



# SCHUYLKILL HERITAGE

*A Newsletter of the Schuylkill County Historical Society*



Volume 11, Issue 4

*“to discover, procure, and preserve...”*

July - August 2016

## Pottsville Native Marched With the First Defenders to Washington

Major William W. Clemens, a brave soldier winning high recognition for his service to his country, was born and raised in Pottsville. Major Clemens attended Pottsville schools and was a graduate of West Chester Academy.

At the time of the Civil War Clemens was a resident of Minersville and joined the 25<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment as a private in Company H. After the muster out of the 25<sup>th</sup> on 7-23-61 Clemens enlisted in the 129<sup>th</sup>, a nine-month regiment under the command of Col. Jacob Frick, on July 21, 1862. He enlisted as the First Lieutenant of Company A formed in Minersville under Captain George J. Lawrence. The 129<sup>th</sup> in its short career fought in two hard battles, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.

During the battle of Fredericksburg Clemens and his men made the charge up Marye’s Heights

with the Humpheris Division. Company A would suffer the loss of Captain George J. Lawrence, John M. Jones, John Nicholas, and Thomas Millington, and many more wounded.

Clemens saw Captain Lawrence fall and detailed a man to carry the body to the rear, where Captain Lawrence would later die from his wounds. After Lawrence’s death Lieutenant Clemens was made commander of Company A.

An event that Major Clemens is famous for is his appointment as Chief Signal Officer by Rear Admiral Porter during the two attacks on Fort Fisher in January of 1865. Fort Fisher controlled the



*W. W. Clemens*

See Clemens on page 2

## Welcome Home

*Digitized Pottsville Journal Reveals Native Son’s World War II Story from Farewell to Homecoming*

Like many retired “baby boomers,” our interest in family research has taken my husband and me to libraries, churches, cemeteries, courthouses, and historical societies to learn more about our ancestors. Since my parents were natives of the Pottsville area, our visits to their hometown have been very helpful in our ongoing genealogy research.



**Kyle Moran Miscoski**

Until recently the Pottsville newspaper was available for viewing only on microfilm,

and the task was a tedious and time consuming one. When I read the news that the Pottsville Journal had been made available in a digitized format at the Schuylkill County Historical Society, I eagerly anticipated making use of this valuable resource.

Our recent visit to SCHS was very much worthwhile. I had planned to focus on the story of my father’s

World War II military experience, as documented in the Pottsville Journal, from his induction into the Army in March, 1942 through his homecoming in June, 1945 after nearly two years as a prisoner of war in Germany. Although I had some original newspaper clippings, I hoped to discover additional information through the newly searchable version of the Journal at the historical society. I was not disappointed.

See Welcome Home on page 6

**Schuylkill County  
Historical Society**



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Pottsville, Pennsylvania  
(570) 622-7540

**Society Hours**

Wednesday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Thursday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Friday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Saturday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

*Tourists, Historical  
Researchers, Scholars  
and Genealogists are  
welcome*

The Purpose of the Schuylkill County Historical Society is to discover, procure, and preserve the records of the history of Schuylkill County and any data or materials which may establish or illustrate that history.

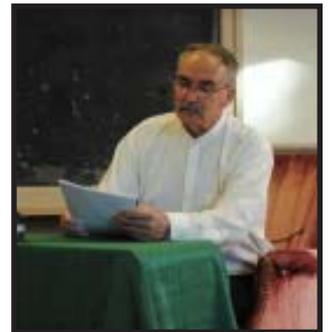
## The Contributions of Major William C. Clemens

Historians Stu Richards and Thomas Symons presented a program on Wednesday, June 29 at the Historical Society sharing their insight into the contributions of Major William C. Clemens at the battle that captured Fort Fisher.



**Stu Richards**

Acting the part of Colonel Jacob Frick, Stu Richards listened as Thomas Symons, who portrayed Major Clemens, read letters that Major Clemens sent home to his family. After "Major Clemens" read each letter Colonel Jacob Frick and he commented about the content of the letter bringing to life for the audience the battles of the Civil War.



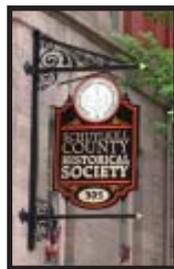
**Thomas Symons**

The presentation was filled with intrigue and action packed stories and was bound to inform even the most savvy of Civil War buffs.

### Clemens continued from page 1

entrance to Wilmington, N.C. and Major Clemens as Chief Signal Officer, commanded the fleet which made the sea attack. Also he signaled for the advance of the land attack, the result of which was the fall of Fort Fisher.

Major Clemens was highly recommended for his valor and dauntless courage displayed in his successful attack on Fort Fisher by Rear Admiral David D. Porter. Because of his actions he was appointed a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Soon after the capture of Fort Fisher, Richmond was taken and Rear Admiral Porter, as a mark of esteem and regard, invited Clemens to accompany him with President Lincoln on a trip up the James River to the capitol of the confederacy where they occupied the mansion deserted by Jefferson Davis.



# WELCOME

**The Schuylkill County Historical Society  
welcomes the following new members:**

Cathleen Trujillo  
Kaeleigh DiCello  
Bernard Kuperavage  
Michael Miscoski  
Susan Soukup

Sandra M. Murray  
Jane McAndrew  
Jackie J. Beck  
Sylvia Nabholz  
James A. Walsh  
Joe Bosack

David T. Ralston  
Bonnie Schantzenback  
Sonny Fenstermacher  
Catherine Mecke



**Rubens Peale**

Rubens Peale was born in Philadelphia, May 4, 1784, the fourth son of Charles Wilson Peale. Charles Wilson Peale was a celebrated American portrait painter, painting portraits of George Washington and his contemporaries. He was also a naturalist and had several museums, including one in what is now Independence Hall. Charles Wilson Peale, his brother James, and his sons were all noted artists.

Rubens Peale managed his father's museum in Philadelphia from 1810 to 1822 and later opened one of his own in New York City. The economy caused the closing and Rubens and his young family moved to his wife's family farm in Schuylkill County. He had married Eliza, daughter of mining engineer, Burd Patterson of Pottsville.



**Charles Wilson Peale family**

When Rubens and his family moved to the farm outside Schuylkill Haven on Adamsdale Road, he developed agricultural pursuits, collected natural curiosities and was a taxidermist for his neighborhood. Because of poor eyesight, he did not begin to develop his artistic talents until his daughter Mary Jane encouraged him in 1855. Rubens began to keep a day to day diary chronicling the affairs of the operation of the farm, along with the details of each of the paintings he was working on. He numbered his paintings as he worked on them and a catalogue was later compiled of his work. Over the next 10 years he produced over 100 still life paintings of Schuylkill County scenes.

Eliza Peale died in 1864 and Rubens Peale in 1865. They are buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery in Pottsville.

Charles Wilson Peale was married three times. He had eleven children with his first wife and six children with his second wife. Several of the children died in infancy with eleven of the children surviving into adulthood. Charles Wilson Peale died in 1827.

Ruben's brothers Raphaele, Rembrandt, and Titam developed their artistic talents earlier in life.

## Rubens Peale: American Artist and Museum Director

*The Schuylkill County Historical Society hosted a presentation on the life of Rubens Peale on Wednesday, May 25, 2016. Three Historical Society members, Wes Schwenk, Kris Miller-Siple and Jean Dellock, used slides, photos and book examples to tell the story of Rubens Peale who for a time was a resident of Schuylkill County.*



**Wesley Schwenk**



**Kris Miller-Siple**



**Jean Dellock**

**Educational Programs & School Field Trips**



**Step into the story!**

Your trip to the Schuylkill County Historical Society



Schuylkill County Historical Society

[www.schuylkillhistory.org](http://www.schuylkillhistory.org)

### Educational Programs & School Field Trips available are:

- Schuylkill County Legends, Lore and Ghost Stories.
- A taste of Schuylkill County.
- Schuylkill Countians and the Civil War.
- Pottsville Maroons - The case of the stolen NFL championship.
- Schuylkill County Dance Party.
- Breaker boys and the Molly Maguires.
- Examining Area Authors.

## Education gets the word out about our history

*All educational experiences to the Schuylkill County Historical Society includes:*

- A collaborative Scavenger Hunt.
- 40-45 minute presentation of your choice.
- Hands-on activities.
- A comprehensive review game with prizes.
- Follow-up packet full of information from the selected presentation.
- Price depends upon presentation selection and number of participants.
- The society is located at 305 North Centre Street in downtown Pottsville.
- The website for the society is [www.schuylkillhistory.org](http://www.schuylkillhistory.org)



### *Schuylkill County has contributed much to history including:*

- The Mahanoy Plane, located in Frackville, held the world's largest steam engine.
- Yuengling of Pottsville is America's oldest brewery.
- Robert Allison of Port Carbon purchased the very first automobile in the U.S.
- First macadamed road in Pennsylvania is Main Street in Ringtown.
- The world's largest rail yard was located in Saint Clair.
- With 35,000 people, Shenandoah was the most densely-populated one square mile in the US. after Chinatown.
- The catcher's mitt was invented in Tamaqua.
- Cable TV was invented in Mahanoy City.
- #1 in the U.S. for Christmas tree production.
- Nicholas Biddle of Pottsville was the first Civil War casualty.
- The first transportation tunnel in America was constructed in Landingville.



**Arrange your visit today by calling 570.622.7540 or visit us on the internet at [sch.hist@comcast.net](mailto:sch.hist@comcast.net)**

# Documents Show History of Indentured Servants

*This article was first printed in the Republican Herald Friday, July 8, 2016. It was written by By Mark Gilger Jr. The photo was taken by Andy Matsko.*

The Schuylkill County Historical Society has countless documents detailing the history of the county, but earlier this year, the organization received something it has never seen before — two contracts for indentured servants.

The practice of indentured servitude in America started in the 17th century as people paid for their passage to the colonies by working for an employer for a fixed number of years. The practice continued until the early 20th century before being outlawed in 1917.

With the incorporation of the Schuylkill County poor district in 1831, about 20 years after the county was founded, the almshouse was built where the Penn State Schuylkill campus is now located to accommodate about 150 patients, including the insane and poor. It had a farm which was maintained by its population, Jean Dellock, genealogist and researcher at the historical society, said Thursday.

“They had to work on the farm to make a living,” she said.

Going through the 1850 county census, Dellock said the almshouse, also known as the poor house or poor farm, had 182 residents, however, there were no males between the ages of 12 and 18 and no females between the ages of 6 and 18.

“They didn’t really have accommodations for children,” Dellock said.

It wasn’t until 1883 that all children older than 2 were to be transferred to the Pottsville Children’s Home, she said. It is then assumed that many of the poor children worked as indentured servants on local farms.

“We can draw the conclusion that it was a fairly common practice,” Thomas B. Drogalis, executive director of the historical society, said Thursday.

The historical society received two indentured servant contracts earlier this year as part of a donation that also included deeds and other documents passed through the generations of a family in Cressona.

The agreements outline terms for Maria Rehn and Rose Reber to work for John Ruch, West Brunswick Township, for 10 years or until they turn 18. Both contracts also include signatures from the directors of the Poor and the House of Employment for the County of Schuylkill. Rehn’s contract is dated April 2, 1849, and Reber’s is dated March 5, 1855.

Rehn was 6 at the time of the 1850 census. Dellock said they have not yet found age records for Reber.



**The Schuylkill County Historical Society recently received some “indentured servant” contracts from the 1840s. Jean Dellock, board member of the Schuylkill County Historical Society, talks about the documents on Thursday, July 7, 2016.**

According to the contracts, Ruch “shall find and provide for the said apprentice sufficient meat, drink, apparel, washing and lodging, and all other necessaries; and shall teach or cause her to be taught, the art and mystery of house keeping, sewing and knitting and during said term shall give her 15 months day schooling, one-half of which after she attains the age of fourteen years; and when free, two complete suits of clothes, one of which to be new, valued from 10 to 12 dollars, and allow her at the expiration of said term one bureau, one table, three chairs and one bed and bedstead and necessary bed clothing.”

“We don’t have anything like this on file that we know of,” Drogalis said. “This is an aspect of life in the county that we didn’t

## Welcome Home continued from page 1

We were graciously welcomed by SCHS director Tom Drogalis and staff. His helpful support and that of volunteer Jean Dellock, navigating the digitized newspaper, locating the desired references, and generating copies of pertinent articles was an efficient process. That first discovery was very exciting and the wealth of information was so enthralling that before I knew it, I had passed the afternoon accumulating dozens of accounts of my father's WWII experience.

My treasure trove of newspaper clippings tells a compelling story of Francis P.E. Moran (aka "Frank" / "Frankie" / "Stidge"). He was born and raised on Schuylkill Avenue and at the age of 22 had been a Journal employee for thirteen years, first as a young paper carrier and later as a full time employee in the circulation department.

The saga begins with a Journal staff farewell party as my father prepared to enter military service. It continues with updates on his Army Air Corps training across the country and his assignment as an aerial gunner and radio operator on a Flying Fortress stationed in England. News that Sgt. Moran

was missing in action gives way to confirmation of his status as a prisoner of war in Germany. There are reports of his injuries as his plane was shot down and its crew bailed out, along with touching excerpts from long awaited letters to his family.

Mentions in the "Sportitorial," "Pottsville Sketches," and "Journal Honor Roll" features lend a personal slant to the newspaper's professional reporting. The narrative concludes with news of my father's May 1945 liberation from prison camp and joyful descriptions of family and friends celebrating his greatly anticipated homecoming.

With sincere gratitude to SCHS, I will share the extensive documentation of this remarkable chronicle with my family. I look forward to future visits to the historical society as I continue to research my Schuylkill County roots.

Kyle Moran Miscocki  
Newark, Delaware  
June 23, 2016

## Thanks Recent Acquisitions

- Large assortment of 1920's, 30's, and 40's sheet music. Donated by Joe Smyk of Pottsville, PA
- Various family member documents to include: indentured servant contracts and land transfers. Donated by Rebecca J. Strauch of Cressona, PA
- Book: "In Silence" by Louis Sanjek. Donated by Nancy Klimon of Hanover, PA
- Book: The 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry in WWI, Vol. 1, Donated by Kenneth R. Gall of Lykens, PA
- Door handles and marque letters from the Hippodrome Theatre. Donated by Francis Lynagh Jr. of Orwigsburg, PA
- Bradley Family artifacts: 45 RPM record of Edgar Brown, Playbills from 1916 and 1917, Elks Famous Forty Placard, 1901 Pottsville High School Commencement Program. Donated by Jane McAndrew of Pottsville, PA
- Photo of a family at Phoenix Park circa 1931. Donated by Diane Fiorillo of Pottsville, PA
- Small POW/MIA hand flag to Vietnam Veterans, books: Our Flag, POW/MIA America's Missing Men, Poems, map of South Vietnam, and Salute to Sacrifice story about Schuylkill Haven Memorial. Donated by Carl (Boone) Sterner of Schuylkill Haven, PA
- 1920' Red Cross Nurses Uniform, aprons, shawl, dress, and duster cap. Minersville Bicentennial garter belt and collection book. Donated by Alice Rozetar of Minersville, PA
- Collection of Reading Coal Company employee records from 1900 – 1970. Donated by Michael C. Smith, West Lawn, PA

## The Death of Muhammed Ali

By Gary Zane, formerly of Schuylkill Haven, June 6, 2016

The news of Ali's death was emotional. I grew up in Schuylkill Haven and I used to visit his camp and watch him train on numerous occasions. My friends and I used to go and there was typically a crowd. We would watch him spar, train, and then he would put on a show about him being "the greatest." I got his autograph one time. I had no paper for him to use and so I handed him a prom picture of me and my date. He rolled his eyes when he saw what he was going to sign. I had the picture in my wallet for years but it finally just fell apart.

I also remember seeing Kris Kristofferson at the camp as he was a big Ali fan – and Rhodes Scholar. I also saw Richard Harris – the movie star and the singer of "McArthur Park" when I was there.

Another time I went to the camp with my friend Richie Robbins. Usually he would start training about 6-8 weeks before a fight. This was about three months before the Foreman fight and there was only one car at the camp. We looked in the windows of his training gym and suddenly Angelo Dundee opened the door and asked if we "want to watch the champ train?" We said yes and we went in – Ali was all business and was just doing tons of exercises, shadow boxing, hitting the heavy bag. It was surreal. By the end, a few more people showed up and Ali

became more animated.

Another time, Ali was in a car that had stopped at the red light by Mickey's luncheonette at the corner of South Jackson and East Norwegian Streets in Pottsville. A few of us were hanging outside when we noticed him. We found out later that his daughter was in the hospital. Joey Devin suddenly yells out "Joe Frazier!" Ali gets

out of his car and starts boxing in the street yelling how he is going to beat up Joe Frazier.

I also remember Ernie Terrell jogging and how that led to Ali coming to Sculp's Hill. Ali used to chop trees down with an ax up at his cabin – part of his training. Lots of memories... he was the greatest and I am glad he is part of Schuylkill County history.

## Servants continued from page 5

have an accurate picture of until now."

Angela Riotto, a Civil War historian, said that although it was widespread practice at the time, many contracts are not likely to exist. Riotto, a Palo Alto native earning a doctorate in American history at the University of Akron, Ohio, said Thursday at the historical society that families sending their children away were too poor to have formal documents drawn up and instead had verbal agreements.

"They are so unique," Dellock said. "It's a part of history we never had before."

**The Historical Society is currently planing bus trips for August and September. Specific details to follow.**



**Reading Railroad Heritage Museum, Hamburg, PA**



**United States Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA**

### Memorial Donations:

*In Memory of Carol M. Bauer*

- Jacob Bauer (Husband) and Denis Bauer (Son)
- Charles and Jeanne Dyer
- Suzanne and Elizabeth Mattioni
- Warren and Diana Grover

The Historical Society  
Of Schuylkill County  
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Pottsville, PA 17901

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## GREAT DVD SALE



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(His Career of Service)



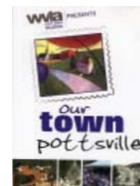
The Battle of  
Little Bighorn



Our National  
Heritage



Railroads of Schuylkill  
County (Vol. 1 & 2)



Our Town  
Pottsville

*Other DVD's on sale but not pictured are:*

*The Life & Time of John O'Hara and Old Schuylkill: A Video History (Vol. 1 & 2)*