

Heritage Center



Published regularly for the friends of the
Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center
at Kutztown University.

NEWS



Number 21, Fall '00

Like a Page Out of a History Book, Heemet Fescht Tells a Unique Story

Sunny skies and mild temperatures graced the Heritage Center farm September 16-17, providing the setting for an enjoyable and successful Heemet Fescht attended by about 3,000 visitors.

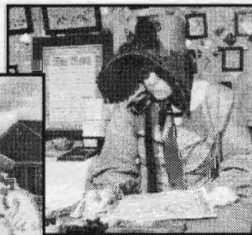
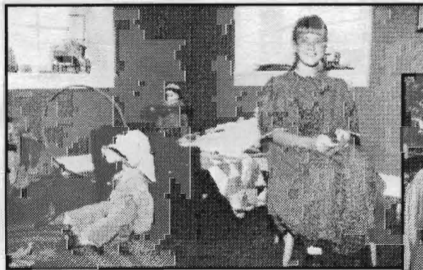
It seems that everyone found some things especially to their liking. Children loved the farm, the lessons in the one-room schoolhouse, and the wagon rides. Collectors and the curious enjoyed the Artisans Village where twenty craftsmen took time to explain their work.

A steady stream of visitors entered the Heritage Center Museum. There, in our restored 200-year-old stone farmhouse, they could sense the way of life of a prosperous Pennsylvania Dutch family in the late 1800s. A visiting youngster remarked that the girls' bed-

room in the museum was like a page out of her storybook.

The schnitzel bunk, quilt making, and traditional foods at the Weibslait Eck provided a peek into some of our oldest traditions. The genealogical information center was busy both days for families interested in tracing their heritage. The traditional church service in the dialect provided additional proof that Heemet Fescht portrays the authentic culture of the Pennsylvania Germans.

Tractor and farm equipment displays and agricultural demonstrations, folk music and dancing, and – of course – plenty of chicken pot pie, funnel cakes, and Kutztown birch beer gave our visitors plenty to talk about, and to look forward to at Heemet Fescht 2001. ❖



Scenes from Heemet Fescht (left to right): Ten-year-old Eliza Altenderfer portrays a farm family girl in her room in the stone farmhouse museum; Dave Fooks greets long-time Heemet Fescht craftsman and hex artist Johnny Claypoole; Ruthanne Hartung takes special care in creating a fraktur certificate; Walter Leibach instructs a young apprentice in furniture-making; Carolyn and Frank Lare demonstrate the art of making linen.

How Many Days 'til Christmas?

How many days left until Christmas? We can't tell for sure, but we do know that you should mark your calendar now for Sunday afternoon, December 9. That is when we will celebrate our annual Christmas on the Farm at the Heritage Center. This is definitely a family affair, so bring everyone!

We can tell you that some of the popular activities from last year's program as well as new features will be presented. An authentic Belsnickel, switch in hand, will arrive to amuse and amaze children and adults alike. The stern but likable Pennsylvania Dutch holiday visitor was prominent in the lives of generations of Pennsylvania Germans.

The festive farm setting will appeal to people of all ages. There will be songs and stories, candy making and cookie baking for the holidays. Again this year, visitors are encouraged to bring handmade ornaments to place on the farmhouse Christmas tree.

An old custom that was part of last year's celebration will be repeated. Children will create a traditional Pennsylvania German cotton tree on which to hang their ornaments and presents.

The schoolhouse and museum will be open and decorated for the holidays. Holiday folk wares, created by local craftsmen, will be displayed in the barn. There will be music and entertainment.

In short, there is something for everyone at Christmas on the Farm. So, join us there for a wonderful, traditional Pennsylvania German celebration!

Harvest Time on the Farm Meant Lots of Hard Work

by **David Semmel**, Heritage Center Archivist

With the arrival of autumn comes the picking of apples and potatoes, the cutting and husking of corn, pressing cider and cooling applebutter.

When I was a kid on the farm, two things were certain when the Labor Day weekend arrived – potato harvesting was at hand and school started for most youngsters.

Many people my age picked potatoes or apples either on the family farm or on a neighbor's farm. Harvest was a labor-intensive operation before mechanization for the potato and corn crops.

Fruit harvest is almost impossible to mechanize, thus orchards near populated areas have pick-your-own setups. Teenagers and housewives in the rural communities looked forward to earning a few extra dollars at harvest time.

In my grade school years, the pay for an hour of potato picking was 10 cents to 20 cents. By my high school years, in the early 1940s, pay was a quarter. Perhaps a few farmers offered a nickel or dime more.

A story that I often relate about potato harvest took place south of Slatington, on a farmstead that was completely razed when the Northeast Turnpike extension was constructed through the farm in the mid-1950s.

The farmer would get a carful of young boys from Slatington to pick potatoes, transporting them from their homes to the farm and returning them in the evening. They worked a 10-hour day. There was an hour for lunch, prepared by the farmer's wife. For the day's work, the 10 hours would have totaled \$1. However, for

the transportation and noon meal, 10 cents was deducted, so the total was reduced to 90 cents for 10 hours.

That was an era when a hired hand might have lived with a farm family for a wage of \$15 a month with room, meals and laundry furnished by the farmer and his wife. A married hired hand, with children, would live in a tenant house owned by the farmer, with an available garden and firewood plus milk, eggs, apples and potatoes supplied for the family. The cash pay was \$30 a month. Somehow, it doesn't seem possible that people survived on those wages, but they did.

The harvest was hard work, bending to pick potatoes, emptying the basket on the wagon, emptying the wagon by shoveling and perhaps carrying the potatoes into the house cellar for frost-proof winter storage. Some potatoes were sized by hand, some went over a shaker-type sizer, others a chain type, but all were hand-operated.

I can recall at least 60 potato farms in North Whitehall Township in 1948. They ranged in size from 10 acres to 75 or more acres. Today, only two farms are operating there. Nearly 100% of harvesting is done mechanically and no farm wagons with iron-rimmed, wooden-spoke wheels, drawn by horses, are seen on the farm.

Now, if you have the opportunity to see a potato harvester move slowly through the field, depositing the crop directly on a vehicle moving along side, stop and think a bit. Ask yourself how many people it would have taken to perform those tasks 60 years ago. ✿

"You've Got Mail" a Familiar Sound Over the Years

by **David Semmel**, Heritage Center Archivist

"Has the mail gone yet? It sure is late today." "The mail went early today. I wanted to get this letter out but I missed getting it out in time."

Do these expressions sound familiar? Yes, we expect mail delivery and postal boxes to be filled regularly, whether delivered to the home or picked up at the post office.

Perhaps the mail delivery system is taken for granted and it might have lost some of its importance with inventions and innovation in recent years. Before telephone, telegraphy, teletype, e-mail and other communications methods, the handwritten and hand-delivered letter was the only means of communication, other than word of mouth.

Remember the complaints by church leaders about letters from Colonial America not reaching their destinations in Europe in a reasonable time, sometimes taking four to six months to cross the Atlantic on sailing ships?

Before the Rural Free Delivery (RFD) system was established by Congress in the last years of the 19th century, residents at a local post office picked up all mail.

A small, rural post office, which has been preserved, is in New Smithville at the store-hotel. But that little post office is not in use – the area is served by rural mail routes from the Kutztown post office.

Virtually all crossroad stores had a post office and a name, even if only a house or two and the store, post office and possibly a hotel were located in the immediate area.

Many times, a postal patron's mail accumulated for several days, as daily trips might be too lengthy and time-consuming for a busy farm family. Neighbors often took turns going for the mail, bringing several families their mail along the way.

Hollenbach's Grist Mill in Lowhill Township (later known as Stahley's) had a series of pigeon hole boxes above the desk in the small office where local residents could pick up their mail. No, it wasn't a post office or a postal annex, but the delivery wagon from the mill went by the Schnecksville Post Office almost daily. The teamster would stop with the horses and wagon and pick up the mail for the half-dozen or so families who lived closer to the grist mill than to the post office. The neighbors really appreciated this service.

The RFD System put an end to rural residents having to travel great distances for their mail. Many small crossroad post offices were closed, but the names of these villages are well remembered and used in everyday local conversation.

Horses with wagons, or sleighs in the winter, were used to deliver the mail, although some carriers gradually changed to automobiles or trucks by 1920, shortening the time for delivery.

The postal system has grown to keep pace with the many new homes, townhouses, and, yes, entire new clusters of homes. Schnecksville was served for many, many years by one rural route. Today, five routes serve the same area.

One other item and don't be embarrassed as I was some 35 years ago, when I went into a post office which I knew was managed by a woman. I inquired if she was the "post mistress." In no uncertain terms, she replied, "I am no one's mistress, I am the postmaster!" ✿

Changing Seasons and Changing Scenes

by Darlene Moyer, Curator, Heritage Museum

Have you been through the historic house at the Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center lately? Have you toured more than once? Do you know that it changes? Are you aware that there is no fee to tour if you are a member of the Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center and/or Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Culture Society?

At Christmas 1999, we had crafters in the barn and in the rotating exhibit room, and greens with candles in the windows. There were winter covers on the beds and winter clothing on our in-house residents: Frances in the parlor, May in the kitchen and Martha in the children's room.

At Easter time, we had the house and school decorated with Easter eggs, including Binsa Gravvs, blown, onion-dyed and paper-decorated, and the beds and residents were in their spring/summer finery. The winter hat on the dresser was changed to summer straw and the rotating exhibit room was changed to a "please touch" room. This room was enjoyed by hundreds of children (of all ages). Even some paintings are changed seasonally.

For Heemet Fescht on September 16 and 17, the decorations were a combination of summer and fall as reflected by the mid-September dates. The Exhibit room was a display of local ephemera. Postcards from the early 20th century, local advertisements and some memorabilia from Keystone/Kutztown Normal School, the predecessor to Kutztown University, were featured.

Once again, the house will be in its elegant Christmas apparel

for December 9, for our second annual Christmas on the Farm. Your Heritage Homestead will be traditionally decorated, artisans will demonstrate, carolers will entertain and perhaps the Bel-snickel will make an appearance.

The Pennsylvania Germans brought the ideas of Christmas trees, Easter eggs, and many other wonderful traditions to America. Aren't we blessed to have all these things in our own backyard? Speaking of "things and backyards," do you have something from Berks or Lehigh County that you would like to stay in our area? Is there a treasured Pennsylvania Dutch/ German item that you no longer need? We are looking for pre-1900 artifacts for our Museum collection. Currently needed: Berks or Reading manufactured iron items, locally made candleholders, and plates and glasses. Other items will also be considered. Remember these must be from the 1800s.

We are also in dire need of a copper apple butter kettle to be used at the Heritage Center for demonstrations. Please contact Darlene Moyer if you wish to donate something - (610) 683-1589 or DarMoyer@aol.com. And in closing, do you know that the Heritage Center operates by 99% donations? Your time, talents and treasures are valuable and always appreciated. Please consider volunteering. Thank you.

As we approach the new real millennium on January 1, we look forward to seeing each of you observe the changing seasons at the Heritage Center. ❁



Sterling Zimmerman was dedicated to the preservation of the Pennsylvania German heritage. Among his many endeavors, he supported the Heritage Center and the Kutztown Pennsylvania German Festival.

In Memoriam

Sterling G. Zimmerman, 79, one of the most prominent persons in the Pennsylvania German community, died September 21. He was the husband of the late Florence M. (Smith) Zimmerman.

For 50 years, Sterling and Florence operated Zimmerman's Hotel in New Tripoli. He was secretary of Zimmerman's Country Homestead, Werley's Corner, for the past 12 years.

He was in the forefront of numerous community activities that focused on the preservation of the Pennsylvania German heritage. He was a founding member and habtmann for 30 years of Grundsow Lodge 15, Kutztown. He was also a founder of many other Grundsow lodges, was the founder of the Lechaw Dahl Fersommmling, and was one of the founders of the Drei County Weibslait Fersommmling. For over 40 years he was a speaker and humorist at numerous events that celebrated Pennsylvania German traditions.

Sterling was one of the first supporters of the concept of a regional Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center at Kutztown University and encouraged its development. He took a keen interest in the Kutztown Pennsylvania German Festival and was a volunteer at the festi-

val's Grundsow lodges-Fersommmling information booth.

He also helped found the Pennsylvania Dutch Historical Society, taught the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect, and helped to organize numerous Pennsylvania Dutch choirs. He was an active participant in many other community activities, and had a special interest in antique automobiles.

He was a member of Ziegels United Church of Christ, Breinigsville, where funeral services were held on September 26. ❁

The Heritage Center Calendar

December 9 - Christmas on the Farm

April 8 - Eastertime on the Farm

May 21 - Glieder Fescht (dinner for our donating members)

May 29 - June 9 - German Heritage Tour

June 3 - Picnic on the Farm (sponsored by the Heritage Center and Grundsow Lodges)

June 30 - July 8 - Kutztown Pennsylvania German Festival

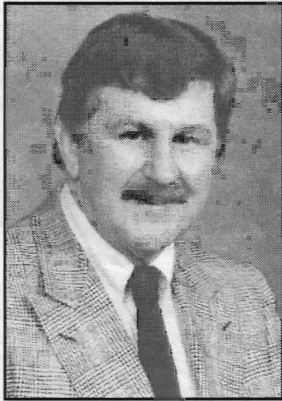
August 11-12 - Kids Day on the Farm

September 15-16 - Heemet Fescht

Tours of the Heritage Center for school children are held throughout the year. The Center is open for group tours by appointment. Please call 610-683-1330 or 610-683-1589. Individuals can tour the Center Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. by calling 610-683-1589.

The **Members Association** provides an opportunity for interested persons to support the purposes and activities of the Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center. For information, please call 610-683-1330. The membership categories include: **Leweszeit Glieder** - \$2,500 (life membership, one-time gift); annual memberships, July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001: **Hoch Gewwe Glieder** - \$1,000 - \$2,499, **Bresident Glieder** - \$500 - \$999, **Gross Helfer** - \$250 - \$499, **Hunnert Daaler Helfer** - \$100 - \$249, **Gut Helfer** - \$50 - \$99, **Raus Helfer** - \$25 - \$49.

From the Director



Wie bischt.

The growth of Center activities continues at an amazing pace. Significantly, our connections in Germany have reached a superb level. We now have strong links with the States of Rhineland-Pfalz, Baden Wuerttemberg, and Rhine-Hesse.

Next year's trip to Germany promises to be one of the most exciting in terms of historical and genealogical involvement. As of this writing, we have 30 people who have already reserved their space—I would, of course, like to have about 40 people go on this trip. With possible changes occurring, this could well be my last trip to Germany. So, if you are interested in going with me to Germany, I hope you will take advantage of this year's trip. Call Alphon Tours at 215-794-5653 for more details.

Heemet Fescht was a resounding success and a great deal of credit for this goes to David Fooks for organizing the event, and to the Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Culture Society for their fantastic involvement. The Old Time Plow Boys continue to provide us with great service.

We were all saddened by the loss of Sterling "Tiny" Zimmerman. Sterling had unquestionably a leading role in the development of the Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center. I remember going to his home and hearing him say (in his own way), "Well, boys, I have a dream..." and he, along with Carl Snyder, gave us the encouragement to start the Heritage Center. One of our hopes is to dedicate a building at the Heritage Center to Sterling and Florence Zimmerman. I hope we can call upon you to assist us with contributions to move the log cabin and to have it named in honor of the Zimmermans.

Mayor Hans Buch of Enkenbach-Alsenborn, Germany visited the Heritage Center in September. Hans has always hosted us when we traveled to Germany, and it was wonderful to have Hans and his wife, Lore, with us, and to share some of our experiences with them. Hans was excited about the mythical bird, the Elbedritsch, as

it is the national bird of the Rhineland-Pfalz and plays a large role in the Pennsylvania Dutch culture. We had a great deal of discussion in terms of Elbedritsch and the mutual cultures of Germany and the Pennsylvania Germans.

Our programs continue to look strong. We are looking forward to Ruth Emmert returning to assist us. We lament the loss of Ruth's husband, Paul, and we hope that Ruth will be able to join in with her usual enthusiasm as we develop our programs.

Thank you, once again, for your support throughout this year, and we look forward to a bigger and better 2001.

Mach's gut,

David L. Valuska, Director, Cultural Heritage Center

Meeting Old Friends



When Mayor Hans Buch of Enkenbach-Alsenborn, Germany and his wife, Lore, visited the Heritage Center in September, they met a number of old friends. Each spring during the Heritage Tour of Germany, Mayor Buch and the people of the village of Enkenbach-Alsenborn in the Rhineland-Pfalz host a reception and dinner for tour members. While they were in Kutztown, the mayor and Mrs. Buch were guests at a luncheon attended by the group shown in this photo, most of whom have participated in the Heritage Tour. Mayor and Mrs. Buch are shown in the front row, right.

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