

# The Biery House Herald



www.hcpa.org

Volume 1, No.5 Newsletter of the Historic Catasauqua Preservation Association Spring 2011

## MEMORABILIA WANTED

The Biery House Museum is looking to expand it's collection of Catasauqua memorabilia. Artifacts that relate to our past may be donated to the museum and can be labeled on your behalf. Items such as posters, photos, slides, or other printed materials can be digitized by our in house reproduction/restoration group and returned to you, if you so wish, for your personal collection.

Would you like to contribute an article to the newsletter? Or interested in a particular topic you would like covered? The history of the Catasauqua area runs deep and HCPA, through it's commitment to preserve the history of this community, can help bring our younger generation and our history together. **Call Janice at 610 266-0255 or email Bob at bobdee@ptd.net.**

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers are needed to set up Catasauqua memorabilia displays. Educators, historians, grant writers: interested in developing a school tour/program on life in Catasauqua from the late 1700's to the early 1900's? How about helping with summer activities such as maintenance of the Biery House & Summer Kitchen or tidying up the Mule Barn? We're planning for Fest O'Fall: can you help? Want to help pour brews at the Lehigh River Blues Jam? And your knowledge of Catasauqua's history will make you a great docent at 8 Race or the GTH during open house Sundays. We can use help with walking tour scripts and brochures. And let us know if you are interested in canal towpath cleanup in the fall. Please **Call Janice at 610 266-0255** if you can help with any of the these activities.

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**Yes! I Wish to Support  
HCPA**



Please accept my contribution

- Member \$25
- Senior \$15
- Business \$50
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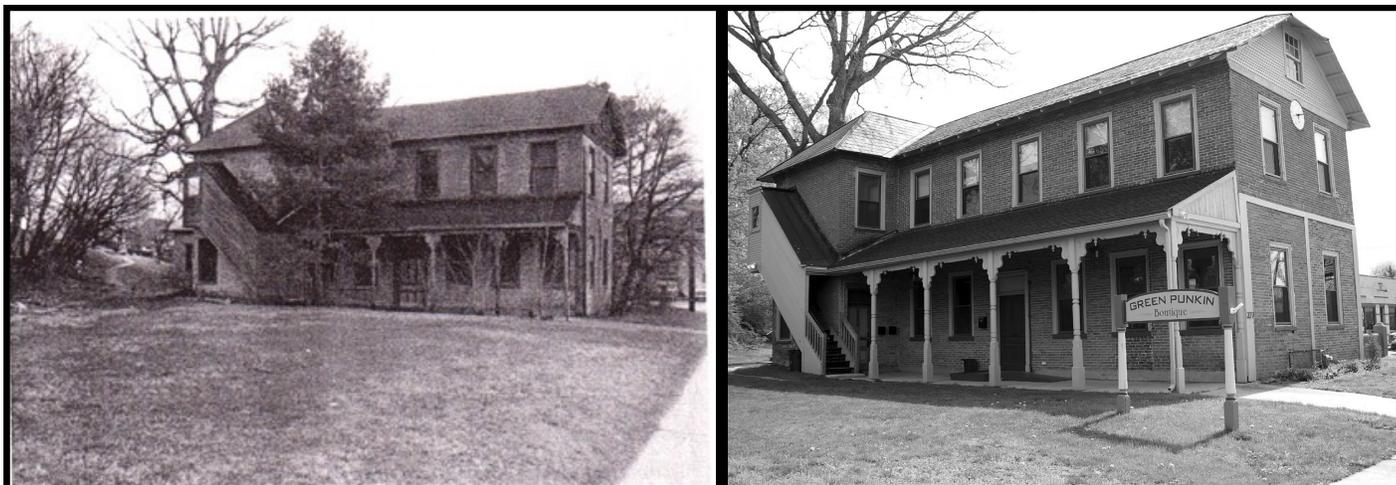
HCPA is a 501 ( c ) ( 3 ) non-profit organization.  
Memberships & donations are 100% tax deductible.

### Make check payable and send to:

HCPA  
8 Race Street, Catasauqua Pa 18032

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_**



**Before and After Restoration in 2008**

### **Crane Iron Works Office Building**

This structure, built in approximately 1840, housed the offices and the laboratory of the Crane Iron Company, the first successful manufacturer of pig iron using anthracite coal outside of Great Britain, which signaled the beginning of the industrial revolution in America.

When the Lehigh Canal was completed from Easton to Mauch Chunk, the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, owned by Josiah White and Erskine Hazard, was able to markedly increase production and shipments of anthracite coal. To further encourage anthracite sales, in 1838 the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company offered water privileges from Hokendauqua to Allentown to any persons who would invest \$30,000 in the erection of an iron furnace, run it successfully for three months, and use anthracite coal exclusively. Erskine Hazard traveled to Wales to meet with Crane, who now held the British and American patents for the process to use hard coal in iron production. Crane suggested that his employee, David Thomas, travel to America and construct the furnaces. The newly formed Lehigh Crane Iron Company signed a contract with Thomas in December 1838. Thomas, at age 45, and his family arrived here in June 1839. He verified there was sufficient water drop at Lock 36 to power the hot blast and began construction of the first furnace on July 9, 1839.

Lehigh Crane Iron Co built him a home at the corner of what is now Church and Front St. Thomas brought with him the English concept of the company town. Homes were built for workers along Church St, a church was built at the end of the street on Howertown, water was supplied from a pump in front of Thomas's home, streets were laid out. From 1846-1855, a room was set aside on the second

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floor of the office building to house a lending library for employees. Thomas guided the development of Catasauqua from a sleepy rural village to an important, internationally recognized industrial center. Industry brought much wealth to Catasauqua, evident in the large, beautiful homes in the Mansion District, which lies 3 blocks north of the office building.

In 1893, the Crane Iron Works came under the control of the Empire Steel and Iron Co, who two years later moved their headquarters from Philadelphia into this office building. An economic downturn led to unfavorable conditions in the iron industry, and the local furnaces suspended operations in 1921. After a prolonged period of idleness and no prospects of profitable operations, the furnaces were dismantled and most of the buildings razed. This office building and the stable just behind and to the side of it (which now houses Biery's Port Bodyworks) are two of the only three remaining structures left from this era. The third structure is the old three story "pattern house" on the corner of Wood and Front Streets currently owned by David and Ming Moloney and used as a photo studio.

After the Crane vacated the office building, it was remodeled and used by the Catasauqua Chapter of The American Red Cross. The building was later purchased from Crane Iron Co for storage by Luke and Earl Blocker, who owned the Texaco gas station and hardware store next door. Vincent Smith purchased the old Crane office and stables and Blocker's Hardware store from Earl Blocker in 2001. In 2008, Vince and his wife Chris renovated the exterior of the building, converted the first floor to commercial space and the second floor into apartments. *Thanks to Vince Smith for this article.*

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### PA CANAL SOCIETY VISITS CATASAUQUA

The PA Canal Society held a weekend excursion meeting on May 6-8 to tour the Lehigh Canal. They caught up with HCPA Saturday and Sunday, and we were happy to show them around. On Saturday, they toured the canal area - you may have seen their bus parked at Carmen's where they had lunch. On Sunday, part of the group returned for a walking tour of the Mansion District. Visit their website at [www.pacanalsociety.org](http://www.pacanalsociety.org) - you may want to join their next excursion! On Saturday night, the group viewed the movie, *The Bridge That Spanned the World*, a Nova production from 1979 which traced the industrial revolution from the Severn Valley in England to Catasauqua. They promised us a copy (future program).

### BIG THANKS

To Ben Ferenchak, Sr. for the huge amount of work he did on the Coal Yard landscaping - can't wait to see the larkspur in bloom. The Catty Garden Club Plant Sale on May 21st will also feature plants by Ben. Thanks to the mulch & gravel angels. And check out the great job the Earth Day group did at the canal, clearing the tow path for spring.

Historic Catasauqua Preservation Association  
8 Race Street  
Catasauqua, PA 18032



The Biery House c. 1826

## OUR MISSION

To encourage an appreciation of the historical and the architectural heritage of the borough; to encourage the preservation of the architecture in our historic districts and the borough at large as the houses and buildings are the tangible evidence of the events that made Catasauqua important as a contributor to the growth and development, not only of Pennsylvania, but also of the United States; to encourage the preservation of the architectural integrity of our neighborhoods and to foster pride of ownership in the houses and buildings in our historic districts.

## Our Board Members

|                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Debra Mellish     | President      |
| Betsy Hillenbrand | Vice President |
| Ray Smicker       | Director       |
| Janice Lathrop    | Treasurer      |
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| Larry Mouer       | Director       |
| John Ponstingl    | Museum Curator |
| Bob LeFevre       | Art Director   |
| Dave Bernini      | Web Master     |
| Keith Shannon     | Director       |

## Mark Your Calendars

- Catasauqua Library Book Sale May 20th-21st
- Catasauqua Garden Club Plant Sale May 21st @ Library
- Night of Music @ St. Paul's, May 21st, 6:30pm
- The LR Blues Jam June 17-19th (Father's Day Weekend) at the St. John St. Amphitheater.
- GTH & HCPA will be celebrating the 4th of July.
- GTH wine tasting, Red, White & George July 17th, 1-4pm. Tickets @ Borough Hall.
- Revolutionary War Encamp't Aug 27-28th, @ GTH
- Fest O Fall Oct 1st, noon-5pm (rain date 10/2)

The Biery House & George Taylor House are open the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month from 1-4pm.

## Biery House Rental

Affordable elegance for any special occasion! Seating for up to 50 guests.

Birthdays, Children's Parties, Showers,

Christenings, Anniversaries, Small weddings, Rehearsal Dinners, Corp Meetings, etc.

\$125 Fee includes tables, chairs, basic linens, kitchenette

Call 610-264-9716 or 610-266-0255 or e-mail [bhillerbrand@hcpa.org](mailto:bhillenbrand@hcpa.org)