

Valley Forge Historical Marker Restored

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In 2018, after being a regular Society member for a number of years, I joined the TEHS board of directors, with much to learn about the Society's past and the manifold topics that captivate our members and followers. Early in my tenure, a board discussion revolved around the restoration of a historical marker that the Society considers its responsibility, since its predecessor, the Tredyffrin Easttown History Club, had erected the marker as one of its earliest tangible acts.

The marker commemorates the location of the Stone Chimney Picket and originally stood on the west side of what was then known as Baptist Road (later changed to Valley Forge Road), just north of its intersection with the original path of Swedesford Road. The substantial cast iron marker was erected and dedicated by the Club in 1939, but was later found abandoned in a field after the road was widened and the nearby intersection reconfigured in the late 1970s. It was recovered and re-erected in 1980, in a new location not far from the original, but over the ensuing decades, its surfaces had deteriorated further, and by the late 2010s, it had become quite apparent that the marker required restoration. We sought bids for the sign's renewal and found that it would cost the Society over \$1,800 to have the job done commercially. That substantial price tag caused us to pause to consider if there might be more affordable alternatives. I subsequently realized that I had previously restored two cast iron signs myself, and both had held up quite well, so I volunteered to undertake the task. It took me over a year to get the project underway, but at the end of August 2019, I cleaned, primed, and repainted the sign, and it is now refreshed and much easier to read at its present location in a small grassy plot at the northwest corner of Valley Forge Road (Rt. 252) and West Anthony Wayne Drive in Tredyffrin, north of the Rt. 202 overpass and westbound on-ramp, and across the road from the Black Powder Tavern.

The reader might be curious about the meaning of the sign, as I, a relocated native of Ohio, was. The sign reads:

**SITE OF THE
STONE CHIMNEY PICKET
100 FEET WEST
THIS MARKER ERECTED BY THE
TREDYFFRIN-EASTTOWN HISTORY CLUB
1939**

During the Valley Forge encampment over the winter of 1777–78 the Continental Army set up a series of observation posts, or pickets, from which sentries marched the perimeter of the grounds to be on the alert for possible British incursions. The one recognized by the marker was at the site of a recently burned house, the large stone chimney of which remained and was used by the soldiers for shelter and to build fires for warmth. Hence the name for the picket location. In



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1939, with war beginning in Europe, and threatening to involve the United States, the Tredyffrin Easttown History Club determined that a memorial to the freedom fighters who put everything on the line in the American Revolution was in order. Thus, the marker was created, and erected with much ceremony in 1939.

Several informative articles concerning the history of the marker were published in *Tredyffrin Easttown History Club Quarterly* (TEHCQ) and may be found in the Society's online *History Quarterly Digital Archives* at tehstory.org, as well as in local libraries. We strongly recommend that you read them to learn more about this noteworthy part of our local history.

In the July 1939 issue (TEHCQ Vol. 2, No. 3), you can read about the encampment, and see a map of the area (on page 67) that indicates the location of the Stone Chimney Picket. The dedication of the marker, and its context in the world of turmoil at the time, are described in an article by founding member S. Paul Teamer in the October 1939 issue (TEHCQ Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 104). The story of its recovery and reinstallation with the support of the Fox Companies is told in the July 1980 issue (TEHCQ Vol. 18 No. 3, p. 96). There are more stories that contain references to the marker and the Stone Chimney Picket, and we encourage you to use the Search feature of our website for further exploration.

(OPPOSITE PAGE, UPPER TO LOWER) ❶ Tredyffrin Easttown History Club dedication ceremony for the new Stone Chimney Picket commemorative marker, 1 August 1939, with notable early club leaders Franklin Burns (far left), J. Alden Mason (behind the flag), and S. Paul Teamer (far right) [EHC39]. ❷ Looking northwest toward Valley Forge Mountain—the original location of the marker along Valley Forge Road, 1963 [YOF20]. ❸ Rededication of the marker. (L-R) Conrad Wilson, Bill Connor, and Club President Bob Goshorn uncover the reinstalled marker in its new location, 1980 [SCP03]. ❹ Restored marker in its present location, April 2020. *Courtesy of John O. Senior* (RIGHT, UPPER TO LOWER) ❶ Marker before restoration process. ❷ Marker prepared for repainting. ❸ Completed restoration. *Photos courtesy of Larry DeYoung* (BELOW) Larry DeYoung working on repainting the marker, 5 September 2019. *Courtesy of Joyce DeYoung*

