

Spring 2014

# Historical Journal



**LITITZ HISTORICAL FOUNDATION**

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## *A Brief History of the Lititz Historical Foundation*

*Charlene Van Brookhoven*

In 1957 a group of history-minded Lititz residents came up with the idea of organizing a museum pertaining to the history of the Moravian community. After the 1956 bicentennial celebration in Lititz, funds were left over to be dispensed to a history-themed project. Several members of the Bicentennial Committee came up with a plan to house a collection of artifacts used in Lititz homes during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thus, the Lititz Bicentennial Committee became the Lititz Historical Foundation.

The group was led by Lititz pharmacist Glenn McElroy, who purchased the 1792 Johannes Mueller House at 137-139 E. Main St. It was the perfect location for a museum in Lititz. The building was built by Johannes (John) Mueller (Miller) as a home for his family. Mueller was the town dyer. His occupation in the Moravian settlement was to dye wool spun by the ladies in town. The main color, brown, would have come from the husk of native black walnut trees growing in the vicinity. Wild plants and herbs would have given a varied choice of colors for the hand-spun skeins of yarn. He also had the job of tanning hides. In the beginning of the 1800s natural tanning of hides was a long, slow process. The odor of the raw hides and the processes used would have been extremely strong and disagreeable.



The frame section of The Mueller House at 137 E. Main St., was used by Frederick Zitzman, second postmaster of Lititz, as a post office. The stone section at 139 E. Main St. housed the following:

1866 - Adam Hambright – husband of Zitzman's daughter

1895 – Mrs. Lavinia Lane

*Above: An early 1900s view of the Johannes Mueller House. During this time, the home was occupied by Mrs. Emma "Mammy" Spangler, who is shown here with her two boys Paul (left), and John (right). The millinery shop on the right was conducted during this time by Mrs.*

*Horace Shelly.*

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## *A Brief History of the Lititz Historical Foundation Con't:*

### Board of Directors:

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1902 – Mrs. Lane's sister Mrs. Annie Wissler (The house was known as the Wissler House for many years)

1913 – It was willed to the Moravian Church by Mrs. Wissler to be held in trust, and the income to be used for needy women over the age of 50 who were members of the congregation.

To obtain the income the church rented the house as a dwelling, a grocery store, a millinery shop, and then once again a dwelling. In October of 1962, the Moravian Church sold it to The Lititz Historical Foundation for \$6,000 with the agreement that it would become a museum.

In the early 1960s the word spread throughout Lititz that a new museum was being organized. In January of 1964 a capital campaign was started to raise funds for restoration of the 1792 Mueller House. Residents, whose roots went back to the founding of the one-time German-speaking community, began searching their attics, cupboards and basements. Precious family heirlooms were found and donated to The Lititz Historical Foundation with the promise that these items would be preserved in an environment suitable for long-term preservation and safe keeping. The original committee was overwhelmed with the generosity of townspeople who were willing to donate their family's history to the project.

In 1964 Dr. Cameron Lane, whose dental office was located at 65 E. Main St., passed away. He was an avid antique collector most of his life. His collection of over 1,000 pieces was donated to The Wheatland Foundation in Lancaster. Members of the board at Wheatland dispersed the majority of Dr. Lane's gift to various historical societies throughout Lancaster County. A large number of the antiques did not fit into the period of occupancy of James Buchanan's house. The Lititz museum received 129 pieces including a beautiful walnut Dutch cupboard, pieces of ironwork made in Lititz, a Moravian coffee roaster and a waffle iron used to make Lovefeast wafers. Because of this generosity and the foresight of Wheatland's board, Lititz has maintained important remnants of Lititz history.

A group of women interested in the furnishings for the museum were busy at work adding to the antiques, some donated, some on loan and some items bought at public auctions in the Lititz/Warwick area. Miss Dorothy Habecker, who lived several houses east of the museum, donated the coat rack belonging to John Sutter of California gold fame. That one piece of Sutter memorabilia led to an entire room dedicated to him. After Miss Habecker's death, her family donated over 100 fans which she received as gifts. Included in this collection is a beautiful fan once owned by Mrs. Abraham (Mary Todd) Lincoln, former First Lady.

An endeavor of this size needs not only articles to fill glass cases, but also money to pay the bills and make the necessary repairs to the 1792 building.

*Concluded on page 3...*

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## ***A Brief History of the Lititz Historical Foundation Concluded:***

In 1962 the board of directors, led by Bill Light and Glenn McElroy, came up with a project to hopefully make enough money to help defray the expenses at the museum. A three day Antiques Show, held over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday, was a huge success. Thirty one antique dealers filled the Bobst Recreation Center in the Lititz Springs Park. Dealers came from all over eastern PA to sell pieces of history to collectors. They brought unusual and unique items pertaining to the early businesses in town. Members of The Lititz Historical Foundation purchased many of these items to display in the newly formed Johannes Mueller House museum. The Lititz Antiques Show has become the only show of its kind in the county and will celebrate 52 years this coming June. Dealers are always anxious to set up their wares at Bonfield Elementary School. Sales during this two day event flourish.

In 1990 the Board of Directors of The Lititz Historical Foundation were informed that the house at 145 E. Main Street, one door east of the Mueller House, was going to be for sale. The Christian Schropp house was built in 1793 and constructed with the same limestone and German architectural exterior as the Mueller House. Schropp was the Moravian community's nail smith, teacher and church musician. George Hepp, a jeweler in town, lived in the house during the early to mid 1900s. For many years, 145 E. Main St. was known locally as the "Hepp House."

In the summer of 1991, a capital campaign drive led by Henry R. Gibbel was begun with a goal of \$325,000 to purchase and renovate the 1793 Schropp House. Initially the campaign raised enough money to purchase the building but was in need of funds to complete the renovations, furnishings and exhibit cases. A few more large contributions arrived and the project was a success financially. The grand opening of The Lititz Museum was held September 17, 1992.

From the first day The Johannes Mueller House opened to the public in June of 1965, and the Lititz Museum in 1992, the buildings and their wonderful collections of Lititz history have become a learning center for locals and tourists alike. Residents of the town love to share the history of our Moravian roots.

The Lititz Historical Foundation's buildings on Main Street are filled with this history thanks to the people who had the foresight to preserve our past.



*Above: The 1793 Christian Schropp house, home of the Lititz Museum.*



**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 preserved for generations to come!

1. A Lititz Springs Ginger Ale spoon/bottle opener. Donated by Raymond and Svea Eckert Hoover.
2. A signed Mueller House framed print of the Johannes Mueller House by artist Mark Workman; five LP's of recordings of the Lititz Moravian Choir; 14 books dating from 1856-1881 which belonged to Harry Smith of Lititz grammar schools and Lititz Academy; an 1876 Moravian hymnal; an 1881 hymnal entitled "Hymnal of Evangelical Association"; and other assorted Lititz items including post cards and collectibles. Items donated by Kathryn Reifsnyder Bates.
3. A large box of Lititz and Moravian items including memorabilia pertaining to the 4th of July programs, Lititz 250th Anniversary keepsakes, booklets, pamphlets, tickets, newspaper articles, photos, and an LP recording on the Lititz Moravian Bicentennial Choir concert. Donated by Larry Donmoyer.
4. A DVD copy of "Lititz: America's Coolest Small Town". Donated by Blue Ridge Cable-11.
5. A CD-ROM of various old newspaper articles written by Elizabeth Lehman Myers on the history of Moravian Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Lititz. Donated and organized by James Farley.
6. An assortment of pamphlets, booklets, and history of the Animal Trap Company of Lititz. Donated by David Drummond.

*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!*

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## Annual Plant Exchange Slated for May 4

The Lititz Historical Foundation will hold its Annual Plant Exchange on Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM. The event will be held in the Mary Oehme Gardens behind the Museum buildings at 137-145 East Main Street in Lititz, rain or shine. The plants to be exchanged must be perennials, and must have identification tags for each plant. Each plant must be placed in a container for transportation. Upon arrival a ticket will be handed out for each plant. The plants must be placed in these categories: Sun, Shade, Exotic, Bulbs, Herbs and Ground Cover.

Tickets then can be redeemed for another plant after all of the plants are placed in the categories and the people have had some time to explore the different categories.

An announcement will be made at approximately 1:30 PM to select plants in exchange for your tickets. The Lititz Garden Club members will be on hand for assistance and to help answer gardening questions. You may bring 1, 2, 5, or more plants and enjoy the afternoon in the Foundation's gardens! The event is open to the public and there is no charge for this event, but a free-will donation can be made to help maintain the gardens.



**52nd Annual**  
**2014 Lititz Antiques Show**  
**Over 40 Dealers • Country Decor**  
 Lititz Historical Foundation  
 Benefit Johannes Mueller House, 1792

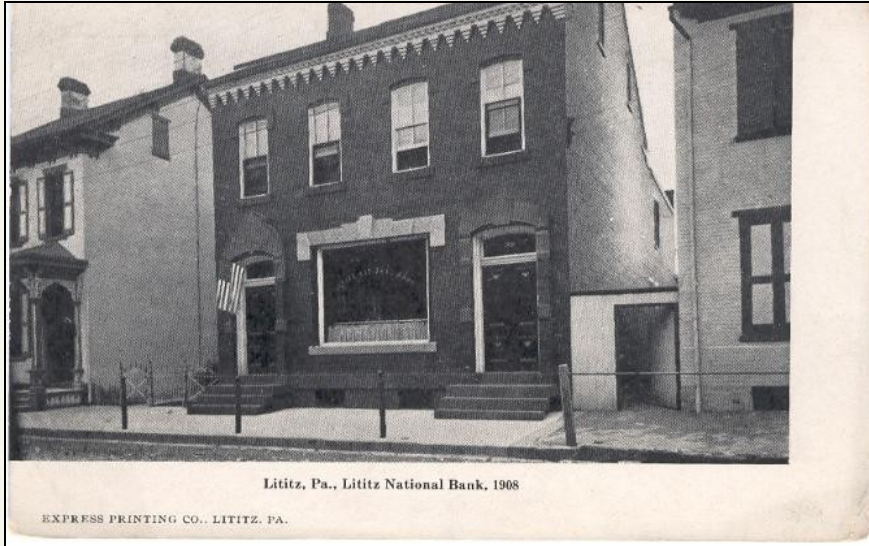
**Fri June 27th & Sat June 28th**

Friday 10 - 5    Saturday 10 - 4  
 Bonfield Elementary School  
 101 N. Oak St., Lititz, PA 17543

**SAVE THE  
 DATE!**  
**Coming June 27  
 & 28 is our  
 52nd Annual  
 Antiques Show!**

**More details in  
 our Summer  
 2014 issue!**

## PICTURE QUIZ



*Shown here is an old postcard of the Lititz National Bank on Main street.  
What business currently occupies this space?*

*Answer to the Winter 2014 Picture Quiz: This was a photo of a “schnitzelbunk”, which was an important tool for chipping or shaving wood or leather.*

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