewed Corn	Buttered Garden Spinach	Honey-Suckle Filling
Barbecued Cabbage		Baked Idaho Potato
SALADS		
Tossed, French Dressing		Creamed Cabbage
DESSERTS		
Lover Cake	Vanilla Ice Cream, Chocolate Sauce	Ice Cream Sundae
Blueberry Pie	Georgia Popen Pie (10 1/2 Extra)	Chocolate Sundae
Rice Pudding	Fruit Jello, Unsweetened Cream	Cherry Cream Pie
Apricot Filling	Assorted French Pastry	Apricot Crumb Pie
Apple Crumb Pie	Apple Pops Cake	Fresh Fruit Compote
Chilled Cantaloupe		Chocolate Chiffon Pie
		Black Bottom Souffly Pie

The following essay was found in the Quakertown Historical Society archives. The date of the essay is unknown, and its accuracy has not been completely established but it is a wonderful tool describing how the Quakertown area developed.

## **The Quakers Town** **By Furman Miles**

In the old days, Quakertown could be considered as being in Lower Bucks. The original boundary of Bucks County (1683) was defined as beginning “at ye River Delaware at Pouquession creek, and so to take in the easterly side thereof, together with the townships of Southampton and Warminster, and thence backwards.” That indeterminate “backwards” extended to the Susquehanna and the present New York State line.

Before the settlers came, Quakertown was called the Manor of Richland. William Penn, probably the most democratic man alive in the 17th century, was by birth a member of the landed gentry and had no intention of abandoning his traditional lifestyle, and, perhaps as insurance for his old age, established a manor of approximately 10,000 acres in each 100,000 acre surveyed parcel of Pennsylvania. The Manor of Richland turned out to contain exactly 16,749 acres, but such was the accuracy of 17<sup>th</sup> century surveying. The soil was fertile, and the Indians had many farms there. The stands of timber were heavy and abounded with wildlife; wolves, bears and panthers. It was a rich land, and it was for this reason that it was given its name Richland. The woods and fields were also rich in rattlesnakes causing the early farmers to wrap their legs for protection against snake bite.

The first German settlers were so impressed that they called the area “Grooten Schwamb,” or Great Swamp. It wasn’t a swamp in the same sense as the Everglades or the Okefenokee, but there were many low spots where the water would collect, and large tracts required draining before they could be tilled. Tohickon and Swamp Creeks were rich with shad, and the salt licks along one creek, a magnet for wildlife, gave Licking Creek its name.

The Proprietor never built a house at Richland as he did at Pennsbury. His heirs, more interested in turning a fast pound than leading a baronial life, sold most of the land to investors (speculators), some of whom never left England. These in turn sold the land in smaller parcels to the people who were the first settlers. Springett and Griffith Jones each bought large portions of the Manor of Richland and were the principal sub-dividers.

The first white man came to Richland in about 1710, rather late by Bucks County standards. The singular honor was held by either Peter Lester or his son-in-law John Ball. They bought tracks from Griffith Jones at the same time and settled at approximately the same time. By 1712 the wilderness was further broken by the arrival of Abraham Griffith and George Phillips. All of the first settlers were Quakers; not typical Bucks County English Quakers who settled along the Delaware and slowly moved inland, but Welsh Quakers from the Byberry and Gwynedd meetings.

Other Quakers came and before long, in the best tradition of the Society of Friends, formed “ye Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with ye Indians.” The Indians continued to live along the creeks and, despite infecting the settlers with smallpox, relations with the Quakers remained harmonious. Religion played an important part in the life of the little community and a “particular meeting” that moved from house to house was established before 1721. A William Shaw donated land for the first meeting house in 1723. This structure was about one mile south of the present meeting house that was built in 1793. While the Richland Quakers were active, it was not until 1742 that a monthly meeting was established under the Abington Quarterly Meeting; the only meeting in Bucks County not under the Bucks Quarterly Meeting.

Richland became a political entity with its establishment as a township in 1719 and the municipal problems began to multiply. John Ball was appointed overseer of highways the same year, and, while there are no reports of a breakdown in law and order, Abraham Griffith was appointed constable in 1720.

The population grew and in 1730 the residents petitioned the provincial government for a road to go “from the new meeting house to the county line near William Thomas’s, in order to go to Philadelphia by the Montgomery road,” explaining that York Road “is marshy, the ground not fitting for carts or loaded horses.” A 1734 survey, conducted on petition of the residents, set the boundaries of Richland Township enclosing 13,986

acres. At that late date the largest landowner was still Griffith Jones who never made the trip from England to visit his holdings.

By this time the taxpayers' list included the names Landis, Klein, Clemmer, Musselman and Yoder along with the older names of Lester, Foulke, Ball, Jones and Roberts. The Germans were part of the great immigration of the earlier Quakers, entering Bucks from the north. Soon giving the upper part of the county the unique character that it retains today.

While not exactly an industrial center, industry of the practical sort quickly followed settlement. The first mill was opened on a branch of the Tohickon Creek by John Leatherman in 1720 and was soon joined by weaver Christian Allebaugh. In 1725 a Duke Jackson opened a small factory to help meet the growing demand for whips among the farmers in the prospering Upper Bucks area.

When did the village of Quakertown take form? What is the magic number of buildings that changes a cluster of houses into a village? No one knows exactly when it happened, but a group of houses began to develop around what is now the corner of Broad and Main Streets. The growth was hastened, perhaps, by the opening of a tavern, later to be called the Red Lion Inn, in about 1750. Why is it called Quakertown? There are no indisputable facts, but it is reported that the name came from the somewhat derisive expression, "the Quakers Town," an English enclave in what was rapidly becoming a German province.

The Friends have a strong tradition of encouraging cultural as well as spiritual growth and in 1742 a school was opened in the meeting house. The school, it is reported, was well attended by both English speaking and German speaking children. A library was opened in 1785, very early for such a small village, with a total of 131 books. The reading tastes of the community are reflected by a review of some of the titles; Hale's Contemplations, Paradise Lost, Law's Serious Call, Franklin on Electricity, Locke on the Understanding, and the very practical Complete Body of Husbandry.

While George Washington never experienced the pleasure of spending the night in Quakertown, the Liberty Bell did. As the British approached Philadelphia in September 1777 the Continental Congress decided to send the symbol of Independence, already considered precious, to Allentown for safe keeping. In those days the journey from Philadelphia to Allentown was long and the procession conveying the bell stopped for the night in Quakertown where tradition holds that the bell itself was secreted behind a building that has become known as Liberty Hall.

Quakertown's greatest day in history was undoubtedly the day in 1799 when the gallows were erected at the corner of Broad and Main for the hanging of one John Fries. When war with France was threatening, Congress levied a special property tax; assessments being based on the number of windows in a building. Local opposition among the Germans was strong. Perhaps due to a language difficulty they interpreted it as a tax on window glass and John Fries was the leader of the local dissidents. Quiet, conservative Upper Bucks was torn with violence and 1,000 troops were brought in to suppress the rebellion. Fries was arrested, convicted of treason, and sentenced to hang. The citizenry were cheated out of their spectacle, however, when Fries was reprieved by President John Adams.

The village grew slowly in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Meetinghouse remained the only church in the village although Lutheran and Reformed pastors held services in the school house. By 1850 the village consisted of only about 50 houses clustered around the Red Lion Inn which did a thriving business serving travelers headed for Philadelphia, Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, or Doylestown.

Real growth did not come until the railroad. When the railroad arrived in 1857 it bypassed the village; passing somewhat to the south. The point where the railroad crossed the road to Doylestown became the nucleus of the competing village of Richland Center. In 1874 the two villages were united and incorporated as the Borough of Quakertown. By that time the 1725 whip factory had been replaced by a silk mill, cigar factories, a foundry, a tannery, and an axe handle factory.

By now Quakers have lost the battle completely and the Germans predominate in both the borough and the township. The name remains, however, to remind the casual traveler of the heritage of the town that now appears to be saturated by Afflerbachs, Clymers, Cressmans Crouthamels, Moyers, Rosenbergers and Trumbauers.