

The Legacy of C. Herbert Fry and Other Gifts Received in 2018

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In 2018, the TEHS received a number of important gifts. This article will describe the most significant items in these donations, starting with the Barbara and C. Herbert Fry Collection, without doubt the single largest donation to the Society's Archives in its history.

Herb Fry, longtime member and former president of the Tredyffrin Easttown History Club (TEHC), passed away in 2018. After his service in World War II, his working life was spent as an accountant, first with an accounting firm, and then for twenty years with Acme Markets, where he rose to the position of Vice-President for Finance, and Corporate Controller. He and his wife Barbara lived on Daventry Road in Berwyn for over fifty years. They joined the History Club in the late 1980s, and became ardent researchers and writers about local history. Herb published over two dozen articles in the *History Quarterly*. Barbara also published in the magazine, with over two dozen short pieces and several long ones. Herb gave sixteen talks at society meetings between 1991 and 2006, served as president from 1992 to 1995, and as editor of the *History Quarterly* from 1996 to 2003.¹



Barbara and Herb Fry at a Trinity Presbyterian Church event in 2000.

In addition to research and writing, they both developed a wide circle of friends on the upper Main Line, and within their congregation at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Berwyn. These contacts often shared their interest in history, and through them Herb and Barbara added many valuable resources to the Society, as well as solid friendships. The couple organized a series of "Berwyn Walks" from 1992 to 2006 where Herb took various groups on a walking tour of Berwyn complete with printed and illustrated programs.

After Herb's death, the house was being cleared for sale by his children, who together agreed that Herb's collection of local history materials would be donated to the Society. It is worth pointing out that Herb, a truly kind and modest man, never put his wishes for his historical collections into his will. Fortunately, his heirs understood how important the collection was to Herb, and a letter of donation was secured. (Readers of this article might see this as an object lesson with regard to their own historical materials.) A preliminary inventory was made, although after processing the material, some of the numbers were changed to reflect the actual contents of the many boxes, bags, envelopes, rolls, and stacks of items. Herb also kept many small things in three-ring binders, all of which contained a mix of clippings, vintage and modern photographs, printed matter, and correspondence. A glance at the preliminary inventory gives a sense of how much and how varied the material was:

- 16 vintage Julius Sachse cyanotypes
- 74 Lucy Sampson photographs printed on postcard stock
- 4 ring-binders of miscellaneous printed matter and correspondence
- 7 ring-binders and 4 boxes of newspaper clippings
- 1 box of brochures and printed matter
- 5 slide carousels containing 35mm slides
- 20 file folders of research for *History Quarterly* articles
- 25 maps (many are reproductions, and there are some duplicates)
- 46 books, 27 of these related to Valley Forge
- 1 atlas (the 1912 *Mueller Atlas of the Upper Main Line*)
- 27 audio-cassette tapes
- 6 magazine storage boxes containing back issues of the TEHS *History Quarterly*
- 1 box of issues of *The Picket Post* magazine and *The Valley Forge Journal*

Once the materials were examined in the Archives, it was clear there was no way to logically or usefully store all these disparate materials together, so the contents of all Herb's containers were dispersed to the relevant collection divisions. That said, it is clear that the Fry bequest, while individually a diverse collection of small things, is collectively the largest and the most significant gift in the Society's history. A complete inventory of Herb's bequest is available at the TEHS Archives.¹¹

Herb and Barbara had several special interests, most notably photographs and postcards, which Herb purchased via mail order from dealer catalogues, and probably acquired from friends and antique stores. In this way, they acquired over 550 photographic images, which include photographic prints, copies of photographs, postcards and color snapshots, many of which are now in the TEHS Image Collection database.

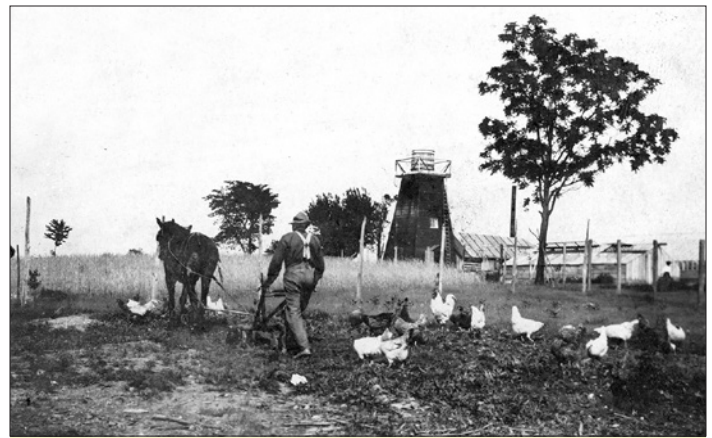
Herb left the Society sixteen pristine cyanotypes by the photographer Julius F. Sachse (1842–1919), and over seventy photographs by the decade-younger Berwyn photographer Lucy Sampson (1852–1920). These two photographers are well known to historians in our area, and their images have been components of both talks and articles for decades. Their life dates suggest that Sachse and Sampson could well have known each other, albeit in the later part of Sachse's photographic career. These two groups are undoubtedly the most important part of Herb's legacy.

The Julius Sachse images date from the mid-1880s to about 1900, and were printed as 3½ x 4½ cyanotypes, a photographic printing process that produces a cyan-blue print.²



This Julius Sachse cyanotype³ image from Herb's collection features the blacksmith shop formerly found a short distance west of the Paoli Inn in the location now occupied by the Paoli (Matthews) Ford Service and Parts building. (PA28)

The Paoli Inn is well known to *History Quarterly* readers, in part from Sachse's important book *The Wayside Inns on the Lancaster Roadside Between Philadelphia and Lancaster* (1915). Less well known is the Sachse cyanotype³ of the Paoli Inn's blacksmith's shop and forge, which Herb and Roger Thorne described thus: "In the days of the Lancaster Turnpike, the inns along the route generally had an attached blacksmith shop to shape horse shoes and make wagon repairs. The Paoli Inn was no exception, with its blacksmiths seen by the anvil and forge. We believe the shop was located west of the Inn, where (Matthews) Paoli Ford's Service and Parts building is presently located, just south of the railroad tracks"



Lucy Sampson postcard, with a handwritten note "A Scene in Berwyn" along the left side. **Roger Thorne:** This image shows a farmer plowing land behind a mule. On the back of the card, a notation refers to the water tower. On the horizon appears a tall vertical shaft which may be a smokestack, suggesting the building could be a nursery, such as were commonly found on any large estate of the time. The remains of a nursery and greenhouse may be found at the Philander Knox Estate in Valley Forge Park. Lucy Sampson calls this "a scene near Berwyn, Pa." not necessarily in Berwyn. **Herb Fry:** The only thing we are sure of is a lot of chickens and an elevated water tower, and you typically put a water tower on the highest piece of topography. That's all the clues we have. (BE79)

Lucy Sampson was born just ten years after Julius Sachse, but her photographic career spanned a later period: the years from about 1898 to 1920. A Sampson image that was included with Herb's collection, and which is not well known, is published here for the first time. It presents a mystery. Lucy's characteristic handwriting along the left margin simply says: "A Scene in Berwyn." Thus far, attempts to locate the site of the photograph, or the exact purpose of the farm structure in the background, have been in vain. Lucy Sampson often printed her photographs on postcard stock, and sold them in local drug stores and post offices. Postcards were cheap to buy and cost just pennies to mail. You could say that they were the text messages of their time.

In addition to the Sachse and Sampson photographs described above, the Fry collection revealed many other images new to our collection. These range widely in date and format from vintage images to photocopies of black and white glossy prints.

Herb was a good photographer and his collection revealed 243 color snapshots of many local events and places, most measuring 3¼" x 5." It's likely that he also received some of these from others. As a long-time Berwyn resident, he must have shared the distress of the parishioners when St. Monica's Catholic Church burned in 1991. Herb, or someone else he knew, took this photo at an early stage of the catastrophic fire.

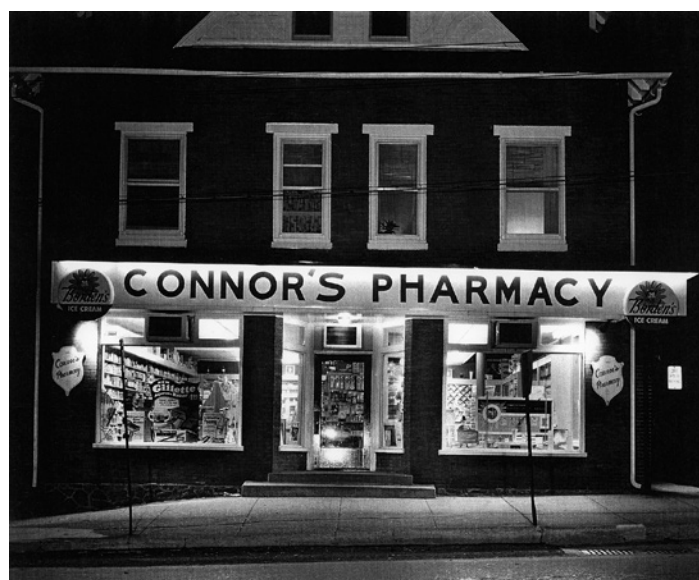




Group of actors in a play inscribed on the verso in ink with the students' names: "Standing Left to Right: Norman Hovell, Edgar Steigerwalt, Carl Hendrickson, Martha McLees, Ada Baldwin, William Mead, Jean Beaumont, William Pinkerton, Edith Hutchings, Clarence Staats. Kneeling: Evelyn Hayman. Sitting left to right: Kathryn Supplee, Grace Robbins, Wilbur Lehman (TEH54)

The original photograph, surely taken by a professional, shows the costumed cast of a play on stage at the T-E High School. The fifteen cast members are identified on the back, but the name of the play is omitted! T-E High School yearbooks were not published until the 1930s, but the student magazine, *The Eastffrin*, contains reviews of several plays for the period from 1924 to 1925, but without exact performance dates. The most likely identification for this play is *The Full House* by Fred Jackson. The verso also carries a penciled note: "T-E 1924," which seems to have been added later and could be off by a year or so.

The 8 x 10 image of Connor's Pharmacy is inscribed on the verso in Herb's hand: "Purchased 1954 by Bill Connor. Charles Connor became half-owner in 1955, then later opened Connor's Pharmacy in Wayne. [The] Berwyn location was at one time previously Boyle's Grocery Store. This copy of the original [is] from the Eric Fox Collection ... acquired by Fry in February 2004." Connor's Pharmacy, at the southeast corner of Lancaster and Main Avenues in Berwyn, closed on March 21, 1998 after 43 years of operation. It was one of the last independent drugstores on the Main Line.⁴



(ABOVE): Façade of Connor's Pharmacy at Night, ca. 1960 (BPH05).
(OPPOSITE, RIGHT): An interior shot of the pharmacy featuring proprietor Bill Connor at the counter (BPH04).

The Playing Fields Of Strafford--50 Years Ago



Clipping titled "The Playing Fields of Strafford - 50 Years Ago," from *The Suburban and Wayne Times*, Thursday, August 23, 1979, p. 7-C. (STR25).
The elaborate miniature golf course shown in the photo was on Lancaster Pike, just west of Old Eagle School Road and the Covered Wagon Inn.

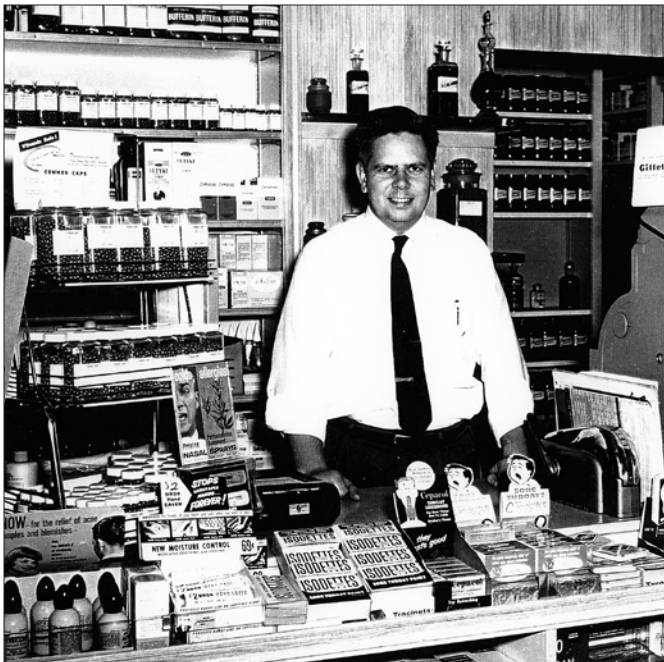
The image in the 1979 clipping from *The Suburban and Wayne Times* must have struck Herb as pretty important, and even though it is a poor photocopy, the Society's image collection is the richer for it. The title "The Playing Fields of Strafford - 50 Years Ago," is continued in the caption:

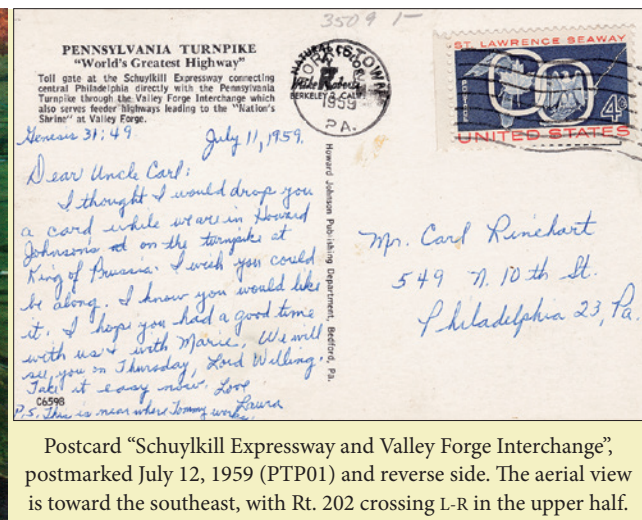
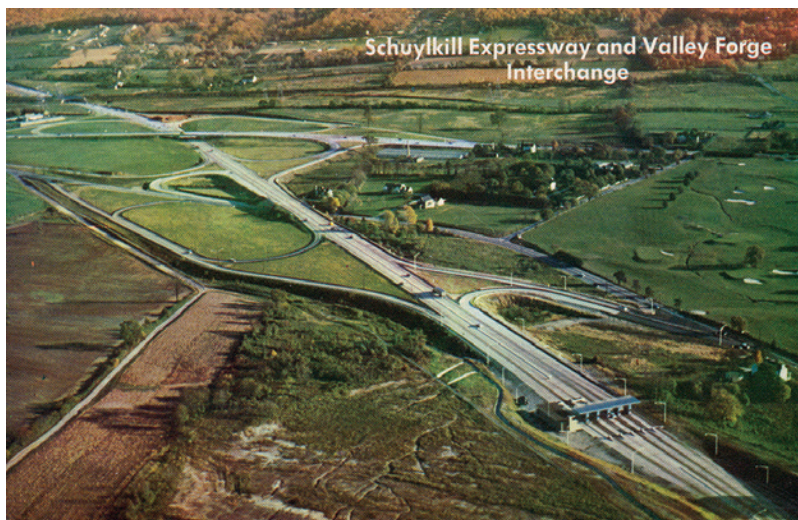
"At least we figure that's how old this picture is, based on the cars shown. This old print was found in the attic of an employee and apparently depicts the opening of the miniature golf course on what is now the parking lot of The Covered Wagon Inn in Strafford. The Inn was advertising lunch for 50 cents and dinner for \$1 in those days. The sign in the middle distance advertises a housing development being built by Frank McDonald on Meadowbrook Rd. The bridge on Lancaster Pike was part of the P & W trolley line

...The dark clouds in the picture were for real ... since the two men at the left seem to be battenning down the top of their two-seater."

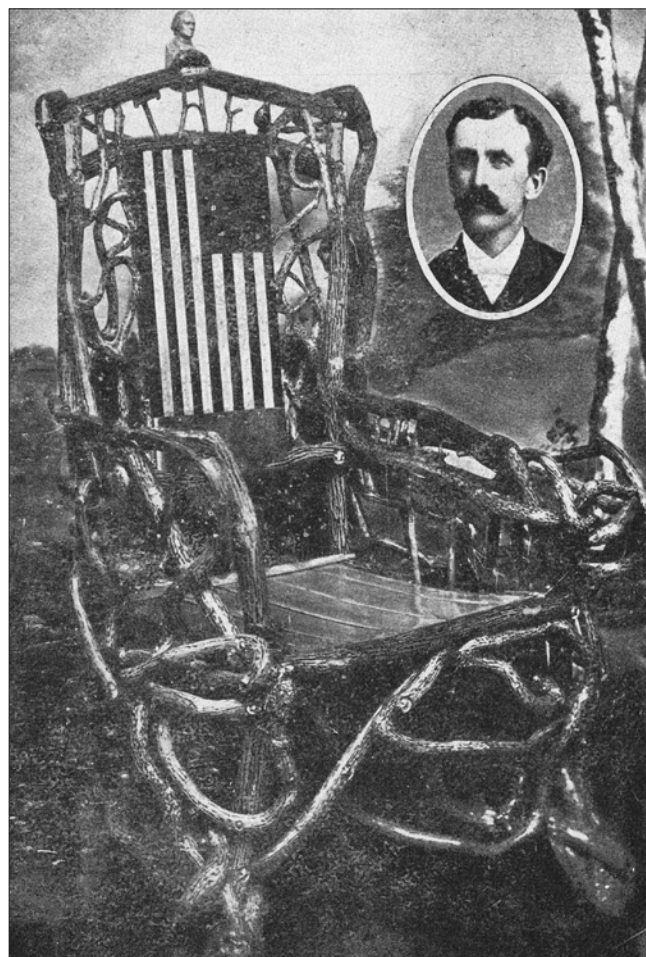
This mini-golf course occupied the northwest corner of the intersection of Old Eagle School Road and Lancaster Pike. The Covered Wagon Inn was a popular destination there, and later eateries included the John Harvard Brewhouse and Landmark Americana. Today, the new Strafford CVS Pharmacy is located at this site. *The Suburban and Wayne Times* mentioned the course in 1930: "In constructing the course at the Covered Wagon Inn, Mr. Mecke left nothing undone to provide the very best. The 18-hole layout is the very last word in "Tom Thumb" courses far exceeding any other in this section of sportiness." Developer J. Howard Mecke Jr., built many of the area's domestic structures. We would dearly like to have the original photograph, but we assume from the wording of the caption that the original print was returned to the owner and is lost. And again, we see how an image caught Herb's eye because he had investigated the subject, producing one of his most thorough and well-researched articles: "The Village of Spread Eagle," in 1998.⁵

Herb's collection of over 150 commercial postcards, purchased from dealers via mail order, many with the price still visible in pencil in one corner, brought many new images into the TEHS collection. Commercial postcards, in addition to being a form of correspondence, often carry a photograph. About 75 of these depict local scenes, and the rest encompass Chester County or non-Pennsylvania subjects. His local-area cards are for the most part well known images, such as Washington's Headquarters in Valley Forge Park, but there are at least a dozen unusual and interesting images. These also shed light on some of Herb's interests.





A rather strange postcard image must have delighted Herb, given his interest in Valley Forge. We know nothing about the chair or its maker, although furniture of this type is not unknown in the antiques world, usually categorized as folk art. However, the card attests to the strong interest in all things Valley Forge and Colonial period that arose in American thought and culture in the years following the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, and which continued into the 1920s.



Postcard depicting "John S. Haller and his rustic chair made from wood from Valley Forge. E.D. Miller, Publisher, Parkersford, Pa." ca. 1890-1910 (VFP94)

A post card image that is not set in Tredyffrin or Easttown shows the intersection of the Schuylkill Expressway and the Valley Forge Interchange of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Note the golf course on the right, today the site of the King of Prussia Town Center development that includes a large Wegmans supermarket and many more stores and restaurants, as well as the adjacent Children's Hospital facility, and numerous other apartment and office buildings. The area of trees in the upper center was once the site of the George Washington Motel, and then the Home Depot store, and now a Walmart. This view does not include the King of Prussia Mall which would be off to the upper left. In acquiring this card, Herb clearly recognized a great aerial shot.

Even though Herb used computer technology in editing the *Quarterly* for seven years, he remained an "analog" kind of guy, avidly collecting printed matter such as brochures, pamphlets, books, and maps. Among the over sixty items of printed matter, some interesting gems turned up. The material he saved in this category indicates just how aware he was of the potential historic value of small things. One of these is the *Constitution and By-Laws of the Tredyffrin Association for the Recovery of Stolen Live Stock and Detection of Burglars and Thieves*, a small six-page pamphlet published in 1870. Herb's 1992 *History Quarterly* article is an excellent description of these "horse companies," with much of the information coming from the minute book of the association preserved in the Chester County Historical Society. Horse companies came into being in the early 1800s in many rural areas where the local sheriff was more of a magistrate than someone who apprehended criminals. Horses were so valuable and important to a farmer's economy that the theft of a horse was a major issue. Associations like this one formed what we might call a "posse" to find and retrieve stolen horses and cattle. In the 1890s, when municipalities began dealing with crime, and when horses were being replaced by the horse-less carriage, "horse companies" died out. He cites the pamphlet as belonging to the author, although we do not know when or how he acquired it. Herb's thorough article brings home the importance of these organizations.⁶