

Fall 2015

Historical Journal



LITITZ HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 65 145 E. Main Street, Lititz, PA 17543

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The Tale of the Webster Schoolhouse Bell

Cory Van Brookhoven

This is the story of a school bell, which for many years sat atop the belfry of the Webster School, built in the mid 1850's, and located just north of Lititz near Speedwell.

Each day, the teacher would ring the bell as a signal to the students that school was open. It would also be used for other occasions throughout the year. For years, it was an audible tone that the Webster School was in session until the day the school closed and was sold.

The building was eventually turned into a private residence.

Anna Bomberger had been a teacher at this school from 1919-1921, and lived with her husband Elmer at 217 South Broad street in Lititz. At some point after the school closed, Anna gained possession of the bell, and Elmer built a special belfry on the top of their garage at the rear of their property to house this unique keepsake. From then until 1976, the bell was rung on special occasions such as anniversaries, birthdays, the 4th of July and other family milestones.

After the death of the Bombergers, the bell was donated to the Lititz Historical Foundation where its history would not be forgotten.

When Tom and Joan Brown purchased the Bomberger home in 1987, they had heard about the bell from Joan's father, the late Jack Bitner, a noted Mount Gretna historian.



*Above: The Webster schoolhouse taken July 1934, during the Third Annual reunion of teachers and pupils.
Story continued on page 3 inside...*

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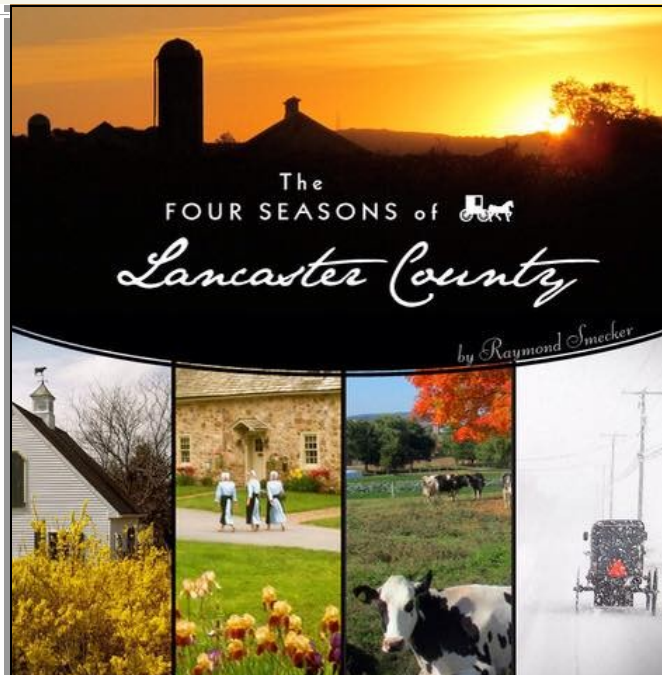
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BRAND NEW IN OUR GIFT SHOP!

A soft cover book filled with author Raymond Smecker's colorful photos and personal stories that gives the reader a look into the world of Lancaster County, Pa. (115 pages, \$17.99 plus tax).

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

In an effort to be more environmentally friendly, we are now giving you the option of receiving your quarterly newsletter via email. This not only saves paper and postage, but it also serves as a great way for you to receive the journal in a much faster way. If you would like your newsletter emailed to you going forward, please send an email to Cory Van Brookhoven at cory@lititzhistoricalfoundation.com and he will be happy to add you to the email newsletter list. **Thank You!**

WHAT A BUSY SUMMER IT HAS BEEN!

July and August proved to be two back to back, record-breaking attendance months for us!

We are THRILLED to announce that in July, we welcomed a record-breaking 1,197 visitors to our museum! But it didn't stop there— in August, July's record was BROKEN when we welcomed a NEW RECORD of 1,208 visitors!

Throughout the season, our guests have come from almost all fifty states, as well as many countries throughout the world. It is always our pleasure to help our visitors learn about Lititz, as well as the Moravian culture. Kudos to our many volunteers and tour guides who have contributed to this success, and thanks to you, our members, for your continued support!

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The Tale of the Webster Schoolhouse Bell Con't:

In July of that year, Bitner and the board members of the Historical Foundation struck a deal that would allow the bell to again hang in the belfry atop the garage behind their home for as long as the Browns lived there. On the day it was hung, members of the Brown family, as well as many of their neighbors, held a solemn tribute to the Bombergers—champagne was poured over the bell to celebrate its return, and was rung on special family occasions once again, just like it had been many years before.

When the Browns moved out, their word was kept and the bell came back to the foundation.

About the same time the bell was returned, the Historical Foundation purchased additional acreage which included the 1793 Christian Schropp House and the carriage house located behind it, which has proven to be an attractive backdrop for weddings and other community events throughout the year.

When the bell returned, a permanent home was again in a belfry, this one at the top of the carriage house, adding additional charm and beauty to the grounds.

From serving at a local school many years ago to celebrating special occasions for two different families in downtown Lititz, and now at its special home at the Historical Foundation, the bell has had some interesting stories to tell.

We here at the Lititz Historical Foundation feel proud and honored to be the good stewards in preserving this piece of our area's past for many generations to come.



Above: The Webster schoolhouse bell, atop the foundation's carriage house. Left: The Webster schoolhouse, now a private home (2015).

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Learn to Make Paper German Stars!

This winter, we are excited to offer classes on how to make paper German stars! Please mail your check to the address below. 3 different classes will be held at our museum. We hope to see you there!

Learn to make German Paper Stars

Lititz Historical Foundation

Sundays on
November 8th; 22nd; and December 6
2:00 – 4:00pm

Cost:\$15.00

Cost includes Registration Fee, Star Kit and Refreshments

Call to Register: 627 - 4636
or send a check for \$15.00 to:
Lititz Historical Foundation
137 East Main street, P.O. Box 65
Lititz, PA 17543

Please indicate "Paper German Star Class" on the check.

THANK YOU!

Winter Lecture Series Returns in 2016!

We are excited to again host special guest speakers for our Annual Meeting in November, as well as during our winter lecture series which will be held in January, February, and March. As we work to finalize our list of speakers, please take note of the dates below and **SAVE THE DATE!** All lectures will be held on a Saturday beginning at 1:30 pm in the Lititz Library's community room. We thank the library for allowing us to continue to hold these lectures in this space. Keep an out on our events page on our website, or in upcoming issues of the Lititz Record Express.

November 14th (Annual Meeting)

January 16th, 2016

February 20th, 2016

March 19, 2016

Our Annual Carol Sing and Christmas Candlelight Tour

The Christmas season will be here before you know it, and the Lititz Historical Foundation wants to help you get in the holiday spirit with two **FREE** holiday events!

First is our very popular Community Christmas Carol Sing, held in conjunction with the Lititz Moravian Archives Committee slated for 7pm on Thursday December 10th at Church Square. The Moravian Trombone Choir will be on hand and free song sheets will be handed out as you, your friends, neighbors and family sing holiday classics. Afterward, all are welcome to warm up inside Fellowship Hall where light refreshments will be served. The Putz will also be available for various showings throughout the evening in the church's social hall.

The next evening, Friday December 11th, you will further get into the Christmas spirit by attending our **FREE** Christmas Candlelight tour of the historic 1792 Johannes Mueller House from 5pm-9pm, during Lititz's very popular Second Friday December event. The house retains its original architectural character and has been carefully restored with hundreds of traditional antiques from the late 1700's and early



1800's. Period costumed docents will lead you through this historic home as you discover what life was like in the closed Moravian town of Lititz. After your tour, take a stroll through our free Lititz Museum next door where additional historical artifacts, antiques and so much more await your curiosity.

DID YOU KNOW...?



The Sensenich Bros. Company was started by brothers Harry and Martin Sensenich of Kissel Hill. In 1923, an article appeared in the Lititz Record indicating that the brothers were part of a team that developed an "Airmobile" (half car, half airplane) which could travel 60 miles per hour on a good road, or 100 miles per hour on ice when equipped with runners.

The local brothers went on to further experiment with propellers, and the rest is history!

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