

# HISTORY OF THE COLUMBIA COUNTY HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

100 YEARS – 1914-2014

## The Society – by Bonnie Farver

A meeting was called on May 9, 1914 by the Fort McClure Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution for the purpose of forming a historical society. It was conducted by James C. Brown in the Bloomsburg Courthouse.

Dr. S. P. Heilman, secretary of the Federation of Historical Societies, J. H. Beers, publisher and compiler of the Historical and Biographical Annals of Columbia and Montour Counties, gave speeches which encouraged the formation of the society.

The officers of the DAR presented a copy of the constitution and by-laws which they had prepared as a good foundation upon which the organization could build. Both documents were read and approved and ordered to be printed. The charter was granted on Dec. 7, 1914.

It stated: “The purposes for which the corporation is formed are to promote discovery, collection, preservation, and publication of the history, historical data and records of and relation to Columbia County, to establish a historical museum, the collection and preservation of books, newspapers, maps, genealogies, portraits, paintings, relics, engravings, letters, journals, manuscripts and any and all materials which may establish and illustrate history, the growth and progress of population, wealth, education, agriculture, arts, sciences, manufactory and commerce in said county.”

In 1954, the purpose was amended to include: “The purposes of the corporation are exclusively charitable and educational.”

Fifty-three names were listed as charter members: Miss Sarah E. I. Van Tassel; Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Ent; Mrs. Mary Alice John; A. W. Duy; Harriet Keffer Hartline; D. S. Hartline; Mrs. Carlton A. Caswell; Miss Anna K. Leverett; Miss Anna Elizabeth Low; Miss Helen D. Chrisman; Miss Sarah M. Hagenbuch; Mrs. May Evans John; Miss Ella G. Steward; Miss Mary P. Leverett; Sarah A. Grotz; Mrs. Josephine L. Schuyler; Lillian D. Funston; Miss Myra Masters

Eves; Mrs. H. A. McKillip; Martha L. Caldwell; Clara A. Dieffenbach; John W. Shuman; J. C. Brown; William W. Evans; I. W. Willits, M.D.; J. R. Montgomery, M.D.; Edith Patterson; Dr. Jeanette Trench; Mrs. J. P. Frymire; Mrs. K. G. Phillips; Mrs. L. P. Sterner; L. P. Sterner; W. M. Longenberger; May McHenry; Mrs. S. B. Karns; H. A. McKillip; Mrs. I. W. Wolfe; Dr. T. C. Harter; Charles E. Randall; Clinton Herring; H. V. White; Clara E. A. White; Sarah M. Wirt; John W. Evans; Mrs. Clinton Herring; J. Bruce Hess, M. D.; J. H. Aikman; K. W. Smith; Mrs. E. H. Sloan; O. D. McHenry; S. B. Karns; Mrs. Mary P. Vastine; Larue Funston Clark.

For a time the County Commissioners provided a room to be used as an office and depository for historical artifacts collected by the society. Later in the 1940s the Magee Museum, West Main St., became the society headquarters. The Edwin Barton House became the next location, until it grew and larger facilities were needed. In 1969 an agreement was made with the Bloomsburg State College to be under the care and not control of the College to be housed in Room 105 Bakeless Humanities Center. Also some of the items were displayed in the College President's home.

In 1976 the Central Susquehanna Valley Genealogical Society was formed. The members of this group were the staff who helped researchers in the library.

After eight years, because of growth of the enrollment at the college, the space was needed for classrooms. Again the society returned to the Edwin Barton house on East Second Street. Because of flooding of the basement and limited parking, and state laws requiring improvements and alterations, it was decided to sell the home and relocate. After finding no suitable location in Bloomsburg, the Presbyterian Church in Orangeville was purchased for \$15,000. The sale was made Jan. 26, 1981. The first room was made into the Edwin M. Barton Library. Dr. Roy Haring and Ernest Hill spent hours cataloging, cross-referencing and arranging books, scrapbooks, genealogies, church and cemetery records, wills, and deeds. Dr. Haring established the Dewey Decimal system. Due to expenses the library was only open from April to Nov. each year.

The sanctuary became the museum area. Members of the George DeMott and Eves families gave most of the primitive artifacts. The Indian artifacts were from Albert Sollender and Otto Wolfe. Books and pamphlets were written by Walter Brasch, H. V. White, Harry S. Barton, Craig Newton, Albert W. Duy, and George Turner. Many tours were given to see our museum items.

In 1998, under the leadership of then President George Turner, we negotiated to relocate to our present site, second floor, Room 207, in the Bloomsburg Public Library, 225 Market St. We moved July, 1998. In 1999, we merged the Columbia County Historical Society and the Central Susquehanna Valley Genealogical Society into the Columbia County Historical and Genealogical Society. We signed a 25-year lease to rent our room and a storage area in the basement for our museum items. We continue to operate today with an all-volunteer staff.

We have over 1100 genealogy files, 400 church files, 250 cemetery files, WPA files, one filing cabinet of deeds dating to late 1700s, over 2000 books and CDs, 600 bound manuscripts-- including area diaries, store ledgers, mill books, 4 cabinets of pamphlets & clippings, 13,000 photographs, naturalizations, and microfilm of miscellaneous newspapers from 1837 to 1961.

We are actively seeking volunteers for Pamphlets, Photographs, Museum, Program, Publishing, and Library Committees.

### **The Museum – by Alex Dubil and Steve Smith**

The Museum continues to make its way through the process of a complete inventory. We now have the help of three college Anthropology students wanting to learn how to inventory and label items; hopefully this will jumpstart the process. Amber Weaver and Rachael Harris are with us tonight [at the annual meeting], while the third, Erika Maxson, couldn't be with us tonight. Items of note that may be of interest to you that may induce you to come in and look around and/or even inspire you to volunteer include...

- 1) Extensive collection of Paul Hartzell Sr's WWII Wartime Artifacts, donated by his son Paul Hartzell
- 2) Collection of furniture from the Greenwood Store donated by Charlotte Bogart of Mechanicsburg, including an oval library table, faux leather rocker, and a mercantile scale made by the Toledo Computing Co. On loan from her is an Ess roll top desk.
- 3) Vintage 1926 Cash register made by the National Cash Register Co. in working condition donated by James Terwilliger of 8 1/2 Street, Bloomsburg
- 4) Chester Fuhrman's Civil War pistol donated by Bill and Molly Harrell
- 5) Service organization display memorabilia
- 6) Fair and celebratory memorabilia of areas of the county

- 7) Magee family and Carpet Co. memorabilia
- 8) Hotel memorabilia, Berwick, Forks, and Exchange Hotels
- 9) Transportation Display including the Harry Logan handmade model train, canal and covered bridge items
- 10) “Music In Bloom” Paul Wirt Music Box with rolls donated by Norman and Shirlee Hoffman
- 11) School memorabilia display
- 12) Various kitchen utensils
- 13) Hat display from various eras
- 14) Medical and doctor display featuring items from Moyer Bros. and items from Doctor Yost.
- 15) Mollie Maguire items: including the original pleading bench, handcuffs and hanging rope mounted on wood with letters of authenticity and a copy of the transcript of the trial.
- 16) Crank Style Enterprise Manufacturing Co. Coffee Grinder Circa 1900
- 17) Some of our photos are now being displayed for sale in the hall

### **The Website – by Dani Crossley**

“No query..... just wish more counties had as nice a website as yours. Thanks very much.” This was a recent entry under the Feedback section of our website. And we DO have a great website- -thanks to the efforts of many volunteers and contributors to ongoing projects.

Our first website was created by Steve Varonka and launched in January 2000. We underwent a design change and incorporated a new look in 2001, created by Kris Hileman. After 11 years, about 2011, Steve Varonka moved on and Andre Dominguez took over. Shortly thereafter, due to our outdated technology, we experienced the “Russian Invasion.” This was a sad period in our website’s history and finally the site had to be shut down because of hackers and viruses.

We contracted with Summit Design Studios to make repairs and bring us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On April 24, 2013, our great new website launched.

When Andre left, we had about 250,000 searchable records on the website. As of today, we have over 331,000, with about 1000 naturalization records waiting in the wings to be imported. There are now three people working on inputting data from our Pamphlets and Clippings Files. These and the Photo descriptions are updated quarterly.

In the month of April 2014 we had 1239 visitors, 47% returning, 53% new. On average they looked at three pages and stayed five minutes.

During our first year on the new website, we had over 16,500 visitors, with 45% returning, 55% new. They viewed over 48,000 pages, averaging again 3 pages per session and staying for 4-5 minutes.

The surprising details on our first year's visitors:

16,000 visitors were from the US

94 from Canada

63 from UK

30 from India

26 from Brazil

24 from Germany

23 from Australia

16 from Ireland

16 from Japan

If you haven't visited the website lately, take a look at [www.columbiacountyhistory.org](http://www.columbiacountyhistory.org).