



Mont Alto Memories

The Newsletter of the
Mont Alto Historical Society



Spring/Summer, 2021

P.O. Box 615, Mont Alto, PA 17237

From the President's Pen

Hello everyone. Hope this finds you well and enjoying some warmer weather. It seems like it was an extra-long winter since we were not able to have our regular meetings and socialization. Hopefully we will be able to get together soon. Our house did sustain some damage to the parlor ceiling from a leaking radiator in the room above. It has been beautifully repaired thanks to Knepper Remodeling. The two rooms upstairs have been painted, new curtains have been hung and are now ready for displays.

As you know, we have lost three knowledgeable Mont Alto historians this past year. They will be greatly missed. The MAHS was able to purchase some Mont Alto memorabilia from two of their sales. These items will be on display when we are able to reopen. We are hoping to open sometime in the near future. More details will follow.

Our flower garden has been planted thanks to Peggy and John Maynes, and Frank Kocek. Looking forward to beautiful flowers blooming for our visitors to enjoy. We want to thank Frank for also faithfully mowing the yard as he has been for many years.

We have two events planned for this year. Our Christmas Open House is planned for Dec 3, 2021, and our Christmas Party is planned for Dec 9. More details will follow concerning these events.

Thank you all for your support, help and patience with us during this unusual year.

Beverly A Spicer, President

Beverly Spicer

2021 Meeting Schedule

Now that the state of PA appears to be "opening" to normal assemblage of people in the same room for the purpose of meetings, displays, and presentations, watch for announcements of the Society beginning to schedule events again. Those of you who are on our email list will receive email notifications, and those who are not will receive post cards announcing upcoming events. Please take notice to the Society President's remarks in the adjacent column announcing two year-end events which the Society has now planned and scheduled.

REMEMBER US, PLEASE!

Please don't forget us! Even though we have not been able to hold our regular meetings, your officers and Society volunteers have been busy working at the Brosius House cleaning up rooms and preparing displays. Also, if you haven't renewed your membership for 2021, or know someone who hasn't, please help us by renewing or encouraging others to do so. The Society still needs revenue for monthly utilities and expenses at the Brosius House.

CURRENT SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

The Society membership stands at 42 dues-paying members in 2021. If you do not belong to the Society but would like to join, please complete and submit the membership form in this issue.

This Newsletter was edited and assembled by Society Secretary, Berry Kline, with several articles kindly contributed by President, Beverly Spicer, who is gratefully thanked and acknowledged by the Editor.

THE MILL POND

The following article was written specifically for the Mont Alto Historical Society, January, 10, 2007, by our (now deceased) member, Leah Cluck, the great-granddaughter of H.M. Small. She commented that "I lived there from 1936 to 1951. It was a blessing to my life." Her article is reproduced below, in her own words.

There was a mill pond in Mont Alto where water was collected, stored, and used to operate the mill owned by H.M. Small in the early 1900's.

The water was diverted from the Antietam Creek, taken under the road (Park Street) through a culvert, flowing on back through a "race" where it entered the approximately two-acre area.

Then the water ran to the back of the mill to power the mill wheel through another race. I saw the water come through there in gushing torrents in the mid-1900's when there would be a very, very heavy rainfall and the creek was overly full.

The mill wheel was no longer there. The mill was deteriorating badly and non-operable. The water entered an underground passageway, which took it under the road and out the other side to join the Antietam Creek again.

The pond would freeze over in the winter thick enough for ice skating. Many school children and young people skated on the pond for years, especially when I lived near.

We would sit on sleds, beside a small fire, to put on our skates, and of course, to warm our hands and toes at times.

Once, I remember a young teenage boy getting too close to the thin ice when skating and falling through. The water was waist deep for him. He scrambled out and ran home. We all learned a lesson!

When the estate was settled, the land sold, the mill had crumbled, and the "Old House" was gone.

Soon, new homes were being built in a housing development known now as Gristmill Park.

SOCIETY SAMPLER GIFTS AND COLLECTIBLES

MAHS T-Shirt: \$5	MAHS Golf Shirt: \$10
Red ware Pottery Plate: \$15	Wooden Keepsake, Otterbein U.M. Church: \$10
MAHS Christmas Ornaments, (2009, 2010, & 2012): \$5	MAHS Calendars (2008, 2011, 2013 & 2015): \$2
Mont Alto Sampler Book, written by Becky Dietrich: \$5	1883 Mont Alto Park Posters: \$0.50
Society Photo Christmas Cards: 10 for \$10	Funkstown Maps: \$0.50
Limited Edition Mont Alto pottery crock: \$25	

The above items make great gifts for current Mont Altonians, Society members, and former residents.

THE OLDEST HOUSE IN MONT ALTO

One of the submissions to this newsletter was a photo of the Oscar Heefner Home featured in the Waynesboro newspaper, The Record Herald on Thursday, March 13, 1947. With apologies from the Editor, due to the quality of the original antique photo having been reproduced so many times, the photo did not lend itself to legible reproduction in this Newsletter. However, it is of worthy note that, according to a hand-written notation on the photo, the house was built in 1854. The Editor remembers riding his bicycle by this home many times as a youth, having no idea of the historical significance of this structure.

PROMINENT NAMES ASSOCIATED WITH FIRST SUNDAY SCHOOL AT MONT ALTO

This article was reprinted from an article in the Waynesboro newspaper, The Record Herald, date and edition unknown. Of appropriate note is that the article was written by well-known Mont Alto reporter, J. T. Simmers. (You can read more about him and his family in the article at the bottom of this page.)

In the year 1857, Mrs. Anna Hughes organized the first Sunday school at the old Hughes iron works in the little stone chapel now used by the Episcopalians. The school soon began to grow and later when the Hughes Iron Company sold out to the Mont Alto Iron Company, the late Col. George B. Wiestling, superintendent of the Mont Alto Iron Company, became superintendent of the little Sunday school in the year 1868. After taking hold of the school, Col. Wiestling began to put it on a real modern basis. He had literature printed with the lessons for the school and by having teachers who were real Bible students, the school became one of the leading schools in the state. People from the large cities would visit this school just to get the idea of how well a school could be made. The little stone chapel was filled to overflowing every Sunday. It was said by many that this school was one of the most loyal and patriotic that could be found anywhere. Col. Wiestling was a scholarly gentleman and commanded an influence that could be seen at any time. Some of the pupils of this school became ministers and a large number became Sunday school teachers as well as public school teachers. There was an impression made by the school that can be seen today. Although many have passed away, their children have the parents' teaching with them.

Among the early Sunday school teachers at the school were Joseph Rouse of the Men's Bible class; William Hayman of the Young Men's class; H.M. Small of Young Men's class; James Verdier and Wilson Reynolds of boys' classes; Mrs. Anna Hughes, Miss Anna Wiestling, Mrs. Anna Rouse, Mrs. James Rowe, Mrs. Mary Avery and Mrs. Ann Stickle of girls' classes.

Col. Wiestling was considered one of the finest organ players in the state. He and his brother, Edward Wiestling, who was assistant superintendent, would lead the school in singing, and people from afar said they never heard singing like this in any church that they were in.

A REMINISCENCE

Your Newsletter editor and Society secretary spent much time in the presence of The Record Herald reporter, J.T. Simmers, during my childhood. As most of you know, my grandfather, Harry Freeman, owned a bakery/grocery store, located where Frank's Taste of Italy restaurant is now situated. I would visit my grandfather in his bake shop each morning to greet him, and then continue down the street to Hoover's store (in the Clyde Hotel) to purchase the daily Philadelphia Inquirer newspaper, which he then read and kept on the counter for others to read. His store was furnished with home-constructed Adirondak chairs and small tables with ash trays, and also to hold soda bottles for his "guests". This store was a "hangout" at all hours of the day for adult males who would purchase a pastry and then enjoy it with a bottle of soda from the refrigerated cooler. J.T. Simmers was there most mornings, just relaxing and conversing with my grandfather while the latter was preparing the day's homemade baked goods. Mr. Simmers' first name was John, but I was never permitted to call any adult by their first name, only by their title (Mr., Mrs., Dr., Miss, Rev., etc.) and their last name. I spent a lot of time talking to Mr. Simmers, and I now wish I had quizzed him (and my grandfather!) on Mont Alto history. Mr. Simmers could always get down to the level of a 5-year old boy or older, to kindly admonish me to "study hard in school", especially math and English. He was probably retired from his reporting duties by that time, so I did not recognize his prominence in the area. I wish he had still been alive when I began college at a pharmacy school in Philadelphia; I suspect he would have been pleased that his admonitions paid off. Mr. Simmers' sister, Minta, was the 3rd & 4th grade teacher to me and many others in the Society. The family was well-known in Mont Alto during our formative years.

THE NEW ROAD

A poem by J.T. Simmers, date unknown

The new road now is finished,
It brings to all delight,
Our troubles have diminished
Our load is hauling light.
For years we have been striving
While on the Quincy road.

Men earnestly were trying
To have a better way
For often there is sighing
In ruts where they would stay.
At last there came a changing,
Men clinging to one mode,
In plans they were arranging,
To build the Quincy road.

For years it was a struggle,
A waiting to begin,
Our plans we dare not smuggle,
When there's a chance to win.
(continued in adjacent column)

THE NEW ROAD *(continued)*

Today we're celebrating,
We hum our little ode,
Our efforts ne'er abating,
And now we have the road.

It surely is a pleasure,
A convenience just as well,
The concrete road we treasure,
Our neighbors we must tell.
And may we rightly mention,
Some day we hope to greet,
By having an extension,
On to the County Seat.

*Addendum: Often Mr. Simmers would append the word **vide** to the end of his poems. To me, the word can mean life or live. However, without him to answer the question, we can't be certain as to what was his intention. This is one of the questions I would ask him if I had the chance today!*



Officers, board members, and Society volunteers have been busy during the Covid pandemic working on exhibits at the Brosius House. Above are some walls in the dining room where photos and artwork have been hung, ready for viewing when the house opens to the public.

Meet Your Officers & Board Members

The following are your Society officers for 2020 - 21:

- President:** Beverly Spicer
- Vice President:** Carolyn Poffenberger
- Treasurer:** Katie Fogelsonger
- Secretary:** Berry Kline

In addition to the above officers, the following are members of the Board of Directors: *Darrell Knepper*

Patti Stitely *Frank Kocek*

When you see any of the above, thank them heartily for their extended service. They have not been able to vacate their positions due to the Covid pandemic.



Photo above is a current view of the wall of the Parlor that is seen upon entry into the Brosius House through the front (street) door.

Know someone who would like to become a Society member? Pass on the form below to them and ask them to complete and return it with their check to the address thereon.

Please complete and mail with your check payable to:

**Mont Alto Historical Society
Atten: Treasurer
P.O. Box 615
Mont Alto, PA 17237**

Name (s) _____

Address _____

Phone # _____ E-mail (will be kept confidential) _____

Junior (under 18) \$5

College Student (with ID) \$10

Individual \$15

Family \$25

Patron \$50

Contrib. or Business \$100

Life \$250