
THE MEANS-MCDOWELL CONNECTION: A 247-YEAR- OLD CLASSMATE REUNION

By Jan Kayhart

This past summer, the Greensburg Salem High School reunion was held as a casual, catered picnic. The relaxed atmosphere was perfect; instead of staying at one table, we drifted around, catching up with different groups. Eventually, I found myself sitting at a table surrounded entirely by old elementary school classmates. We spent a wonderful afternoon trading childhood stories and laughing over old escapades, reveling in the rare comfort of connecting with people who have known you nearly your whole life.

But the most incredible connection of the day actually went back much further than childhood.

As someone with a deep love for history, my husband and I have spent a lot of time researching our genealogy. Through our digging, I successfully located my DAR patriot (qualifying me for the Daughters of the American Revolution) and uncovered a fascinating story about my sixth great-grandfather, Robert Means. In the tense summer of 1777, Robert had moved his family close to Fort Ligonier for protection against frontier raids.

According to C. Hale Sipes' book, *Fort Ligonier and Its Times*, a dramatic event unfolded the following summer in 1778. A group of local youth—including Martha Ann Reed, her brother George, and Robert's children, Rebecca and James Means—left the safety of the fort to pick berries in a clearing about two miles away.

As they crossed a hill past the Loyalhanna Creek, the young men ahead crossed paths with a man on horseback riding toward the fort: Major William McDowell. In that exact moment, Indians hidden behind a log ambushed the group. George Reed was killed instantly. A bullet splintered Major McDowell's rifle and wounded his hand. Young James Means bravely ran back to protect the girls as they fled toward the fort, but he was captured. Tragically, the pursuers caught and tomahawked young Rebecca Means, though Martha Ann Reed managed to outrun them and make it to safety. James Means—who happens to be my fifth great-grandfather—survived his captivity and finally returned home three years later.

(Continued on page 3)

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
- ◆ Toyota of Greensburg
- ◆ Olympic Windows and Doors

GOLD

- ◆ Kepple-Graft Funeral Home
- ◆ Commissioner Sean Kertes

SILVER

- ◆ CFS Bank

BRONZE

- ◆ Beeghly's Jewelers
- ◆ Shaffer Memorials

BMHS BOARD

EXECUTIVE BOARD (ELECTED FOR A ONE-YEAR TERM TO EXPIRE DECEMBER 2026)

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)

DOMIIC CRISCONE ___ 2026
LYDIA GREENBERG ___ 2027
MARCUS GREENBERG ___ 2026
JAN KAYHART ___ 2027
JOHN KLEIN ___ 2028
TOM HARROLD ___ 2028

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

CEMETERY ___ ROB MYERS
DIGITIZING ___ DEL SMITH
FUNDRAISING ___ BECKY PLISCHKE
LIBRARY ___ LORI MYERS
MEMBERSHIP ___ JOHN KLEIN
MUSEUM ___ BECKY PLISCHKE
NEWSLETTER ___ LYDIA GREENBERG
PLANNING ___ RAE KAYHART
PUBLISHING ___ LORI MYERS
SOCIAL MEDIA ___ JOHN KLEIN

ELECTION NOMINATIONS OPEN!

The time has come for Baltzer Meyer Historical Society to establish a ballot for next year's board and executive board. Anyone wishing to run for president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, or one of the two available board seats must send a letter or email stating their intent and desired position. Letters may be sent to Baltzer Meyer Historical Society at 642 Baltzer Meyer Pike, Greensburg, PA 15601. Emails may be sent to info@BaltzerMeyer.com. The letter or email must be received by 5 PM November 12, 2026, to be considered for the ballot. Alternatively, those wishing to be considered for the ballot may appear before the board at the monthly board meeting at 6PM November 12, 2026, to state their interest.

THERE IS A NEW KID IN TOWN

By Rob Myers

Let's welcome the newly forming Penn Township Historical Society of Westmoreland Co., PA. It may seem a bit verbose, but the name tells you exactly where they are located. There are several Penn Townships within Pennsylvania, as well as ones located in other states.

This group is forming because of the desire of Trevor Seice, a student at Penn-Trafford High School. Their society's goal is to cover interests from students to senior citizens, and to incorporate that age range into their board.



GENEALOGY LIBRARY HOURS

The 1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month are the only days Lori is scheduled to be on site 10am-2pm. Please email LMyers@BaltzerMeyer.com to schedule research.

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

THE MEANS-MCDOWELL CONNECTION: A 247-YEAR-OLD CLASSMATE REUNION (CONTINUED)

By Jan Kayhart

Armed with this history, I walked over to one of my classmates at the picnic: Marty (Martha) McDowell. I've known Marti for over 50 years, and since the day I met her, I have always envied her incredibly beautiful hair. I asked her if she liked history, and when she said yes, I launched into the tale of the 1778 ambush.

To my delight, Marti already knew it! Her family was well aware of Major McDowell, noting that he had even served under George Washington.

It was a breathtaking realization. Marti and I had been classmates for half a century, completely unaware that 247 years ago, right in the local area where we grew up, our ancestors' lives had collided in a moment of historical drama. There is a truly wondrous feeling in discovering a bond that stretches so deeply into our ancestral past.

WINDOWS AND DOORS

Thank you to Timothy Miller Windows and Doors for the incredible job they did on our upstairs windows! We also want to extend our gratitude to Kerry Watkins, one of our amazing volunteers, for refreshing the paint on the upstairs door. Make sure to stop by our building to see the transformation!



WANT TO SEE MORE?

Check out Baltzer Meyer Historical Society's website for upcoming events and exciting updates!

www.BaltzerMeyer.com

HISTORY OF A SCHAEFFER KINSHIP

By Jim Blair

INTRODUCTION

This article takes us from Medieval Times to the Post-Revolutionary War Period. The story begins with a backdrop of 15th century Mainz, Germany. The initial focus is on Johannes Gutenberg, who was the inventor of modern typography.

JOHANNES GUTENBERG

In 1455 Johannes Gutenberg printed a 42- line Bible. His publication played a key role in the age of the Reformation. His apprentice and principal workman was Peter Schoffer (1425-1503), who was also one of my 16,384 maternal 13th great grandfathers. Peter was born in Gernsheim, Gross-Gerau, Hessen, Germany. Gutenberg's financier in this project was Johann Fust (1400-1466). Fust advanced Gutenberg 800 guilders for developing printing with movable type. Fust controlled the sales aspect of the business. Fust also persuaded Peter, an associate, to leave a prestigious job in Paris to be an apprentice for Gutenberg. Peter did this reluctantly.

Gutenberg mortgaged his property through Fust. Gutenberg was also advanced 800 guilders from Fust for other medieval projects, which were not pursued. As a result, Fust took Gutenberg to court for misuse of invested proceeds. Peter supported Fust in the suit and Fust was successful in the litigation in 1457. Fust foreclosed on Gutenberg's mortgage and printing workshop. There is no evidence that Fust took any of the printing materials for himself, although some of the printing equipment was required to be turned over. Because of the way Fust was affiliated with the project, Gutenberg had no legal protection for his invention. Thus, theft of intellectual property was unlikely. Even if there was, because of Peter's contribution to the project, whose creations of the mind could have been stolen?

DAWN OF THE PRINTED AGE

After the matter was adjudicated, Fust and Schoffer began a printing firm together. Their efforts had an impact on the culture and technological landscape. Peter (pictured) also married Fust's daughter, Christina Dyna Faust (1434-1513) years later. Fust was a member of the Goldsmith Guild of Strasbourg. Peter was the first printer to use a printer's mark, date books and indicate the publisher in his works when he published the Mainz Psalter (Psalms) in red ink. In his lifetime Peter printed over 300 books. In 1466 Fust went to Paris to make arrangements for a firm to market their literary works. He died there of the Plague.

This article is continued on our blog! To continue reading, please visit us at www.BaltzerMeyer.com
