



Longswamp Township Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 12, Issue 4

August/September, 2022

OUR MISSION:

Ensure present and future generations will be able to learn and study the historical heritage of the township.

OUR VISION:

Inspire current and future generations to share a sense of community and pride in the heritage of our township.

BOARD MEMBERS:

Kristine Chase (Correspondence Secretary)
Troy Fairchild
Connie Falatko
Dr. Eloise Long
Marie Maly* (President)
Bill Meck
Debbie Miller* (Vice President)
Willard Miller* (Treasurer)
Vicki Skill* (Recording Secretary)
Lynn Shoemaker
Leon Smith
Bonnie Solt
John Stichter

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS LIAISON:

Joyce Marin

* Executive Board Members

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Building: Troy Fairchild
Capital Campaign: Marie Maly
Foundation Grants: Kristine Chase
Fundraising: Tootie Hellwig
Marketing: Marie Maly
Membership: OPEN
Museum: Eloise Long
Nominations: Eloise Long
Programs: Leon Smith
Publications: Eloise Long

LONGSWAMP TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 610, Mertztown, PA 19539
longswamphistory@gmail.com
www.longswamphistory.org



A Message from the President

I'm not going to lie. Often, serendipity descends just in time for the next newsletter publication, and this issue is no exception. Or maybe it's desperation and not serendipity. Either way, inside you'll find an article cobbled together using historical publications and contemporary secondary research. The rest of the newsletter is jam-packed with recaps of recent events, new discoveries and acquisitions, as well as upcoming programs, including a new field trip opportunity, and fundraisers.

Unsurprisingly, months of increasing inflation and worry about recession has resulted in flagging donations. This tough-to-swallow fact is greatly slowing progress in reaching our goal to own and operate a permanent home location and museum building by restoring and repurposing the Mertztown train station. Inflation has also significantly raised the estimated cost of the project. Our capital campaign now stands at the half-way point (\$203,000)—which is a significant achievement, inflation or no inflation. Once again, we'd like to express our thanks to people like you for helping us to achieve this lofty goal.

Undaunted by our current reality, we continue seeking out opportunities, with more than just fundraising in mind: We also are looking for new and interesting ways for us to share the heritage of the place we call home or where we or our ancestors once called home.

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News in Brief

Board of Directors Changes

Please help us to welcome Connie Falatko to the Longswamp Township Historical Society Board. She was born to David and Delores Hellwig and raised in Mertztown. She graduated from Brandywine High School in 1986 and married Lawrence Falatko in 1993. She has been the owner/operator of DooDahDaze, a candle/skincare/jewelry business, since September, 2000, and she serves as craft coordinator for the Berks Fiddle Fest and Swampfest. She is also mom to Roscoe. Connie will assume the role of Fundraising chairperson.

We're still looking to add two additional members to our Board. If you believe history is worth saving and are available and willing to attend and participate in once-a-month board meetings and offer additional services as a volunteer (based on your availability, work experience, skills, interests, personal or professional contacts, etc.), please contact board president Marie Maly at longswamphistory@gmail.com or 610-682-1645. If you are acquainted with one or more other board members (see page 1 for a listing), feel free to reach out to them.

Donations News

We'd like to recognize—and thank—the individuals who contributed funds (or contributed additional funds) to the Longswamp Township Historical Society during June and July, 2022:

Capital Campaign – Mertztown Station Restoration Project

\$1,500 - \$4,000

Marie and John Maly*

\$25 - \$99

Kevin Shoemaker

** denotes individuals/businesses who have donated additional funds during the period*

FUNDRAISING NEWS

It's Coming! We Promise. Candy Bar Fundraiser at Radcliffe's

Fire up your taste buds! The sales agreement between Radcliffe's and the LTHS is now signed and notarized, and the bars will soon be making their way to Mertztown.



Quilt Raffle Fundraiser Continues

(oversized queen, Lover's Knot pattern (104" x 113"), quilted and donated by Althea Hahn.) Tickets are \$5 each; three for \$12. You can purchase tickets at most of our events OR The Quilted Rabbit (128 Centre Avenue, Topton) OR via U.S. postal service. (Send us a check for the number of tickets you wish to purchase, and we'll send the tickets by return mail. Our mailing address is listed on page 8 of this newsletter.) The winning ticket will be drawn at the end of November.



Sunday, September 18th, 12:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Berks Fiddle Fest

Bear Creek Mountain Resort, 101 Doe Mountain Road, Longswamp Township)

Entry fee: \$7 for attendees age 13 and older

The Fest, held for 38 years in Lyons, is now held at the Bear Creek Mountain Resort, a location that offers more parking and more space to accommodate an expanded array of

displays and activities. The event will run between 9 AM and 5:30 PM. We'll be displaying several "visuals" that contain photos and captions, arranged in poster format, to share a brief history of the village of Rittenhouse Gap, especially for folks who are attending from outside our local area. Quilt tickets, Gertrude Hawk candy bars, our "Village" series booklets and 2022 "Favorite Family Recipes" calendar (now just \$5) will be available purchase.

Two Food Fundraisers to Benefit Longswamp Township Historical Society



Wednesday, August 17, 2022, 11 AM to 11 PM

**BJ's Restaurant and Brewhouse at the Hamilton Crossings,
665 No. Krocks Road, Allentown, Pa.**

Eat in or take out • Phone: 484-268-2340

If you're looking for an excuse to enjoy lunch, dinner or late-night snack out somewhere AND benefit a worthy cause at the same time, mark your calendars and plan to attend. Twenty percent of all meal and soft drink

purchases will be donated to Longswamp Township Historical Society.

Here's how this fundraiser will work: Notify your server (or the person who takes your order over the phone) that you are supporting the **Mertztown Train Station Fundraiser**. The server/order taker will do the rest!

Reserving a table for eat-in, especially during traditional meal times, is a good idea.

(We will not be permitted to set up a table to distribute materials or sell items during this fundraiser.)

Thursday, October 6, 2022, 3 PM to 8 PM

Historic Bowers Hotel, 298 Bowers Road, Bowers, Pa.

Eat-in only • Phone: 610-899-0183

Bowers Hotel proprietors Bonnie and Rich Tremmel have graciously agreed to host a second fundraiser at their Bowers Hotel to benefit the Mertztown Train Station Restoration Project; they will donate ten percent of every eat-in meal.

Please call to reserve a table. Our volunteers will be on hand to help out with bussing tables and welcoming patrons. **Meals paid for using a Brandywine card will not qualify for this fundraiser.**

(We will have a table set up in the hotel vestibule to display donated raffle items.)



Saturday, October 1, 2022, 8 AM to 1 PM

Community Flea Market and Yard Sale

Longswamp Township Community Park, 1112-17 State Street, Mertztown

We've got the lawn in front of the municipal building and Pavilion 1 in the park reserved for a community yard sale. Like last year, this will be a bring-your-own table(s) event. A \$10 fee will allow interested folks to set up in a spacious 15' x 25' outdoor space. All spaces will be placed along the macadam driving path or the parking lot for more convenient unload/load. Nonprofits will be invited to set up at no charge. Food and beverage items will be available for purchase at Pavilion 1 during the entire event. Restrooms will be open.

Our thanks to the township Board of Supervisors for waiving the fee to use these spaces.

We'll start posting registration forms this week. If you just can't wait, reach out to any Board member or write us at longswamhistory@gmail.com to request a copy. Proceeds will benefit Longswamp Township Historical Society.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Please help us to welcome our newest members, Jeanne Ziegler and Althea and Gene Hahn. Also help us to welcome back Kevin Shoemaker, who has renewed his membership following a short hiatus.



Photo courtesy of Leann Sacks

In Loving Memory: Delores “Tootie” Hellwig

Tootie joined the Longswamp Township Historical Society as a charter member and served on the board from its establishment until her death last June. She could always be counted on to pitch in and help out in any way she was able. And her winning smile could always light up any room.

Our deepest sympathy and thanks to her daughters, Connie and Sue, and to all who contributed to the Longswamp Township Historical Society in Tootie’s memory:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Kristine Chase* | Marie* and John Maly | Bonnie Solt* |
| Coralie and Barry Eck | Debbie* and Willard* Miller | Susan and Frank Sterner |
| Julie and Ronald Kemmerer | Marian E. Pounder | Alverta Stichter* |
| Susan Kutz* | Sandra* and Dennis* Reppert | John Stichter* and Lisa Geist* |
| Eloise Long* | Vicki* and Paul Skill | Marian Xiques |
| Mary Mabry* | Ivy and Kerry Solt | |

* LTHS Members

MUSEUM NEWS

Open House Event: July 2 and 3



(Pictured: *The Schubert Haus*, our rented museum space)

Our second open house event of 2022 took place over the July 4th holiday. Thanks to our docents, Bonnie Solt, Deb Miller, Vicki Skill, Lynn Shoemaker, and Leon Smith; to Morgan Larese and Tim Long, who helped with set-up and “dressing” Dr. Long. (Our male mannequin, donated by Crystal and Greg Kupar, was a big hit.) Thanks also to Marie Maly for her marketing

skills—visitors learned about the event via several media outlets—and to Lisa Mitchell, editor of the *Northern Berks Patriot Item*, for great coverage both before and after the event. A special thanks to those who visited our museum space; donations received during the open house event will be used to help offset rental expense.



Docent is a fancy word for guide. You don’t need any special skills – just an interest in learning about the displays and having an interest in a wide variety of local stories. Come join us, Thursday mornings, 9:30-noon. A fall display of local businesses (advertising items, calendars, employee photos of Longswamp area businesses) is under discussion.

ERRATA! Apologies are in order for incorrect bits of information that appeared in recent newsletters:

- June/July: Mention of the donation of Althea Hahn’s “Love Knot” quilt should have said “Lover’s Knot.”*
- June/July: Some items donated by Gail Geist, which had belonged to her mother and LTHS member, Goldie, were incorrectly reported as giveaways from the Topton Movie Theater instead of Kressley’s Sporting Goods Store.*
- April/May: The Amandus Long store (Chestnut Street, Mertztown) was located on the property, not inside the house.*

Recent Museum Item Donations

Almost every Thursday, we are pleasantly surprised by the arrival of new photos and artifacts to add to our collection. Our collection of school photos is growing in leaps and bounds. And our collection of Longswamp area military veteran photos has grown so much that it now needs to be organized.

- School and family photos (scanned from originals belonging to Mike Solt)
- Vintage carrot collectibles (in memory of “Tootie” Hellwig)
- 1950 Longswamp Township elephant-shaped GOP pin (donated by Bill Hellwig)
- Photos of Long Valley Rug Mill #2, Longswamp Union Church (donated by Susan Wendling Sterner)
- Mertztown and Shamrock photos (scanned from originals belonging to Robert Fenstermacher)



(pictured): The Wilson H. Fox, General Merchandise store. Later, the store became Radcliffe’s Blue Knot Store, under the ownership of Charles E. Radcliffe. This is the first photo we’ve seen of the store with the Fox sign. Very exciting!

If your skills / interests include data entry, organizing, scrapbooking, and/or researching, Ellie, Morgan, Bonnie, and Debbie are eager to “teach you the ropes.”

PROGRAM / EVENT NEWS

For most of the upcoming events listed below, count on us to share news of these events using flyers posted to local bulletin boards, local newspapers, WFMZ online news, our website (under the EVENTS tab), the township’s digital bulletin board and our Facebook page. We’ll also send you event reminders via email.

Thursday, September 1, 2022, 10 AM – 12 PM (Muster at 9 AM at the township building)

A Visit to Where Reading Education in Pennsylvania was Born

Governor Wolf Historical Society, 6600 Jacksonville Pike, Bath, Pa.

Lecture / tour fee: Free for LTHS members; \$7.50 for non-members

10 AM to 12 PM: Drive yourself or join a carpool (Carpoolers will meet in township parking lot at 9:45 AM)

Complimentary light refreshments will be available at the historical society site

A 40-minute drive from the Longswamp Township municipal building is about all the time we’ll need to be transported to the 18th century and the place where the seed of reading education in Pennsylvania was planted. Our visit to the property of the Governor Wolf History Society will begin inside the 1785 Wolf Academy (now Allen Township Academy)—one of the first schools in Pennsylvania to offer free education to boys and girls. Once inside, you’ll enjoy a brief video to introduce you to our state’s seventh governor, George Wolf. Afterward, Gov. Wolf H.S. volunteer

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Linda Kortz will present: “So You Can Read? Meet the Man Who Made It Possible.”



The Allen Academy was built with the assistance of George Wolf, a German immigrant farmer. After attending school here, George’s son (also George) taught in the building and, in 1829, he became Pennsylvania’s 7th governor (pictured left).

Before we leave the property, we’ll have time to take a spin through the downstairs and basement kitchen of the early 19th century Ralston McKeen House, also located on the property. The kitchen has been completely restored to be period-appropriate and the first floor is in the process of a complete period-appropriate restoration. Near to the house is an outdoor garden that was designed to mimic those of the period.

Optional Lunch Stop: We invite those interested in grabbing some lunch before heading back to follow us to the Seemsville Pub and Grille, just a few miles from the Historical Society property. Tragically, a 2019 fire destroyed the historic hotel. But the owners have built back new and offer a wide select of pub food, including a selection of affordable lunch specials.

Interested? Contact Program Chair Leon Smith at 610-682-2082 or email us at longswamphistory@gmail.com by/ before Monday, August 29 and provide the following information:

- 1) Your name and the number of the people in your party
- 2) Your email address or phone number (both is better!)
- 3) Whether you prefer to drive yourself or join a car pool. If you choose the car pool, please also tell us if your preference: Ride only, Ride or Drive.
- 4) Tell us if you/your party will join us at the Seemsville Pub and Grille for lunch. (The cost of lunch is not included in your lecture and tour fee.

Wednesday, September 21, 6:15 PM start

LTHS Board of Directors Meeting

Fellowship Hall, Christian Congregation Church, 323 Church Street, Mertztown

All are welcome to attend.

Wednesday, September 21st, 7 – 8:30 PM

A Fireside Chat w/ Paul Oswald

Longswamp Township Community Park (Pavilion 1), 1112 State Street, Mertztown

Hear stories about bygone days of the Longswamp area. Share your Longswamp area growing-up stories.

The pandemic made a book launch lecture for our village of Farmington publication impractical. So instead, we’re hosting a post-launch fireside chat to share experiences of Longswamp Township’s days gone by, including lore from Oreville and Klines Corner—two of the villages showcased in our 2021 “Farmington” publication.

Paul Oswald, a native Oreville resident, will get the ball rolling by sharing his childhood memories of days spent combing every nook and cranny of Oreville and Klines Corner. A moderator will be on hand to help involve the audience and offer the chance for them to share their growing-up memories.

Our thanks to the township Board of Supervisors for waiving the fee to use these spaces.

Fireside chats are all about ease and comfort, so we invite you to bring a lawn chair, if you wish, and get comfy. (Picnic table benches and table will also be available for your use.) Should the evening be a bit on the cool side, we’ll fire up the BBQ pit to help you get into a “fireside” mood. Restrooms will be open.

This event is free of charge and open to the public. Enjoy complimentary refreshments and a door prize drawing. “The Village of Farmington” and all of our “Village” series publications, plus quilt raffle tickets and candy bars, will be available for purchase.



Seventeen LTHS and other community members recently toured of the former plantation of the historic Lock Ridge iron ore blast furnace in Albutis; Longswamp Township iron ore was smelted here somewhere between 1868 and 1921; the site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981.

Our thanks to LTHS honorary member and Lehigh County Historical Society employee, Joshua Fink, for an informative, enjoyable tour.

(Pictured): Some of the structures that remain on the site of the former Lockridge Furnace. Building remnants were artfully cleaned up to create a safe gathering space and maximize visual impact.

The Mary Ann Iron Ore Furnace: An Instigator and Beneficiary of America's Switch to Coal

"Wood, our common Fewel [sic], which within these hundred Years might be had at every Man's Door, must now be fetch'd [sic] near 100 Miles to some towns, and makes a very considerable Article in the Expense of Families.

-- Benjamin Franklin

The Mary Ann Charcoal Iron Ore furnace is one of the earliest examples of industrialization in Longswamp Township. Using iron ore extracted from area mines, including the ones he owned in the area now called Rittenhouse Gap, Jacob Leshar (as early as 1789), his son-in-law, Reuben Trexler (beginning 1808), and grandson, Horatio (from 1837 to 1869), fabricated stoves—wood-burning at first and, later, coal-burning. In fact, the Mary Ann is believed to have been the first Pennsylvania furnace to develop and manufacture coal stoves, beginning around 1820.

However, iron ore furnaces like the Mary Ann, which consumed as much as one acre of trees a day (in the form of charcoal), contributed greatly to the demise of forests in eastern Pennsylvania and, ultimately, was a key factor in the Mary Ann's demise.



Pictured: Reuben Trexler, American School [Berks County] (circa 1830)

In the business world, being first to the market with a new product is typically considered advantageous for any company. But the early coal stoves turned out to be extremely unpopular with the public for a myriad of reasons. Unlike an open wood-burning hearth, the coal stove was made from (expensive) metal. Burning coal (especially soft coal) produced a lot of soot and did not smell as pleasant as burning wood. Housewives complained that lighting the stove and keeping it lit (a task sometimes referred to as "the black art")—added an hour of work to their daily chores. But the biggest complaint of all was that flame could not be seen behind the closed door.

Writer Nathaniel Hawthorne, possibly the coal stove's most eloquent of haters, said the stove was "a great revolution in social and domestic life," adding for clarify that he believed gathering around a fire was crucial in bringing both families and citizens together. And, after having whipped himself up to a real frenzy, said, "While a man was true to the fireside, so long would he also be true to country and law, to the God whom his fathers worshipped, to the wife of his youth and to all things else which instinct or religion have taught us to consider sacred." In turn, citizens of the day came up with their own, outlandish reasons for why coal stoves were bad: Baking food

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Longswamp Township Historical Society
P. O. Box 610
Mertztown, PA 19539-0610
 longswamphistory@gmail.com
 www.longswamphistory.org

*Please send address, email address,
 or phone number changes to
 longswamphistory@gmail.com or
 write us at P. O. Box 610,
 Mertztown, PA, 19539-0610*

(versus broiling it) offended the tastebuds. The stoves caused impaired vision and nerves ... in addition to baldness and tooth decay.

Gradually, stove technology improved and, by the around the mid-19th century, keeping a fire going was much easier. It was also during this period that stove makers began embellishing stove doors with lavish designs; this aesthetic touch was key to stoves appearing in both the kitchen and the parlor. And, by as early as 1831, coal was about one-fourth the cost of wood.

As far as we know, the Mary Ann Furnace never changed its door design from the plain Jane “Mary Ann Furnace” stamp. Plus, by the 1860s, the Mary Ann was operating only sporadically and went out of blast by the time coal stoves were truly being embraced by the public. By 1885, American homes were burning more coal than wood.

Breaking News!

We’ve just learned that the Lehigh Valley Regional Train Show & Expo, after years of hiatus, will return on October 2, 2022, at the Charles Chrin Community Center in Easton (Palmer) between 10 AM and 3 PM. The event represents a fantastic opportunity for us, and we plan to participate.



Sometimes, it's sad to think about how the past has slipped away from us. But it's equally heartwarming when the past reaches out, in sometimes new and unexpected ways, and reminds us of where we came from and what helped to make us who we have become.

This license plate belongs to Paul Oswald, who will be the guest speaker at our September 21st program.