

Fall 2013

# Historical Journal



LITITZ HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

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## M.C. Demmy

*Glenn Knight*

From just after World War I through the mid-1950's Lititz public schools were known for being among the most progressive school districts in the country.

During that time Lititz fielded the first high school band in Lancaster County, the first special education program, home economics curriculum, and industrial arts concentration.

The town's first athletic field was opened and the first school cafeteria was established in the newly expanded school building during this period. In 1935, Lititz formed one of the first community public libraries in Lancaster County.

The guiding force behind all of this was one man—Professor M. C. Demmy,

Supervising Principal of the Lititz School District from 1922 through 1951. For 29 of his 47 years as an educator, he served the students of Lititz as well as the community being forced to retire in 1951 under a new state law setting an optional age

limit for educators. The controversial school board action forced a number of local well known and respected educators into retirement.

Maurice C. Demmy was born on Sept. 1, 1888 in Bainbridge, Lancaster County, along the Susquehanna River where he completed his high school studies. In 1911 he entered Millersville Nor-

mal School, returning to Bainbridge to teach high school. The Heidelberg Township Consolidated Schools in Lebanon County hired him in 1915 as their Supervising Principal. Three years later he was selected to be Supervising Principal of the schools in Morrisville, Bucks County.



*Above: M.C. Demmy*

*Story continued on page 4 inside...*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

We have been very busy! Our numbers are in, and we have welcomed almost 3,000 visitors to our museum and the Johannes Mueller house this summer. I attribute this to the hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm within our town that is very evident both internally with our board of directors, and externally (towards our guests and customers) by our various volunteers and tour guides. I salute each and every one of them for a job well done.

On November 16th our annual meeting will take place at the Lititz Public Library. We thank both Sallie Rihn and the staff at the library for allowing us to have this program along with our Winter 2014 lecture series again at this venue. Keep an eye both on our website and within the pages of the Lititz Record Express where we will announce our guest speakers for these programs!

A few months ago, several members of our board spent a Saturday morning working with the community in helping to restore the 1744 St. James Cemetery. This area, at the intersection of Pine Lane and West Center street, was in poor condition for many years. Led by community volunteer Shawn Houchin, this graveyard was beautified and included such tasks as cleaning each stone, leveling the ground, planting flowers, and installing a park bench. Special thanks also to Bill Oehme of Lititz for using the "shaving cream method" that helped him identify stones that were once thought to be unreadable. The very last step in the process was laying the stones back in their original places using an old plot plan that is in the Lititz Moravian Archives building. An article which appeared in last month's Lititz Record Express written by yours truly is excerpted below:

*The spirit of community pride was displayed in a very large way recently with the restoration and beautification of the grounds which make up the St. James Graveyard. This plot of land is located at the corner of Pine Lane and West Center streets in Lititz. Approximately 182 souls are said to be buried there.*

*The beginning of this congregation started with several citizens who were moved by Count Zinzendorf's preachings in 1742, and decided to organize and call themselves the Warwick (Moravian) Country Congregation. This group was primarily made up of followers of the Reformed and Mennonite denominations. Their place of worship, consecrated on July 25, 1744 (St. James Day), was thus named the St. James Church. Burials began that same year.*

*In 1889, the trustees of the Moravian Congregation begin a task to renovate the St. James Graveyard removing brush, bramble, planting trees, and repairing the enclosure. The stones were temporarily taken up to level the ground and were then laid back down in straight rows - however, NOT back in the correct places. After this unfortunate incident, it was said that the locations of the exact sites where the stones belonged were hopelessly lost forever. In 1941, in memory of her husband who served as the church's sexton for more than 40 years, Mrs. Eugene Kreider led an effort to tidy up the cemetery by clearing debris, adding a chain-link fence, and erecting a monument on the southeast corner of the plot.*

*A few months ago, Lititz resident Shawn Houchin, who frequently walks his dog by this cemetery was concerned over the condition of the property, so he created a plan of action and presented it to the Lititz Moravian cemetery committee. Shortly thereafter, the committee approved his proposal.*

## **New Accessions**

We are pleased to announce many new donations to our ever-growing archives. We thank all of the donors for thinking of us as they decided where these items should go. We encourage you to consider donating any Lititz or Warwick Township related items to our archives where they can be studied, interpreted, and taken care of for generations to come!

1. Plans and fundraising paperwork concerning the rebuilding of the 1884 Passenger and Depot train station which currently serves as the Lititz Welcome Center. Donated by Jim Wynkoop.
2. Various antique tapestries, tablecloths, and wool blankets. Donated by Mrs. Blu Scheree Miller. Donated in memory of Ada Lydia Ann Smith.
3. Various deeds including many having to do with Doster properties around Lititz. Donated by Jere Schlemm in memory of Ethel Murr who currently resides at Luther Acres.
4. Old wooden shipping crate with lettering "Ideal Cocoa and Chocolate Lititz". Donated by Jesse Wenger. Given in memory of Dorothy J. Burkhart.
5. An old Lititz school photo, a Belshazzar musical book from 1904, and other assorted Lititz items. Donated by Ken Hess of Lititz.
6. Several deeds originating from Warwick Township. Donated by Carl Bomberger.
7. A wall hung cabinet used at the H.P. Fry Drug store which was later the Hensel Drug Store; as well as several ephemeral items having to do with Lititz. Donated by Hank Auwerda.

*The Foundation is very thankful for the above generous gifts!  
Additional donations will be printed in future issues of the Historical Journal.*

## **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](mailto:cory@lititzhistoricalfoundation.com) and he will be happy to add you to the email newsletter list.

Thank You!

## M.C. Demmy Con't:

In his four years at Morrisville he raised the standards of education from second to first class according to the requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

He resigned from the Morrisville position, for "climatic conditions" in 1922 and accepted an offer from the Lititz School Board.

Following his teacher training at Millersville, he attended courses at Valparaiso University and earned a Bachelor of Arts from Lebanon Valley College, later picking up a master's degree from Columbia University.



An active Mason, Demmy was a 50-year member of Andrew H. Hershey Lodge 764 in Lancaster. He was also a member of the Lancaster Lodge of Perfection, Lancaster County Shrine Club and the Zembo Temple in Harrisburg, Pa.

He became an elder in the Lititz Moravian Church where he attended regularly with his wife, the former Aurora K. Phalm and their daughter, Arlyne. In the community he was president of the Lititz Chamber of Commerce and served on Borough Council for eight years as well as four years on the Borough Water Authority. A founding member of the Lititz Public Library, he served as president of the board and then president emeritus. He was president of the Rotary Club of Lititz, Lititz Welfare Board, and the Lititz Recreation Center. As Chairman of the March of Dimes in Lititz, he ran the fund raising efforts during a time before Dr. Salk's vaccine when infantile paralysis (polio) was a major health concern. He was also active in the Association for Retarded Citizens and the Lititz Senior Citizens, as well as retaining membership in Lititz's unique Young Men's Business League.

When, in the early 1930's, the Borough of Lititz was considering the purchase of Christmas lights for the community, Demmy was president of the Chamber of Commerce and had just recently started the Industrial (then called manual) Arts curriculum. He suggested that stars designed to fit the Washington Standard street lights in the downtown area might be a good option. He then said that his students would be happy to design and build them as a Yule project. Thus, one of Lititz' iconic sights began in the mind of M. C. Demmy.

At the presentation of the Paul E. Beck Memorial Band Shell to the Lititz Springs Park Committee and the community from the Chamber of Commerce in 1937, Prof. Demmy was in charge of the presentation program.

*Above: Tire Registration-Lititz, Pennsylvania. This took place in the school library, supervised by principal M. C. Demmy. At right is the town librarian, Mrs. (SIC) Searle. (Library of Congress file photo).*

*Story concludes on Page 5...*



## M.C. Demmy Con't:

During World War II the professor ran the Lititz Borough Ration Board and was active in the county's Russian Aid Society.

For 39 years he was seemingly everywhere in Lititz as an educational leader, community volunteer, religious shepherd, and tireless worker. Even after his retirement from active teaching, he continued to help students as the local representative for the World Book Encyclopedia.

When the Lititz High School Band gave its final performance in March of 1956, a retired M. C. Demmy was one of the honored guest conductors. That fall saw the debut of the Warwick High School Band.

Eventually moving from his home at 419 S. Cedar street, he settled into Moravian Manor where in 1985 at the age of 96 he died and was buried next to his wife in the Fairview Cemetery outside of Manheim.

Few people remember what this effervescent personality did for the community of Lititz. On several occasions groups of citizens have attempted to have his name honored within the Warwick School District but have been unsuccessful in their worthy quest.

Sir Isaac Newton reminds us: "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." Professor M. C. Demmy was one of those giants in our community.

## The 1744 St. James Cemetery Restoration Con't:



*Sacrificing many hours of his time, Houchin carefully removed each stone to begin the restoration process. Tasks such as grinding stumps, removing roots, and even receiving cash donations from three generous citizens to cover a specialist to use ground penetrating radar to locate tombstones that had sunken into the ground took place. Using this technology, the St. James Church's original foundation was discovered, along with a second foundation situated on the southwest corner of the property. Once the church's foundation was pin-*

*pointed, an early plot plan of the cemetery could be oriented correctly to show where many of the stones were originally laid. Finally, a large number of tombstones can be laid back to their places of origin.*

*This beautification project is an outstanding example of what one history-minded community member can do when they have a desire to make their town even greater.*

*Above: Shawn Houchin (center) and many community volunteers work hard to restore the 1744 St. James Cemetery.*

## PICTURE QUIZ



*Picture Quiz: Although slightly changed from when this photo was taken, where can this beautiful and serene landscape be seen today?*

*Answer to the Summer 2013 edition's picture Quiz: This photo is now the patio of the General Sutter Inn.*

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