

HAYCOCK HISTORICAL NEWS

The Newsletter of The Haycock Historical Society • Spring 2004

HISTORY OF THE THATCHER FAMILY AND THE VILLAGE OF THATCHER

by Harry Thatcher Hinkel, Grandson of Franklin Thatcher (1881-1919)

The Village of Thatcher in Haycock Township, Bucks County, was named after Samuel B. Thatcher (1822-1905). He was a sixth generation descendent of his emigrant ancestor, Richard Thatcher (1641-1690), a Quaker who arrived in Philadelphia from England in 1671. The history of the Thatcher family is relevant not only to the history of Haycock Township, but is also interesting to the broader topic of the history of early America in this part of the country.

After arriving in 1671, Richard Thatcher received a land grant of 1000 acres in the Newtown area of Lower Bucks County from the Penn Proprietors. Richard Thatcher's son, Bartholomew (circa 1680-1770), continued to live on that land, until about 1705, when he moved across the Delaware River into Hunterdon County, NJ, near Flemington. Bartholomew's son, Joseph (1705-1791), also lived his life in Hunterdon County. Joseph had a son named Bartholomew, after his father. As the American Revolution developed, this Bartholomew (1735-1817) remained loyal to the English King. He became, as the patriots called them, a "Tory." Even though he was a Quaker, he became a Captain in the 3rd New Jersey Volunteers. This was a loyalist unit under British General Sir Henry Clinton. He was severely injured in battle, losing an arm. He survived, but lost all of his property, which was confiscated by the Patriots. After the war, he fled to Canada with his family. So how did the Thatcher family end up living in Haycock Township?

Bartholomew had a son, Charles Thatcher (1767-1846), who accompanied his family on their escape to Canada. About 1800, Charles returned from Canada as a young man. He did not return to his New Jersey home, but instead, came to the Durham area of Upper Bucks. Here he met Magdalena Afflerbach, whom he married. They had a son, Samuel B.

Thatcher. Charles and Magdalena left Durham to Haycock Township in 1837, settling near Tohickon Creek in the area now known as the Village of Thatcher. He is buried in the Tohickon Union Church Cemetery at Wiesel.

Samuel B. Thatcher (1822-1905), Charles' son, lived his

entire life in the Village of Thatcher with his wife Deborah (Shelly) Thatcher. He became a prominent Bucks County citizen. Although from Quaker roots, he was fluent in Pennsylvania German. His accomplishments are described in the biographical sketches in both *The History of Bucks County* by J.H. Battle, 1887, and *The History of Bucks County* by W.W.H.

Davis, 1905. To quote

an excerpt from Davis' book: "Among the names of the notable and distinguished men of Pennsylvania, the men of ability and enterprise who have labored assiduously to advance the interests of the community, may justly be named Samuel B. Thatcher, the man after whom the town of Thatcher, Pennsylvania was named."

Most noteworthy of his accomplishments were: a founder of the Quakertown National Bank; Bucks County Prothonotary; Assistant United States Revenue Assessor; Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue; Justice of the Peace; Republican Pennsylvania Presidential Elector; founder and president of the Tohickon Live Stock Insurance Company; school board director, and gentleman farmer.

Davis' book concludes: "In 1889, as a mark of respect and acknowledgement of his worth and public service, a post office was created at the general store near his home and was named Thatcher."

The Thatcher family and close relatives lived in all of the village houses for most of the 19th century and the first third of the 20th century. The store and the Victorian house across the street were built by him.



Thatcher Store circa 1925

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CLYMER MILL MEMORIES

by Sue Kleiner Grew

Bill Peischel calls it the Clymer Mill but it's also known as Sheard's Mill in the Village of Thatcher.

Peischel's memories of the mill began when he was a young man driving a wagon pulled by two horses and full of the grains grown on the family farm.

The Quakertown resident, who is now 80, recalled that the loaded wagon would be driven from the Peischel farm on Woodbine Lane to the gristmill located off Covered Bridge Road in East Rockhill Township.

When growing up in Haycock, Peischel recalled, families would "grow your own food". Much of what was on the family table came from the farm.

Peischel's best recollection of the mill begins at about age 14, when he began making the trip in the horse drawn wagon. At that time, he said, Woodbine Lane was known as Peischel's Road.

Before getting to the mill, he recalled, there was a lengthy process of preparing the grains grown on the farm.

Fresh corn would have been dried in the corncrib for about a month. Burlap bags would be filled with corn, oats and sometimes wheat. Peischel and his siblings had to get those burlap bags loaded into the wagon. A bag of corn could weigh between 60-70 pounds and wheat was even heavier coming in around 100 pounds. Typically, 12-15 bags of corn and 3 bags of oats would be loaded into the open wagon. It would take the better part of an hour to get from the farm to the mill.

The road between home and the mill could be "rough and muddy" as you made your way across the township, he recalled.

Crossing the covered bridge, Peischel remembers enjoying the sound of the horses' hoof beats echoing inside the confines of the bridge.

As he drew close to the mill itself, he had his own special technique of slowing the horses and bringing them into the mill yard.

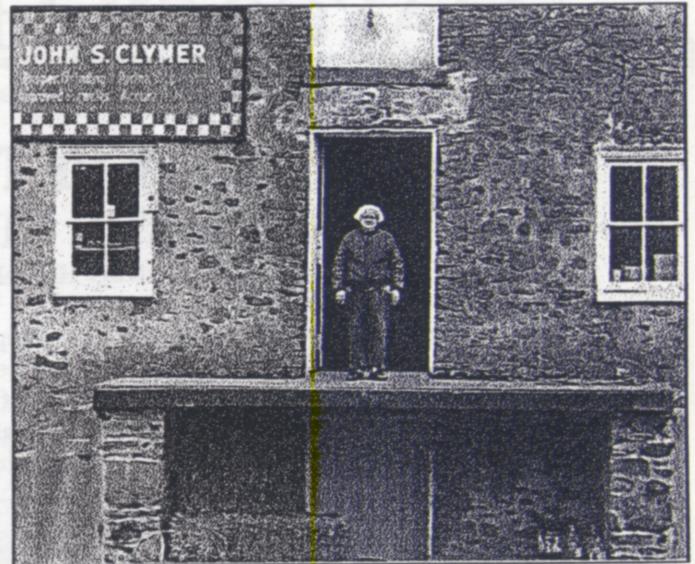
This technique, he said, was done by jumping off the wagon while the horses kept moving. He would then grab and pull the "big lever" on the wagon's hand brake with all his strength to slow their pace enough to direct them toward the mill.

In order to guide the animals into place, he said he would have to scramble into the wagon and crawl over the grain-stuffed burlap bags to rein the horses, Dolly and Lady, in the right direction.

Sometimes, he would arrive and other people from the neighborhood were already waiting for their turn with the miller.

Bill Clymer ran the mill while his brother, John, was in charge of the delivery part of the business.

The miller was completely white from head to toe, Peischel said, due to the volume of dust created by the



Mrs. Clymer standing outside the mill.

milling process. The gristmill would be filled with noise and dust.

The grains in their burlap bags would be hoisted to a third floor door and taken inside where processing would begin. Inside the mill, he said, pulleys and belts would be moving overhead. These devices powered the grain elevator and grinder.

On the bottom floor was the grinder that Peischel described as large and impressive and constructed from huge stones.

The gristmill's energy source was Tohickon Creek which pushed the large water wheel that ran the belts and pulleys.

In the 1930's, during a dry period, he said, you might have to wait hours for the grains to be ground since they were done in shifts. The miller would patiently wait for the water to build up, run a batch of grains, then wait again for the stream to replenish the millrace before being able to run the next batch.

There was a cider press at Sheard's Mill. The press was housed in a building to the right of the gristmill. According to Peischel, the apples would be crushed and then pressed through a cloth funnel. The juices would be sent through a hose and emptied directly into a barrel or jug.

In his home, Peischel and his wife, Janice, have a painting of a mill. He used it to explain what went on in the gristmill he knew as a young man. He kindly shared his memories of a way of life once common in Haycock Township.

More information about gristmills can be found in a book called, "Notes on Gristmills and Milling in Pennsylvania," by Henry Engart.

THATCHER HISTORY *continued from page 1*

Samuel B. died in 1905. He is buried in the graveyard of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Applebachsville.

Samuel B. and Deborah had three sons but only one survived to adulthood. That was Charles Thatcher (1855-1947). He lived on the farm until very old age. Charles married Ellen Meyers of a nearby farm and they had four sons: Franklin (1881-1919); Samuel (1885-1887); Harrison (1890-1923), and Mark (1891-1937). All of them died at young ages.

Sheard's Mill was managed by Harrison Thatcher prior to his entry into World War I, where he was badly wounded, dying several years later. All of Charles' and Ellen's sons predeceased them, so as old age overtook them, Charles and Ellen sold the farm in 1936. It had been in the family since 1837.

The Haycock Historical Society now has in its collection many pictures and other memorabilia of the Thatcher family and the Village of Thatcher, given by the family.



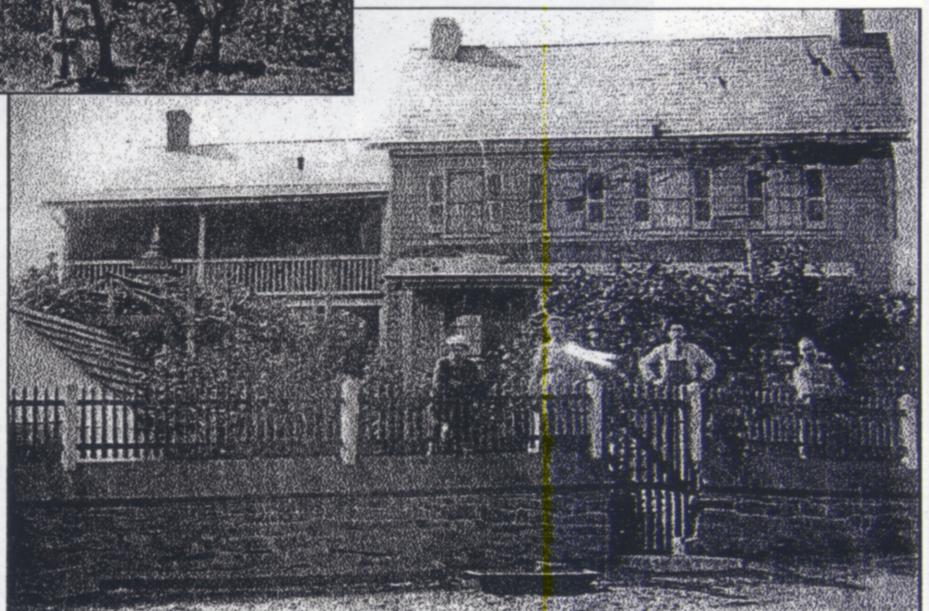
Samuel B. Thatcher, (1822-1905)



Samuel B. and Deborah Thatcher's house, circa 1895, located across from the general store. Pictured with them is hired hand Preston McCarthy with horse.

The Thatcher Farm, circa 1905, located a few hundred yards north of the covered bridge.

Pictured left to right: Harrison Thatcher, his mother Ellen (Meyers) Thatcher, his father Charles Thatcher, and Preston McCarthy.



THATCHER GENERAL STORE

by Sue Kleiner Grew

For a good portion of his childhood, Harry Grim Jr. helped his parents at the family store, first known as the Thatcher Store and in his time, H.R. Grim General Merchandise.

The store building still stands today at the intersection of Thatcher and Covered Bridge roads, and is now a private residence.

Grim, who still resides in Haycock and is 73-years-old, recollected some of his memories of the store and its history.

The store was built by Samuel B. Thatcher in the late 1800's and was first managed by William Lewis.

Through the years, the store changed owners several times until 1933. In that year, Harry R. Grim purchased the store from P.B. Ahlum who was running the business since 1919.

When Grim and his wife, Hazel, bought the store they had full time jobs. Hazel was a schoolteacher in Hellertown and Harry worked for the Reading Railroad as a ticket agent and a telegrapher.

The couple had three sons: Harry Jr., Barry, and Larry. The family resided in the building that housed the store which became known as H.R. Grim General Merchandise.

Harry Jr. began to work in the family business when he was about 6 or 7 years old. However, Grim did point out that it was more fun to go swimming in Tohickon Creek near Sheard's Mill.

You could get almost anything at the store. Shoes, horse blankets, corset hooks, plowshares, greeting cards, brown sugar, minced meat, produce and meats. Potato chips sat loose in large cans. Different kinds of dried beans and rice would be in bags stored in wooden bins. These items would be weighed on a scale and placed in a bag to take home.

Molasses was stored in a barrel that had a crank to pump

the thick syrup into a waiting container. The Grim's three young sons thought the molasses resembled varnish. One day, the boys decided to coat the handles of the shovels in the store with the brown goo. Their mom, Hazel, was the one who had to clean up that sticky mess.

The Grim's provided delivery service both locally and beyond. They went to Roudenbush Road and Applebachville on Fridays. On Saturdays they would go to Shelly, the town in which Harry had grown up.

H.R. Grim General Merchandise was open hours that would have kept them competitive with today's convenience stores. They opened at 8 am and closed at 9 pm. They were open Sundays and the the only holiday they closed for the entire day was Christmas.

A customer might barter with the Grim's for store items. The customer could trade eggs or some other commodity to help pay their bill.

Grim recalled selling salt mackerel from wooden buckets and what many customers had to do before eating the fish. He said many would soak the filets for a week just to get the salt out in time to enjoy the briny delight for Sunday breakfast.

When all the mackerel were sold, the bottom of the bucket in which they were stored would remain filled with hunks of leftover salt.

In the winter of 1961, the Grim family sold the store to Sam Henderson. He kept the business open as a general store for a short time. He closed it briefly and reopened again only this time trying to sell snowmobiles.

Unfortunately, Henderson's venture was short lived and he closed the store in the mid-1960s.

Although the building remains, traces of its 19th and early 20th century past have mostly been wiped away by a recent renovation.



Mrs. Hazel Grim and the "Phantom Buck"

**PUBLIC MEETING ON SHEARD/CLYMER
MILL PRESERVATION EFFORT**

Saturday April 17th • 1 PM
Grandma's Country Kitchen Barn

Tohickon Family Campground, Covered Bridge Road

Jerry Deegan, owner of Sheard's/Clymer Mill at Tohickon Family Campgrounds, is inviting the public to a meeting on the future of the mill. A mill site since the 1700s, the current mill structure was built sometime in the early 1800s and operated as a mill until the late 60s. The interior of the mill contains most of the mill operating equipment and the millstones. Situated next to the picturesque Sheard's Covered Bridge the mill, cider press, miller's house and barn all still stand. Help the newly formed Mill Preservation Society in their efforts to protect this important part of our local past for the benefit of our children.

A BIG THANKS TO BOB GELWICKS

The Haycock Historical Society would like to express appreciation to Bob Gelwicks for being the founding president of the society. Bob's experience with the governance and running of historical societies helped to guide us through our important first steps in establishing the society. Unfortunately, (for personal reasons) Bob is stepping down as president, but will remain a treasured member of the society. Thank you Bob, for all your help and advice.

The Haycock Historical Society would like to recognize the generosity of its first corporate sponsor.

Hearth & Hedgerow is a local service oriented business providing interior design, home improvement and landscaping. Their unique name reflects both aspects of their home and garden business providing both interior and exterior home design.

Kathy Appel is the design half of the team with over 20 years experience. She offers space planning, furniture, draperies, wall coverings and historic restoration. Her favorite restoration project was the window treatments for the Tyler Mansion at Bucks County Community College.

Ken Appel has over 25 years experience in landscaping and carpentry. He offers custom carpentry, decks, outbuildings, cabinetry, repairs, remodeling, ponds, waterfalls, nursery and pond stock, planting and installation. His favorite projects are custom built-ins and creating pond environments.



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**THATCHER VILLAGE
HISTORIC SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING
Thursday May 20th 7:30pm**

Please join us in May at St. Paul's Lutheran Church for a presentation by Harry Hinkel on Thatcher Village and the Thatcher family. Hinkel, of Doylestown, is a direct descendent of the Thatchers that founded the general store and operated the adjacent Thatcher farm. The presentation will be preceded at 7pm by a general meeting during which society officers for next year will be elected.

THANK YOU, RON TRAUGER

Anyone who attended the November 13 general meeting was fortunate to hear Ron Trauger's lively and informative presentation on Pennsylvania German frakturs. Many people stayed well beyond the meeting to find out more about these highly collectible art forms.

We thank Ron for sharing his knowledge and making it a memorable evening for all.

LATVIAN CONCERT WELL ATTENDED

The new year began on a bright note for all who attended the Jan. 4 Epiphany Concert at the Latvian Baptist Church in Applebachsville. Traditional Latvian music was sung by the choir under the artful direction of Ralf Augstroze, Benita Ukstins and Dagnija Berzins. Also performing was the Yoder family with their band, 'Daybreak,' offering Celtic sounds played on Irish instruments.

The sermon preceding the concert, delivered by Pastor Uldis Ukstins, focused on the special gifts of the season. We'd like to thank the church for their gift of fellowship and for inviting us to this special event.

The Latvian choir will also be performing at the North American Baptist Choir Festival on April 25, 3 pm, at the United Church of Christ, 4th & Park Ave., Quakertown.

For those interested in Daybreak's newly released CD, "Little Steps," visit them at www.daybreakfolk.com.

ARCHIVAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The Haycock Historical Society would like to thank the following for contributing photos and information our archives. We appreciate the time, expenses and energy involved:

- Harry Hinkle -Thatcher Family and Village of Thatcher
- Harry and Grace Grim - Grim General Store in the Village of Thatcher , and mill photos
- Pam Fulmer - Strawn Family photos (50 pages)
- Jerry Deegan-Sheard/Clymer Mill historical background research
- Eddie Bauer-ongoing contributions