

Jenkins Journal

LANSDALE, PA

FEBRUARY, 2014

Heebners: Titans of Industry

Agricultural works featured at Feb. 11 show

The coming of the railroad turned muddy farmland into the bustling town of Lansdale during the second half of the 19th century, but it didn't happen without a big assist from a long-gone business that provided hundreds of jobs for new residents of the community.

Heebner and Sons Agricultural Works was not just any old business: It became the world's largest manufacturer of horse-powered farm equipment; it was the John Deere of the pre-tractor age. Heebner's reputation spread far and wide and its products were highly sought after by farmers in many countries.

The Heebners: Titans of Industry will be the subject of the Lansdale Historical Society's next Community Program, Tuesday, Feb. 11, 7:30 p.m., at the Lansdale Parks and

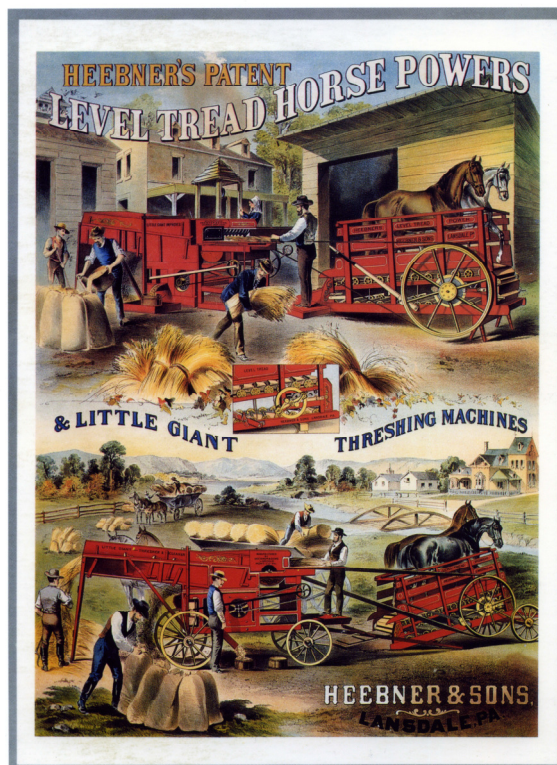
Recreation Building.

The story of the Heebners centers around three men – David S. Heebner and his sons William and Isaac – whose impact in Lansdale was both immediate and long-lasting. The elder Heebner developed the horse-power, basically a wagon or wheeled sled that featured a treadmill for horses. As the horses walked the treadmill, power was supplied to operate a variety of farm implements like reapers and threshers.

It eliminated much of the harvesting work that had previously been done by hand, allowing farmers to plant more acreage and realize greater profits.

Heebner's horse-power was the standard of the industry until the

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Full house for first History 101 seminar

Education is next topic;
register now for Feb. 15

The society's second Saturday Morning History 101 seminar will be held February 15 at the Jenkins Homestead beginning at 9:30 p.m.

"The Evolution of Education in the North Penn Area" will be the topic of this program prepared by Clarence Kinsey. The 90-minute seminar is geared to adults who are new to the area and want to learn more about our local history or long-time residents who want a quick refresher course. There is no

charge.

The monthly seminars are limited to 20 participants so it is necessary to register in advance by calling (215) 855-1872. Please leave your name, phone number and the number of people attending. The deadline for reservations is February 13.

The first seminar which addressed the railroad's impact on the North Penn Valley was fully subscribed in a few days so it's important to sign up early.

**Details of the education seminar
can be found on the
society's website,
www.lansdalehistory.org.**

A third seminar is planned for March 15. The topic: "The Development of Downtown Lansdale" will be hosted by Dick Shearer.

Just a reminder...

...If you haven't sent in your 2014 membership renewal, please do so now.

The deadline for dues was January 31 and it is important to remember that your contribution helps us continue our efforts to preserve the North Penn region's history for future generations to enjoy.

Some thoughts after a snowy January

By DICK SHEARER

OK, this hasn't been the best of winters and right now I'm sitting by my office window watching another wave of big white flakes fall on the driveway. If my snow blower could talk I doubt that its comments would be printable.

Here are a few additional items that we want to pass along in this issue of *the Jenkins Journal*:

Inclement weather alerts

After spending weeks or months preparing a Community Program one of the last things we want to do is announce a postponement because of bad weather. Unfortunately, we'd had to do so in the past and surely it will happen again.

Our policy is this: We will err on the side of caution. Many of our attendees are senior citizens and, frankly, in snowy, icy or frigid weather, we'd postpone a show rather than risk possible injury to anyone. So if we call off a program early only to see

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

conditions improve, so be it.

Postponements will be announced on 1440 Radio WNPV by no later than 2 p.m., but in most cases it will be earlier. The station updates postponements every half hour.

If we call off a show, it will be rescheduled for a later date based on weather conditions and the availability of the parks and rec building.

Bring a friend to our programs

In keeping with our discussion above, Clarence Kinsey and several of our regular volunteers have suggested that regulars at our Community Programs should reach out to friends and family who would come if they were invited and had a ride.

So how about it? Invite a friend to get out of the house and join you at one of our shows.

Upcoming events this spring

Just a reminder to reserve April 8 as the date of the society's annual banquet at William Penn Inn.

As usual, we plan to present the

Edwin G. Holl Historic Achievement Award to a deserving area resident or organization whose work has promoted or preserved the rich heritage of the North Penn area. A committee comprised of board members will make the selection but we welcome suggestions from our members. I invite you to pass them along to me – but please do so by February 21.

Details about the banquet will be included in the March issue of the *Jenkins Journal*.

Our final Community Program of the year will be held Tuesday, May 13, featuring the history of Lansdale area churches-part 2. Pat Rieker has been working year-round on this series and we're certain the second installment will be every bit as interesting as the first.

Heebner poster on sale soon

Details are still being worked out but the society will be offering a number of new items for sale during 2014. One of them will be a special limited edition print of the Heebner Agricultural Works adver-

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Lansdale Historical Society



137 Jenkins Ave., Lansdale, PA 19446

•Hours: Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Saturdays, 9 a.m. to noon. (Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. by appointment).

•Telephone: (215) 855-1872;
(215) 393-8919 (fax).

•E-mail: info@lansdalehistory.org
•Please send mail correspondence to:
•137 Jenkins Ave., Lansdale, PA 19446.

•Website: www.lansdalehistory.org.

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Board elections at Feb. 11 program

The election of officers and members of the board of trustees for 2014 take place prior to the February 11 Community Program.

Those nominated are:

Richard Shearer, president; Clarence Kinsey, first vice president; Stephen Moyer, second vice president; Pat Rieker, third vice president; Janice Bennett, secretary; Anne Scheuring, treasurer.

Also, Christopher Cooke, Marti Drumheller, Frank Krimm, Ruth Madison, Richard Stricker and Raymond Walton, trustees.

Those elected will serve one-year terms through the second Community

Program of 2015.

We would like to extend our thanks to Larry O'Malley for his many years of service on the board. He is not seeking re-election as third vice president. Larry will continue to serve as our webmaster and membership coordinator.

Pat Rieker has been selected to move from trustee to third vice president and we anticipate welcoming Chris Cooke to the board. A Lansdale resident and an employee of Merck & Co., he has coordinated implementation of our PastPerfect archival system for several years.

March 11: Dialing back to 1945

The year was 1945, one of the most important of the 20th century – a time of war that turned to peace as the result of a horrific new weapon. Scars of the recent past were replaced by hopes of stability and prosperity.

Rewind 1945 will be the topic of our March 11 Community Program at the Lansdale Parks and Recreation Building.

Narrator Linda Evans will take us back to the time when war's end was celebrated in the streets of Lansdale and towns across the nation. We'll revisit the nation's grief that spilled out upon the death of President Franklin Roosevelt and worries that his replacement, untested Harry Truman, wasn't up to the task.

We'll step back to that night in January, 1945, when 3,000 teenagers packed an open house for "The Rec," a place they could call their own. Or how about checking out the prices of those treats to be found at Shelly's?

Also included will be music and movies of the time and a reflective glance at some of the things that haven't changed much in 69 years.

The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. The Lansdale Parks and Recreation Building is located at 7th St. and Lansdale Ave. There is no admission charge but donations are appreciated.



Kids camp coming this summer

What was it like to grow up on a Pennsylvania farm in colonial times? Participants in our first summer history camp at the Jenkins Homestead will experience firsthand the work and play activities that filled a typical day for the Jenkins children.

Campers will play games and hear stories, make rag rugs and Scherenschnitte (cut paper) projects, learn how to prepare cornbread over an open hearth, and churn butter from fresh cream. An interpretive tour of the homestead will be included in the day's activities.

A Jenkins Farmstead Day will take place at the Jenkins Homestead on **Tuesday, July 15, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.** The raindate is July 16. The camp is open to children who are entering third through sixth grades. Registration forms will be available at the Research Center in mid-February.

It's not too late to get involved. If you would like to be a member of the planning committee, or if you would like to help out for an hour or two on July 15, please contact Pat Rieker at (215) 368-0854 or pkrieker@verizon.net. Your help is most appreciated.

Heebners featured at February show

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gasoline-powered tractor succeeded it early in the 1900s. Even then, horse-powers continued to be sold around the world in areas where gas was not readily available. Finally in 1926, the plant closed down.

In addition to their business venture, all three Heebners were active in other aspects of Lansdale life. David served in a number of elected offices. William, who oversaw the business for many years, was at one time a member of the

state House of Representatives and a big supporter of the cultural arts. Isaac is credited with organizing the borough's public school system.

The program, which is largely based on the book *Heebner & Sons: Pioneers of Farm Machinery in America*, by the late Frances Blasé, former president of the society, will be narrated by Dick Shearer.

There is no admission charge but donations are appreciated.

The parks building is located at 7th St. and Lansdale Ave.

Take advantage of our website and Facebook

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tising poster that was produced in 1882 and placed in publications across the country (see image on page 1).

The full-color poster can be viewed on our website. It has been meticulously reproduced by North Penn Art, and we thank them for their support of our society. The finished product is a keeper and we encourage you to go to our website, www.lansdalehistory.org, in the coming weeks for more information on this. The original hangs in our office and I'm always hearing positive comments about it.

Some final thoughts

As a former newspaper editor it pains me to admit in this day and age that more information can be delivered by the Internet than by a printed publication like the *Jenkins Journal* or your local daily newspaper.

But unfortunately that is the case. The point was driven home again by the recent USPS first class rate increase to 49 cents for first class postage. Many nonprofits like us have dropped mailings and gone exclusively to the web to dis-

seminate information to their members or supporters.

We have not gone that route yet although we have decreased the number of annual newsletters by one. But the reality is that we can offer more to our members and the public through our website and our Facebook page. Surveys indicate that an increasing number of seniors, even those in their nineties, navigate the web regularly.

We hope those of you who do not go to the web regularly for information about our society will do so. Right now the website offers stories about the Ku Klux Klan's visit to a Lansdale church and a new installment in our series, *Saving Historic Lansdale*, featuring our railroad stations.

Admittedly this information is also available to the general public – those folks who are not paying dues – but we'd like to think that you, as loyal supporters, primarily contribute to us so that we can continue our mission of preserving the North Penn Valley's heritage for future generations. I hope that is what we are really investing our donation money to support.

Lansdale Historical Society 137 Jenkins Ave., Lansdale, PA 19446



The Jenkins Historic Complex