

HAYCOCK HISTORICAL NEWS

The Newsletter of The Haycock Historical Society • Spring 2005

STRAWNTOWN GETS SIGNS

by Charles S. Malinchak

In January, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation recognized Strawntown with signs that were installed on Old Bethlehem Road at the village's northern and southern boundaries.

The signs came about through the effort of Haycock Township Roadmaster Dave Long who requested them from PennDOT.

Long said his reason for wanting the signs was to both recognize the village and as a cautionary element to alert motorists to slow down since they're entering a more densely populated area of the road.

The village is listed on most road maps, Long said, but there were never any signs identifying it. The new signs were installed in late January.

"Its been here forever," Long said of Strawntown, "so I asked PennDOT if we could identify it with a sign. They approved it Jan. 6."

Strawntown gets its name from the Strawn families who are believed to have emigrated to the U.S. from Scotland in the early 17th century. The family is traced to having first settled in caves along the Delaware River and then to Hunterdon County, N.J.

In the late 17th century, about 1780, Jacob Strawn came to present day Strawntown that was then known as Stokes Meadow.

The focal point of the village is the Ravens Nest tavern that was called the Strawntown Inn. Strawntown consists of about 14 houses and is roughly bounded by Roudenbush and Cider Press roads.

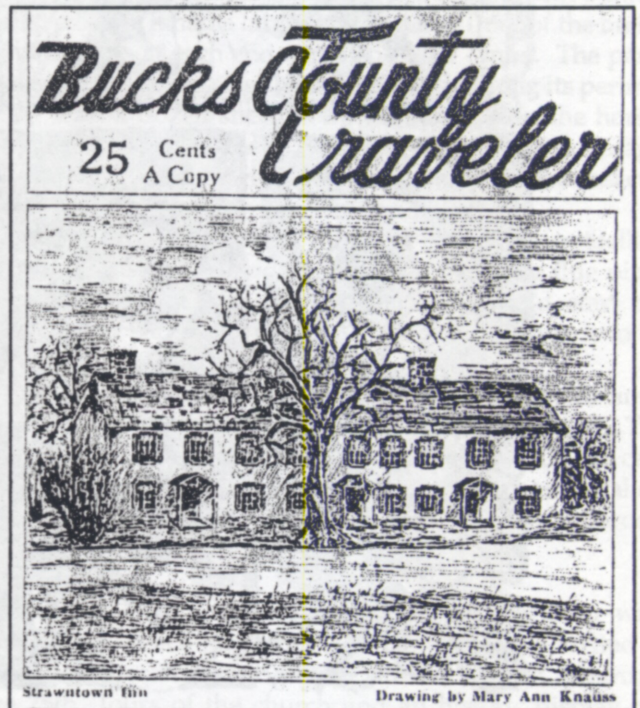
Jacob Strawn eventually constructed a stone home at his farm on Strawntown Road, which came to be called the 'stone mansion' by the Strawn family.

The Strawn home still exists and prior to its current owner, the Nichols family, descendants of the Strawns, operated it as a dairy farm until about the late 1960s. Natalie Nichols, and her sister and brother-in law, Dan and Zena Ahlum, lived in the home from the 1930s until their deaths in the 1990s.

Many of the Strawns moved from Pennsylvania to the mid and far western states to farm larger, less expensive tracts of land. But it is not unusual in summers to see a member of the Strawn family tracing their roots by walking the village or visiting the stone farmhouse on the road that bears their name.



Photo by Heather Radick



Strawntown Inn pictured in the Sept. 1951 Bucks Traveler

ARTISTS WALLY REINHARDT AND ROBERT KEYSER

by Sue Kleiner Grew

The late abstract expressionist painter Robert Keyser and his partner of 37 years, Wally Reinhardt, moved from New York state to Haycock Township in the late 1960's.

Abstract expressionism emphasizes the act and action of painting and tends to depict forms not found in the natural world. It focuses on the freedom of emotional expression.

Keyser was a teacher at the Philadelphia College of Art and during his life, his works were purchased by the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., as well as the public libraries of Philadelphia and New York. Toward the end of his life, he enjoyed printmaking and had a press in his Philadelphia studio. Keyser died at the age 75 in 1999.

Reinhardt, now 75 and residing in Manhattan, prefers to let his paintings speak for him rather than talk about himself. He said, "For years, all of my pictures have been prompted by Ovid's poem, 'Metamorphoses.' The poem has provided my pictures with many lively characters."

In a phone interview from his New York City studio, Reinhardt recalled the time he and Keyser spent at their township home on East Sawmill Road.

He said they chose the place because of its proximity to Philadelphia yet it was still rural, and also that it was an old log cabin.

"It was a secluded place," he said. "It was the house, the

right place and the right price" that also helped in the decision to buy the home.

After buying the home, they set about on a seven-year renovation project that he said meant they kept a table saw in the living room. The home's original log exterior was left intact and both men worked in a studio above a garage on the property.

They resided in the township until 1987 when they moved to Philadelphia. The artists, who stayed together for 37 years, met as young men when Reinhardt had his works shown in the art gallery Keyser owned on Lexington Avenue in New York City.

Keyser was born in Philadelphia in 1924 and began his education as a chemistry major at the University of Pennsylvania until 1942. World War II intervened and Keyser served in the Navy. After the war, he resumed his studies but changed his major to art history and English. Later, he went to study in Paris on the G.I. bill and also with the Cubist painter Fernand Leger from 1949-1951.

Reinhardt was born in New York City and only recently returned to live in his native Manhattan.

The focus of his life's work was launched when he became acquainted with Ovid's poem while he and Keyser lived in Rome for two years. Currently, he is working in watercolors, creating large pieces on paper medium.

"I'm an artist," Reinhardt added, "we never retire."



"Turned to Stone by Medusa's Gaze" by Wally Reinhardt, 1996



"Cultural Standoffs" by Robert Keyser, 1995

ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF APPLEBACHSVILLE...CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

by Jane Nase



Excerpted from St. Paul's History, written by Sascha Baringer and Helen Drissel and additional commentary on the Underground Railroad by Sara George.

Although we have no records describing what occurred between 1852-1855, St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church originated in 1852. The church cornerstone was laid on Whitsunday, May 27, 1855, under the direction of The Rev. C.P. Miller. The church has been located on its present site since that time on Old Bethlehem Road in Applebachsville, Haycock Township.

The structure was known as the "German Evangelical Lutheran and Reformed and Mennonist Church." It was a union church then, but the Mennonite group early surrendered its rights, and there is no record that it ever worshipped there. The building committee members were Paul Applebach, Joseph Mann, William Applebach, John Sames, and Jared Apple.

Pastor Miller was known for his outspoken opinions against slavery. The death of his son, Henry A. Miller, on the Gettysburg Battlefield in the Civil War saddened him to an extreme degree, however, and he retired in 1865.

Rumors abound as to the possible role residents along Old Bethlehem Road may have played in the Underground Railroad. One such rumor holds that the tavern now known as The Raven's Nest harbored fugitives in its expansive cellar. Quakers and other like-minded people would have hung special quilts in windows or over railings as signs that they were a safe house. Given Pastor Miller's anti-slavery stance, St. Paul's may have played a quiet yet important role in helping people find their way to freedom in the North. This was a dangerous time to be outspoken and to harbor fugitives.

People risked their property, reputations, and even their lives to help others.

In addition to being a union church early in its history, St. Paul's has at various times belonged to a "parish" of churches sharing a pastor between them. Under Pastor Miller, St. Paul's was originally part of the Kintnersville Parish and remained so from 1855-63, when it was united with "Keller's Parish." Traveling through Kintnersville today, one will see the small stone church still standing but now a private residence. In 1879, a change took place in which Keller's (later known as St. Matthew's Evangelical Congregation at Keller's Church), St. Paul's and St. John's, Quakertown, made up a parish. St. John's became self-sustaining and withdrew from the parish sometime between 1894-1895. Zion Hill then joined the parish in 1897.

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- 1916-1922 Sunday School organized
- 1933-1935 under The Rev. Wilmer F. Furman the Keller-Tohickon Lutheran Parish dissolved. St. Paul's now on its own
- 1952 - 1956 new stained glass windows installed
- 1977 Education Building or Fellowship Hall added under Pastor Merwyn Shelly
- 1978 The Rev. Paul Nye called as the first full-time pastor of St. Paul's
- 1989 Narthex renovated

ARCHITECTURE

St. Paul's was originally a red brick building with a three-storied steeple. It had a large slate porch in front of the building with steps at each end and also in the center. The parking area of the church had hitching posts all along its perimeter. At least a dozen sheds were used to shelter the horses during inclement weather. The shed, now used for storage, was once used for the organist's and pastor's horses and carriages.

The church was originally heated with two potbellied stoves located on each side of the nave with the flue pipes extending through the ceiling. Members would start the stove fire on Saturday night in order for the church to be warm enough for Sunday services.

In the early years a painting of the Good Shepherd hung above the pulpit on the back wall. The artist is unknown. The painting still exists underneath the renovated wall. The ceiling of the church had paintings of symbols such as a chalice, a dove, and a crown of thorns. The symbols bordered the outside of a large circle.

Today, St. Paul's remains a vibrant congregation with numerous outreach ministries. The community is invited to attend activities celebrating our 150th celebration, Saturday, June 25th. Tours of the church and an historic display are planned.

ROBERT KEYSER: AN INTERVIEW FROM 1987

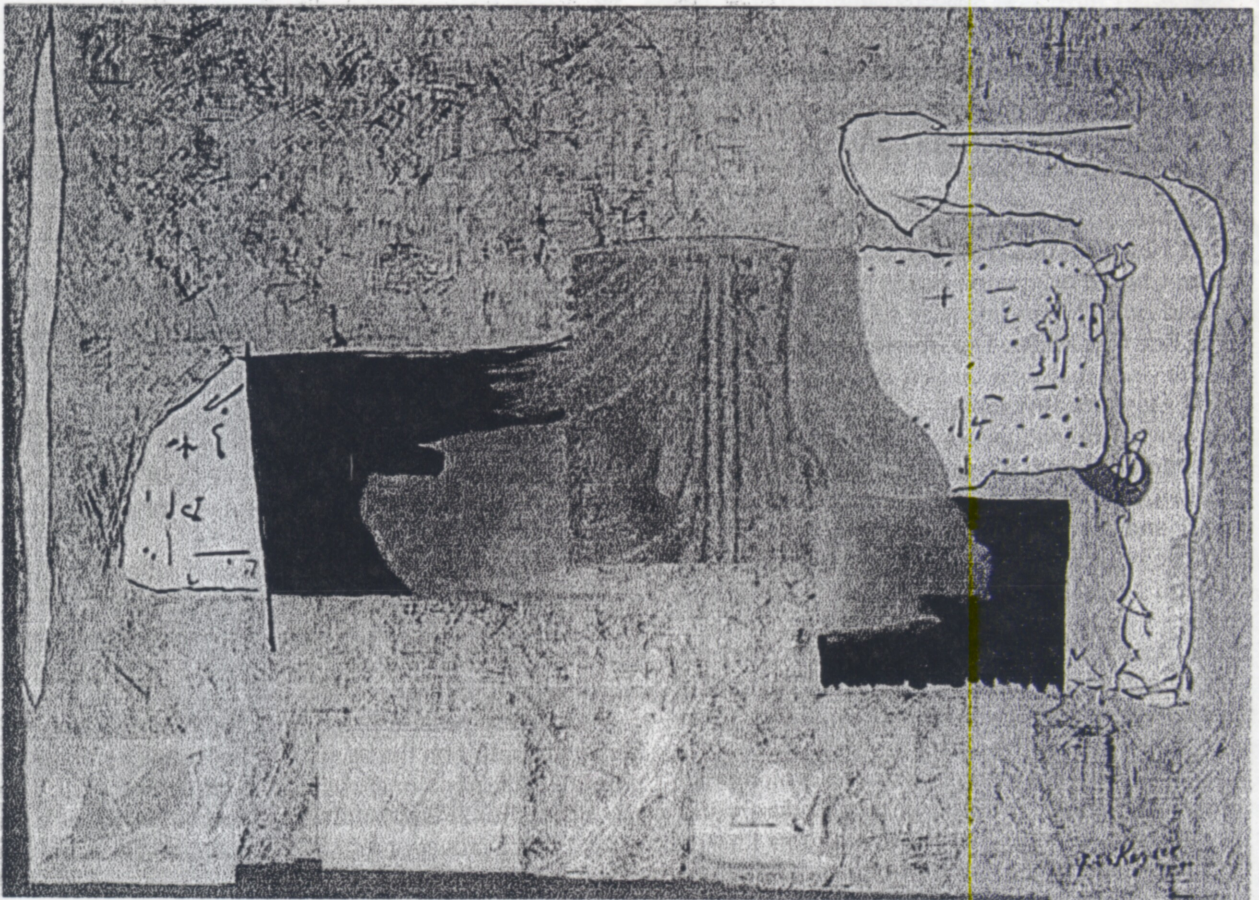
by Beth Kerdock

Although Bucks County is usually associated with rural impressionism, Haycock was home to artists who embodied a variety of styles including the post-World War II Abstract Expressionism of Robert Keyser. In the Spring of 2004 the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts included paintings by Keyser in its' exhibit- Radicals and Conservatives: Abstraction 1945 to the Present. As described in the Academy's press release during "...the years following World War II, American art exploded onto the international art scene, becoming the leading force in the daring avant-garde... Philadelphia artists created work that was vibrant, new, and sometimes shocking to conventional tastes." According to the Academy the hallmark of the movement lay in the individuality of artistic expression, rather than the recognizable 'look' of a particular school-like impressionism.

In a 1987 interview with Frank Zadlo, reprinted from the internet website Art-Spirit.net, Keyser explained how he starts a painting.

"Because any one painting can so easily spark the beginning of another, I guess there is an actual beginning only when I start a

series of paintings. My working habit is to paint in a concentrated way, six to eight hours a day, for, maybe, two years and then to knock off for several months. I get burned out easily. And I look forward to getting burned out as much as I do to getting charged up. Anyway, how do I begin? I suppose I have a plan or idea, something that might come out of my sketchbooks, a new image or configuration, say. And I am usually dissatisfied with some aspect of the last group of work, something which I now feel was overly fussy to have done. I guess that that is a healthy condition. Sometimes I find a configuration or even an entire composition from the Magic Cards. This is a deck I make by gathering together fifty-two small notecards, most of them formed by chance and containing writing, signs, watercolor images and color notes, etc. I made them over the last few years when I needed notes to myself regarding the watercolors I was painting. Here is how I use them. As I play one of my solitaire games, I make identical moves with the Magic Cards, play a companion game, so to speak. The overlaps can create new meaningful configurations, all formed by a game of chance."



"The Irish Matador" by Robert Keyser, 1994-5

IN MEMORIAM



The Haycock Historical Society would like to acknowledge the passing of Bob Gelwicks on 2/15/05. Bob served as the first president of the HHS and his contribution to the start up of the society is greatly appreciated by all. He and his wife Cathi were active members in the society.

In the past, Bob served for one year as the president of the Quakertown Historical Society. He had also participated in the historical society of Elma, New York when he lived in that area.

Bob was born on 6/8/37 in Emmitsburg, Maryland and was the eldest of 9 children. A Marine Corps veteran, he worked for the Beneficial Management Corporation for 36 years. In 1996, he and his wife Cathi settled in Haycock Township. Bob enjoyed going to garage sales and antiques in the area.

He is survived by his wife Cathi, their two daughters and five grandchildren.

THANK YOU

A special thanks to Chris Bauer, editor of the Haycock Township newsletter for giving the Haycock Historical Society a full page in the township's spring issue.

HAYCOCK RECIPES SOUGHT

The Society is creating a recipe and remembrance cookbook and is asking current and former residents of the township to participate. You are invited to submit as many recipes as you'd like along with a Haycock experience, past or present, serious or funny. The cookbook will be sold at the Kringle Shoppe in December. For more information, call Natalie Searl at (215) 536-3939 or natalie39@epix.net.

Correction: In the article on artist Ed Lehman featured in the Winter '05 newsletter, the subject posing with the horse in the painting, "Goodbye Whiskey" was Norma Hall, daughter of Ed Lehman. She was incorrectly identified and we apologize for the error.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Research Committee - The research committee held their meeting 4/28/05 at Pat DeWald's home. The committee is planning an archaeological dig and hopes to schedule it later this spring. They are looking to have the dig on the Sheard's Mill property. Research is always looking for old photos of the area to scan and place in archives of the Haycock Historical Society. Anyone interested in joining the research committee can contact chairperson Diane Kelly at 215 536-4297 or rrdk@juno.com

Social Events Committee - The Social Committee met on 5/12/05 at Pat DeWald's home. Two separate walks up Haycock Mountain were hosted by the committee. On 4/25/05, hikers were led to Stony Garden's ringing rocks by Linda Pasqua-Blaisse. Joe Fite led 5/1/05 hike to rock shelters on top of Haycock Mountain.

The Haycock Historical Society will be present to help St. Paul's Church celebrate its 150th year. The festivities will take place 6/25/05 from 2pm until 7 pm. HHS will have members on hand to gather remembrances from folks who'd like to share their stories about life in Haycock Township. Tables will be available for a flea market of antiques, crafts and other items at the firehouse. To reserve a table, call Trudi at (215) 536-8849.

Haycock Historical Society Pot Luck Picnic will be at Pat DeWald's home 7/24/05 from 2pm to 6pm. Bring a covered dish, chairs and swimsuits.

The Social Committee has already begun to form plans for next year's Kringle Shoppe which will be held the first weekend in December 2005. Anyone interested in participating in the social events committee may contact Chris Handschin (215) 536-0364 or chandschin@netcarrier.com

**HAYCOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY –
GENERAL INFORMATION**

The Haycock Historical Society is a non-profit organization whose mission is to research and record the history of Haycock Township and the surrounding environs. General meetings are open to society members and the public. Meetings are held six times a year, clustered in the fall: September, October and November; and spring: March, April and May, and usually held at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Applebachsville.

The society's newsletter is published four times a year and distributed to members and also available to the public at general meetings, the Haycock Township Building and other public locations in the area.

Officers 2004-2005

- PresidentRalph Rosencransralphj@ptd.net
- Vice-Presidents ..Chris Handschin ..chandschin@netcarrier.com
-Beth Kerdockbjsninpa@ptd.net
- TreasurerDick Landgreenrjlandgreen@comcast.net
- SecretaryDiane Kellyrdrdk@juno.com
- Ad HockHenry DePue
- MembersGreg Seifert

Government Meetings are held the first Monday of the month at 6:30pm in the Haycock Township Building. Society members and the public are invited to attend. Elections for all society officers are held during the general meeting in May.

