



knee-deep in history

The Scribe

October 2019

Palmerton Area Historical Society
*Palmerton, Pennsylvania proudly listed on the
National Register of Historic Places*

2019 - The Palmerton Community Festival

A 30 Year Tradition – or Is It 55 Years?

It all depends on how you count! In 1965 Palmerton rallied behind plans to build a new hospital. The New Jersey Zinc Company had transferred control to a community board of directors and funds obtained through the federal Hill-Burton Act assured construction by 1967 of a modern health care facility.

held in 1990 and it has grown in stature with each passing year. One month ago, on the traditional three-day weekend after Labor Day, the event celebrated its 30th anniversary – or 55th depending on your count.

Three days of almost ideal weather – warm days

In September 1965, a festival was held in the borough park to provide financial support to the venture. Its success led to a second festival one year later – and a tradition followed. For 25



Nary a parking spot was to be found in Palmerton during the Festival

years the hospital was the beneficiary of this support. In 1989, the Hospital Board offered a fledging community-backed organization the opportunity to broaden the benefits to a wide range of churches and non-profit organizations.

The first Palmerton Community Festival was

and cool dry evenings – drew record crowds. Each day the population of the town more than doubled as visitors from near and far returned to sample the excellent ethnic food offerings and to

experience Palmerton hospitality. Thanks go to the volunteers who continue to make this annual event so enjoyable and rewarding so and to the Palmerton Borough maintenance crew who within days returned the park to its natural beauty. Well done!

photo courtesy of Carl P. Kern

Palmerton Area Historical Society

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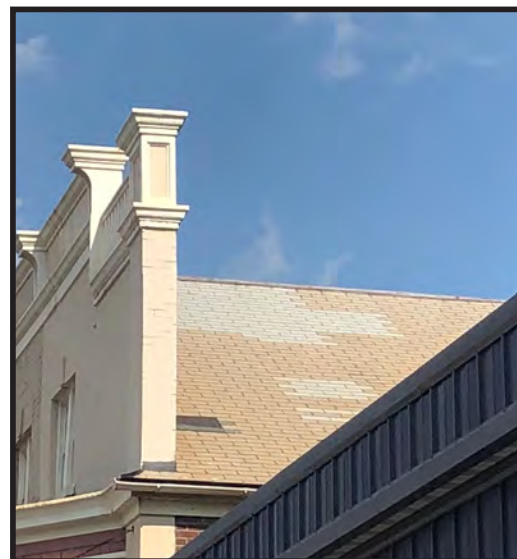
Susan Steigerwalt

The Joys of “Home Ownership” *Heritage Center Roof Shows Its Age*

There aren't many things that can aggravate a homeowner more than the sound of dripping coming through the ceiling. If it's not a toilet overflowing, it's a roof leak!

As the Festival came to an end, a visit to the second floor of the Heritage Center for new materials yielded an unwelcome surprise. Some wet carpet and minor damage to supplies precipitated an upward glance and the stain on the ceiling indicated the source. Although the attic was dry, a quick trip outdoors showed missing shingles in the area adjacent to the wet ceiling and temporary repairs were made.

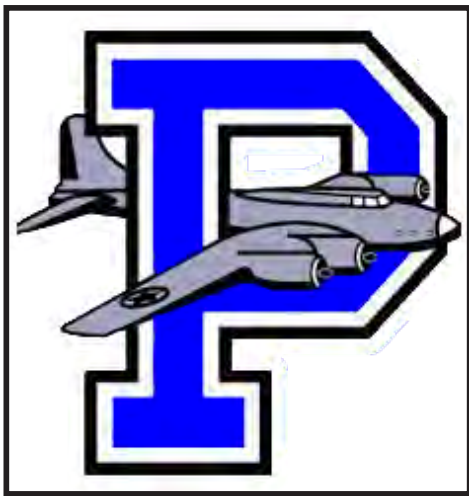
The photograph below shows that this is not the first time that shingles had to be replaced and it is almost certain the roofing has exceeded its guaranteed life. An estimate is being obtained to install a new roof - a cost that almost certainly will be outside the Society's normal budget. The Board of Directors is considering ways in which it can establish a “restricted fund” to be used solely for such unusual maintenance events. Suggestions from the membership are welcomed.



Palmerton High School Team Name

The Historical Society has often been asked how the Palmerton High School athletic teams received their nickname. Sometimes symbols can become the target of ridicule. Even Ben Franklin was hooted when he suggested that the wild turkey be adopted over the bald eagle as the symbol of the United States. According to a survey of high schools in America, the most popular team names were Eagles, Tigers, Panthers, Bulldogs, and Wildcats. All “safe” choices in today’s era of political correctness.

In the November 1935 issue of *The Mirror*, it was reported that a student vote was taken at the high school on November 1st during the homeroom period to determine what name the sports team should carry. Up to that time, the teams were known as the “Blue and White”-colors reportedly chosen years earlier by Styles Butz. The final choices had been narrowed to “Blue Bombers”, “Panthers”, and “Blue Jays”. The Palmerton teams have been known as the Blue Bombers ever since.



Palmerton High School Alma Mater

The Latin term “alma mater” translates as “bountiful mother” and was first used by the early Romans to refer to their goddesses. By the early 1700’s it had been adopted in England to fondly describe one’s school or university. This usage continues today, but to its definition has been added a school’s anthem that is generally sung in unison by the student body to express pride and unity.

It was reported to *The Scribe* that in the 1920-21 school year, young Margaret Gabrio moved to Palmerton from Madison, Wisconsin. Although she attended Palmerton High School for only one year, she is credited with having written the school’s alma mater. Her plans after graduation were to attend a “musical school” in Boston, but it is not known whether her dream was ever fulfilled.

Article V of the Constitution of the United States has great significance. It defines the terms and conditions necessary for this important document to be amended. Understandably, it is no easy matter. On one hand, Congress may initiate a proposal with approval by two-thirds majority of both the House and the Senate. Alternatively, two-thirds of the legislatures of the individual states may request consideration of the matter. In either case, the amendment does not become effective until subsequently approved by the legislative bodies of three-fourths of the states.

The first ten amendments, known as The Bill of Rights, were approved in 1791, shortly after the Constitution itself was approved. It was the result of much infighting between federalists who believed in a strong central government and state's rights advocates who feared the placement of too much power in the hands of too few. The Bill of Rights was the compromise that guaranteed the approval of the Constitution.

Following the Bill of Rights, amendments seemed at times to come in bunches. The 11th

and 12th were added by 1804 while the 13th, 14th, and 15th appeared in the period following the Civil War. Some proposed amendments languish for years trying to obtain the necessary ratification by the states. For example, a 1926 proposal to allow the federal government to determine labor standards for children under eighteen is still 12 states short of approval.

In the period between 1913 and 1919 four significant amendments were proposed and subsequently adopted. The sixteenth gave Congress the power to levy an income tax and the seventeenth provided for the election of Senators by popular vote for a term of six years. Prior to the adoption of this latter amendment, state legislatures appointed the senators to represent their states in Congress – a smoke-filled back room practice that often led to charges of corruption.

The nineteenth amendment was approved by Congress on June 4, 1919. It gave women the right to vote and it took less than 15 months to obtain the necessary approval by 36 states. It formally remedied a longstanding injustice – although by the time of its approval a number of states had already provided woman suffrage. Ironically, it was the Territory of Wyoming that first granted the vote to women. When threatened with the denial of statehood if they persisted, the legislature fired back that they would forego this honor for 100 years rather than disenfranchise their women.

18th Amendment

After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

Noble Experiment **to Legislate Morality**

It is the eighteenth amendment on the prohibition of alcohol that perhaps most distinguishes this period in American history. The amendment was formally adopted when the 36th state (Tennessee) ratified it on January 16, 1919. Eventually, all but two state legislatures (Connecticut and Rhode Island) approved it. Its ignominious history ended thirteen years later when, with the passage of the 21st Amendment, it became the only amendment to the Constitution to be totally repealed.

The story of this so-called “Noble Experiment” is far too detailed to be completely retold here except to say that it failed to achieve its objective. Although legal sales of alcohol ended, bootleg operations flourished and thousands of “speakeasies” sprang up. Juries were reluctant to convict violators and the federal government lost the tax revenue on which it had once relied. Elected officials in Washington had learned a bitter lesson.

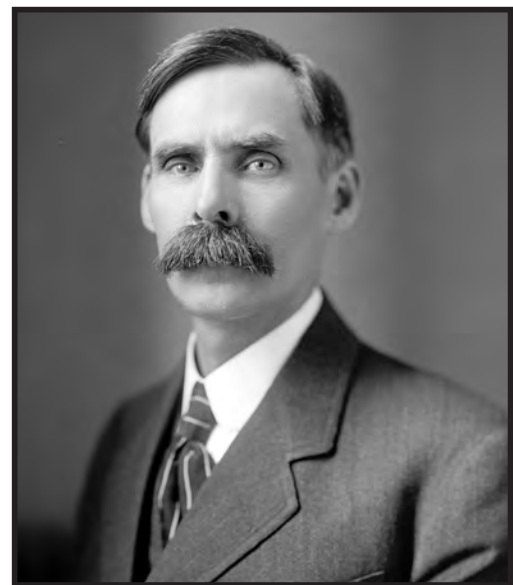
The Volstead Act

...or What Constitutes an Alcoholic Beverage

To provide “teeth” to the 18th Amendment, Congress had to enact enabling legislation. This took the form of the Volstead Act, named for Andrew Volstead, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. The Act was approved by both houses in October 1919 and was vetoed on October 27th by President Woodrow Wilson. His veto was promptly overridden the next day.

The Act defined alcoholic beverages as those containing more than 0.5% alcohol and it prohibited the manufacture, transport, export, sale, or possession of such beverages within the United States or its territories. Surprisingly, the Act did not attempt to prohibit the actual purchase or consumption of alcoholic beverages and it did provide a loophole for “medicinal” use.

In retrospect, this Act was doomed for failure. Although many arrests were made under the Act, few convictions followed. Shortly after its adoption, over 4,000 arrests were reported in New York alone! They resulted in six convictions and no prison time! The Act was voided in 1933 with the passage of the 21st Amendment that returned control of alcohol to the states.



Rep. Andrew Volstead of Minnesota

2019 Monthly Program Schedule

All programs are handicapped accessible

Programs are generally held in the Knight's Gallery of Palmerton Library at 7pm unless otherwise noted

October 14, 2019

Strange, Odd & Wonderful Tombstones

Tammy Schane
Little White Church

November 11, 2019

The Slatington Slate Industry

David Altrichter

December 1, 2019

Ecumenical Service

3pm at Little White Church

Christmas Party

4:30pm at Bert's Steakhouse

January/February 2020

NO MEETINGS SCHEDULED

1939 – GW Bridge Receives a Makeover

Zinc Dust Paints Provide Protection

Design of the iconic George Washington Bridge began in 1923 and construction commenced four years later. It is an engineering marvel that has survived almost a century of the heaviest bridge travel in the world. Constant attention to maintenance is necessary and through the years The New Jersey Zinc Company played a role. In 1939 the Company's Zinc magazine reported on the importance of zinc dust in preventing the damaging corrosion to the cables that support the roadway and to the various other steel surfaces.

It is worth noting that the original design of the bridge called for the towers to be faced in pink granite – hiding their marvelous engineering design. It has been said the additional cost during the Great Depression was considered unjustified and unnecessary. The end result, in

the words of the renowned Swiss architect Le Corbusier is “the most beautiful bridge in the world.” Many would agree.

A lower deck was added in 1962 and the bridge now handles 100 million vehicles per year – 12 times its original estimate!



1949 – NJZ Takes on Titanium Ore

Kennecott Copper is Partner

In 1946, Kennecott Copper sought to develop the world's largest deposit of ilmenite – a titanium/iron ore – in the Allard Lake region of Quebec. The New Jersey Zinc Company had the know-how required to process this ore and a joint venture was created to mine, transport, and smelt it. The partnership was incorporated as Quebec Iron & Titanium and a site on the St Lawrence River near the town of Sorel was chosen for a smelter using NJZ electric furnace technology.

would be loaded on ships and carried upriver to Sorel. Work on the rail line was undertaken in harsh conditions. Workers not only had to contend with the cold and snow, they also had the challenge of constructing a 1,000 foot long bridge across the Romaine River.



In 1949 work began on a 17-mile railroad to transport the ore from the mine to Havre St. Pierre. From there it

The construction of the smelter at Sorel required the assistance of a number of NJZ scientists, engineers, and technical support staff. Seven large capacity electric furnaces eventually produced over 500 tons per day of high grade pig iron and a corresponding amount of titanium rich slag.

Palmerton Area Historical Society Items for Sale

PAHS offers shopping by mail for those unable to visit the Heritage Center. Items include postcards, photographs, books and a historical throw, among other items.

We also have special items, including all-silk Horsehead Industries ties featuring the NJZ logo, a Christmas ornament commemorating the town's Veterans Memorial, souvenir mugs of Palmerton and other items.

Contact the Heritage Center at (610) 824-6954 for prices or stop by and see all the items available for purchase!



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PO Box 267
Palmerton, PA 18071

**Palmerton Area
Historical Society
Heritage Center**

410 Delaware Avenue
(610) 824-6954

HOURS

Wednesday - 12:30-3pm

Thursday - 10am-2pm

Friday - Noon-4pm

Saturday - 10am-2pm

