

Spring 2015

# Historical Journal



**LITITZ HISTORICAL FOUNDATION**

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

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[www.lititzhistoricalfoundation.com](http://www.lititzhistoricalfoundation.com)

## *Miss Grace Keller—Dedicated Lititz Telephone Operator*

*Charlene Van Brookhoven*

Individuals and families in search of their historical ties to Lititz mainly concentrate on the buildings and industries in town. They are interested in what house their families lived in and if there are relatives still living here. Most tourists have questions regarding the Moravian Church and wonder if Moravians are similar to the Amish. Of course, the first question from an out of the area visitor is “how many blocks to the chocolate factory.” Rarely do locals or visitors inquire about the people that helped form the town.

One interesting person, Miss Grace Keller, became the town's telephone operator in 1885 at the age of nineteen. Fifty-six years later, in 1941, she retired from The Bell Telephone Company. Her dedication as Lititz's telephone operator was typical of the hard working people in Lititz. The years of her employment saw many improvements in the telephone system.

Miss Keller, on the day of her birthday in November 1917, told a Lititz Record newspaper reporter that her first switchboard looked like a grandfather clock with no numbers. At that time, only sixty homes in town had phones. She earned \$10 per month and said “that is a very good salary for just talking thirteen hours a day.”

“Number please” was Miss Keller's response to every incoming call to her switchboard. After connecting the two parties through a system of many electrical cords or switches, “did they answer” was her next expected remark.

In the early days of her career, before rules were established by the telephone companies not to allow operators to divulge general information, Miss Keller helped half the town locate the other half. When there was no answer at the other end of the line, Grace would say in her sweet voice “they're away now, but I think you can find them at the drug store.” Or “I don't think Helen is home yet. I just saw her crossing Main Street.”

Lititz, of course, had fewer residents in the early 1900's and Grace knew them all. She had suggestions for the unanswered calls that arrived at her switchboard. “The Mrs. is hard of hearing. She probably is upstairs and can't hear the phone.



*Above: Miss Grace Keller. Story continued on page 3 inside...*

## Recent Acquisitions

### Board of Directors:

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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. Items pertaining to Rosey's Lunch Wagon in Lititz; and a "Brief History of Wilbur Chocolate" historical summary.
2. Memorabilia pertaining to the class of 1940 at Lititz High School; and historical newspaper clippings involving those class members.
3. A glue cup and knife that was used to apply glue to boxes at Morgan Paper Mill in Lititz. Gift of Glenn and Rae Zartman.

### Thanks to the following businesses for their support:

1. Scooter's restaurant of Lititz.
2. Keller Brothers auto dealerships of Lititz.
3. American Legion Post 56 in Lititz.

*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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*HISTORICAL JOURNAL*

## *Miss Grace Keller—Con't:*

Her son is over at the drug store. Will he do? I can ring him there.” The residents relied on Miss Keller to always have their best interest foremost in her work. Her confidentiality was superior in that she never divulged information she heard over the phone lines.

Grace Keller also served as the person responsible for setting off the fire alarms. One evening the siren would not stop blasting even after she turned off the switch. The town folks were convinced that a huge conflagration must be out of control nearby since the siren would not stop ringing. Much to the relief of everyone, it turned out a small chicken coop in town had caught fire and was quickly extinguished. The malfunctioning siren was fixed and the excited townspeople could go back to their beds.

During the fifty six years Grace Keller diligently served as Lititz's phone operator, she revealed her most frequently asked questions were “What time is it? Where's the fire? and Who won the basketball game?” And she always knew the answers!



*Top: The telephone exchange, one of the locations where Keller worked, located at 136 East Main street (smaller building on right). Left: the interior of 136 East Main street.*

*Spring 2015*

HISTORICAL JOURNAL

***New Location Selected for our 53rd Annual Antiques Show***

*Henry Paul*

Warwick Middle School, 104 Maple Street (behind Warwick High School), will be the new location for the Lititz Historical Foundation's annual Antiques Show, now in its 53rd year. Show dates are June 26 and 27 (Friday and Saturday). Hours are Friday 10-5pm and Saturday 9-2pm. All are invited to attend. A small admission fee will be collected at the door.

The beloved show, a special fundraiser for the 1792 Johannes Mueller House, remains among the oldest, continually running shows in Pennsylvania and the United States. Promoted as an "old time country show," the celebration draws more than 40 dealers specializing primarily in country primitives, textiles, and folk art. Shoppers can expect to find country wares, holiday and kitchen items, stoneware, Pennsylvania German art, and much more.

According to show organizer Ken Martin, "The middle school is a first rate venue for the show. It's larger than the former, with excellent lighting, more than ample parking, and a beautiful atrium area next to the gymnasium with plenty of natural light from two stories of floor to ceiling windows. You need to see it to appreciate it."

For the first time ever, show attendees will be able to purchase food from a food service truck set up outdoors, adjacent to the show entrance. Hungry shoppers can enjoy a diverse menu and eat comfortably in an air conditioned cafeteria.

***We look forward to seeing you in June!***



2015  

**Lititz Historical Foundation**  
**53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Antiques Show**

➤ NEW LOCATION ◀

**Warwick Middle School**  
401 Maple Street  
Lititz, PA 17543

— Dates —  
Friday June 26th  
Saturday June 27th

— Times —  
Friday 10 - 5  
Saturday 9 - 2




Over 40 Dealers • Primarily Country

## ***Still Time to Renew Your Membership for 2015!***

Our 2015 membership drive is still underway! We ask that you will renew your membership for next year, and help us continue to preserve the history of Lititz. With various events throughout the year such as the community Carol Sing, the Christmas Candlelight Tour, the Plant Exchange, various winter lectures, and so much more, we give back to our community in so many special ways.

We hope that you will consider renewing your membership, and ask that you to take it one step further this year. Please tell a friend, neighbor, or family member about us. They may also visit our website and click on the "Become a Member" tab to join. Remember that members receive unlimited tours of the Johannes Mueller House, a 10% discount in our gift shop, and this newsletter delivered to their door or email inbox. Best part is, they are doing their part to help us preserve Lititz history. We THANK YOU so much for your continued support!

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## **Lititz Historical Foundation's Annual Plant Exchange**

The Lititz Historical Foundation will hold its Annual Plant Exchange on Sunday, May 3rd 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 exchange 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. These tickets can be redeemed for another plant after all plants are placed in the categories and the people have some time to explore the Plant Exchange 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 can 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.



## DID YOU KNOW...?



*Did You Know...Miss Lorna Malcolmson Ringler, Miss Pennsylvania 1956, was one of the guests of honor during Lititz's Bicentennial Parade in 1956.*

*Answer from our previous issue: The couple pictured was none other than Hollywood actress Ruth Hussey. Her husband, who was pictured on the right, was Lititz native Bob Longenecker.*

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Lititz Historical Foundation's  
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