

Appreciating Middletown

By Ray Burkett

"Some proposals for a second settlement in the Province of Pennsylvania." It is now my purpose to make another settlement upon the river Susquehannagh, that runs into the Bay of Chesapeake. There I design to lay out a plan for the building of another city, in the most convenient place for communication with the former plantations on the East, a way being laid out between the two rivers (Swatara and Susquehannagh) very exactly and conveniently. By water is in the common course of the Indians with their skins and furs into our parts, and to provinces of east and west Jersey, and New York, from the west and northwest part of the continent from whence they bring the m. And I do also intend that every one who shall be a purchaser in this proposed settlement, shall have a proportionable lot in the city to build a house or houses upon.

William Penn, London 1690

The entire central Pennsylvania area is rich in history but especially significant is Middletown. It exists as one of the oldest settlements in the area, and in all of Dauphin County for that matter. The town was founded in 1720 by George Fisher. Middletown was so named because of its central location between Lancaster and Carlisle along the only road extending from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh.

The town grew rapidly during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, not only because of the main road but also because of its strategic location for transportation along the Susquehanna river at the mouth of the Swatara Creek.

Boats from the Susquehanna could leave the river and travel upstream on the Swatara to the headwaters of the Tulphocken Creek which was a tributary of the Schuylkill River which flows past Philadelphia. The original early eighteenth century log trading fort remains erect along the Swatara Creek near the intersection of South Union and Ann Street. Another historic building on that site is the early nineteenth century community band hall.

Middletown was given a further economic boost during the 1820's with the construction of canals for trade and transportation. The Main Line and Union Canals travelled through town and even today remnants of the ditch, towpath, and locks can be found in the area. In fact, only a few miles south of town, along Route 441, the previous canal bed and lock has been restored and developed into a park and boat landing.

During the 1840's, the railroad brought about the demise of the canal system but more prosperity to Middletown. The primary freight and passenger line from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh bisects the town. As a matter of fact, Amtrak lines still stop daily to service passengers.

Railroad cars were even manufactured here during the nineteenth century for the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Pullman Company. The tremendous brick car houses remain standing today and are even in use by a manufacturer. They are located along West Main Street next to the Giant grocery store and adjacent to Hoffer Park at the East End of Town.

Another interesting structure in that vicinity is the Bnai Jacob Synagogue at the corner of Niss-ley and Water Sts.

It is one of the oldest surviving synagogues in this area of the

state. Also important is Saint Peter's Lutherin Kierch at the corner of North Union and High Street. The structure dates to 1764 and is exceptionally well preserved along its adjoining historic cemetery. The Kierch is still used on special occasions during the summer months.

As you travel across the Swatara Creek from down-town Middletown, you enter Royalton. This community was laid out in 1774 and was also a port for river boats as is obvious from its original title of Port Royal. This community lies at the junction of the Philadelphia and Columbia divisions of Amtrak, formerly P.R.R. The town's incorporation as a borough was decreed in September 1891 after a petition was filed by residents requesting the community be a separate entity from Middletown with its own election and school district.

An iron manu-facturing company once existed in Royalton. It was originally known as the Christiana Furnaces and later changed to the Cameron Furnace Company. It sat on the hill overlooking Middletown and the Swatara Creek. After the iron manu-facturing ended, the Glen Gery Brick Company built a plant on the site which remained in operation until the 1960's. Remnant of both of these forgotten industries can still be seen on the site.

I could continue for hours but I must stop. The purpose of this article was to bring your attention to the important historical role Middletown played in the development of Central Pennsylvania.

So when you're tired of the campus environment and wish you were somewhere else, take a closer look at Middletown, slowly observe the prime examples of colonial and victorian architecture and notice the beauty in your own backyard.

Why Are Teachers?

By Julie Larson

It is true, I concede, that learning is up to the student. But if this be the case, why are teachers?

I was thinking in class the other day. (I sometimes do that.) It was not one of those classes in which I play the epitome of the model student. Don't get me wrong, I was prepared. I had read the material, and recognized each topic as it scrolled forth. But alas, the scrolled material was not the topic of my thoughts.

I daydreamed of scuba diving through the universe of my Pepsi, only to emerge, beer in hand, through the dance floor of the "Burst". There I loitered to engage in the collegiate stimulation which happens there, and which led me back to a question of importance. Which was the most unwise investment: my class book (\$30), or my tuition for that class (\$600, out of state). It was obvious that the two items were of equal value and content - or so it seemed on that day and many others - one costing \$30, and one \$600. Now I'm a business major, and this shouldn't be too tough!

This analysis embraces the question I began with. Why are teachers? (For as a business major, I hoped that I had more integrity than to waste \$600.) There obviously was a rationale which motivated the creation of teachers. Toward this end, I



consulted the dictionary. Teacher (te' cher) n. A magical being who makes material come alive, rising out of the pages of a book, off of the blackboard, and permeating the minds of students, and in turn, the walls of the room. This action is sometimes referred to as teaching, and often results in learning.

For this magical experience, we pay \$13.30 per hour. For this we forfeit lunch, sunny afternoons, time to play, and sometimes even sleep! The bell rang (the one that was permanently installed in the brain in H.S.) and I looked at the indecipherable doodles; I flipped back through pages of them. A playground for any psychoanalyst, but not too useful as study aids.

After a whole section of these doodles - which indicates a semester in my book - we are permitted to evaluate our purchase. It would seem logical that we would be given the opportunity to say if our teacher was instrumental in weaving the magical spell. Is there information ghosting around your brain, or is your brain cluttered with breathless pages of text?

A question, such as, "Was this teacher instrumental in your understanding and learning of this material?" might be appropriate. Many teachers are magicians with their material, and there are others who feel that students prefer to be taught from the book. Perhaps this is true, perhaps it varies from class to class. Perhaps someone should ask the students. Have they? We shall soon see...

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