

WHAT A YEAR!

Written by Lydia Greenberg
Photographs submitted by Franny Petras

Our 2024 has been packed full of incredible speakers and community events. We're thankful for our presenters for sharing their expertise and enthusiasm with us! If you would like to suggest a presenter or topic, or if you would like to present at one of our meetings, please reach out either by email (info@BaltzerMeyer.com) or through our Facebook page!

Our biggest accomplishments came toward the end of the year: in October, Baltzer Meyer Historical Society became the city of Greensburg's official historical society. BMHS was nominated by the Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce for Nonprofit of the year. Our own Franny Petras and Ronel Baccus were honored with nominations for member of the year and the Athena Award respectively. December surprised us with another official proclamation – in addition to being Greensburg's official historical society, we are now also Hempfield Township's official historical depository. We're proud of our society, our board, and our members for enabling us to reach these heights.



Board members accepting the Proclamation from the city of Greensburg.



Board members accepting the Proclamation from Hempfield Township.

THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS!

If you are interested in becoming a corporate sponsor, please visit our website for full information.

PLATINUM

- ◆ Breeze Hill Apartments

GOLD

- ◆ Kepple-Graft Funeral Home
 - ◆ Bacha Funeral Home
 - ◆ Toyota of Greensburg
 - ◆ Commissioner Sean Kertes

SILVER

- ◆ CFS Bank
- ◆ Pantalone Funeral Home
- ◆ Daniels & Miller

BRONZE

- ◆ The City of Greensburg

BMHS BOARD

EXECUTIVE BOARD (ELECTED FOR A ONE-YEAR TERM TO EXPIRE DECEMBER 2025)

NICK KAYHART ___ PRESIDENT
 FRANNY PETRAS ___ VICE PRESIDENT
 ROB MYERS ___ SECRETARY
 BECKY PLISCHKE ___ TREASURER

ELECTED DIRECTORS (ELECTED FOR A THREE-YEAR TERM SET TO EXPIRE IN DECEMBER OF RESPECTIVE YEARS)

RONEL BACCUS ___ 2027
 LYDIA GREENBERG ___ 2027
 MARCUS GREENBERG ___ 2026
 JAN KAYHART ___ 2027
 RAE KAYHART ___ 2026
 JOHN KLEIN ___ 2025
 DEL SMITH ___ 2025

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

ACCESSION ___ BECKY PLISCHKE
 ARCHIVES ___ FRANNY PETRAS
 CEMETERY ___ ROB MYERS
 DIGITIZING ___ DEL SMITH
 GENEALOGY ___ LORI MYERS
 MEMBERSHIP ___ JOHN KLEIN
 NEWSLETTER ___ LYDIA GREENBERG
 PLANNING ___ RAE KAYHART
 PUBLISHING ___ LORI MYERS

GENEALOGY LIBRARY HOURS

The 1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month are the only days Lori is scheduled to be on site 10am-2pm, weather permitting.

Wednesdays 6pm-8pm
Thursdays 10am-2pm

WINTER MEMORIES

By Del Smith

Some of my grandparents walked to one or two-room schools, familiar buildings in which their parents might have met for social occasions, dances and singing. After having read my Great Uncle Isaac Alpheus Shuster's diaries from 1878 and 1879, I try to visualize what winters must have been over one-hundred years ago.

I attended a school for boys, Church Farm School, then an 1800-acre collection of farms, cottages and buildings where we learned how to work hard (real farm work) and attend classes six days a week for ten months yearly. For a time, I was on the milk squad.

That meant rising early and walking about a mile through snow to the barns to milk the cows before breakfast. Those barns held over two hundred Golden Guernsey cows that high school boys fed and milked daily. I remember the crunching of the honey pellets mixed with ensilage, usually fermenting soybeans from the silo, and the growling of the cows four stomachs as they ruminated their food manufacturing milk. We used individual milking machines back then- the barns were well lit.

After the morning milking, we would challenge each other to lift units of milk onto the flat-bed truck that would return us to the main building to get ready for school. We would clean up and get ready for classes. A bell would call us to breakfast, a large brass bell below the chapel and between the thirteen cottages where we lived.

After lunch, we returned to the barns to clean them and to milk the cows once more. There were no snow days, no plows that we saw, and walking through the heavy snow was just a matter of course.

That was over sixty-five years ago. My great uncle Issac was farming eighty years before that. I know from his diaries that residents kept the roads and small bridges open, but he did not write about clearing the snow. He wrote of horses and a sometimes-borrowed sleigh to ride to church in Greensburg or Manor for service. Singing was a popular form of activity.

The livestock which my great-uncle Isaac maintained were few: horses, cows, pigs and chickens, but those all would be worked by the whole family and friends sharing work and meals in their close-knit community.

Winters then would have been long and cold with firewood and coal burned in the small home fireplaces near where the food would be heated also. Visitors were welcome to sit a while, have some food and tell stories. They sometimes stayed the night. Isaac's best friend, David Detar, visited often, and Isaac did the same, eventually marrying David's sister Susan Detar.

I write this as the wind howling outside in a large home with heat and light; fireplaces are often used for creating atmosphere. We get milk at the grocery store.

A YEAR OF GENEROSITY AND GROWTH IN 2024

By Becky Plischke

2024 was an extraordinary year for the Baltzer Meyer Historical Society, marked by an impressive influx of donated items that have significantly enriched our collection. We are thrilled to announce that we received a remarkable 1,039 items as donations. It's worth noting that this number is even higher when considering the numerous additional items yet to be cataloged.

Among the most exciting donations were two boxes brimming with vintage photographs. This collection includes tintypes, daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, and cabinet cards. We also received several photo albums and individual photographs. While each album is counted as a single item, many contain up to 30 individual photos, adding to the historical treasures.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our generous donors. This year, we had contributions from 36 known donors as well as numerous anonymous donors. Your support is invaluable, and we encourage everyone to think of us when you come across items with historical significance that you no longer need or want to be shared and preserved for the future.

Our museum boasts numerous displays throughout the building. When you visit, be sure to explore the upstairs archives room, the sanctuary, and Harrold Hall. Each space is filled with fascinating Museum Exhibits that showcase our rich history.

Once again, thank you for your continued support and generosity. Together, we are preserving history for future generations.

DITIGIZING UPDATES

By Del Smith and Nick Kayhart

Working now with flat, overhead, and multiple copy scanners, the volunteers both worked with donations and sharing of media to preserve letters, maps, books, slides, negatives, and prints of material reaching over a century.

We learn as we scan. At best we are given dates, names, and places for which the images were taken. One of our present tasks was to scan a diary kept of a camping trip taken in 1920, meeting with other family members in Greensburg, and continuing to New York. Pictures were included that had been taken along the way.

Our group has been working with yearbooks (our library includes many from this area). The CZUR scanner works best for books, and we plan to have it running on a desktop computer (saving about thirty minutes of set-up each time).

Three of us (Nick, Dave, and I) cooperated in using the machines and in giving each other advice as we work. The atmosphere helps to make the work enjoyable and educational.

Dave has continued to scan the maps that are stored in the hall.

The IT person, John Klein, has helped us better back up our materials and to create areas on which to save our work. During 2024, we experimented with taping some of the presentations (with permission from the presenters) in Harrold Hall.

Rae Kayhart has made these available to members who have made significant contributions to our society.

We have been working with digital interviews in the past year taken in person at the center and on phone calls. Topics include information about early settlers in the area and educators willing to share their stories during the transition from one or two-room schools to the districts students now attend.

We continue to cooperate, learn, and grow as part of the larger society.

PRESIDENT'S REVIEW

REFLECTING ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND SETTING FUTURE GOALS

By Nick Kayhart

Review of the Past Year

Last year, the Baltzer Meyer Historical Society experienced significant growth and achievements, all made possible by the dedication and hard work of our members and volunteers. We successfully organized 20 lectures, enriching the community's understanding of our heritage and history. We also received two display cabinets for the museum, enhancing our ability to showcase artifacts and exhibits.

A monumental achievement for our society was the digitization of our records and photos. This project has greatly improved the accessibility and preservation of our historical documents. Furthermore, we were honored to be proclaimed the official historical society of both Greensburg, PA, and Hempfield Township, a testament to our commitment and efforts in preserving local history.

Plans for the Upcoming Year

Looking ahead, we are excited about the initiatives and improvements planned for the upcoming year. One of our major goals is to expand the museum to include a tribute to the residents of our city and township who have served in the armed forces from the Revolutionary War to the present. This tribute will honor their sacrifices and contribute to the community's appreciation of its military history.

We have also scheduled numerous talks and seminars aimed at further engaging the community and fostering a deeper connection with our shared history. Moreover, we will be launching a funding campaign to undertake much-needed restorations to our 1881 schoolhouse, an essential part of our historical legacy.

Call for Assistance

The preservation of our history is a collective effort, and we welcome any help and volunteers to support our endeavors. Your contributions, no matter how small, will make a significant difference in continuing the preservation of our history for future generations.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the Baltzer Meyer Historical Society.

MYSTERY ARTIFACT

By Becky Plischke

These artifacts are each approximately 1 ½ inches tall and 3 inches wide. The bases are oval shaped. They have an East-Asian style design and are made of a high-grade silver. Do you know what these are? Find out on page 5!



UPCOMING EVENTS

March 15th Saturday 1-3 PM – Joan Drexler to talk about Phoebe Bayard, the wife of General Arthur St Clair.

April 13th Sunday 1-3 PM – Patty Flowers

April 27th 2025 12-4 PM – Join us for our annual Open House. Come see the changes at Baltzer Meyer Historical Society. There will be new displays in Harrold Hall and upstairs. Don't forget a tour of Harrold School #8. John Plischke will speak on Wild Mushrooms. Copies of his book, Good Mushroom, Bad Mushroom will be available.

May 14th 6 PM – John Hepple to speak about Elizabeth Thorn, "The Angel of Gettysburg" during the Civil War.

May 25th 12- 2 PM– Ronel Baccus Veterans Brunch
All dates are subject to change, please check your email or our website.

MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBER!

My name is Ronel Baccus. I'm newly-elected board member. I'm a lifetime member of BMHS and a VA liason. I volunteer in many organizations across several counties. My non-profits are Unity in the Community of SWPA and Westmoreland County Black Caucus. I have 3 profit business. I will be having upcoming events this year at BMHS focusing on veterans, youth and seniors. I advocate for my grandson who has autism, my sons who are in recovery, and my family because of the racism and hatred they experienced. I advocate for food insecurity, homelessness, and types of abuse. Everyone deserves to be treated equally and with respect. It's time to change the narrative

SPRING RAFFLE TICKET SALE

We are selling raffle tickets! The winner receives \$900 in PA Scratch-off tickets, 1 pack each of \$10 and \$5 tickets, PLUS \$600 in cash! The winning number will be taken from the first 7:00 Pick-3 Lottery drawing on Wednesday, April 30, 2025. You can purchase tickets at our events or from any of our board members. Stop by whenever the Historical Society is open to buy some tickets. They will also be available at the Greensburg Newsstand, Penelope's, and For The Love of Furbabies. Support Baltzer Meyer Historical Society and win some prizes!
Good Luck!

Mystery Artifact Answer
The mystery artifact is a set of salt and pepper shakers!

