Oley Valley Heritage Association

NEWSLETTER

March, 2015

Textiles and Textile Tools of Oley

Presented by **Alan G. Keyser**

Sponsored by Oley Valley Heritage Association

Alan G. Keyser has studied, published and presented lectures on homespun over the last 40 years. He will show examples of both tools and pieces of homespun linens, linsey and wool made in the Oley area and elsewhere in southeastern Pennsylvania more than 150 years ago.

See actual samplers, coverlets and other textiles made in the Oley Valley!

See what tools were used and learn how those tools were made!

Sampler image courtesy of Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center

Program is FREE. Membership is not required but would be greatly appreciated.

When: Monday, April 13, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.
Where: Oley Fair Centre Building
26 Jefferson Street, Oley, PA

Complimentary light refreshments will be provided after the program.

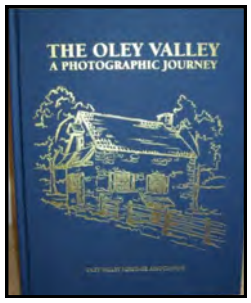
New President

On November 17, 2014, our long-time President, **Darlene Dillon**, announced her resignation from the position of President of Oley Valley Heritage Association effective January 19, 2015. On January 19, 2015, the Oley Valley Heritage Association board voted to approve **Kelly Spatz** as our new President. If you see Kelly, please congratulate her on her new position.

Steve Fisher will remain as our Vice President, Judith Merkel will remain as our Secretary, and Debra Pook will remain as our Treasurer. We have one vacant seat on the board.

Covered Bridges Program

On November 10, 2014, Fred J. Moll presented an educational and interesting power point program entitled "Covered Bridges of Berks County" featuring the Penn Street Covered Bridge, the Schuylkill Avenue Covered Bridge, the Lancaster Avenue Covered Bridge, Stoudt's Ferry Covered Bridge and many others. Special emphasis was made on the 2002 to 2004 restoration of the Pleasantville Covered Bridge located in Oley Township. Approximately 100 people attended.



Interesting Fact about our book "The Oley Valley: A Photographic Journey"

Do you know someone who has memory loss? Several people have told us that they have given our photographic book to someone who has memory loss and was surprised at their positive reaction. This book has been a real comfort to them as they can remember people, places and events of years ago but struggle with recent memories. Many have reported that the receiver of the book looks at it over and over again. What a nice, unexpected compliment!

Facebook

Oley Valley Heritage Association is on Facebook! Look for Oley Valley Heritage, like our page and posts and share it with your friends. Help us spread the word about OVHA! We look forward to your comments.

Photo Identification

We need your help! Beside what school was this photo taken? Can you identify the people in the photo? If so, please call Mary Williams at (610) 987-3179.

You Are Invited!

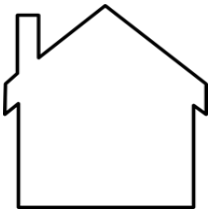
Members are invited to attend our board meetings which are held at the Oley Township Municipal Building at 7:00 p.m. the 3rd Monday of every month except December. If you are in doubt about a meeting being held, please call Kelly Spatz at (610) 987-9278. You are always welcome to join us!

Oley Valley School District Administration Building Display Cases

Did you see our booth at the Oley Valley Community Fair in 2014? If not, you can see part of it on display in the School Administration Building's display case. It's a wonderful collection of vintage photos on various forms of transportation in the Oley Valley.

Home for OVHA

Do you have any suggestions about a home for us? We are still interested in finding a home for our organization. Why do we want a home? Currently, we have our board meetings at the Oley Township Municipal Building and have artifacts and other items stored elsewhere. Our goal is to have a place where we could hold board meetings and programs for the public, to have a place where people can donate antique Oley Valley items, and to create a museum to display these antique Oley Valley items. The Oley Valley has so much history, and we'd like to save these treasures.



Mission Statement

The Oley Valley Heritage Association is dedicated to promoting education, publishing information and encouraging preservation of those subjects that reflect the heritage of the Oley Valley.

Memories of the Oley Valley

We're always looking for new Memories and are interested in nostalgia or memories of out-of-date practices (those things typically not done today). Do you have any memories to add? We'd like to hear from you, our members. Please email or write to us and include your phone number in case we have any questions. Your memory may be included in the next newsletter. Please be brief.

The Oley Valley.
I remember when…

"In the spring after fields were plowed, disking was done, and after it had rained, people often went hunting for arrowheads. The most fertile field I found to hunt is the field across the driveway from Irene Keller's home on Lake Road." *Submitted by Mabel Yoder.*

"I grew up on a farm just down the road from the Pleasantville Covered Bridge. I started school in 1932. Everyday I walked up the road to the bridge and waited in the bridge for the school bus to pick me up." *Submitted by Kenneth F. Cleaver.*

"I remember swimming under the Pleasantville Covered Bridge every night during the summer. I went swimming a hundred times in the Manatawny Creek. I would swim with the Haas boys: Honey, Sunny, Pat and Les Dierolf." *Submitted by Kenneth F. Cleaver.*

"I remember a flood on the Manatawny Creek. The pink stuccoed stone house along the creek near the bridge had a flooded basement. I also watched a chicken house float down the Manatawny with chickens on the roof." *Submitted by Kenneth F. Cleaver.*

"We had some pretty bad storms back in the 1940's. I still remember helping my Dad shovel open our farm lane so the milk truck could get in. Our farm was along what is now Limekiln Road in Exeter, Oley and Amity Townships and was set back from the road pretty far." *Submitted by Charlie King.*

We received the following Memory written in story form from Mildred (Fisher) Reber.

Oley Valley Memories

Finally, everyone was ready to go, sitting in our assigned seats in the "1935 Ford", Daddy at the wheel and Momma in her co-pilot seat. We were off to our Saturday night treat at the Oley Valley Fire Company picnic grounds.

Once a month, as my memory recalls, there would be a community picnic featuring entertainment from local area bands. New Ringgold, Pottstown, and sometimes Oley Valley High School Band were often among many others who filled the summer months with entertainment.

As we approached the road that took us on Main Street in Oley, now known as Route 662 or Memorial Highway, the excitement would intensify. We kids had a plan for the evening.

At this point in time there were only five children making these trips. My youngest sister was not yet born. Our spending money for the night was 25¢. That's right, a quarter for each of us to make last for about 3 to 4 hours. No amount of begging in the world would have made my Father cough up more spending money for us. But, we knew not to beg. It was final. Amen!

After Momma and Daddy located the ideal spot to put their folding lawn chairs, we knew where to return throughout the evening and they would certainly still be at that spot, we were off to make our night fun. This is where our plan for the evening came into play.

We knew we would have to pace ourselves to make our quarter stretch for the whole evening. First we bought a hot dog for 10 cents. Finding some friends or relatives, we would play games and waste time in the process. No way could we leave Oley without having their famous french fries. Spending 15¢ for fries, we now had used up our entire quarter. No fear, we had this all planned.

Sodas were bought in glass bottles which were often dropped at various places on the picnic grounds. If we searched for these bottles and returned them to the soda stand, we would be paid 1¢ per bottle for the returned empties. Now we could earn enough money to buy a soda to share plus any penny candy with the remainder of the pennies. Yes, I said penny candy. Something you can't find today.

Clutching our penny candy, our bellies filled with hot dogs, French fries, and soda, and our entire quarter spent, we found our way back to Momma and Daddy who were sitting at the same spot in their lawn chairs.

After the entertainment ended, we were on our way home. Tired, but we felt quite satisfied and pretty proud of how we managed to stretch our 25¢. Our plan worked. We were good until our next month's Oley Valley treat.

Trolley Memories

"I remember camping at the ruins of the "power house" as a kid. The power house was the Oley Line substation for the Oley Valley Railway. The ruins are located on my family's property near Limekiln." *Submitted by Craig Houp of Houp's Landscaping.*

"My great-grandfather, Samuel P. Stapleton, was a conductor on the Oley Valley Railway." *Submitted by Mike Moyer.*

"I worked for Boyertown Body Works and remember that the Body Works made about a dozen trolley busses for Philadelphia for their 1976 celebration." *Submitted by Ken Kurtz.*

*"*I remember riding on the Oley trolley. We took milk to the trolley daily." *Submitted by Mary DeTurck.*

"I am 97 years old and I rode the trolley. I lived near Antietam Lake and rode the trolley to work in the knitting mills." *Submitted by Miriam Hare Noll.*

"The late Mabel Sailor rode the trolley to attend dances at the Griesemersville Hotel." *Submitted by Susan Gierschick.*

Pay Rates in 1855

One of our board members found these rates in an Oley Township book written by Solomon Levengood in May, 1855:

3 hands. 1 day @ $.75 = $2.25
3 hands and 1/2 day at $.60 per day = $.90
1 day ploughing = $4.00
2 hands for 1 day at $.75 = $1.50
1/2 day hauling = $2.00
1/2 day hauling on road = $2.00
1/2 day labor = $1.12

And, yes, ploughing is how it was spelled.

Oley Valley Railway Trolley
by the late William P. Christman

The Oley Valley Railway Trolley began in 1902 and ended on July 21, 1932. It cost more than $500,000.

The trolley entered the Oley area on Weist School Road and traveled north to Friedensburg Road traveling along Friedensburg Road on the property that is now the Middle and Elementary School, passing the Vo-Tech School and making a right turn and running close to the present highway. A waiting area was located near where the former American Legion Diner was located. This was a busy stop as the Oley Picnic Grove had many activities. Many people from the Reading area attended church picnic and reunions there. The next stop was near Bertolet's Mill, now Kaufman Road.

The town's swimming hole, the "Railey," was located a hundred yards from the stop. All the kids would wait to throw water at the trolley. As it passed over the bridge, it continued through the meadows and fields to Pleasantville. The stop was about a hundred yards from the covered bridge. This stop had a large platform for the farmers to put their cans of milk on. It was picked up by an early "milk run" trolley.

The next stop was at Cedar View Road, now Manatawny Road, a block from my grandfather's house, a trip we took many times. Next a long hill to Shanesville where the boys from Shanesville would put down a huge cover of grease on the tracks. The trolley conductor had to get out and put sand on the tracks to get up the hill. A few blocks past Shanesville stood a large brick building which housed a number of large batteries which was a booster for the electric system to Gabelsville and finally to Boyertown. Here the electric boom was turned around, and the trip back to Reading started.

The cost from Oley to Pleasantville was a nickel. On a nice day my mother and two other students would walk home and save that nickel.

During trapping season many of the boys would walk the trolley tracks to find skunks or raccoons that were killed and would sell them.

The Oley High School basketball team and the baseball team used the trolley for transportation to away games.

Our family could ride free because my father worked for the Reading Railroad Company.

A few spikes and an anvil made from the tracks are the only material things remaining from the trolley era. However, I can still recall the full trolley on that last day, the final wave from the people, and I can still hear that final "toot" ring through the Oley Valley.

It should be noted that Bill Christman donated a trolley track spike to OVHA for the enlightenment of future Oley Valley generations. This spike was displayed at our 2014 Oley Fair stand.

Morels

Last spring people in the Oley Valley found a great deal of morels. For mushroom hunters, this was quite a treat. Typically they are found in moist areas around dying or dead trees. A good place to search is in a old apple orchard. Some morels are edible and some are poisonous. Above is a photo of morels that were picked last spring in the Oley Valley. Typically, here in the Oley Valley they were sautéed in butter. Some people added spices. Sometimes morels were added to a stew or made in an omelet.

Mabel Yoder shared a memory with us about morels. "In the spring, before the tomatoes were planted, the Levengoods went morel hunting, mostly in apple orchards. Sometimes you found very large morels; other times small ones. If you found a good spot, the location was kept a secret."

Did your family hunt for morels? How did you cook them? We'd love to hear your memories on morels.

Warning: Never eat a morel mushroom if you are unsure of the type.

PHOTOS

The Oley Valley Heritage Association needs

Old Photos of the Oley Valley

from the 1950's and earlier.

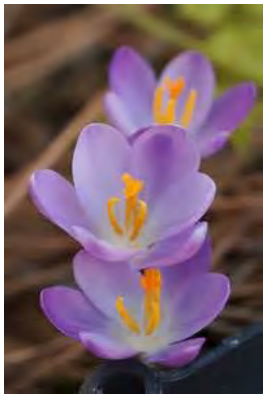
Oley Township, Ruscombmanor Township, Alsace Township and Pike Township.

We will scan your photos, save them for our photo archives and possibly use them in a second book. Your photos will be returned to you.

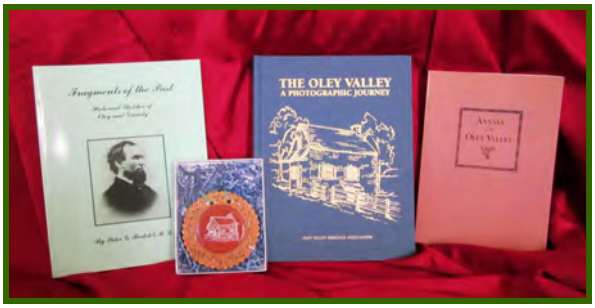
Please call one of these people if you are willing to share:
Doug Wegman at (610) 944-8437
Doris Lorah (610) 987-6167

OLEY VALLEY
HERITAGE ASSOCIATION
P O Box 401
Oley, PA 19547-0401

Spring 2015
Newsletter



OVHA ITEMS FOR SALE



Fragments of the Past by Dr. Peter G. Bertolet $20
30th Anniversary Ornament $15
The Oley Valley: A Photographic Journey $35
Annals of the Oley Valley by Rev. P. C. Croll, D.D. $22

Above Items Available At:

- **Charming Country Crafts**
  486 Main Street, Oley, PA
  Phone: (610) 987-9486
- **Evelyn & Harriette's**
  1232 Oysterdale Road, Oley, PA
  Phone (610) 987-6055
- **Riverview Nursery**
  3049 Pricetown Road, Temple, PA
  Phone: (610) 929-5049
- **Spayd's at Green Valley Nursery**
  4610 Penn Avenue, Sinking Spring, PA
  Phone: (610) 678-6711
- **Yellow House Hotel**
  6743 Boyertown Pike, Douglassville, PA
  Phone: (610) 689-9410
  (Only sells *The Oley Valley: A Photographic Journey*)
- **www.oleyvalleyheritage.org**

All proceeds go to the Oley Valley Heritage Association, a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation.

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Debra Pook, *Treasurer*
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