

Fulton House News

Fall 2025



Lidia Gamble showing off the "I Made History At The Derry 250" photo prop we made for the Derry Township 250th Anniversary Festival



Rebecca Gamble serving up some freshly roasted corn at this year's Lammas Day Festival



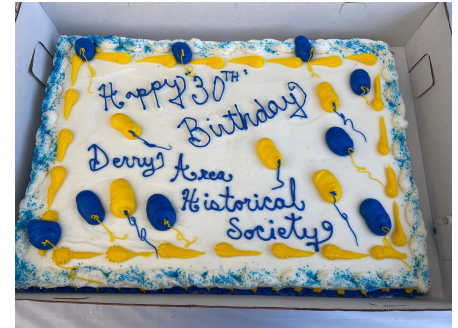
Pat & Donna Showalter waiting for the Derry Township 250th Anniversary parade to begin



Fran Campbell showing off her new costume while waiting for the Derry Township 250th Anniversary parade to begin



Rachel Ruffing and her daughter Hayley grinding corn at this year's Lammas Days festival



Thank you for joining us at this year's ice cream social to celebrate our 30th year as the Derry Area Historical Society!

Upcoming Events:

*All Meetings
Third Monday of
Each Month, 6:30 pm

Old Salem Cemetery Work
Day (Volunteers Needed)
November 1st, 9:00 am

Afternoon Tea At The
Fulton House,
\$20, Reservations Required
November 22nd

*To register please, email
derryareahistoricalsociety
@gmail.com or text/call
724-717-3187
(Please leave a message)

Community Christmas Sing
at Old Salem Church,
December 1, 6:30 pm

Community Christmas
Party at the Fulton House
(Free event, Donations of
cookies & hors d'oeuvres
are appreciated!)

More events to come! Follow us on Facebook at "Derry Area Historical Society Official" so you don't miss out!



Derry Area Historical Society Kicked Off Fall Season With “New” Floor & Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Earlier this year when the gift shop floor began to deteriorate, we were fortunate enough to be able to replace it with an even older piece of Derry’s history. As fate would have it, local construction company owner, Dave McMahan had salvaged part of the flooring from the 1789 home of William Guthrie that once stood less than a mile away from the New Derry Fulton House and was torn down several years ago. Mr. McMahan generously donated the floor boards to replace the failing Fulton House floor, while historical society member Bill Snyder donated his labor, and local non-profit group “Friends of Latrobe, Ligonier, Derry” sponsored costs associated with the repairs.

Other members of the historical society grounds and maintenance committee helped with tearing out the old floor boards and with the clean-up process after the project was over. Those members include Will Snyder, Pat Showalter, Duane Campbell, John Kerin, Chris Johnston who replaced all of the trim, and Rebecca & Lidia Gamble who gave the room a fresh coat of paint. Other volunteers and board members put in long hours cleaning and rearranging to make the house look fresh and clean after its nearly 6-month hiatus. The Historical Society commemorated this milestone by inviting the public to a ribbon cutting ceremony on September 7th to celebrate being fully “back to normal” and ready to kick off upcoming Fall events.

The Fulton House was built in 1817 by one of Derry’s first settlers, Robert Fulton, just two years after plans for New Derry were laid out by Joseph Guthrie who was the son of another of the first settlers, William Guthrie. Robert Fulton sold the property to his son, James Fulton, Jr., in April 1821, who operated it as an inn for animal drovers for about 20 years. Afterward, the Fulton House was used as a private residence by multiple individuals until it was finally acquired by the Derry Area Historical Society in 1997. By 1999, under the leadership of Bob Reintgen & with help from community volunteers and Derry Area High School students, the Fulton House was restored to what you see today.

So many historical buildings fall victim to the ravages of time - Buildings like the former Guthrie House, for example. It takes a village to preserve history. We at the Derry Area Historical Society could not do what we do without our volunteers, members, donors, and supportive community. With continued community support, the Fulton House will be here long after we are all gone. Thank you for helping us to preserve the past for future generations.

Building Renovation Fund Update & Annual Appeal

Over the last several years, we have begun to notice things that are in need of maintenance and repair on the Fulton House. By March of this year, we realized the gift shop floor needed moved to the top of our list and worked quickly to address the immediate need for floor repair. We were blessed to have the materials, labor, and expenses of that repair donated to us, easing the panic that comes along with the sudden need for such an expensive repair.

As every homeowner does, we are beginning to experience surprise expenses and are now thinking about how to stay ahead of them. Looking ahead, we see that our next major need will be replacing the roof of our barn behind the Fulton House. The current asphalt shingles are rapidly approaching their life limitations and should be replaced with a metal roof, similar in style to the cedar shake look metal roof that we installed on the Fulton House a few years ago.

We are estimating this roof replacement to cost around \$15,000. We will be applying for grants to help with this project. But due to the competitive nature of grants, these are never a guarantee. Most grants are also “matching grants,” meaning they require the organization to come up with a percentage (usually half) of the expenses on their own. As a small and local non-profit, we receive no state or federal funding. Everything we do is accomplished through fundraising and generous donations from our members, friends, and community.

To begin addressing current issues such as our barn roof and stay ahead of future ones, we are holding a building renovation drive to establish a Building Renovation Fund. If you are interested in contributing to the cause with a donation of any amount, you can make a check out to Derry Area Historical Society with the words “Building Renovation” in the memo line & fill out the form below.

We hope you will keep this in mind and remember us as you do your end-of-the-year giving. We thank you, as always, for your ongoing support.

Yes, I would like to contribute to the building renovation fund!

Name: _____ Donation Amount: _____

Address: _____

Derry's 4th Street Branceros, 1944

by Denise Frisko Wood

Since 1902, The Latrobe Bulletin has been a consistent keeper of our local history. The everyday happenings, the business advertisements, and the mention of people and places documented within the Bulletin are sometimes our only written record of those things. A perfect example is the 150 Mexican workers brought into Derry by the Pennsylvania Railroad, housed in the Ritchey and Kerr Garage at 417 East 4th Street in 1944.

This topic was brought to my attention by a gentleman who contacted the historical society asking us to research this "lost history." Frankly, I wasn't sure where to even begin researching such a topic, as the only information I was given was that there were Mexican railroad workers living on 4th Street. I pulled up the Latrobe Bulletin Archives and typed "Derry Mexicans," thinking that surely such a vague search query wouldn't work. Lo and behold, the "lost history" wasn't lost at all. Albeit, a list of names would have been nice to have, their presence was actually well-documented by none other than the Latrobe Bulletin.

The first article I stumbled onto in the Bulletin Archives was from April 14, 1944 and was titled, "First Mexicans Arrive In Derry." The article stated, "Sixty-two Mexicans arrived in Derry last evening, as the first contingent of a group brought in by the P. R. R. to do track work, due to the manpower shortage. Under special arrangements with the Mexican government these men can stay in this country six months. They are being housed in the old Ritchey and Kerr garage, on Fourth St. It has been fitted up for their occupancy, with tiered bunks, toilets, shower baths and a complete kitchen. It is said there will be about 150 brought to Derry eventually."

There was a follow-up article published on May 17th 1945, stating, Thirty more Mexican laborers arrived in Derry on train 652. They are said to have come direct from Mexico. Several groups of those who had been there for some time, left recently, either to work on other railroads, or go back to Mexico. It is said there are now about seventy five housed in the building on Fourth street."

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order establishing the Bracero Program (Bracero is a Spanish term meaning manual laborer). This accord between the U.S. and Mexico permitted millions of Mexican men to work in the U.S. on short-term contracts, legally. The purpose of this agreement was to address the labor shortage, specifically in agriculture and the railroad industry, caused by World War II. In return men were promised housing, food, and a pay of around 50 cents per hour. The program was extended the whole way to 1964. One could deduce that these men brought to Derry were here as a part of that effort.

Another article from November 29, 1944 was titled "Mexican Workers Sign Up For War Bonds." It stated, "At the present time, there are approximately 20 Mexicans who are still living at the Pennsylvania Railroad camp, in Derry. The salesmen at the railroad are not permitted to solicit these men to buy bonds however, they are permitted to tell them about the sale of bonds and explain the manner in which the drives are conducted. Recently, Mr. Aikman and several members of the committee visited the camp and all 20 of the Mexicans volunteered to buy a bond. Each of them either bought a bond immediately or made the first payment on one."

A headline from April 27th 1944, titled, "19 Mexicans Aid Derry Blood Bank," states "Among the blood donors, in Derry, yesterday, on the closing day of the Red Cross Blood Bank, were 19 Mexicans, members of a group of track workmen who are located in Derry. Although not citizens, these Mexicans, clean cut young men, as a rule, were only too glad to offer their blood when the blood bank was explained to them recently, through an Interpreter. They understood fully what was wanted, and registered gladly."

As is the case with anything, not all headlines were positive. A headline dated October 10th 1945 titled, "Mexican Flees But Is Arrested Later By Local Police" states, "A Mexican employed by the Pennsylvania Railroad and located in Derry, was fined \$25 for disorderly conduct and released in the custody of railroad officials, following a hearing last night. According to police, the Mexican was charged with entering the bathroom of an apartment house in Latrobe and stealing pajamas, soap and other articles. He was discovered by the small daughter of Harry Dugan, who resides in the apartment, at 808 Weldon Street. The youngster entered the bathroom and saw the Mexican sitting on the edge of the bathtub. The youngster ran out of the bathroom screaming, and the Mexican made a speedy exit from the house... He was placed under arrest and taken to the City Hall where an interpreter and a railroad official appeared to pay the fine and take custody of the prisoner."

An article from Friday, October 13th 1944, documenting the departure of some of these men gives us a glimpse into the overall opinion of them from the townspeople. It states, "About forty of the Mexican laborers who have been located at Derry, for the past six months, left on Train 15 last evening for Kansas City, Mo. There they will work for the Santa Fe Railroad for another six month period. About seventeen more will return to their native land, while others are expected to leave the first of the week. Under contract, these laborers, in large numbers, have been working for various supervisors of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. Supervisor, Frank Aikman, Jr., at Derry, has had about ninety of them on his division... The group in Derry had been housed in the old Ritchey Kerr Garage, on Fourth Street, which was fitted with modern conveniences. They were fed in the building. The people of Derry have found the men, mostly young and with some degree of education, gentlemen in every way. They have, conducted themselves like gentlemen, have mingled with the people of the community, entertained them on a number of occasions with their native music, and have proved desirable workmen in every way."

When trying to find further information on the Richey & Kerr Garage that is referenced as the housing location for these men, I came across a sales ad that was published in the Latrobe Bulletin in 1941. I also came across another 1938 ad for the 417 East 4th Street building, for a previous business there, called Central Motor Service. I'm most curious what the circumstances were behind this building being chosen as housing and what year Ritchey & Kerr went out of business. I have not yet found that information. It appears that this is the same building that was formerly Fourth Street Pizza. If anyone has any other information or photographs to contribute to my research, please email derryareahistoricalociety@gmail.com

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More Mexicans Arrive In Derry

Wednesday, thirty more Mexicans laborers arrived in Derry on train 652. They are said to have come direct from Mexico. Several groups of those who had been there for some time, left recently, either to work on other railroads, or go back to Mexico. It is said there are now about seventy-five housed in the building on Fourth street.

GRAND OPENING

Your car has an important date with us. To meet Mr. Paul Jones, Quaker State Lubrication Engineer, with us July 18 and 19 to supervise the lubrication of your automobile. No extra charge, but—please make reservations early.

THIS AD ENTITLES YOU TO A
FREE MOTOR TEST

Mr. W. M. Cake, factory-trained expert representing the Sun Manufacturing Co., will be in our Service Department

JULY 18th & 19th

If your car is hard to start, uses too much gas, lacks power and speed—knocks on hills—vibrates or runs rough—sluggish and no pep—Pissan drive it into our service station and have the engine scientifically tested with the Sun Motor Tester, and see for yourself exactly what is needed to put the engine in first class operating condition. We can restore that lost "new car" feel, that thrilling, sparkling old time pep and surging power that gives you complete motoring satisfaction. NO CHARGE FOR THE COMPLETE TEST!

RICHEY & KERR

—Sales—HUDSON—Service—
FOURTH ST. DIAL 2431 DERRY

We Are Proud to Announce We're Selling HUDSON Now!

Come In and look over our special opening display of 1941 Hudsons. See why we can promise you lasting satisfaction.

Ritchey & Kerr



Get acquainted with new Hudson Six On-Line 4 Door Touring Sedan, one of the latest priced sedans built today.

NEW Safety! Hudson is winner of the 1941 Safety Engineering Magazine award for safety body design. And all the way from GO to STOP, Hudson gives you with lightning driving. Success found in no other automobiles. In every way, Hudson is AMERICA'S SAFEST CAR! new Richey Hudson's Synthetic Spring brings you brilliant new design... and, for the first time in low priced cars, a wide choice of interior color combinations that harmonize with exterior colors... AT NO EXTRA COST!

NEW Driving Asset! Forget the clutch pedal... with Hudson's Vanumatic Clutch. Come less than any other feature that completely eliminates clutch pedal pumping. Only \$27.50 extra (installed at factory) in any 1941 Hudson!

From its 25 years of engineering leadership, Hudson brings you the only turbine new Canadian model. Road cars ease to wear the Hudson compass... the brilliant new turntable, and the new Hudson Six in the lowest price \$485. A new high in value in every popular price class!

Best 1941 Buy in Every Popular Price Field! Starting with the Lowest HUDSON EXES and EIGHTS

RICHEY & KERR

417 EAST 4TH STREET — DIAL 2431—DERRY

The Toner Brothers Who Made History

Dr. Joseph Toner, M.D.

Dr. Joseph Toner (1825-1896) was president of the American Medical Association in 1873. He was a well known medical scholar and archivist, amassing one of the largest collections of journals of the day which are now held in the Library of Congress.

Joseph was born in Pittsburgh, Pa., April 30, 1825. He was the eldest of two sons, he & his brother James being the only surviving children of farmers, Meredith and Ann (Layton) Toner. His mother Meredith, widowed early, moved to Derry Township when and his brother were young. Joseph went on to study and receive the degree of M.D., from Jefferson Medical College, in the spring of 1853. In the fall of the same year he moved to the city of Pittsburgh, and was in practice there during the cholera epidemic of 1854.

He began a collection of medical books, which had grown to be one of the largest and most valuable private collections in the country. He had succeeded in bringing together much of the literature on cholera, yellow fever, and the other epidemics which have visited our country. The local histories of cities, towns, counties, and of the states, as they contain much medical biography, accounts of local epidemics topographical information, are for this reason included in his library. His collection of American medical journals was the most complete in the country. In 1864, Joseph joined the American Medical Association. He was elected President in 1873.

After the burning of the Washington Infirmary in 1861, it was at his insistence that the Sisters of Charity founded what is now known as Providence Hospital. The "Nicholson House" was temporarily fitted up by them and opened as a hospital, which he attended for some years. He was also one of the originators of St. Ann's Infant Asylum, which was first opened in a building on Pennsylvania Avenue, formerly Maher's Hotel." In 1860 he succeeded Dr. John Dyer as medical attendant to St. Vincent's Female Orphan Asylum, where he served for many years. (Source: A Biographical Sketch of Joseph M. Toner, 1878)

After his death in 1896, he was interred in St. Martin's Church Cemetery in New Derry, Pa. where he returned for burial after his years in Washington D.C.



James L. Toner & Derry Township's Toner Institute

James L. Toner was born on December 25, 1831. He was a farmer, elected as a Democrat to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for the 1874, 1875 and 1876 terms. He died on January 6, 1899 in Derry Township and was interred at Saint Martin's Catholic Church Cemetery in New Derry.

The Toner Institute, established in 1899, was an orphanage for boy's run by the Capuchin Franciscan Friars. The school was named for James L. Toner of Westmoreland County, who provided in his will a \$140,000 fund to establish a school for boys from broken or disrupted homes. Originally housed at St. Joseph's Protectors, located on Vine Street, the orphanage relocated to a new Catholic Industrial School called Toner Institute on the 100 acre Toner Farm in Derry Township in 1901, under the care of the Brothers of Our Lady of Lourdes and the Sisters of Mercy. Reverend Joseph Gerold, who had been in charge of St. Joseph's for several years, was assigned as superintendent of the newly formed establishment. Twenty boys were transferred from St. Joseph's to Toner Farm during that first year in Derry. These children, ranging in age from eight to sixteen, received an education, worked the farm fields to earn their keep and were taught the trade of their choice. Some of the children were placed in homes and the rest were raised to adulthood and then released.

In May 1909, Bishop Regis Canevin appointed a committee to oversee the reorganization of Toner Institute. He proposed that the institute also be utilized as a place for homeless boys who came within the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts, although it was not to take in boys charged with criminality.

Under the direction of the St. Vincent DePaul Society, the institute was to be funded completely through private means, with no assistance from the government or local agencies.* The institution was officially chartered and the name changed to Toner Institute and Seraphic Home. The new superintendent assigned by the Bishop was Reverend Sigmund Cratz. The school moved to Brookline in 1914 until it ceased operation in 1977. (Source: BrooklineConnection.com)

The Toner Institute's former Derry Township location was within the property that is now cornfield between the Grandview entrance and the old bus barn along 982.



What Have We Been Up To?

Spring: DAHS applied for & received a grant from "Mobile Citizen," receiving WIFI for the first time ever at the Fulton House.

Early Summer: DAHS president, Denise Wood, gathered previously prepared but never released books from the DAHS archives, including "History of New Derry" and "Derry Area Historical Sketches," editing & publishing them to preserve & share them for future generations.

May 18: DAHS, led by Donna Showalter, presented a program on the history of Memorial Day & Derry's heroes at the Derry Area School District Amphitheater
June 14: DAHS was voted #1 local civic organization & one of the best local museums and places to volunteer, receiving the Latrobe Bulletin Community Choice Award.

June 23: DAHS held its annual ice cream social at the Fulton House as well as its 30th anniversary celebration.

June 25: DAHS applied for & received a grant from Latrobe Rotary Club for \$2500 toward its Revolutionary War Hero grave marker project at Old Salem Cemetery.



July 12: DAHS, in collaboration with the Derry Township Supervisors, celebrated Derry Township's 250th anniversary with a festival & parade in Bradenville. The parade was over an hour long with over 100 floats, trucks, & organizations. The festival was well-attended and the fireworks were the perfect grand finale.

July 13: DAHS presented a program on the history of Derry Township & the Cokeville Flood, featuring Dana Spiardi at the Derry Ag Fair.

July 13-19: DAHS manned an informational booth, daily, at the Derry Ag Fair.

August 10: DAHS hosted its annual Lammass Day celebration at the Fulton House.

September 7: DAHS hosts ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate new flooring installed by Bill Snyder.

September 20-21: DAHS manned an informational booth and a "dime toss" during the Derry Railroad Days weekend.

September and beyond: DAHS begins heavily re-organizing and revamping library & archives at the Fulton House, led by Diane Kerr & Denise Wood.

****As you can see, we are constantly working on new projects. We could use YOUR help! Does any of this sound like something you could help us do? Send us an email derryareahistoricalociety@gmail.com*

**THIS ISSUE OF THE FULTON HOUSE
NEWS IS SPONSORED BY:**



**Join the Derry Area Historical Society in
installing the final 10 Revolutionary War
grave markers at Old Salem Cemetery on
Saturday, November 1st at 9 am!**



VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED!

Both young & old! Everyone is welcome!

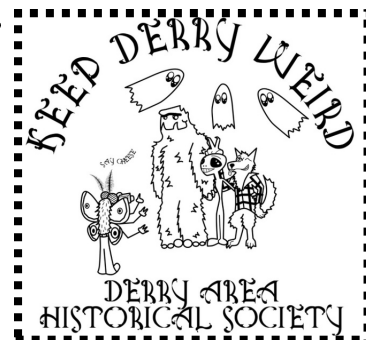
Contact us if you can help!

**Old Salem Church is located at
6500 Route 982 Blairsville**



**T-Shirts Still
Available
Small - 2X**

"Keep Derry Weird" t-shirts (black with white text), designed by Molly Snyder & "Derry Township: Older Than America" t-shirts (navy blue with white text), designed by Donna Showalter can be purchased at our upcoming events for \$20 each or by mail. To order by mail, please add an additional \$5 for shipping. Send us a check along with a note specifying which shirt(s) and what size(s).



Derry Township

★ ★ ★
1775

OLDER THAN AMERICA

DERRY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO BOX 64
NEW DERRY, PA 15671

Our web site has a new look! Visit us at www.derryhistory.org

Board of Directors: Denise Frisko Wood (President), Judy Johnston (Vice President) Peter Wood (Treasurer), Rachel Ruffing (Secretary),
Joanne Vicini, Donna Showalter, William Snyder II, Rebecca Gamble, Lidia Gamble, Fran Campbell
Newsletter designed & edited by Denise Frisko Wood

HAVE YOU JOINED US OR RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2026 YET?

*NEW MEMBERS JOINING AFTER SEPTEMBER 1ST WILL HAVE THEIR DUES COVERED FOR THE FOLLOWING CALENDAR YEAR.

NAME: _____
PHONE NUMBER: _____
EMAIL: _____
ADDRESS: _____

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL (CHECK ONE)
YEARLY DUES: INDIVIDUAL (\$10)_____ COUPLE (\$15)_____ BUSINESS (\$25)_____
LIFETIME DUES: INDIVIDUAL (\$100)_____ COUPLE (\$150)_____ BUSINESS* (\$250) _____

*LIFETIME BUSINESS MEMBERSHIPS INCLUDE ONE FREE ADVERTISEMENT IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER AS A GOLD LEVEL SPONSOR. BE SURE TO EMAIL YOUR BUSINESS LOGO.

Checks may be made payable to: Derry Area Historical Society PO Box 64 New Derry, PA 15671

2026 INNKEEPERS APPEAL

_____ I WANT TO HELP “KEEP THE LIGHTS ON” AT THE FULTON HOUSE AS A 2026 INNKEEPER.
ENCLOSED IS MY CHECK FOR \$175 MADE OUT TO THE DERRY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.