



knee-deep in history

The Scribe

April 2020

Palmerton Area Historical Society
www.palmertonhistorical.org

Heritage Center Closes for Refreshing *After Fifteen Years, a New Look*

In October 2005, after a brief period of leasing, the Historical Society completed the purchase of the former site of Tommie's at 410 Delaware Avenue. The generosity of friends and the confidence expressed through a mortgage from a local bank encouraged the Society to acquire a home they could call their own. The excitement among members was palpable as the former ice cream emporium was converted into a center for the display and commemoration of the community's history.

The property, prominently referred to as the Palmerton Area Heritage Center, was divided into two sections. The larger entry area was dedicated to a "permanent" display of artifacts, photographs, and memorabilia related to the early history of the area. A slightly smaller room was reserved for display of topical subjects ranging from the importance of the European groups that immigrated here to the role of area veterans in the world conflicts that safeguarded the American way of life.

The latter exhibits were on display for three to five months and brought many visitors. But the time came for the "permanent" display to be refreshed with new items from the archives. The Center was closed to the public and painters were brought in to restore a cheerful, crisp look to the walls and ceiling. Improved fluorescent lights were installed to enhance the displays. Volunteers are now at work with their interior decorating skills. When completed, the cost of this undertaking will total about \$6,000.



... a fresh coat of paint

The Society is demonstrating that history is not a lifeless subject and the Heritage Center has become an integral part of downtown Palmerton. It welcomes about 2,000 visitors each year from places as far away as New Zealand! All who come through the door are impressed by Palmerton's unique history and hospitality. The Historical Society could not achieve this without the support of its volunteers and dedicated members from across the United States. Thank you!

Palmerton Area Historical Society

PO Box 267 ~ Palmerton, PA 18071
www.palmertonhistorical.org
palmertonhistorical@ptd.net
(610) 824-6954

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Palmerton Billboard on Route 248 *New Message Installed*

For more than 25 years, the Palmerton Area Chamber of Commerce has had a billboard on Route 248 that was permitted by the Department of Transportation as part of a highway beautification project. The sign was used to “welcome” visitors to the community and was positioned about one-half mile ahead of the Palmerton exit. It saw its last message change in 2004 and the ravages of time had since taken its toll.

The billboard now has a fresh new look thanks to Sterner Outdoor Advertising. A vinyl wrap has now replaced the old hand-painted sign and the message is designed to encourage more passers-by to take a trip through Palmerton. The comments of Society members are always welcomed. You may drop a line to palmertonhistorical@ptd.net.



WANTED - Early Artwork

The Heritage Center is mounting a display of works by Palmerton artists. We seek early works by Queenie Stein and others. If you would consider lending a work for display, please call Jane Borbe at (610) 824-6954.

An Era Ends - A New One Begins *Palmerton Hospital Closes To Become?*

For more than one hundred years, the area bounded by Lafayette and Columbia Avenues and by First and Second Streets was a health care destination for many in Carbon County and beyond. Palmerton Hospital was valued for its quality of care and for its convenient access. First constructed in 1908 as part of Stephen Palmer's vision, it was staffed by many physicians from the renowned Johns Hopkins program in Baltimore and was supported by nurses trained in its own school of nursing.

Through the years, the Hospital adapted to change. Beginning in 1910, only a few years after it was dedicated, and again in 1967 it added more beds and services. In 1980 and in 1993 it added modern emergency care and same day surgery facilities along with expanded parking to accommodate a greater number of patients and staff.

Through the years it kept pace with the needs of a growing community.

But delivery of health care today is changing rapidly. Advances in drug therapy have minimized the need for admission and minimally invasive same day surgery has reduced the need

for lengthy hospital stays. These changes bring great benefits to patients, but they often involve capital expenditures well beyond the financial reach of smaller community hospitals such as Palmerton.

The acquisition of the Palmerton and Lehighton hospitals by the St. Luke's University Health Network has assured the future of health care in the area. A new hospital has been approved on a 100 acre site in nearby Franklin Township that will provide easy access to patients, not only in the immediate Palmerton area, but also to those in rapidly growing neighboring townships. And in January of this year, St. Luke's opened



Empty now ... but is the best yet to come?

a modern urgent care center on Delaware Avenue at the former site of the Haja Lanes Bowling Alleys. This Spring, they will further expand their presence by renovating the adjacent Terry's Winner Circle property at 636 Delaware Avenue. Together these additions to downtown will replace many of the out-patient services formerly provided at Palmerton Hospital.

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Original Irving Jelly Prints *His Images Live on*

In 1908, a fourteen year-old boy arrived in Palmerton from a Newark, NJ orphanage. His older brother, who had come to Palmerton a year earlier as a junior draftsman in NJZ's Engineering Department, recognized the similar skills of his younger sibling and encouraged him to make the journey west. It was a different era when high school education was an option not always exercised.

Irving A. Jelly (his name was shortened from "Jelley" in a bookkeeping oversight) started at a salary of \$5 per week and his talents were evident from an early age. Examples of his

doodlings and cartoons show up periodically in Company publications but his greatest talent appeared to lie in his fascination with bridges. Although his formal education ceased with elementary school, his innate talent was so profound that his work on bridges resulted two articles written and illustrated for a prestigious journal of Civil Engineering.

Jelly settled into his work at Palmerton, married his childhood sweetheart from the orphanage

and raised a family of three children in their home at 371 Lafayette Avenue. But sixty-five years after his death, he is best remembered for the prints he made for friends. In the early years of the Great Depression he found time to travel to New York City to take lessons in the techniques of creating etchings and making prints from the etched plates.



Jelly's version of Forain's etching "The Prodigal Son"

In most instances, Jelly created fewer than ten copies of each image and gave these as gifts to his friends. Few original examples survive and the Historical Society mounted a centennial exhibition at the Heritage Center in

2008 with a grand opening humorously titled "Tea and Scones with Jelly."

What most Palmertonians know of this talented man is associated with the hundreds of inexpensive copies that were produced after his death in 1955. His family authorized reprints on stock paper and these were sold to raise funds for the 1965 planned expansion of Palmerton Hospital. No one was able to describe the origins of these prints and a number of them

Prints a Permanent Feature at Heritage Center

were seriously misattributed to Palmerton locations when in fact they were Jelly's copies of works by other well-known etchers – a not uncommon practice by those seeking to learn and perfect their art.

Jelly was scrupulous in giving credit to those whose works he copied. Three examples are present among the original prints displayed at the Heritage Center – one by Joseph Pennell that was widely thought to be of the Lehigh River at the West Plant. In fact, it was a copy Pennell's etching entitled "River of Work" at Leeds, England. Another example is shown here of Jelly's copy of "The Prodigal Son" by noted French artist Jean-Louis Forain, who died in 1931. Forain's works were prominently shown in New York City at that time and Jelly undoubtedly saw this example and chose to copy it as he perfected his skill. On each print

Jelly inscribed "©/forain" to indicate that it was not his original creation.

He similarly marked all other works that he copied. Another was thought to be of a West Plant blast furnace when in fact it was of a Pittsburgh steel mill that he copied from Otto Kuhler

Jelly's story might have drifted into obscurity were it not for the Historical Society's desire to preserve these small works of art. Dozens of images will be part of the permanent exhibit at the Heritage Center when it reopens to the public in May. The Society encourages members who may have other signed original prints by Irving A. Jelly to provide information to the Society so that a better record of his story can be told.



Jelly created many etchings of the Palmerton area. On the left is a quaint snow scene showing the approach to Lehigh Gap from what is today Route 248.

2020 Monthly Program Schedule

*all programs held in the Knight's Gallery of the Palmerton Library at 7pm unless otherwise noted
handicap accessibility*

April 13

***How the Ice Age Impacted the
Lehigh Gap Area***

Dr. Dru Germanowski, Geologist

May 11

The History of the Lehigh River

Louise Bugby

June 8

Wild Creek Bee Farm

Chris Maxwell

July 13

***History and Demonstration of the
High Wheel Bicycle***

Donald R. Serfass
at the Borough Park

August 10

Annual Picnic

September

No Meeting

October 12

PA German Gravestones

Michael Emory
PA Historical Museum Commission

November 9

TBA

December 6

***Ecumenical Service &
Christmas Party***

***The Palmerton Area Heritage Center will be closed from
January through April for a complete display revision***

Have Your Renewed Your Membership for 2020?

Check Your Label for a "Blue Dot"

If you have a "blue dot" on the address label, it indicates that we haven't yet heard from you.

Don't miss future issues of *The Scribe!* Renew now! Memberships begin at only \$15. Support the Historical Society and keep Palmerton alive for future generations.

Wow! Society Has a New Website

New Photos – Easy to Navigate

For the first time in fifteen years, the Historical Society website has taken on a new look. It was professionally designed and is being maintained by Palmerton's own Michael Jesky of Dekka Studios. The website captures the past and the present in a unique way with photos old and new. Michael Jesky used his creative talents to scroll and explore what the Society has to offer. He has also included past issues of *The Scribe* for online reading.

Dekka Studios helps small businesses, professionals, manufacturers, and organizations such as the Palmerton Area Historical Society improve their access to the public through web design, social media, video production, and other marketing approaches. Check out the Society's attractive web design at palmertonhistorical.org. You will be pleased with it.



An Era Ends - A New One Begins

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The Hospital has now officially closed its doors and plans are being made by St. Luke's to raze the building later this year. What is to become of this iconic site? Senior housing is in short supply in Carbon County and consideration is being given to facilities that would address this need. The Chamber of Commerce has

already received inquiries from members of the community who wish to be put on the waiting list. When plans have been finalized and hearings have been held more information will be available. The "Book of History of Palmerton Hospital" has not been closed – a new chapter is being written.



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PO Box 267
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**Palmerton Area
Historical Society
Heritage Center**

410 Delaware Avenue
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HOURS

Wednesday - 12:30-3pm

Thursday - 10am-2pm

Friday - Noon-4pm

Saturday - 10am-2pm

