



Monroe County Memories: An Oral History Project Preserving the memories of our citizens

By Amy Leiser
Executive Director

The new year has begun, and all of the hustle and bustle of the holiday season is now a part of our past. I hope many of you were able to enjoy your annual holiday activities, even if some were still a little “non-normal” during these continuing COVID-19 pandemic times.

Our family gathered, but the crowd wasn’t as large, and we didn’t take our annual trip to New York City to see the holiday decorations. But some traditions did carry on, and new memories were made. What traditions do you and your family have? Some people display sentimental decorations or make a time-honored recipe to share with friends and family. Perhaps it’s lighting sacred candles, worshipping with your spiritual family, sending special cards, or watching the big game or a classic holiday film.

Sharing traditions and memories is vital to connecting us with family and friends. These traditions, memories, and stories also connect us with our community – our Monroe County community.

To continue to share our traditions and safeguard our memories, the Monroe County Historical Association is expanding efforts to collect oral histories from area residents. Our initiative, titled “Monroe County Memories: An Oral History Project,” is collecting these valuable memories and making them accessible to the public.

Oral history stems from the tradition of passing information from one person to another and from one generation to the next. The Monroe County Memories project allows people to share unique stories in their own words and preserve their voices and memories. Through these recollections, oral histories provide primary source information to help historians, family members, friends, and fellow residents understand the experiences of others and appreciate the communities that connect us all.

Since 1991, Dr. Martin Wilson, MCHA Board member and retired ESU history professor, has been interviewing citizens about Monroe County’s past.



Charlotte Halterman Clapper visited the Stroud Mansion last spring to donate a quilt handmade by her great aunt in 1895. In conversation with Executive Director Amy Leiser, Mrs. Clapper describes the history of the quilt and its connection to her family, while also telling stories of growing up in Stroudsburg and the changes she has seen in the community over the years.

The oral histories of over 50 Monroe County citizens have been recorded so far. These firsthand accounts are entertaining, informative, and heartfelt, and they provide the opportunity for listeners to reflect on earlier times. The MCHA staff is uploading the videos and voice recordings to our YouTube channel, which is available and accessible anytime.

Would you like to be included in “Monroe County Memories: An Oral History Project?” All histories are recorded at the Stroud Mansion by appointment during business hours. Special appointments are also available.

If you are interested in sharing your story or know someone we should interview, please contact the office at 570-421-7703 or email us at admin@monroehistorical.org.

We can’t wait to hear all of the wonderful stories our residents will share of life from Monroe County’s yesteryears!



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2022 Meetings

The MCHA Board of Directors meets the fourth Tuesday of most months at 7 p.m.

Now meeting via Zoom

January 25

Sunday, February 27 – Annual Meeting

March 22

April 26

May 24

June 28

July – No meeting

August 23

September 27

October 25

November 22

December – No meeting

The Monroe County Historical Association is a cultural and learning center that assists our diverse community of residents and visitors in connecting the county's past with the present.



Michael Chaplin will discuss the history of the Pennsylvania State Police at the MCHA's virtual Annual Meeting on February 27.

Virtual Annual Meeting on February 27

Featured presentation: History of Pennsylvania State Police

Our 2022 Annual Meeting will be held virtually on Sunday, February 27. Following the success of last year's virtual presentation, this will be held again via Zoom Webinar.

Our featured speaker is Mr. Michael Chaplin, who will deliver a presentation on the history of the Pennsylvania State Police, formed in 1905 as the first uniformed state police force in the country. Included in his presentation will be details about the first substation in Stroudsburg.

A Monroe County resident, Mr. Chaplin is first vice president of the Pennsylvania State Police Historical, Educational, and Memorial Center, including the Pennsylvania State Police Museum in Hershey.

An email invitation to join the 2022 Annual Meeting will be sent in the coming weeks. Check your email for the link to join this informative and entertaining presentation.



President Theodore Roosevelt visits the Wyoming Barracks of the Pennsylvania State Police in 1910.

Did you know?

- In October 1971, the first female applicant was accepted as a cadet in the Pennsylvania State Police.
- On July 7, 1972, a history-making cadet class of 14 women graduated from the Pennsylvania State Police Academy and joined the trooper ranks.



Earl 'Slim' Heller, the Pocono Cowboy

Editor's note: This new column in the Fanlight will highlight some of the Historical Association's recent donations to the museum and library.

By Bret Fowler, Curator

One of the donations we received recently was a suitcase belonging to local musician, Earl "Slim" Heller. Known as the Pocono Cowboy, Heller was born and raised in Appenzell and remained a lifelong resident of Monroe County.

As a young man, Earl ran the knitting machines at the Nu-Maid Hosiery Mill in Stroudsburg until he was called up for active duty overseas in World War II. Upon returning home, he took a job as a machinist at the Tru-Matic Machine Co. and pursued a career as a country-western performer.

In the late 1940s, "Slim" Heller gained recognition as a singer and songwriter as he played fairs and local events, and by 1950 he was performing a live weekly radio show Saturday mornings on WVPO. "Slim" also toured the country, and appeared on stage at The Grand Ole Opry with many early country music legends, including his friend, Hank Williams Sr.

The suitcase we received from his family, marked with "Slim" near the handle, contains Heller's personal memorabilia collection. It includes publicity photos with a local photographer's original proof, two printing plates for promotional



materials, and a hand-painted poster advertising a local appearance. Also in the suitcase are a notebook with playlists for all of his performance dates from 1950 to 1955, a songbook of original lyrics, and an album with 18 original acetate master recording discs with Slim performing not only the popular standards of the day, but also many of his original songs.

Your help needed

The past two years have been quite busy for the Curatorial Department here at the Stroud Mansion. While the Mansion remained closed to tours for most of last year, behind the scenes we have been busier than ever. During the pandemic, hundreds of museum items and archival materials were donated, at a record high level.

As our supporters downsized their homes, relocated to be nearer to loved ones, or cleaned out their attics and closets, more and more museum and archival items have been donated. Because of this, we are experiencing a backlog in processing and cataloging all of the items we have received. And that's a good thing!

Thank you to all of our generous members and friends who have contributed items to the museum or library.

Among the many donations we have received, there are some truly unique and original collections of artifacts related to Monroe County's vast and varied history.

As we move toward reopening the Mansion this year, please consider volunteering to help process these valuable donations. If you have an interest in museum curatorial work and can volunteer some time, please contact me. Your assistance would be greatly valued and appreciated in our small curatorial department.



Virtual Tour of Stroud Mansion coming soon

The Monroe County Historical Association has been awarded a grant by the Stroudsburgs Rotary Foundation to develop an interactive, online tour experience of the Stroud Mansion Museum and Library.

The Virtual Tour of the Stroud Mansion will provide a free interactive journey through the Stroud Mansion Museum and Library collections, with visitors taking a self-guided tour using their desktop or mobile devices.

Accessible through the MCHA website and maintained by MCHA staff, the tour will allow visitors to “walk” through each room of the historic, 227-year-old structure. Once in an exhibition room, visitors will have the option to explore a gallery space to learn more about noteworthy objects found in that room.

For example, as they enter the Stroud Room, visitors will be able to see the overall layout and decor of an early American receiving room. Visitors will then “touch” a highlighted artifact by tapping their screen. A high-quality photograph of the artifact will appear along with a detailed narrative regarding that item.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Historical Association has improved and intensified our presence on social media to maintain contact with our community. Over the past two years, our organization has gained over 2,500 social media followers, indicating a strong desire from the public for increased online engagement with cultural sites.

The MCHA is excited to launch the Virtual Tour in Spring 2022. Thank you to the Stroudsburgs Rotary Foundation and the members of the Rotary Club of the Stroudsburgs for the opportunity to offer an interactive tour experience of the Stroud Mansion and showcase our unique museum and library collections.



Volunteers cut ice at Mill Pond #1 at the annual Tobyhanna ice harvesting event.

Historical Happenings Ice Harvest set for Jan. 29

Mark your calendar for Saturday, January 29, for the annual historical ice harvesting event in Tobyhanna, weather and ice conditions permitting.

Ice harvesting was a major industry in Monroe County from the late 1800s through the 1940s. Vast icehouses on local lakes and ponds kept tons of ice frozen through summer, insulated with sawdust. Blocks of ice were shipped by rail to major cities and points south, until electric refrigeration ended the era.

The ice harvest runs from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. at Mill Pond #1 on Lakeside Drive in Tobyhanna.

The Tobyhanna Ice Harvest is sponsored by the Leonard family with financial support from the Coolbaugh Township Historical Association.

Check the Ice Harvest Hotline at 570-894-8205 or the Tobyhanna Ice Harvest Facebook page for updates, since the event is very much weather dependent — the pond must be frozen to a certain depth for ice to be able to be cut and harvested safely.



Bill Leonard, MCHA Board member and director of the ice harvest event, gets ready to cut ice by hand with an ice saw.



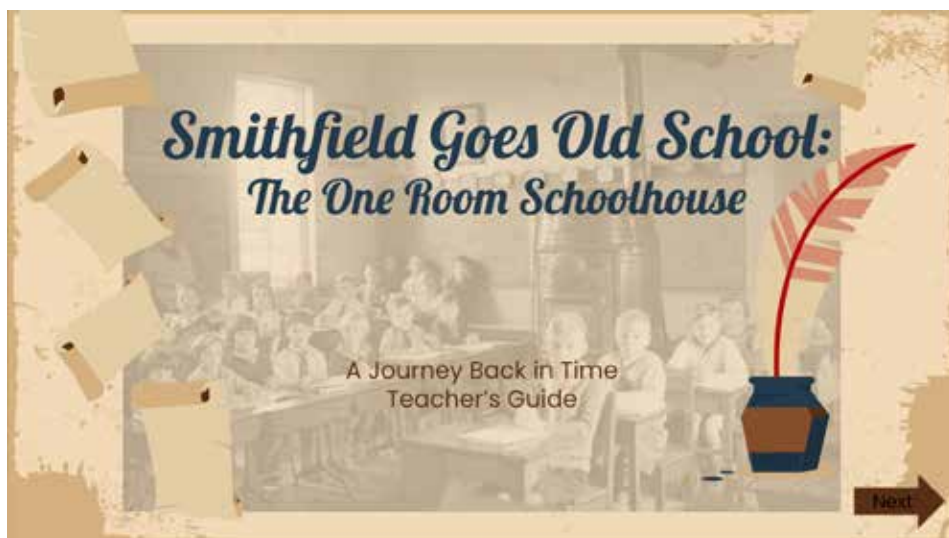
Smithfield Elementary's historical website

Smithfield Elementary School teacher Michael Karpe visited the Stroud Mansion Library over the summer to research the school's history. He and fellow teachers Robin Daning and Kevin Simonds used what he found to create a historical display with artifacts, documents, and photographs to tell the story of the school from its early days.

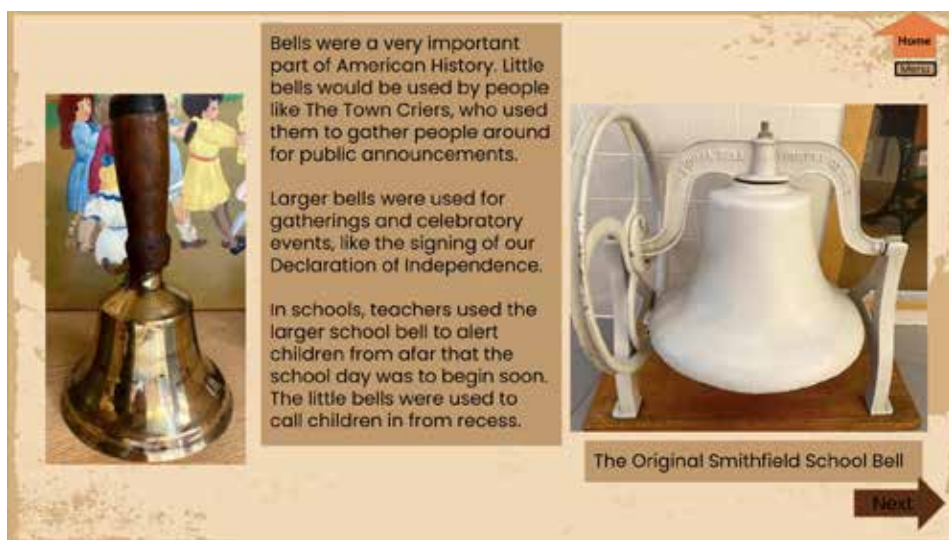
The team also developed a digital educational guide to accompany the exhibit. This fun and engaging resource, incorporating a variety of documents, photos, games, videos, and artifacts, is sure to be a hit with the teachers and students and prompt many discussions on education in the time of one-room schoolhouses.

We're so impressed with this creative and effective use of historical research and thank these educators for helping bring history to life for the next generation.

Schedule a visit to our library to get started on your own local history research project!



Some of the images from the Smithfield Elementary School's historic online slideshow.



Artifacts from 2019 archaeological dig returned to Stroud Mansion

After more than two years of hard work, we're happy to report that the archaeology students and faculty of Juniata College have completed the process of cleaning, documenting, and cataloging the artifacts uncovered during the 2019 archaeological dig at the Stroud Mansion. The entire collection of over 27,000 artifacts was returned in October, and the staff is looking forward to sharing some of the many interesting findings with you. Stay tuned for updates!

Roland Hunter, a Juniata College student and member of the archaeological team, personally drove the artifacts from Huntingdon, Pa., to Stroudsburg to deliver them to our executive director, Amy Leiser.

At left: MCHA Executive Director Amy Leiser and Juniata College student Roland Hunter carry the bins of artifacts into the Stroud Mansion.



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Pennsylvania Humanities Council
R. Dale and Frances M. Hughes Foundation
Stroudsburgs Rotary Foundation



The MCHA wants YOU as a volunteer

Hello, *Fanlight* readers!

I was scampering through the Stroud Mansion the other night after hearing some voices downstairs. I learned they were celebrating 100 years of the Monroe County Historical Association!

It was so lovely to hear such cheerful noises again. I made my way into an exhibit room, admiring all of the historical medical equipment.

I thought about all of the advances in medicine, even today. The COVID-19 vaccine has made it possible to bring many visitors back to our special building!

I spy researchers on the microfilm machine looking at old newspapers and others perusing through books and files of records. It's so nice to hear my beloved Stroud Mansion come to life again.

I've also been peeking around and have seen all of the recent donations to the museum and library. The curator's workroom is packed with artwork, photographs, furniture, vintage clothing, diaries, toys, dishes and ephemera related to local resorts and businesses, and even a heart-shaped tub!

That's what we're here for. How wonderful that this community continues to remember their local museum.

In fact, because of all this renewed activity at the Stroud Mansion, I hear that the Monroe County Historical Association needs help! They're looking for volunteers, and



there are many different ways to get involved.

Volunteers can assist in the research library or work with the curator in the museum collections. Extra hands are always appreciated to tackle light office work or even help give tours of the Stroud Mansion.

Volunteers can serve on committees, help plan the many fundraisers, workshops, and events that happen each year, or spend the day talking with the public at area festivals. Some may want to share the research they've done in our library by presenting their unique program for the Third Thursday Lecture Series.

There are so many ways to showcase your talents here, and volunteering with MCHA is a very meaningful

way to help your community. I hear that they're having a volunteer workshop this Spring!

I may just be a little mouse, but I make sure I follow all the goings-on here, and I'll be so excited to see all the new faces.

If you'd like to share your time and talents, please give the Monroe County Historical Association a call at 570-421-7703, or send an email to admin@monroehistorical.org.

Be well and be safe!

MM



**MONROE COUNTY
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

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www.monroehistorical.org

STROUD MANSION

900 Main Street, Stroudsburg, PA 18360

**Research library open by appointment.
Mansion remains closed for tours.
Information: 570-421-7703**

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www.monroehistorical.org

and use our social media links

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