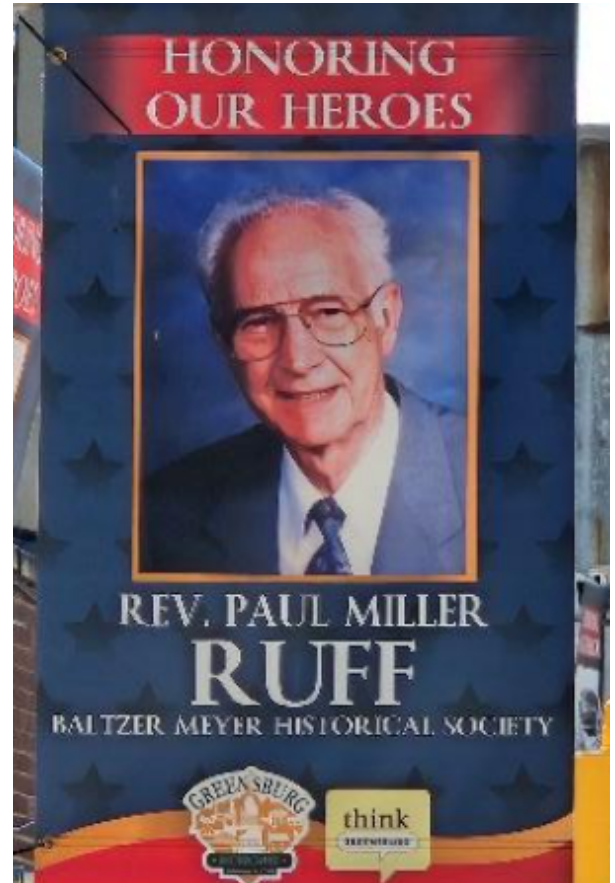

PAUL RUFF: HOMETOWN HERO

Rev. Paul Miller Ruff (1918–2009) of Greensburg, was a dedicated Lutheran pastor and historian. After his ordination in 1943, he served congregations in Ohio and Western Pennsylvania, retiring in 1990. Post-retirement, he continued as an interim pastor and the Lutheran Synod historian, which led him to translate many old German church records. In 1993, he founded Baltzer Meyer Historical Society, where his four-volume set of early German church records of Western Pennsylvania are still published today. He was also instrumental in the restoration of the historic Harrold's Schoolhouse No. 8, which he had attended as a boy. Gardening was also important to Ruff, and he organized local farmers markets across Beaver and Westmoreland counties that are still serving their respective communities today.

Paul Ruff was recently honored by the Baltzer Meyer Historical Society. He has a Hometown Hero Banner which is located at the corner of Second Street and Pennsylvania Avenue in Greensburg. It is also diagonal from the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church.



THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS!

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

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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

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

PRESIDENTIAL YEAR IN REVIEW

By Nick Kayhart

On behalf of myself and the Baltzer Meyer Historical Society, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all our sponsors and volunteers. Your dedication and support have played a vital role in making this year a successful one for our organization.

This year, we made significant progress on much-needed repairs to our school building, Harrold #8. In addition, we have begun renovations of the church, marking the start of an exciting new chapter for our facilities.

We are deeply appreciative of the generous donations of artifacts and literature to our museum and library. These contributions help us preserve and share our community's rich history with future generations.

Among our community initiatives, we proudly sponsored a Hometown Banner featuring our founder, Pastor Paul Ruff. This effort highlights his enduring legacy and commitment to our society. We are also honored to have been nominated for Non-Profit of the Year by the Westmoreland Chamber of Commerce. This recognition reflects the hard work and passion of everyone involved with our organization.

This year, we launched a Pollinator Garden featuring native plants. We also have plans to create an additional garden at the schoolhouse, providing students with hands-on learning opportunities about the importance of pollinators and native plant species.

Thank you once again to everyone who contributed to the success of this year. Your ongoing support makes our mission possible.

BMHS ELECTION 2024

By Lydia Greenberg

You probably expected this newsletter to come with a ballot for our society's yearly election. We are delighted to announce that this is not the case. As our candidates ran unopposed, our board of directors deemed a formal election unnecessary.

We still have a board member position available! The term is 2026-2028 and will be filled by board appointment. If you have any interest in serving on our board, please contact info@BaltzerMeyer.com.

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. Please email LMyers@BaltzerMeyer.com to schedule research.

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

RATIONING WALLETS AND EARLY MEMORIES

By Del Smith

Memories of the late 1940's bring visions during a blue-sky summer on Keystone Street. The ration book wallet, pictured to the right, would have been a normal item of my parents' generation although I had never seen one before we had some accepted to the Plischke museum at Baltzer Meyer Historical Society. Not only were there coupon books to be used for a month at a time for canned groceries, but victory gardens marked many properties in the neighborhood.



By the summer of 1953 some folks on my street were getting televisions, few homes had garages, chicken coops and tree stumps with a hatchet for beheading sat on at least one neighbor's front lawn. I remember our screen doors being unhooked, perhaps movie theaters were air conditioned (it was a feature to see a movie and cool off at the same time).



A point system had been in use. The above tokens were used as change from using higher point coupons at the local grocery store within walking distance from home.

Small planes would often write slogans in the sky, visible for miles in all directions. A larger plane flying low overhead would assail us on the ground via a great speaker saying, "I see you down there working in your garden."

I was young enough that money was not yet in my thoughts, let alone another system for saving items for the war effort and our military fighting overseas in Korea. My dad had a ship's clock from the USS Melville, but I did not understand that he had been part of the preparation for an operation entitled "D-Day".

We are surprised at how one object can take us to a part of the past that was not ours. I was born near the end of the Second World War, and I was just starting to think and have memories of the early 1950's. I remember that Mom's cake fell when I let the screen door slam shut. "Don't slam the...door," she said too late. We ate what was placed on the table and went outside to play, with no shirt, no sunscreen, no worries. Before we were born a system was in place to limit how much of certain items Americans could buy because the items were needed for the war effort. Commercials at the movies pitched war bonds. News reels showed plenty of violence to all ages. We played army and cowboys and Indians on scraped clay and slag hills in the remains of a coal mine, not noticing how dirty we would be. Our parents had come through war being denied material goods which we could take for granted.

THE COURTHOUSE: DEMYSTIFIED PART 1

By Lori Myers

As shocking as it sounds, not everything in our county court houses has been digitized. At some point in our genealogy searches we **WILL** have to step foot in a courthouse and navigate the maze of offices to find some obscure piece of paper that proves our ancestors actually existed. But how do we know what office holds that proverbial needle in the haystack? This is a two-part guide on the six most important offices in a Pennsylvania court house and what records they hold.

Clerk of Courts

Sometimes, as much as we hate to admit it, we have an ancestor in the family that passed through the court system (in my case, after a few years he was referred to in the court records as 'Our Old Friend'). If you have heard rumors about it, this is the office you want to hit. The clerk's office is responsible for maintaining the records and dockets for the Court of Common Pleas. The Clerk of Courts office secures and maintains accurate and up-to-date information on all criminal and juvenile proceedings.

Prothonotary

A unique title to Pennsylvania and Delaware, where the title "prothonotary" (prow· Thaa· nuh· teh· ree) is still used for the chief civil clerk of the court. The prothonotary is the elected CIVIL clerk of the Court of Common Pleas who is responsible for keeping records of all civil proceedings, and officially signing and sealing court documents. The county prothonotary's office is where you will find Pennsylvania divorce records and naturalization records. In some counties this office is run by the Clerk of Courts.

- Divorce Records beginning in 1804. Before this, divorces in Pennsylvania could only be granted by the governor, state legislature, or the Supreme Court, depending on the time period.
- Naturalization Records up to 1906, which was when the federal government assumed control of the naturalization process.

Register of Wills

As the name suggests, the Register of Wills holds wills and probate records.

Find the Right County for Your Research

Most Pennsylvania counties were originally part of another county.

When a new county was formed, the existing records from the new county remained in the original county. Researchers must look for records in the county that existed during their ancestor's lifetime. For a really cool interactive map, visit

<https://www.mapofus.org/pennsylvania/> Just click on the year and see how the boundaries changed.

WANT TO SEE MORE?

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

www.BaltzerMeyer.com

Feeling lucky? Looking for some holiday cash? 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 Saturday, December 13, 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, or check our Facebook page to see what local businesses have them available.