

# The Biery House Herald

www.hcpa.org



Newsletter of the Historic Catasauqua Preservation Association Fall 2014



### THANKS FOR A GREAT OLD HOME WEEK 2014 CELEBRATION

Thanks to all those who planned, volunteered, sponsored, "bunted" and attended the Old Home Week events. The event celebrated the rich heritage of Catasauqua and North Catasauqua and the 175 year anniversary of the founding of the Crane Iron Works in 1839. The first pig iron production at the Crane in 1840 marked the beginning of the industrial revolution in America. A special thanks to all the homeowners that opened their doors and gardens for this year's house tour.

### FEST O'FALL

Mark you calendars for Saturday, October 4th, to attend this year's Fest O'Fall. HCPA, the Borough of Catasauqua and CHS Student Council will coordinate events at HCPA's canal-front property between Race and Union Sts. and at the grounds of the George Taylor House bringing kid-friendly activities to the community. Volunteers are needed and all community organizations are welcome to participate. Contact Betsy @ 610 264-9716 or Jessica @ 610 390-3999.

### BLAST AT THE IRON WORKS OF CATASAUQUA

The Borough of Catasauqua and Catasauqua MainStreets are planning a reception at the Iron Works property the evening of November 8th. Open to the public, the event will give residents, business owners, and potential businesses and investors a chance to see the site and view plans for its redevelopment.

### 2015 HCPA Membership

\_\_\_Member \$25      \_\_\_Senior \$15      \_\_\_Business \$50      \_\_\_Benefactor

\$\_\_\_\_\_ I wish to make an in-kind donation of \_\_\_\_\_

Please send receipt to address \_\_\_\_\_ or email \_\_\_\_\_

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

Address\* \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail\* \_\_\_\_\_

Make Checks out to HCPA & send to HCPA, 8 Race St, Catasauqua, PA 18032  
HCPA is a 501 ( c ) ( 3 ) non-profit organization. Memberships & donations are 100% tax deductible.

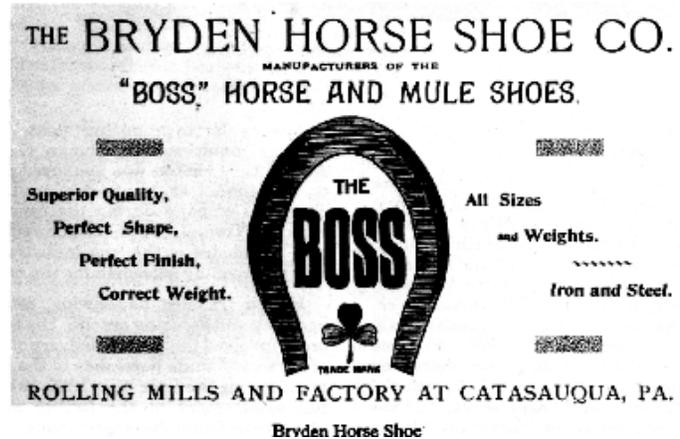
## BRYDEN HORSE SHOE WORKS—PHOENIX FORGING COMPANY HISTORIC MARKER DEDICATION

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission recently approved a historical marker for the Bryden Horse Shoe Works. The marker nomination was submitted by HCPA. The Bryden Horse Shoe Works was one of the largest plants of its kind in the world, producing a larger variety of horseshoes than any other one plant and shipping horseshoes to all parts of the world. The dedication of the marker took place on Saturday, July 26, 2014 at the Phoenix Forging Company on 800 Front Street. Phoenix graciously funded the fabrication of the marker and hosted the reception. The Bryden marker is the sixth state historical marker for Catasauqua; the fifth nominated by HCPA.

### History of the Bryden Horse Shoe Works

Oliver Williams, who was raised here, returned to Catasauqua in 1867 at the request of his friend David Thomas to run the Catasauqua Manufacturing Company. Starting as general manager, he served as president from 1879 to 1892, growing the business into one of the best known and largest merchant iron mills in eastern Pennsylvania.

Williams, looking for a way to use the iron products from his rolling plant, bought the patent rights for the Bryden process from George Bryden of Hartford, Connecticut. The Bryden technique made horseshoes with toe and heel caulks completely formed under the blows of a heavy hammer, making them highly durable. Other machine-made shoes at the time were rolled, with heel and toe-caulks welded on.



With a capital investment of \$60,000 Williams erected a one story brick building on the north-west corner of Railroad and Strawberry Alleys. This lay adjacent to the Union Foundry and Machine Shop, another company owned in part by Oliver Williams, located on the corner of Pine and Front. Williams, as secretary-treasurer, Joshua Hunt, as president, and Peter F. Greenwood, as superintendent, organized the first Bryden plant in 1882. The plant, equipped with two forge hammers, employed approximately 30 men and produced a daily sum of 2 ½ to 3 tons of horseshoes. In 1884 Williams became president of Bryden Horse Shoes. The plant was so successful that by 1888 the company purchased land along the west side of Front Street for a new plant. Williams hired Jacob Roberts, then part owner and superintendent of Phoenix Horse Shoe Company of Poughkeepsie, NY as superintendent of the new facility. Roberts moved to Catasauqua in 1889 and began to build and equip the plant, eventually operating a complete rolling mill plus bender and pressing irons for the exclusive manufacture of horse and mule shoes. Roberts lived in what is now the Capwell home on the SW corner of Third and Strawberry.

Williams hired a young ambitious Englishman, George E. Holton, who had extensive knowledge of the iron industry and employed him as traveling salesman for the new firm. Holton traveled nationwide, establishing sales agencies and securing orders. His most noteworthy order involved the weekly delivery of a train-car load of horse and mule shoes to the British Government during the Boer War, 1899-1910. This allowed full employment at the facility and the Bryden became one of the largest industrial employers in the Lehigh Valley. George Holton married Williams' youngest daughter, Jessica. When Williams died on September 17, 1904, Bryden's ownership passed to his three daughters. George Holton became president until his death February 10, 1913 when his widow became president; his brother helped oversee operations. By 1914 the plant occupied 7 acres of ground and employed 300 men, producing a daily amount of horseshoes between 40 and 50 tons, making it one of the largest plants of its kind in the world.



In 1917 the business and property were sold to the Never Slip Co. of New Brunswick, NJ and continued operation under that name. As cars replaced horse-drawn vehicles, the horseshoe market declined, however, Bryden attracted the attention of a competitor, the Phoenix Horse Shoe Company of Poughkeepsie, NY. Facing the same market decline for horse shoes, the Phoenix management decided to absorb the competition and to acquire new markets through diversification. In 1928 the newly organized Phoenix Manufacturing Company acquired the Bryden Never Slip Company. Phoenix later acquired other horse shoe companies, but, except for the Catasauqua plant, liquidated or moved the operations. Since the Catasauqua plant was suitable for modernization, Phoenix discontinued the rolling mill in 1939 and converted to the production of commercial forgings and flanges.

(Continued on the bottom of page 3)

## Desk from David Thomas' Office



The desk shown on left was recently donated by the Hirschel family in memory of Frederick Hirschel and Myrtle Ott Hirschel. The latter's grandmother worked as a house keeper for David Thomas. The family has been the desk's caretaker and has painstakingly restored it ~1965. Thanks so much to the family for allowing it to stay in Catasauqua. Stop by 8 Race to view.

### Old Home Week Arch Finds a Permanent Home

The Old Home Week 1914-2014 arch has been moved to its permanent home at the park by the volleyball courts. Thanks to Tyler Miller (and his friends and family) for the design and construction.



### Bryden Horse Shoe Works—Phoenix Forging Company Historic Marker Dedication—cont'd from page 2

Over the next 25 years, the local Phoenix plant experienced several ownership changes: Union Car Co in 1957 and the Trans Union Company in 1971, both of whom continued to make improvements at the Catasauqua plant. By 1953, the facility housed more than 21 board hammers, a complete die room, and a production machine shop. Two large 6-station, 5-die cold heading machines capable of forming parts from coil stock were installed. In 1977, a new modern metal building replaced the earlier wooden structure. The offices were relocated from the building on Chapel into the main manufacturing building, and the old office building sold.

In 1981, the Marmon Group of Chicago purchased Trans Union, and in 1985 sold the Phoenix plant in Catasauqua to Barco Industries of Reading. Today, the Phoenix Forge Group is made up of the following companies: Capitol Manufacturing Company, Phoenix Forging Company, Conduit Pipe Products Company, Phoenix Hotform Company, Barco Industries, and CapProducts of Canada. The Phoenix Forging Co of Catasauqua continues to modernize, manufacturing forged fittings for pressure vessels.

### Early History of the Site of the Phoenix Forge

In 1795, John Philip Faust paid off his father Henry's mortgage on the 193.5 acre farm located here along the Lehigh River and built a beautiful stone mansion on the site of today's Phoenix Forge. His son Jonas inherited the farm, died a year later, and passed on the family farm to his son, Paul. Unfortunately Paul, who was only 24 at the time, inherited enormous responsibilities: the care of his great-grandmother Catherine (resided in a small house along the west side of Front St above Pine), his grandmother Barbara (lived in Stemton, aka Northampton) and his mother Susannah, Jonas's widow, tho' Susannah later married Henry Breisch and lived at the farm house at the corner of what is now Third and Bridge. Paul Faust began selling off land to meet his obligations in 1840; the first recorded deed transfer was to Owen Rice. Other historically significant sales were to Catasauqua Manufacturing Co (1863), St. Lawrence Church (1860) and cemetery (1868), and the Fuller Grove Farm (1885), the later a 57 acre purchase by James W. Fuller, which marked the end of Faust ownership. In 1905, the Lackawanna Land Company, comprised of venture capitalists from the coal region and Philadelphia, purchased the Fuller Grove farm acreage; their sales office for lots was on the second floor of the POSofA building on Bridge St. After WWII, much of this land still remained undeveloped, & in 1940 a large section reverted to Northampton County for unpaid taxes. These lots were purchased by the Borough of North Catasauqua and are currently the site of the North Catasauqua Park and War Memorial. The Faust farm straddled what would become the dividing line between Lehigh and Northampton counties, the bulk lying within North Catasauqua.

Historic Catasauqua Preservation Association  
8 Race Street  
Catasauqua, PA 18032



Fall 2014



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

Betsy Hillenbrand	President
Debra Mellish	Vice President
Janice Lathrop	Treasurer
Bob LeFevre	Gallery Director
Ben Ferenschak	Museum Director
Keith Shannon	Director
Dave Bernini	Web Master

## UPCOMING EVENTS

FEST O' FALL – SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4TH, noon to 5pm  
IRON WORKS BLAST - Saturday evening, Nov 8th  
Open House hours for the Biery House and George Taylor House continue the first Sunday and third Sundays of the month through September 2014.

Business meetings are the first Tuesday of each month, 7pm at 8 Race St. Come join us.

**DONATIONS:** Thanks for the many pictures and other memorabilia that were loaned for the recent OHW event and/or donated to HCPA's museum. We will be expanding our museum displays at 8 Race St to accommodate the growing collection. Stop by during open house hours to view the collection - or call for an appointment (610 231-0603 or 610 222-0255).

**THANKS** to Larry Mouer for his many years of service as a member of HCPA's board. Larry has recently stepped down from the Board but plans to remain active in the organization.

## RENTAL OF THE BIERY HOUSE

The Biery House may be rented for private parties/meetings. The rental fee of \$125 includes use of tables (seats up to 50), chairs, basic linens and a kitchenette. A discount is available for members. Email [eshillenbrand@gmail.com](mailto:eshillenbrand@gmail.com) or call 610 264-9716 for information.

Inside this issue: page 1: Old Home Week 2014 page 2: Bryden Horse Shoe Historic Marker Dedication  
page 3: David Thomas Desk page 3: Old Home Week Arch