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Historical Society of Hilltown Township Newsletter

August 2025

We hope you visit the Strassburger Farmstead during the weekend of September 20 and 21. It will mark the 50th anniversary of the Historical Society of Hilltown Township. Maybe the term anniversary is not quite the proper term. How about our 50th birthday? We were formed in 1975, being born in a sense. Either way, join us for the celebration. Our “Fall Festival” this year will be much different than the 15 prior festivals. We are showcasing our local history, rather than crafters. Check out our Hilltown High School yearbooks, the first one published in 1925. Can you find your ancestors? These yearbooks stopped during the depression and World War II, picking up again in 1946, until the big “merge” in 1952.

Books will be displayed, including Bucks County Deeds, Orphan Court Records, Wills, Census records and the like. Some of our duplicates will be for sale.

We possess a nice number of local family histories. Take a seat and page through them. Information for you genealogists! Check out our hundreds of old local photographs in an album or slideshow. Our collection of Lenape artifacts and history will be displayed.

Contained in our archive collection are thousands of old Hilltown documents, some dating back to the mid-1700s. One of the homestead rooms will be dedicated to showing the most interesting items, along with a transcription or translation for those with difficulties in reading centuries old, faded cursive!

At your request, we will have our computer to research family names that may be contained in the Hilltown archives, both in deeds and documents. They may range from a loan of money to a receipt for providing whiskey, to disputes between neighbors.

Check out the transcribed deacons’ meeting minutes from the Hilltown Baptist Church, dating back into the 1700s. The Bucks County Recorder of Deeds will be set up in a room downstairs in the Homestead building. Does this sound like anything we have ever done before? Of course, our three pre-Civil War buildings will be open.

Did you know there was a glass factory in Hilltown, prior to the Revolutionary War? Remnants will be displayed.

Some other changes in our site since last year: We finally got the remainder of the barn painted red. The contractor painted the entire

side that faces the homestead building as well as the back side. Do you remember that old mulberry tree that was next to the driveway? It had a twisted trunk and a root system that was occupied by families of groundhogs. After a partial collapse, we had the entire tree removed. What is left is an unusually shaped low trunk.

That picket fence surrounding the homestead yard is mostly gone. Certain sections have been saved, marking gated areas, some corners, and an opening. Some of our c.1900 photographs are quite clear that the fence didn't exist around this yard, however a picket fence was in an area around a portion of the barn. We just couldn't keep up with the maintenance and it was becoming quite shabby. We think the removal will improve the general appearance of the homestead site. (And easier to mow!)

In June and July of this year, we were the beneficiaries of work performed by the Bucks County Intermediate Unit. These young adults scraped paint, cleaned windows, repainted, cleaned the barn out, and worked on the fence removal project. They worked tirelessly in some very hot weather. They were mentored by Tony, a caring individual and master of project coordination. Three cheers for Deric, Willow, Jake, and Caleb!!!

Last, but not least, the large parking area across Keystone Drive, which was used for parking one day per year, has been sold. Yes, we will miss the luxury of a large parking area, but the sale will allow us to make much needed improvements. Did you know that the heating system for the first-floor homestead needs replacement? Or the boiler in the museum probably dates to the 1950s? The homestead basement takes in much water. And so on!

Come visit for our 50th birthday party! See you in September.

The Dry Decade

Prohibition was a battle dating back into the 19th century but took hold with overwhelming majority votes in Congress in January 1919. This new law, the 18th amendment to the Constitution was to take effect on January 17, 1920. In Pennsylvania, prohibition began in February 1919. Ultimately, it was overturned when the 21st amendment was passed in December 1933. This trend began even in the 19th century to ban the devil's brew. The Women's Christian Temperance Union as well as the Anti-Saloon League were forerunners in this debate. There was actually a political party named the Prohibitionists. It seemed public sentiment was for this ban, blaming it for violence, alcoholism (yes, it just might follow!) and political corruption.

In January 1920, the liquor signs were removed from the Logan Inn at New Hope. Reported in the News Herald on May 22, 1922: "*A Reading prohibition officer gave up his job because he did not like to drink whiskey, which he was compelled to do in gathering evidence.*" There are a lot of people who would be willing to perform these duties which the officer found so repugnant.

In July 1922, Pennsylvania State Police raided the Public House owned by J. G. Stinley at Hagersville (5th Ave & Old Bethlehem Rd) and the East Rockhill Center Hotel on Ridge Road owned by Stanley Skrazt. The owners were charged with violations of the Volstead Act (Prohibition)



Old East Rockhill Hotel

In April 1923, a group of six Federal agents in a large truck raided a series of local hotels. First, they hit the Central House in Sellersville, owned by Samuel Smith. A thorough search found five quarts of illegal brew. Next stop was in Almont along Ridge Road. Nothing illegal was found. Next stop was the Bush House in Quakertown. A quantity of liquor was found and agents indicated that an arrest warrant would be forthcoming. The Brick Tavern was the next hotel to be victimized. They were forewarned and happily stood by when the premises were searched. A small quantity of cider was discovered and kept by the agents "to test it in the lab". Such was the life of inns and hotels during prohibition.

There were exceptions. Licensed physicians could write prescriptions for booze. It was said that most of them were shams. In a one-year period, ending June 30, 1923, over eleven million prescriptions were filled. My grandfather Skeath owned Skeath's Pharmacy in North Hills and filled many of these prescriptions with alcohol supplied to him by the Bureau of Prohibition, a branch of the U.S. Treasury Department. What medical conditions require whiskey? Indigestion, cancer, nervousness, depression, and teething babies to name but a few.

The Washington House was victimized in February 1924. After a search, "some bottled

goods" were discovered and owner Fargo put up \$1,000 bail. In the 1920s, Federal agents destroyed the bar, looking for the illegal "hooch". The same agents then descended upon the Rocky Ridge Hotel. In addition to finding liquor, they came upon a card game, being played for money. The card players were arrested, including one Robert Mack of Keystone Point. Did you know that Keystone Point is at the intersection of Keystone Drive and Bethlehem Pike? It is the location of our Strassburger Farmstead.

The Unionville Hotel, near the corner of Bethlehem Pike and Unionville Road, was raided in 1926. 31 cases of high-test beer and a gambling machine were seized. In November 1927, three local hotels were raided. The Trewigtown Hotel, at the corner of Bethlehem Pike and Trewigtown Road, was set upon late Saturday night and a vast amount of whiskey and beer was discovered. Rischard Casper, the proprietor, tried to dispose of the evidence by pouring it down a drain but was stopped in the act. Freed's Inn of Souderton was next, but only a small amount of beer was discovered. Asher Freed was arrested, nonetheless.

As time went on, the news seemed to reflect negatively about this new law. The massive effort to eliminate alcohol cost millions, funded by taxpayers. High unemployment during the depression increased the demand of the illegal product. One editorial declared that drinking and driving should be allowed as to not infringe on someone's personal rights. Another editorial stated that after eight years of prohibition, the country's morals had not improved. The population of Bucks County prison had not decreased. The pendulum was swinging.

In time, a grass roots effort began. In Washington, the Volstead Act was coming under fire. A vote in early 1932 kept Prohibition intact, the vote tally being for the

“Drys”. General John Pershing, leader of American troops in WWI, spoke out for the repeal of the Volstead Act. In the political races in 1932, Prohibition was the primary topic, despite the country being immersed in the great depression. The 1932 Presidential election had Hoover as the incumbent arguing for the existing policy and Roosevelt, arguing for the repeal. Roosevelt won in a landslide. By the end of 1933, the 21st amendment to our constitution was passed, for better or worse.



I think we outdid ourselves this year, with four speakers’ programs under our belt so far, and two more scheduled for this coming October. In addition, we will be showcasing David Kimmerly on Saturday Sept 20 and Jeffrey Marshall on Sunday Sept 21. David is a Historic Preservationist and documentarian. It was he who researched our own Strassburger Farmstead site, leading to its inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Although Jeffrey Marshall needs no introduction, I will do so anyway. He spent 40 years with the Heritage Conservancy, the last ten as its president. His work has been recognized on the national, state, and local level. He is the author of six books. Both speakers are highly sought after.

We still have two programs remaining, even after the September event.



The Original Bucks County Boundry

When William Penn first established the Province of Pennsylvania in 1682, he divided the area into three counties. These original

three counties were Philadelphia, Chester, and Bucks

We are in possession of an original document from 1744, describing both Colebrookdale and Franconia in Philadelphia County. Of course, we know now that Colebrookdale is in Berks County, while Franconia is in Montgomery. (That document indicated that William Brigs, woodcutter, was to deliver a horse to John Mathias’ only wife for the sum of two pounds)

Montgomery County was originally part of Philadelphia County. In 1683, the border of Bucks was determined by that northwest straight line on the western edge that remains today. That straight line extended all the way to New York state, ending in what is now Potter County. Around 1752, Northampton County was created, and subsequently the other northern counties began to take shape.

Fact or Fiction?

Jeffrey Marshall is known for his knowledge and research, and in 1993, he wrote a booklet titled “Bucks County History, Fact or Fiction?” It’s a fun publication and I would like to share some of the content here.

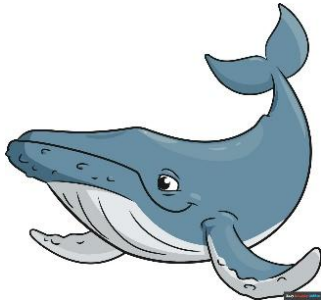
Israel Taylor, one of Bucks County’s early sheriffs was convicted of telling lies. In 1688, Taylor was accused of telling tales about Frances Swift, the wife of John Swift. He was found guilty of spreading malicious gossip and had to post a 20-pound bond and promise to keep the peace.

Ivyland has a pleasant-sounding name but was in fact named after poison ivy! In 1873, Edwin Lacey named the village after *the beautiful, glossy, three-lobed ivy* that was so common in the area.

The “Perils of Pauline” movies were filmed in Tinicum Township. The Uhlerstown area

provided location for some of Pearl White's popular "Perils of Pauline" movie serials.

In the Fall of 1815, a large whale was captured alive and exhibited at the Doylestown Hotel. Adults were charged 25 cents, while the child's rate was 12 ½ cents. (seems fishy to me)



In 1685, Joseph Lunn was the indentured servant of Derrick Clawson. At some point, Clawson struck young Joseph, prompting the servant to utter profanities. Poor Joseph was sentenced to either pay a fine, or spend 15 days in jail, to be fed only bread and water. Clawson ended up paying Joseph's fine, but the judge added 15 days' service to the servant's time. Clawson was also fined for striking his servant. Did you know that Hilltown's first postmaster was Elisha Lunn, taking that post in 1817?

I hope you have been entertained or informed by these stories. Many thanks go out to Jeffrey Marshall for publishing this information 32 years ago.

Samuel Angelmoyer of Silverdale

William W H Davis wrote the famous "History of Bucks County". The first two volumes outline the history of this county, as part of the title reads "From the Discovery of the Delaware to the Present Time". A third volume consisted of biographies of notable citizens, I believe many were collected by Warren Ely. It seems to me that the men

noted in this biographical tome wrote their "autobiographies" in the third person.

"Samuel Angelmoyer Architect, plumber, and steam fitter and carpenter, P. O. Lawndale (Silverdale) is a native of this township and was born in 1834. His great grandfather came from Germany. His grandfather came from Northampton County. His son Henry married Mary, daughter of Martin Fretz. They had ten children, of whom but four are still living. Samuel was the youngest child and at the age of 11, left school and engaged in various pursuits until he was 15, when he learned the carpenters trade, serving an apprenticeship for a period of two years and after that, worked working at a journey's work for about one year. He was employed as borough's carpenter in which capacity he served for about twenty-three years. He married Louise Ann, daughter of John Hangey, of Montgomery County, Pa. John Hangey had four children: Allen and Louisa Ann, living and Hannah and Mariah, deceased. Mr. and Mrs. Angelmoyer had four children: John Henry, Lovinia, Allen, and Hannah, deceased. For a period of years previously in settling at his present home, Mr. Angelmoyer carried on farming in connection with his other business where his son now lives. He is a member of the Mennonite Church, and a Republican politically.

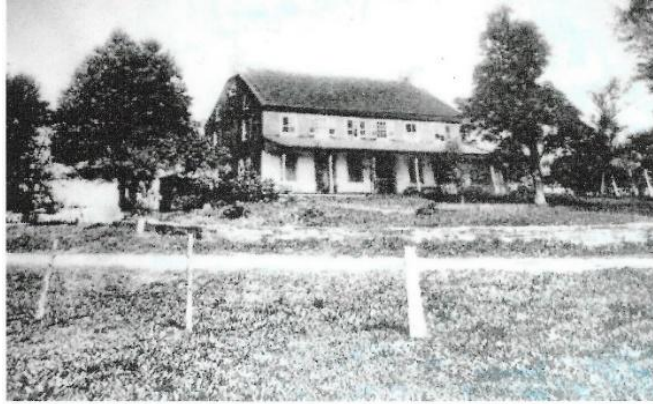


Angelmoyer Farm across the street from Gehman School (Hickory Stick) c. 1895

**Join us for our
50th Anniversary Event, September 20 & 21**

Saturday & Sunday 10-3

A Hilltown History Extravaganza!



Strassburger Homestead c. 1900

Saturday speaker will be David Kimmerly 12 Noon

Sunday speaker will be Jeffrey Marshall 11 AM

On display will be:

Lenape artifacts

Hilltown's Colonial Glass House artifacts

View the Hilltown High School yearbooks 1925-1952

Check out our most interesting Hilltown archives 1750-1900.

(Translations or transcriptions will make viewing easy!)

Hundreds of old area photographs in slideshow & albums

View our family history volumes.

Check out our archive index.

Unusual book sale.

What did public auctions look like several hundred years ago?

Hunt down names and Hilltown property maps from the 18th & 19th
century.

Buildings will be open for viewing and food available to purchase.

Displays will be shown of famous Hilltown residents

Visit the Bucks County Recorder of Deeds, on site

Displays of well known "Hilltownians".

Hilltown Historical Society Fall Events

Sunday, October 12 2025



Pre-European occupation sites in the Delaware Valley w/ artifacts from the Delaware River to the Schuylkill River and fields. Bruce Hentschel, a field walking Arrowhead hunter, searches fields and streams for pre-European occupation sites in the Delaware Valley. He will discuss the physical conditions and artifacts found in fields and on campsite locations from the Delaware River to the Schuylkill River. Artifacts will be on display. Have you found an artifact? Bring it to share.

Open House at the Strassburger Farmstead 1:30-4:00 w/speaker @ 2:00

Wednesday, October 22, 2025 7:00 PM



Outlaws in the Underworld: Bucks County Caves and the Doan Gang. by Clint Flack.

Once again, Clint Flack will share his knowledge on the infamous Doans, loyalists to the crown during America's revolt from England. They romped about in Bucks County hiding in our regions many caves.

Hilltown Township Building, 13 W. Creamery Rd

All events are free! Donations happily accepted!

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As the year comes to a close, we will greet 2026 with open arms. Our country's 250th birthday will arrive. I suppose that the official birthday would be on July 4, however we should celebrate the entire year. Hanging up in our homestead will be a replica of our Declaration of Independence, along with an easy-to-read transcription. We know how it begins -" When in the course of human events". The document goes on to list 27 grievances against King George. Among them, "He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people." Good riddance, King George.

Happy Birthday America!

