



knee-deep in history

The Scribe

January 2022

Palmerton Area Historical Society
www.palmertonhistorical.org

By-Products of Zinc Manufacture ***Silver & Gold - A Significant Source of Revenue***

It has often been said about the hog industry that everything is used but the “squeal”. Much the same is true of other industrial operations –



including New Jersey Zinc’s Palmerton plant. Although zinc metal and zinc oxide were NJZ’s primary products, the collection of minor impurities often

contributed to the Company’s profitability. At no time was this more important than at the time of the second oil crisis of 1980.

Many of NJZ’s zinc ores – especially those from its Colorado mines - contained trace amounts of gold and silver. By themselves, the quantities were too small to be economically recoverable – each present at only at a small fraction of an ounce per ton of raw material. However, as they found their way through the smelting process the silver and gold were gradually concentrated in the environmental dust collectors.

These dusts were sent for processing to the Cadmium Plant where, after the cadmium was

recovered, there remained only an insoluble lead sulfate sludge. The lead in the sludge had only minimal value of about ten cents per pound, but the precious metals had now been concentrated by more than one hundred fold! At these levels, the sludge could be sold to a lead smelter for silver and gold recovery.

In the early 1970s, silver sold for less than \$2.00 per ounce and the price attracted the attention of the wealthy Hunt Brothers of Texas. In the days before today’s “tech billionaires” the Hunts were the wealthiest family in the world. As a hedge against inflation, they started to acquire and control enormous quantities of silver –

estimated at more than 250 million ounces. By early 1979 the price had tripled and in the next nine months speculation drove the price to \$50 per ounce!



continued on next page

Palmerton Area Historical Society

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

OFFICERS and BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Jane Borbe

Vice President

David Taschler

Secretary

Susan Steigerwalt

Interim Treasurer

Peter Kern

John Aulenbach
Roy Christman
Bert Holczman
Vinita Horinko
Richard Horinko

COMMITTEE CHAIRPEOPLE

Publications

Vinita & Richard Horinko

Kibler School

Roy Christman

Little White Church

Jane Borbe

LWC Building and Grounds

Richard Horinko

Membership

Jane Borbe

PAHS Steering Committee

Jane Borbe

Program Coordinators

Vinita Horinko & Marianne Smelas

“The Scribe” Editorial Staff

Jane Borbe, Peter Kern & Susan Steigerwalt

By-Products of Zinc Manufacture *continued from first page*

What does this have to do with NJZ? At the end of 1979, NJZ completed a sale of 200 tons of lead sulfate sludge containing 2% silver at a net price of a little over \$49 per ounce - with a modest additional bonus for the gold content. Great timing! In January 1980, the “Silver Bubble” burst and by March 1980 the price was back to \$10 per ounce.

The Hunt Brothers lost more than a billion dollars and bankruptcy followed along with an investigation by the federal government. After the dust had cleared, the Hunt Brothers fortune had dropped from five billion to one billion! They were no longer the richest family – but they were hardly destitute.

What about the rest of the story? For those who choose not to do the math, the sale of the sludge netted NJZ approximately seven million dollars – or more than the Company realized that entire year from the sale of zinc!

Our Members

The Society has about 380 members of whom approximately one-third live in Palmerton.

One-third reside in 48 other communities within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The remaining one-third have found homes in 24 other states across the country – from New England to Hawaii!

Historical Society Loses an Icon

Betsy Burnhauser Passes at Age 92

Inherent in the mission of historical societies is their commitment to preserve the knowledge and beauty of the past and to convey its importance to future generations. No one felt a greater responsibility for this purpose than Romaine (“Betsy”) Burnhauser whose passing on December 21, 2021 freed her to use her talents in an entirely new venue.

Check the dictionary for the words persistent, stubborn, resolute, single-minded, committed, unfaltering – and enthusiastic. You may find they are all synonymous with Betsy Burnhauser! These were the characteristics she brought to the Palmerton Area Historical Society that helped it achieve its status today.



Betsy was born and raised in Palmerton, graduated from Stephen S. Palmer High School, and received her B.S. in Elementary Education from Kutztown University. For thirty years she taught fourth grade in the East Penn School District while at the same time raising a family and volunteering in numerous community organizations.

The roots of Betsy’s interest in local history could perhaps be found in her membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution. It was not just her pride in knowing she could trace her lineage to an ancestor in the war for

independence – she subscribed wholeheartedly to the DAR principles of historic preservation, education, and support of her country.

Shortly after the Historical Society was founded in 1990, Betsy and her late husband Jim, brought that enthusiasm to every task they undertook - and no project was undertaken without the

expectation of success. She was very proud of the highly acclaimed hour-long video “Welcome to Palmerton” that she was instrumental in producing in 2000 and which is still a classic today. She left her mark everywhere – at the Little White Church, at the Archives, and in her under-appreciated role as Board Secretary.

But Betsy’s most significant achievements resulted from her efforts to create the Heritage Center and to obtain Palmerton’s status as a National Historic District. Although both took years to achieve, Betsy’s persistence won out. For all she did for the Palmerton area, the community will always be the beneficiary – and that is as she would have wanted it.

Betsy, Rest in Peace. You will always have our admiration and thanks.

Historic Lehigh Gap Mansion

Nazareth Area Business

Three years ago, The Scribe featured an article on the Marshall Mansion that sits prominently atop Eddy's Hill overlooking the Lehigh River. At that time, the property was owned by William Gordon, a Drexel University professor, who acquired it in 1986. Years slip by quickly and in June 2020 Gordon engaged Diamond 1st Real Estate of Palmerton to find a buyer. A new chapter in the storied history of this landmark was about to begin.

The mansion sits on a three-acre parcel and is a wonderful example of the Victorian era. Its four-bedrooms and one and one-half baths would hardly comport with the demands of today's younger generation, but the photographs displayed here show a warmth and personality often absent from the homes built today.

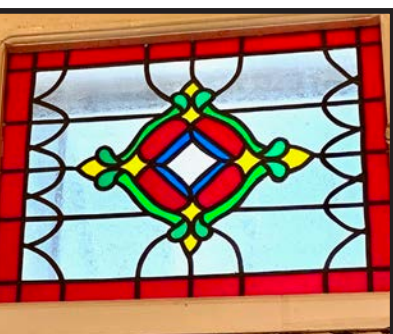


Mansion Has New Owner

Businessman Acquires Property

Gordon thoroughly renovated the home thirty-five years ago, but elements take their toll and, as with all homes, constant maintenance is required. The property was fairly listed for \$375,000 – an amount that reflected some of the needs for attention. To avoid viewing requests from the simply inquisitive, the listing was limited to those with a serious interest. However, because of its historic nature (and to an extent the publicity of the article in *The Scribe*) a tour was arranged for several members of the Historical Society. Within weeks, an offer to purchase was made by a Nazareth businessman and a new era was to begin.

As soon as the sale of the property was completed, there was speculation as to its use. Would the new owner live there? Would it become a corporate retreat – or perhaps a Bed and Breakfast. The privacy of the new owners has been respected and undoubtedly their plans will eventually become known. In the interim, the property will continue to attract the interest of residents and passers-by.



2022 Monthly Program Schedule

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

January, February & March

No Meeting

April 11

History of Local Trains

Emphasis on NJZ Trains

Kermit Geary

May 9

The History of the Lehigh River

Louise Bugby

Heartfelt Thanks

We would be remiss if we didn't express our appreciation

- To those who staff the Heritage Center
- To those who diligently archive information and artifacts
- To the Steering Committee for its programming skills, Feature Room, window displays and Christmas Tree in the Park
- To the Cleaning Committee of the Little White Church
- To those who staffed the Covered Bridge Trailer at the Festival
- To those who assist at the Sidewalk Sale and who provide decorations
- To our Officers and Board of Directors for their guidance, and
- To all our members both and near

Thank you for your support. You make us what we are!

Have Your Renewed Your Membership for 2022?

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. If it is our mistake, let us know!!

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.

Financial Summary

Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2021

In an effort to keep our membership apprised of our financial status, the following summary is provided for the fiscal year just ended.

INCOME (\$)

Membership Dues	18,564
Foundation Grants	10,500
Bequests	21,874
Contributions - In Memorium	1,592
Carbon County COVID	4,459
Sales & Applicable Taxes	2,279
Miscellaneous	882

Total Income **60,150**

This is a summary of the income and expenses of the Society for the year ending September 30, 2021.

EXPENSES (\$)

Utilities & Fuel	5,210
Maintenance	17,287
Water - Sewer - Trash	2,042

ADMINISTRATIVE

Insurance & Professional Fees	3,946
Printing, Supplies & <i>The Scribe</i>	3,814
Telephone, Internet & Website	2,962
Taxes	7,286
Equipment	1,980
Contributions/Memberships	1,855

Total Expenses **46,382**

A formal financial report has been prepared by the firm of Francis X. Mullane, Inc. and all required Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and IRS 990 reports have been filed.

Board Plans for the Future

Creates a Restricted Quasi-Endowment Fund

The generous bequest of the late George Ashman encouraged the Board of Directors to undertake the creation of a Board-restricted fund to help assure the future viability of the organization.

A balanced equity account was opened at a Palmerton bank with an initial investment of \$25,000 and into which the Board will direct

bequests, memorials, and other designated gifts. At the time of publication additional contributions of almost \$2,000 have been added to this account

The Board believes this to be prudent planning for unforeseen events. Members who wish additional information on the Fund should feel free to contact the Society.



knee-deep in history

PO Box 267
Palmerton, PA 18071

**Palmerton Area
Historical Society
Heritage Center**

410 Delaware Avenue
(610) 824-6954

**Thursdays & Saturdays
10am-1pm**

