



Pennsylvania Historical
& Museum Commission

News for Immediate Release

April 2, 2013

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Approves 12 New State Historical Markers

Harrisburg – The creation of the banana split, a Civil War prisoner of war camp and the inventor of the first practical artificial blood vessel replacement are among the subjects of 12 new state historical markers approved by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC).

The new markers, selected from 47 applications, will be added to the nearly 2,200 familiar blue-with-gold-lettering signs along roads and streets throughout Pennsylvania.

Since 1946, PHMC's historical markers have chronicled the people, places and events that have affected the lives of Pennsylvanians over the centuries. The signs feature subjects such as Native Americans and settlers, government and politics, athletes, entertainers, artists, struggles for freedom and equality, factories and businesses, and a multitude of other notable topics.

Nominations for historical markers may be submitted by any individual or organization and are evaluated by a panel of independent experts from across the state and approved by PHMC commissioners.

More information on the Historical Marker Program, including application information, is available online at www.PAHistoricalMarkers.com.

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission is the official history agency of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Media contact: Howard Pollman, 717-705-8639

Editor's Note: The following is a list of the newly approved state historical markers with the name of the marker, location and a brief description:

The Atkinson Family, Maple Glen, Montgomery County

This Quaker abolitionist family was active in the Underground Railroad. They harbored many fugitive slaves in their barn and attic. Son, Wilmer, founded the Farm Journal magazine in 1877. The publication attained national distribution and remains an influential resource for American farmers and ranchers today.

Baltimore Mine Tunnel Disaster, Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County

The second worst industrial disaster in Pennsylvania history, this incident in 1919 led to changes in enforcement of regulations at state mines. A team of state and national experts were assembled to investigate the incident which resulted in an order against the practice of transporting explosive powder and miners on the same railcar. National leaders of the United Mine Workers intervened to advocate for reforms and provide relief to victims' families.

Banana Split, Latrobe, Westmoreland County

This unique ice cream sundae was created by David E. Strickler, an apprentice pharmacist from Latrobe, in 1904. Although two other American towns make the claim of first, documentation supports 1904 as the earliest recorded date for the concoction. Strickler also created a glass dish specially designed to accommodate the unusual shape of the dessert.

Battle of the Clouds, Frazer, Chester County

A skirmish took place at the site of the White Horse Tavern shortly after the American defeat at the Battle of Brandywine in 1777. A deluge of rain prevented a true battle which may have had dire consequences for the Continental Army. About to be outflanked by British and Hessian forces, the sudden storm enabled the Americans to retreat and resupply their rain-soaked ammunition and prevented the British from crossing the flooded Schuylkill River to move on Philadelphia. Another defeat on the heels of Brandywine could have turned the tide of the war.

Camp Elder Civil War Paroled P.O.W. Camp, Westtown Township, Chester County

Camp established to hold Union soldiers that had been captured by the Confederate Army during the Battle of Gettysburg. Retreating armies often issued battlefield paroles to captured enemy soldiers, rather than transport them to prison camps. A Union commandant and guards oversaw such parolees at Camp Elder while they awaited exchange for Confederate prisoners.

Gen. Jesse L. Reno (1823-1862), Franklin, Venango County

A Union Civil War general who spent his boyhood in Franklin, Reno led his troops during the Maryland Campaign at the battles of Second Bull Run and Chantilly before being shot and killed at South Mountain, Maryland, in 1862. Prior to the Civil War, Reno had a distinguished military career in the Mexican War and led peacetime assignments such as building military roads, conducting surveys of several western states, and overseeing arsenals in Alabama and Kansas.

Little Lithuania, USA, Shenandoah, Schuylkill County

Schuylkill County has the highest percentage of residents with Lithuanian ancestry in the entire United States. The town of Shenandoah has the highest percentage within the county. To preserve ethnic heritage, local Knights of Lithuania administer an active Lithuanian museum and cultural center and sponsor the annual Lithuanian Days celebration. Celebrating 100 years in 2014, Lithuanian Days is one of the longest running consecutive ethnic festivals in the nation. Shenandoah was also the site of one of the nation's earliest Lithuanian parishes led by one of the first Lithuanian priests in the United States.

Old St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Philadelphia County

Established in 1763, it was a very early American Roman Catholic Church and Pennsylvania's first Catholic Cathedral. The Continental Congress attended services here several times out of respect for the alliances with the Catholic countries of France and Spain. It was also the site of the first public religious commemoration of the Declaration of Independence in 1779.

Pennepack Baptist Church, Philadelphia County

The first permanent Baptist Church in Pennsylvania and the "mother" church of the American Baptist Association. Founded in 1688, the existing building dates to 1805 and was constructed on a 1707 foundation. The church spawned subsequent churches in New York, Delaware, and Maryland. In colonial America, Baptist influence emanated from Philadelphia.

Scotland School for Veterans' Children, Scotland, Franklin County

The last state-run school for veteran's children in the nation, it operated for 114 years before closing in 2009. It consolidated several soldiers' orphan schools from across the state into one residential campus, which served all of Pennsylvania and included an industrial training program. Excelling in athletics and academics, it provided superior education to more than 10,000 Pennsylvania boys and girls.

Walter M. Golaski (1913-1996), Philadelphia County

A mechanical-bio-medical engineer, Golaski developed a knitted arterial prosthesis which was the first practical artificial blood vessel replacement. Originally rebuilding hosiery machines to enable the switch from silk to nylon in the knitting industry, he reapplied his knowledge to the medical field to produce a specialized machine to produce tightly knit Dacron arteries which revolutionized vascular replacement surgery.

Wood Street Riverbank Steps, Philadelphia County

The staircase has been in the same location since the 1680's. It is the last remaining set of steps that were established under land warrant by William Penn and represents the establishment of Philadelphia's original waterfront. Originally connecting the waterfront to the commercial and residential sections of the city, they served to stimulate the economy and balance public and private interests. They facilitated transportation and commerce and promoted westward settlement in Pennsylvania.

###