

Spring 2025

# Historical Journal



**LITITZ HISTORICAL FOUNDATION**

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

717-627-4636

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

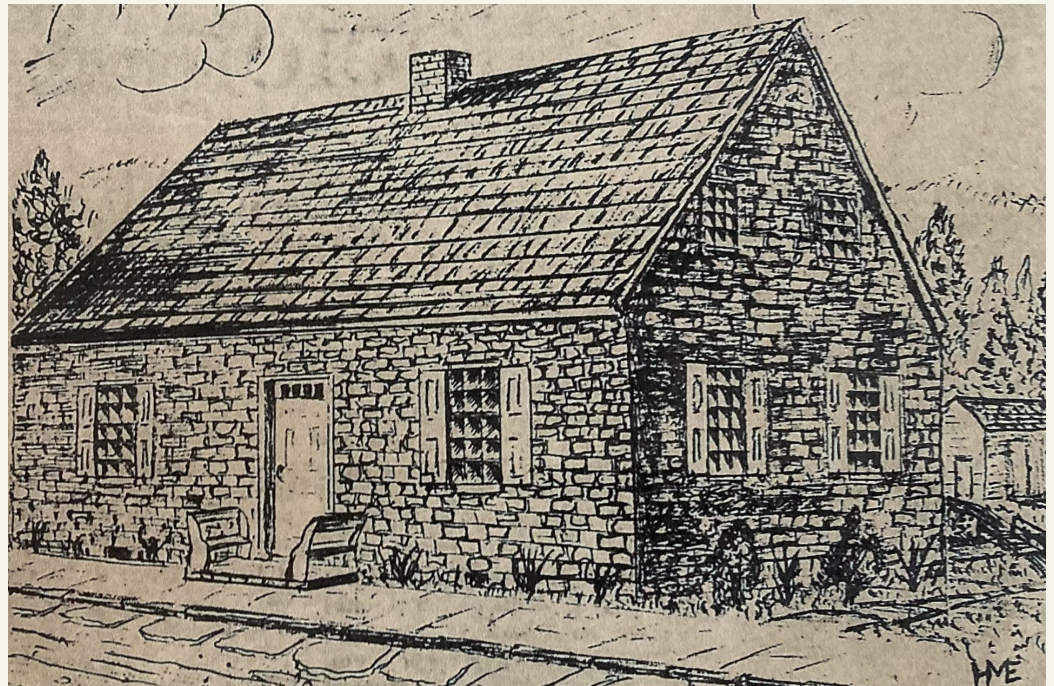
## 39 East Main Street - The Geitner Tannery

*Charlene Van Brookhoven*

As Lititz was growing as a Moravian community, the town Brethren had to assign tradesmen to attain a self-sustaining economy. Some of the men had built a grist mill and saw mill on the east side of town before the first homes could be built. As new families were moving in, they were called upon to share their individual skills. It was quickly realized that a tanner was needed as leather was used for shoes, men's breeches and horse and carriage gear.

In 1767 John George Geitner brought his family to Lititz and moved into 39 East Main Street and set up a tannery. They moved into Brother Ebermann's house, constructed in 1761, which was the sixth house built in the town. He learned the trade of tanning hides from his father while growing up in Germany and quickly became skilled at the trade.

Geitner set up his tanning shop behind his house along the main street thinking it would be convenient for his customers to drop off their hides. This location did not last long as the stench of the tanning process quickly became offensive to his neighbors and most of the townspeople. The odor from the tannery was brought about by the raw, uncleaned hides that had been brought to his shop. He was ordered to move his tannery along the creek at the back of his property after a small race was dug to allow water to run into the troughs containing raw hides. (\*This was the first known means of pollution in what is now the Lititz Run.)



*Above: A rendering of 39 East Main Street by Hiram Eberly. Story continued on page 3 inside*

## Our 62nd Annual Antiques Show is June 27—28

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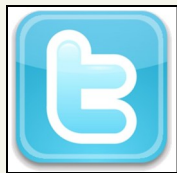
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Our 62nd Year!  
JUNE 27 AND 28, 2025

Lancaster County's oldest show of its kind and always a perennial favorite, our biggest fundraiser of the year will be staged at the Warwick Middle School (401 Maple Street) in Lititz June 27th and 28th, 2025.

Admission is \$10 per person. \$9 in advance by visiting the ticket link below. Hours are Friday 10am-5pm; and Saturday 9am-2pm.

This two-day event is an "old time country show" a cast of over 50 dealers will present a wide range of interesting, reasonably priced country wares and dry goods. Shoppers can expect to find farm items, stoneware, kitchen goods, textiles, early lighting, transfer ware, doll items, coin silver, holiday items, Pennsylvania folk art, and more!

Hungry shoppers will have an opportunity onsite to purchase hot food for lunch or a snack.

This is our biggest fundraiser of the year – See you there!

Purchase your advance tickets here to save a dollar on admission:

[https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/62nd-annual-antiques-show?fbclid=IwY2xjawIXLX5leHRuA2F1bQIxMAABHZYqZVbGt71tcmie-ihlikFynRDQKL7DwKw3Be9oe-aFmy4L7CYE-jt81Q\\_aem\\_tc9Y3ViiQDAyF07zITpVjg](https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/62nd-annual-antiques-show?fbclid=IwY2xjawIXLX5leHRuA2F1bQIxMAABHZYqZVbGt71tcmie-ihlikFynRDQKL7DwKw3Be9oe-aFmy4L7CYE-jt81Q_aem_tc9Y3ViiQDAyF07zITpVjg)



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## **GEITNER TANNERY STORY CON'T:**

The process of tanning hides in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was soaking and cleaning with water and removing the hair. Next the softening of the pelt or hide was accomplished with lime and adding vegetable, nut or bark tannin which brought about the conversion of hides into leather. The last process was to add fats or oils before it was taken to the town dyer Johannes Mueller, at 137 East Main Street. Geitner's tannery soon became a destination not only for the Moravian community but also to accommodate farmers and trappers living in Warwick Township and northern Lancaster County.

In 1777 the Lititz Moravian members were asked by Gen. George Washington to house wounded Revolutionary War soldiers from the battles of Brandywine and Germantown. The men and boys who were residing in the Single Brethren's House had to vacate and live wherever they could find housing. By the beginning of 1778, when a large number of soldiers arrived into town, Geitner had to move his family to a neighboring home so doctors and officers could take residence a distance from the hub of the sick and diseased. In August of 1778 an end came to the disruption of the town as the soldiers were moved farther south to other hospital facilities.

The Geitner family as well as the entire Moravian community could once again return to somewhat normal lives. During this time Geitner's son John III took over the tannery to relieve his aging father. A third generation of the Geitner family, Jacob, soon became an experienced tanner and joined the growing, commercial business. The family continued the tannery at 39 E. Main Street into the late 1800's. In the year 1855 Lititz ceased to be an exclusive church settlement and welcomed non-Moravians into their town. By the early 1900's it was necessary to welcome a physician to care for the sick of the growing number of townspeople. Dr. J. L. Hertz moved into 39 East Main Street and began his medical practice.



A tannery, a doctor and many and varied businesses have occupied 39 East Main Street. Today, 2025, Main Men & Main Men Ladies occupy this address one of the remaining buildings that are a part of our original 1756 Moravian town of Lititz.

## **Whiskey and History Tours return for 2025!**

If you enjoy Lititz and whiskey, then this is the tour for you! Your evening will begin with a guided walking tour of historic Main Street, Lititz. Through personal stories and beautiful architecture, Lititz, Pennsylvania's heritage and unique past will come alive as you travel from one end of historic Main Street to the other, learning about over 25 historic structures along the way, many of which date back to the 1700s.

Just some of the many places you will see include: America's first commercial pretzel bakery, Lancaster County's first pharmacy, the location of Lititz's first bank, a Revolutionary War Hospital, and more!

Visitors will then visit a local distillery, where they will enjoy a guided tasting of three local whiskeys. Guests will also learn about the whiskey and distilling history of the Lititz area. The tour will run from 4-6pm and begins across from the square in Lititz. This is an exclusive tour limited to 16 people and sure to fill up fast! Cost is \$25 per person. You must be 21 years of age or older. Visit the BOOK NOW button on our website to book or call us at 717-627-4636. Hurry! These tours fill up fast!

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## Our 2025 Summer Concert Series kicks off June 22nd

We are pleased to yet again present to you four outstanding Central Pennsylvania live musical acts in our Mary Oehme Gardens this Summer.

We're kicking it off on June 22nd with Fierce! Playing all over Central Pennsylvania but calling Lancaster County their home, Fierce will entice you with songs from Adele, Heart, Jethro Tull, Led Zeppelin, No Doubt, Patsy Cline, Pink, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Eric Clapton, ZZ Ward, Jefferson Airplane, Grace Potter, Melissa Etheridge, Elle King, Gin Wigmore, Stevie Nicks, Janis Joplin, Cranberries, blues and originals.

All shows begin at 6:30pm. The gardens are located behind 145 East Main Street, Lititz, PA 17543.

The evening of music is sponsored by Tiger's Eye of Lititz – THANK YOU!

Bring your chairs, blankets, and dancing shoes and invite your friends, family, and neighbors. Plenty of free parking nearby is available. Refreshments will be available for a small fee. This is a pay what you can event. We will be collecting donations that evening to help preserve our gardens and 18th century structures.

Stay tuned to our Facebook page for announcement regarding the other three acts playing this summer!

Care to make an online donation? Click the link below to give a safe and secure gift in any amount!

[https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/donation-form/f1eaa470-91fb-479e-ba5f-fc6424e945cf?fbclid=IwY2xjawIXK29leHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHaExfAHO7ZsuQwuC9H1KmtPZ7oC28xgLfFsZcVsK-oJKUEJzZ54Sk3L-2g\\_aem\\_9-eF6fnAFvJK07d0kvxQuA](https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/donation-form/f1eaa470-91fb-479e-ba5f-fc6424e945cf?fbclid=IwY2xjawIXK29leHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHaExfAHO7ZsuQwuC9H1KmtPZ7oC28xgLfFsZcVsK-oJKUEJzZ54Sk3L-2g_aem_9-eF6fnAFvJK07d0kvxQuA)

**LITITZ HISTORICAL FOUNDATION**

**SUMMER CONCERT SERIES**

2025

**June 22**

**July 13**

**Aug 10**

**Aug 31**

sponsored by  
**TIGER'S EYE**  
YOUR WAY YOUR STYLE

Pay what you can-  
Donations benefit  
Lititz Historical  
Foundation

6:30 - 8:00PM

**MARY OEHME GARDENS • 137 E MAIN ST, LITITZ**

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www.lititzhistorical.org

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## Program on Civil War Photography is March 15th

Join us March 15th at the Lititz Public Library for the last presentation in our 2025 Winter lecture series. The program will begin at 1:30pm.

We'll be welcoming historian Steve Whitcomb, who will discuss Civil War photography. This program will have a concentration on photographers Matthew Brady and Alexander Gardner. You will also learn about the images, processes, and equipment which were used during that time, as well as discover some of the famous people who were captured on film throughout that era.

Admission is free, but registration is required. Signups open on March 1st at 9am. Beginning on that day and time, call the library at 717-626-2255 to reserve your spot, or visit the link below to sign up. We hope to see you there!

## 3rd Annual Community Yard Sale is May 10th!

THIS IS A RAIN OR SHINE EVENT!

Search your attic, basement, and closets and turn your unwanted items into CASH at our Community Yard Sale on May 10th! Or attend as a shopper and walk away with some great deals!

This event will be held in the Mary Oehme Gardens, located behind 137 East Main Street, in the heart of downtown Lititz from 7am-12pm. This is a fundraiser for the Lititz Historical Foundation. \$20 per space.

Spaces are limited! Each space sold is for a 6-foot table, which vendors must bring. Email [info@lititzhistoricalfoundation.com](mailto:info@lititzhistoricalfoundation.com) or call 717-627-4636 with questions. Free parking is available in front of the historical foundation. There is also a free lot along Water Street, behind the Lititz Ambulance building, which is steps from the event!

While you're there, be sure to visit the Lititz Historical Foundation's museum and gift shop.

Reserve your space today using this link below or call the foundation at 717-627-4636.



Reserve your spot: [https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/3rd-annual-community-yard-sale?fbclid=IwY2xjawIXIn9leHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHXmigNsCrA3a0XW\\_OVY8jHk9Vhl4KRripBWviDVQ7](https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/3rd-annual-community-yard-sale?fbclid=IwY2xjawIXIn9leHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHXmigNsCrA3a0XW_OVY8jHk9Vhl4KRripBWviDVQ7)

## DID YOU KNOW...?



Shown here are the skilled workers gathered outside the Walter S. Bare tobacco warehouse, once located on West Main Street. Before then, this building served as the malt house for the Rauch and Tshudy Brewery.

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