

Spring 2026

Issue No. 5

The Bell

**BELLEFONTE'S
EARLY JAILS**

**VICTORIAN
PAINTED
LADIES**

**CENTRE
COUNTY'S
BELLS**

Deciding The
FUTURE of our PAST

A Publication of the Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association

From the Editor



Welcome to the Spring 2026 issue of *The Bell*, a publication of Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association. Spring is a time of renewal and remembrance. If there is a theme to this issue, that is it.

There are articles about the need for renewal. Philip Ruth and The Very Reverend Ruth Ferguson tell the stories of a couple of historically noteworthy Bellefonte churches, both in need of repair. Ruth recounts how the second St. Paul’s African Methodist Episcopal Church came into being. Though not addressed in this story, this historically significant old building needs repair if it is to survive. This challenge is made more difficult by the fact that there really is not an active congregation there currently.

The Very Revd. Ferguson tells us about the plight of St. John’s Episcopal Church. Its steeple is the last original Victorian steeple remaining in Bellefonte’s skyline.

It was damaged in a derecho that swept through town last year, leading to an inspection that revealed it is in dire need of repair. Now the small congregation faces the need to raise at least \$200,000 to fix it and needs the community’s support in its fundraising efforts.

Matt Maris of Local Historia explores the history of Bellefonte’s jails in a story that originally appeared in *Town & Gown Magazine*. We thank them for granting permission to reprint it. Holly Hopkins, author of the *Big Spring Chronicles* series, rejoices in the uniqueness of our Victorian homes and the charm they add to our town.

Featured on our cover is the Valentine-Beaver Tenant Farmhouse. The farmhouse’s future is uncertain. A story written by Joseph Griffin provides an updated look at developments regarding this 1800’s stone structure that sits on land now owned by the Bellefonte Area School District.

Remembrance of our nation’s history takes on a special significance in 2026 as the United State of America reaches its 250th Anniversary. We tell of four commemorative Liberty Bell replicas, each decorated to recount the history of its place in Bellefonte, Curtin Village, Philipsburg, and State College. These bells have been unveiled and dedicated by the America 250 PA’s Bells Across PA program as part of the nationwide celebration.

Also commemorating America’s 250th birthday, planning is underway for Bellefonte’s celebration of this momentous milestone. Read about the progress of several community organizations that are working together to make sure our town’s celebration is one to remember. There will be a parade to honor our veterans. After the parade ends at Talleyrand Park, the dedication of a new round of Hometown Heroes Banners will be followed by a concert of patriotic music, an ethnic food tasting, free hotdogs, and a big

birthday cake in Talleyrand Park. In this article you can also find out how to participate in this celebration or how to purchase a banner to honor your own hometown hero.

Inside, you will also find a Calendar of Events. It is your guide to community events happening in April, May, and June. This list is as complete as our efforts made possible, with apologies for any that were missed. Events such as these make Bellefonte a more interesting community in which to live. For these events to continue, it takes the financial support of donors and sponsors. In this issue, BHCA thanks its supporters. It also takes the work of many

dedicated community volunteers. So, we have also included contact information for those who wish to volunteer, whether to help with the planning or as an event-day helper. After all, “many hands make light work,” according to a proverb first translated into English by John Heywood in 1546, and there is room for everyone. All these stories, as diverse as they are, share one thing in common. They are about the history of people, places, and events that make Bellefonte, both past and present, unique and special.

It was an honor to be selected as the guest editor for this issue of *The Bell*. The former editor, Sharon Weisser, left big shoes to

fill. Coming into the process late and scrambling to complete the myriad tasks that go into turning out a magazine made it more difficult than usual, but this is not a solo undertaking. I had help. And everyone involved rose to the challenge. I extend sincere thanks to everyone who contributed, especially those who had to jump into the fray without very much notice. Without your efforts, this issue of *The Bell* would not have been possible. Dear readers, please enjoy the fruits of our labor.

Romayne B. Naylor

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MISSION

The Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association exists to improve the lives of all Bellefonte residents and their nearby neighbors through opportunities to participate in and enjoy programming that explores Bellefonte’s rich history; promotes appreciation and preservation of our town’s historic architecture; and enriches the sensibilities of visitors and residents through literary, performing, and visual arts.

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Photo by Carla Cipro

This year, when the Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association celebrates its Semicentennial, the United States will be observing its Semiquincentennial. We understand that nothing lasts forever but know that 250 years is pretty good for a state and fifty years is not bad for a small organization. Only half of small businesses survive their first five years and just over a third are around for their tenth anniversary. So, at the very least, major anniversaries prove persistence and can be considered legitimate proxies of success.

To the skeptic, anniversaries are mechanical and meaningless. They are entertaining but about as consequential as watching the odometer of your grandfather's Ford roll over from 99999 to 00000 on that long vacation trip when you were a kid. There is no essential difference between the 48th and the 50th anniversary. However, notable anniversaries, conveniently labeled with round numbers, are occasions for celebration, reflection, and remembrance.

Everybody likes a party, but on our nation's 250th anniversary, what can we profitably remember or reflect about? Given these stressful times, maybe the conversation between Ben Franklin and Elizabeth Willing Powel will do. On the last day of the 1787 Constitutional Convention, as Franklin left Independence Hall, Mrs. Powel approached him asking, "Well, Doctor, what have we got—a republic or a monarchy?" Franklin famously replied, "A republic, if you can keep it." Will our descendants

get to celebrate a USA Tricentennial? The USSR did not even get to have a Centennial. Now, that is something to think about.

Let's turn our attention to BHCA. Its Articles of Incorporation, officially approved by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on March 1, 1976, are analogous to the Constitution. The signers of that document, Donald L. Peters, Mary B. Mianulli, and Robert N. Fisher are long gone, but still remembered by some people around Bellefonte. They were our founders. What did they envision when they created an organization that has lasted half a century?

You can access a digital copy of our founding document at bellefontearts.org, but I will summarize it here. It calls for seeking the betterment of Bellefonte, cooperating and coordinating with other organizations, preserving our historic sites and structures, promoting the "Historical and Cultural Traditions of Bellefonte," and fostering the "spirit of Bellefonte."

BHCA has hewed to the line laid down by our founders. Our current efforts to help preserve St. Paul AME Church and the Valentine-Beaver Tenant Farmhouse would have met with their approval. Our celebration of local history and promotion of the arts check another box on our Articles of Incorporation. We have lately been cooperating with the American Philatelic Society, the Historical Museum, the Union Cemetery, and the Centre County Library. And certainly, we believe we are striving for

the betterment of Bellefonte. This only leaves fostering the spirit of Bellefonte, an intangible yet essential aspiration.

What is the "spirit of Bellefonte?" If you live here, you feel it. This small town is not like others its size. Our history, our hills, our old buildings, our pride, the persistent urge to return to our former 19th-century glory, and the subtle tensions between the big fish and the minnows who share this small pond combine to form a social amalgam seldom found elsewhere. The taste of this small town is sweet yet savory; it lingers on the sensibility of residents and visitors alike.

Perhaps it was the pursuit of the "spirit of Bellefonte" that carried BHCA all the way to its Semicentennial. As we and our predecessors labored to save our historic architecture, promote the arts, acknowledge our town's old-fashioned traditions, and assist other organizations, we unwittingly approached a higher mysterious mission. For five decades, BHCA members contemplated and then curated the qualia of Bellefonte that meant so much to them. Their success is revealed by the simple fact that many of us feel what our founders felt in 1976.

If you feel it too, maybe you should join us in that long caravan of caring people who keep Bellefonte special.

Joseph Griffin

Bellefonte's Early Jails

I've been researching the jails in Bellefonte for several years, hoping to find which jails were earliest and where they were located. I got serious about this topic when a local told me her uncle once owned the property at 119 East High Street and that she remembered an old prison cell inside the basement. Others have expressed similar memories or stories. After spending countless hours poring over county records, deeds, maps, newspapers, and even casing the property ... well, I intend to solve the Bellefonte jail mystery in the following paragraphs.

Going back to the beginning, I found several enlightening records at the Centre County Library & Historical Museum. An article of agreement dated November 11, 1800, among the county commissioners describes that the first jail was contracted to be built by Hudson Williams. The dimensions of this "Prison House or common Goal" were detailed in elegant cursive handwriting.

This original "goal" ("gaol" is an old-fashioned British word for jail; our Pennsylvania trustees used the Americanized spelling "goal" instead) was two stories, thirty feet long by twenty-five feet wide, with a cellar below, having a two-foot, six-inch-thick foundation. According to the plans, "there shall be an apartment in the cellar for a Dungeon separated from the other part of the said cellar by a wall one



The second jail, built around 1815, at 119 East High Street. (Photo by Matt Maris)

foot eight inches thick. The said dungeon shall be twelve feet by nine feet in the clear and shall be covered above by hewed logs laid close together under the plank of the floor." Of course, the dungeon would have "a proper trap door" too.

Former Governor James Beaver expanded upon these facts during his speech at the Centennial Anniversary of Bellefonte in 1895. Beaver clarified the locations of the original jails, stating: "in reference to the erection of the public buildings, they [the trustees of Centre County] found that it would be impractical to erect the jail upon the public square or ground which had been set apart for that purpose. ... They did not seem to think it advisable

to erect the jail upon the top of the hill as it is now [in 1895] and ... there was erected upon lots on the north side of High street, nearly opposite the court house, a small building thirty feet long and twenty-five feet wide in the clear with a dungeon in the cellar. ... This primitive prison was succeeded by a stone building for the residence of the sheriff and for a jail for the custody of prisoners, which is well remembered by many now living and which continued to be used for such purposes until the new jail was erected on the top of the hill where it now stands."

The court criminal docket confirms that the first jail was in use by 1801. This "primitive prison" seemed to work for the town

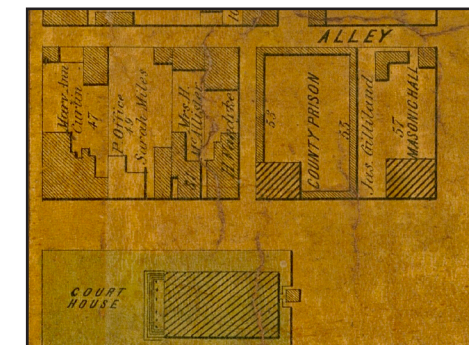
until August of 1811, when a "grand inquest of Centre County reviewed "the publick goal" and found "it to be insufficient to detain prisoners in the same with safety, that a new goal ought to be built." However, because this was not expected to be done immediately, they recommended improvements such as repairing "the floors thereof which are partly broke and serve the escaping of the prisoners," and that "the second story to be partitioned of in separate rooms to separate Prisoners of different sexes and colours [sic]." They also reported that "for the health of the prisoners, the rooms ought to be kept cleaner and more airy by the keeper of the said Goal."



Circa 1818 map of Bellefonte Borough with "goal" (jail) lots fifty-three and fifty-five. (Image courtesy of Centre County Library & Historical Museum)

By 1814, it was apparent that the county was making steps to build a new jail. In May and June that year, the county commissioners gave notices within Bellefonte's American Patriot newspaper of an upcoming meeting for the purpose of contracting workmen to erect a new jail. Then in April of 1815, Thomas Burnside sold his

lot "fronting the publick ground" to the county commissioners for \$300. According to the deed, this lot was adjacent to the "prison lot on the west and known to be lot numbered fifty five in the general plan of said borough." You can clearly see that these are the lots identified on the provided images of the Centre County prison (1858 map), and the oldest available map of Bellefonte where they appear circa 1818.



Close-up of jail lots fifty-three and fifty-five in 1858 (J.A.J. Cummings)

Now the county owned a double lot that would need more walls. So in September of 1815, a stonemason named Henry Vandyk was contracted to build the walls for the new jail as well as an eight-by-six-foot "Necessary House" made of stone and "to be sealed off in a proper manner with two holes." Thus, our second jail, a new jail, its walls, and privy were at least under construction in 1815.

There is a gap in county records until 1830. It is then that commissioners make another contract with a Frederick Wheeland (also spelled Wheeling) to "build a new jail wall, beginning where the present wall commences at the southeast corner of the new jail, and extending up the hill fif-

ty feet six inches in front; thence one hundred and forty feet to the alley at right angles, to commence again at the north west corner of the new jail and run parallel with the upper wall until it comes opposite the south west corner of the old jail; and thence to join the same in a proper manner at right angles. The wall to be sixteen feet high above the ground in the inside, the foundation to be dug to the rock or so deep as to ensure a safe foundation for the wall – the said walls to be three feet thick at the base and continue said thickness to the height of six feet to be gradually sloped until it reaches sixteen feet in height from the ground."



Prisoner graffiti on east side of jailhouse wall (Photo by Matt Maris)

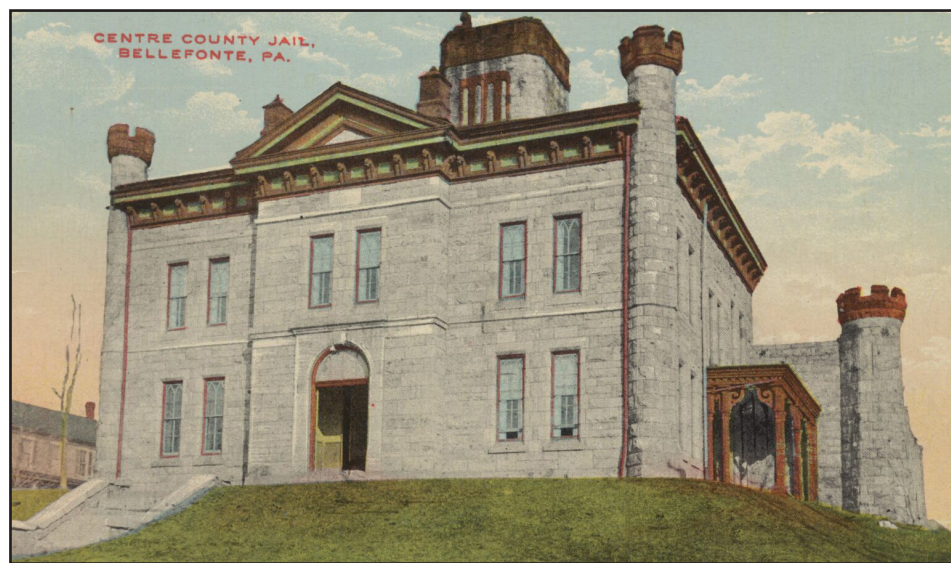
This is where we find the old jail; the wall connects from the respective corners of the "new jail" to the corners of the "old jail"—and there is the answer for the location of Bellefonte's original jail—the first jail—and its dungeon. This is confirmed in a practical sketch of the jail lots and their wall dimensions found in the records. The old jail was toward the back of lots fifty-three and fifty-five, approximately where East Pike Street and Decatur Lane meet behind the current 119 East High Street.



This is the location of the original jail; the structure is still being investigated. (Photo by Matt Maris)

For decades there have been rumors that the first jail was located near the parking lot of the YMCA. However, this conflicts with the records. Those areas were occupied by residences at the turn of the nineteenth century. People may have assumed old stables and carriage houses behind them were associated

with the prison. Nevertheless, now we can put the rumors to rest—and better yet, acknowledge that Bellefonte's second jail is still standing. The third jail behind the courthouse was razed and removed after a fire in 1959, but the second jail property likely goes back to about 1819, if not as early as 1815.



The third jail and sheriff's residence behind the courthouse was razed after a fire in 1959. (Image courtesy of Centre County Library & Historical Museum)

Finally, you may be wondering why the property and apartments in 119 East High Street have the appearance of a late 1800s Victorian home today. A notable builder and developer named Charles McCafferty purchased the old jail in 1872, shortly after he completed the construction of the new (third) jail behind the courthouse circa 1868. McCafferty was the highest bidder when the county sold the old prison at auction in 1872. He paid \$3,100 and sold it two years later for over \$6,000. The old jail was upgraded with a mansard roof, an improved facade with brownstone quoins, and other improvements.

The McCafferty deeds, as well as the ones that are current today, all reference this historic property as the "Old County Jail." Indeed, it may be one of the oldest surviving county jails and sheriff's residences in the state of Pennsylvania. This opens up other inquiries as to which prisoners were confined within these walls. However, for now, we can recognize this forgotten structure for the historic jail, and jail lot, that it always has been.

By Matt Maris

This article originally appeared in *Town & Gown*.

THE BELLEFONTE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ASSOCIATION

PRESENTS

THE 2ND CIVIL WAR WEEKEND IN BELLEFONTE

➡ MAY 1ST, 2ND, & 3RD ⬅

After 165 years, we can better understand why the United States suffered its most devastating conflict less than a century after its founding. The problems that caused our Civil War were never resolved, and we still struggle with the issues that led to this tragedy. Our second Civil War Weekend in Bellefonte explores the causes and aftereffects of the War as well as the actual struggles on its battlefields.

At the American Philatelic Society on Saturday, May 2nd, eight scholars will address the political and military facets of this defining period in the evolution of our government while the Civil War and More bookstore holds a daylong sale of Civil War books from its extensive collection.

The Weekend also features an encampment of Civil War reenactors including artillery and infantry units, a battlefield doctor, an embalmer, civilian women who assisted the troops, and more. In addition, there will be a band concert featuring music of the era, exhibits at the Bellefonte Library and Historical Museum, recreations of famous speeches given by Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, and an interdenominational church service on Sunday afternoon.

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE ☐ NO TICKETS ARE REQUIRED

Visit bellefontecivilwarweekend.org or just search for "Civil War Weekend in Bellefonte" for a complete schedule of activities.

Deciding the Future of Our Past

The House

A small stone farmhouse lies nestled in a tiny dell behind the PENNDOT facility on Bishop Street. Few people around town even know it is there, although it's been standing in its little hollow for at least 169 years. It's not hard to spot from Airport Road. Those who know about it often refer to it as the Beaver Farmhouse. That's because it was once owned by James A. Beaver, a name that still resounds around the hills of Bellefonte and denotes a nearby football temple. Surprisingly, James A. Beaver bought the place in 1947 and farmed the accompanying acreage. Turns out it was not Governor Beaver who owned the house, but a name-sake grandson. An extensive investigation into the property's history by BHCA Board member Philip Ruth indicates the house was built around 1856 by Quaker ironmaster Jacob D. Valentine, a son of George Valentine, one of four brothers who, together with William Thomas, moved from Chester County to Bellefonte in 1815 to take over the expansive iron works of recently deceased ironmaster John Dunlop.

Jacob Valentine was a wealthy businessman, not a farmer, and it might seem strange for him to build a modest house in this out-of-the-way low spot in the countryside. However, like many of his well-to-do contemporaries, he was a gentleman farmer. Valentine owned farmland



but did not farm it himself. He built the house for a farmer who would work his land, possibly on a share-crop basis. Owning land could guarantee the availability of food for workers and draft animals at industrial properties. It was a way to diversify one's assets and a form of speculation — cheap farmland might later become much more valuable. It allowed gentlemen to practice a sophisticated avocation, exploring the efficacy of new principles of scientific agriculture at no great financial risk. And finally, it gave Jacob the simple joy of owning green, productive fields, something far more soul-soothing than those acres of ravaged ore banks and timberlands that provided his prosperity.

We used to call this obscure building the Beaver Farmhouse, leading many to think it was once

the home of Civil War hero and Governor of Pennsylvania, James A. Beaver. Following Phil Ruth's deep dive into property records, we have started calling it the Valentine-Beaver Tenant Farmhouse. Since that helpfully informative name fails to roll off the tongue easily, it will just be "the farmhouse" for the remainder of this article.

The farmhouse owned by Jacob Valentine now stands on the campus of the new elementary school being built by the Bellefonte Area School District. From the late 1850s through the early twenty-first century, the farmhouse had been occupied by tenant farmers and their families. Non-farmers occupied the house for a few years before it was closed, and the 107-acre tract on which it stood was purchased by the district in 2011 as a building

site for a new school. No longer a home, the farmhouse stood vacant and gradually deteriorated. Recently, the Centre Region Code Administration informed the school district that repairs were required to maintain the building in a safe condition. Failure to comply would result in very substantial fines. Since the District was not planning to use the building, the most convenient way to solve this problem appeared to be removing the farmhouse.

The Scramble

The little building gathered statewide attention when the school district applied for a permit to demolish it. Preservation-minded members of the Borough Council sounded an alert that drew in those who care about Bellefonte's historic architecture. Within a week, in my capacity as President of BHCA, I called the State Historic Preservation Office, the Borough Manager, Representative Benninghoff, The Lock Haven Express, Preservation Pennsylvania, The Centre Daily Times, and the Tor Michaels Show. Meanwhile, Amy Kelchner, President of the Bellefonte Historic Preservation Foundation, and Sue Hannegan, President of the Roland Curtin Foundation, reached out to their contacts, advocating for preservation of the farmhouse.

This PR blitz seemed to pay off.

Local papers ran long articles about the farmhouse, and the Tor Michaels' show put up a Facebook poll in which the votes for preservation outnumbered the votes for demolition by twenty to one. When a motion to approve the demolition permit was introduced at the next Borough Council meeting, it was tabled.

During the next two weeks, a small cadre of about a dozen preservationists made calls, sent emails, and held meetings. Presentations to the school board were made by Sadie Belsky, a



Bellefonte High School alumna studying architecture at Penn State, Nancy Perkins, a director of the Bellefonte Historic Preservation Foundation, and me. The plight of the farmhouse was covered in a statewide Preservation Pennsylvania newsletter. A meticulous examination of the development plan submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office and the plans filed with the Bellefonte Planning Commission disclosed discrepancies possibly affecting the school

district's freedom to remove the farmhouse. I met with both the school superintendent and the borough manager.

The Decision

At the next Borough Council meeting, the motion to approve the demolition of the farmhouse was taken off the table and debated. Before the Council voted, two Bellefonte high school teachers, several townspeople, Sadie Belsky, and I spoke in favor of preserving the building. District Superintendent Roy Rakszawski

explained that historic preservation is not part of the district's educational mission. He also pointed out that the farmhouse could not be used as an educational space because it would be cost-prohibitive to bring the old building up to state-mandated educational standards. Finally, Walt Schneider, the director of Centre Region Code Administration, explained what repairs

would be required if the building were permitted to stand. After the public input and some discussion, the Council voted to deny the demolition permit.

The Follow-up

Farmhouse advocates were pleased but understood this victory to be fragile. Any decision to deny a demolition permit can be appealed at the Orphan's Court, and another motion to grant a demolition permit can be made

at any meeting of the Borough Council. Following this setback, the school district made the repairs required by Centre Region Code Administration and then invited the people advocating for preservation to meet with the district's Facilities Committee. It was an informative meeting because the district explained why it wants to demolish the farmhouse.

The district's original impulse to remove the farmhouse was motivated by its desire to avoid substantial fines. While repairs to the building have made these fines a moot issue, the farmhouse poses a deeper, more difficult problem for the district.

The district owns over one hundred acres and has used about half of it for the new elementary school and other purposes. There are plans, not yet made public, for developing the remainder of the tract. The elementary school occupies the top of a hill, and the farmhouse lies at the bottom of the district's property. A feature, very much like a sinkhole, is within yards of the farmhouse. The area around the farmhouse receives the drainage from the rest of the one hundred acres and even the runoff from the football field, which was directed there to avoid flooding on Bishop Street. In short, the immediate environs of the farmhouse form a sink, receiving water from the surrounding land. We were told that hydrological studies show that water sinking into the

ground around the farmhouse shows up in the Axmann Spring, a little over two miles away.

At the Facilities Committee meeting, school district personnel explained the main problem with the farmhouse was that future development of their property could adversely impact it. The building's mere presence in the path of possibly increased runoff from new uphill development might move the Bellefonte Planning Commission to refuse approval of that development. As in so many real estate matters,



it's location, location, location. If the farmhouse were anywhere else, there would be no problem. In fact, one district employee at the meeting said that the district would be happy to give the farmhouse to anyone who would move it.

The Solution

At the moment, there is no solution. The farmhouse continues to bedevil the school district and is still at risk. Preservationists want

to save the building, and the district would like to get rid of it. Several strategies have been advanced to solve this conundrum, but none have gained general endorsement. There are at least three worth mentioning.

Some preservationists argue strongly for changing the district's mind. This involves making it as difficult as possible to demolish the building and persuading the district to accept it as an asset. As of this writing, about \$15,000 has been pledged or given toward preserving the farmhouse. This money could be used as the nucleus of a fund to fix up the farmhouse so that the district might consider keeping it. Since the building is nonresidential, exposing it to possible peril through future development might be forgiven by the planning commission.

A few on either side of the argument about the farmhouse have suggested moving it.

This would probably cost about \$150,000 plus the price of a new site for the building. This would satisfy the district, but many preservationists feel the building should stay in its original location. Some have suggested that the building, but not its site, be transferred to a nonprofit so it can be rehabilitated and put to constructive use. This would reduce the district's liability associated with owning the building and allow more freedom for restoration and

use of the structure. It also opens the possibility of a serious fundraising campaign to rehabilitate the building. However, it does not solve the problem of the farmhouse's potential interference with the district's plans for developing the rest of its property.

A possible fix for this last issue would be for the nonprofit receiving the building to grant the district a Waiver of Drainage Rights or Covenant of Non-Protection. The idea here is to hold the district harmless for any adverse impact to the building caused by increased runoff due to the development of its uphill land, thus making the building's presence a non-issue for the planning commission. This step makes sense if one believes that drainage issues are not likely to be a major problem.

Next Steps

The school district has agreed to keep talking with the preservationists as both sides seek a mutually acceptable solution. The Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association has been a staunch advocate for preserving Bellefonte's historic buildings for decades and will do what it can to keep the farmhouse standing. The issue of the farmhouse is a political one, with strong arguments on either side. If you have an opinion, consider sharing it with a school board director or a member of the Borough Council. And feel free to share your thoughts with BHCA. Someone reading this article may have the solution. All of us can agree that we need more of those.

By Joseph Griffin



HISTORIC BELLEFONTE, INC.

"Celebrating A Timeless Heritage"

Historic Bellefonte, Inc.

PO Box 14, Bellefonte PA 16823

HBI is a not-for-profit,
charitable organization.

Dedicated to the revitalization of
Bellefonte and the preservation of
the Borough's rich Historic,
Cultural and Architectural Heritage.

Through a volunteer structure,
HBI serves as an umbrella
vehicle to coordinate community
efforts to carry out its mission.

We are looking for a few good
Volunteers
for various tasks on our committees.

Please feel free to attend
our monthly meeting at 6:30 pm
on the second Thursday
of each month at the
Bellefonte Borough offices

2026 EVENTS CALENDAR

April 4	17th Annual Bellefonte Easter Egg Hunt (Moose Lodge 206 & HBI)
April 4	Easter Speeder Train Rides (BHRS)
April 4	First Saturday in the Fonte (DBI, Downtown Shops, BIACC, BHCA, HBI)
April 8	Ekphrastic Poetry Workshop (Bellefonte Art Museum)
April 12	First Sunday Opening (Bellefonte Art Museum)
April 18	30th Annual Watershed Cleanup Day (Clearwater Conservancy)
May 1-3	The 2nd Annual Civil War Weekend in Bellefonte (BHCA)
May 2	First Saturday in the Fonte (DBI, Downtown Shops, BIACC, BHCA, HBI)
May 3-9	Small Business Week (DBI, Downtown Shops, BIACC)
May 15-16	First Responders Weekend (HBI)
May 16	Bellefonte Townwide Yard Sale (Bellefonte Borough)
May 18-22	Annual Bulk Waste Collection (Bellefonte Borough)
June 6	First Saturday in the Fonte (DBI, Downtown Shops, BIACC, BHCA, HBI)
June 7	Summer Sounds, Coal Alley (BHCA)
June 14	Summer Sounds, Lindy Sisters (BHCA)
June 19-20	37th Annual Historic Bellefonte Cruise (HBI)
June 20	Jitterbug Contest (BHCA)
June 21	Summer Sounds, Honey Pie (BHCA)
June 28	Summer Sounds, Western Range (BHCA)

More information on these events can be found on the websites of the sponsoring organizations. Non-profit organizations may submit events for inclusion in future listings to Joseph Griffin, cbproduce@comcast.net. Submission does not guarantee publication.

CONTACTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Bellefonte Historical & Cultural Association (BHCA)

Membership Civil War Weekend Jitterbug Contest

Joseph Griffin, President:
cbproduce@comcast.net

Art in the Open
Kathy Breidenbaugh:
breidengaugh.k@gmail.com

Summer Sounds

Tom Wilson:
centretainment@verizon.net

Sunday Afternoon Chamber Music Series Victorian Christmas Arts & Crafts Fair

Jim Dunne:
jhdunne@comcast.net

Bellefonte Historical Railroad Society (BHRS)

Volunteers

bellefontetrain.org/membership

Train Rides

bellefontetrain.org/train

Bellefonte Intervalley Area Chamber of Commerce

Janie Provan, President: jprovan124@gmail.com, 814-355-2917

Downtown Bellefonte, Inc. (DBI)

mulfinger@downtownbellefonteinc.com

Historic Bellefonte, Inc. (HBI)

Volunteers First Responders Weekend Historic Bellefonte Cruise Halloween Parade

Pat McCool, President:
PAMP@dejazzd.com

Bellefonte Arts & Crafts Fair

Juanita Lose:
fair@bellefontefair.org

Hometown Heroes Banners 250 America Parade and Celebration

Deb Burger: 4vets@comcast.net

Santa House & Downtown Decorating

Romayne Naylor: 814-571-0106

Bellefonte Victorian Christmas

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BIG SPRING CHRONICLES: Victorian Painted Ladies

The span of time between the winter holidays and the first sight of spring flowers emerging from the ground can be difficult for some people. The twinkling lights have been unplugged, the decorations put away, and everything is either covered in snow like this winter has been or withered, gray, and drab.

What sets the town of Bellefonte apart is that when our mountains and meadows look dull, the architecture still appears stunningly vivid. I am not just referring to the large stately anchor buildings like the Bockerhoff Hotel, Crider Exchange, and the Bush Arcade, but also the magnificently preserved Victorian-era homes in their bold color schemes that can be seen surrounding the downtown district. These homes were built in eclectic, eye-catching styles during Queen Victoria's reign in the United Kingdom from 1837 to 1901. They can be separated into the following categories, or because some time-frames overlap, a combination of more than one:

GEORGIAN (1714–1837)

Characterized by strict symmetry, proportion, and sash windows.

FEDERALIST (1780s–1830s):

The American successor to Georgian, with lighter, more delicate details.

REGENCY (1811–1830s):

A subset of late Georgian featuring larger windows, stucco exteriors, and more exotic influences.

GREEK REVIVAL (1820s–1850s):

Inspired by Greek temples, featuring massive columns and pediments.

GOTHIC REVIVAL (1840s–1890s):

Pointed arches, steep gables, and ornate trim.

ITALIANATE (1840s–1880s):

Low-pitched roofs, brackets, and tower features.

SECOND EMPIRE (1855–1885):

Distinctive mansard roofs and ornate decorations.

QUEEN ANNE (1870s–1910):

Irregular, asymmetrical shapes, towers, turrets, and gingerbread trim.

EDWARDIAN (1901–1914):

Lighter, less fancy, and airier than earlier Victorian styles.

While we commonly refer to many of these homes as “Painted Ladies,” that term was not

coined in the Victorian era, but in 1978 as the title of an architectural book written by Michael Larsen and Elizabeth Pomada. They described a period of wealth a hundred years earlier in San Francisco when residents built large houses painted three or more vibrant colors, and had elaborate details like towers, gables, stained glass windows, and decorative trim that gave them a feminine feel. After two world wars and financial strains, many of these homes were painted neutral colors, and the ornate details were covered up or removed. In the early 1960s, San Francisco resident Butch Kardum painted his Victorian-style home in intense shades of blues and greens, starting a city-wide trend called the Colorist Movement. Artistically, pops of color are used to evoke emotions and make a person pause and reflect. It must have worked because a revival soon spread across the United States, making these houses iconic symbols of the Victorian era and artistic expression. What was once a sign of wealth, later became an expression of hope, renewal, and perseverance.

In Bellefonte, we are lucky to have so many residents who cared enough to restore and preserve our Painted Ladies. Two well-known examples were built on Linn Street in the late 1800's and have been turned into successful bed and breakfasts. I interviewed the innkeepers of The



Queen and Our Fair Lady, along with others, for my second volume of Big Spring Chronicles (2023). The Queen gets its name from its Queen Anne style and lives up to the royal title with its high-toned color palette, tall turret, and floral stained-glass windows. Across the street, Our Fair Lady was named because it was built in 1883 during the Painted Lady era, and the owners met during a high school production of My Fair Lady. It remains one of Bellefonte's most striking landmarks in Italianate/Second Empire style with a central tower, mansard roof, and crimson shutters.

Other notable Painted Ladies in town include the formerly prominent Dr. Dart's house on Allegheny Street, which is in renaissance thanks to its current dedicated owners. The home was once nicknamed the Miami Vice house, due to the 1980's pink and turquoise color theme, but it is being returned to a beautiful mossy green shade. Dart's features a large wrap-around porch and a widow's walk, which makes the massive three-story house look even taller. The home of William Hughes, who, along with Governor Daniel Hastings, led relief efforts after the Johnstown flood of 1889, was built on West Linn Street in 1875. Its sharp Italianate style is currently

the most pleasing hue of purple – like orchids in bloom, which is bound to capture your attention. One Painted Lady that I consider the most photogenic is not found in the fashionable part of town, but across Spring Creek, perched high above North Thomas Street. This house, now owned by the free-spirited Kennedys, was built in 1894, and its original wood siding is colored citrusy shades of lemon yellow, lime green, and orange peel, providing a crisp and refreshing look year-round.

Aside from the colors and unique architectural shapes, the Victorian era was also known for ornamental wrought iron pieces. Iron was used to create exterior sconces, railings, fences, and gates, decorated with scrolls, finials, crosses, and other fancy ornaments. What better place to showcase these than a town founded by skilled Ironmasters? The Valentine brothers relocated to Bellefonte in the early 1800's for the acclaimed iron ore, and used their craft to adorn their homes, and even family grave plots in the Union Cemetery with beautiful cast iron fencing. Across America, many of the iron fences and gates were removed during WWII and melted down to use towards the war effort. Thankfully, quite a few Victorian-era buildings and residences around Bellefonte still have their decorative iron pieces proudly on display today.



If you are looking to chase the winter blues away, let me suggest taking a historical walking tour through Bellefonte with a variety of maps that can be found online. While strolling from stop to stop, take time to notice the enchanting colors and attention to detail on all the timeless works of art we are so fortunate to have!

By Holly Hopkins



Bellefonte's 2nd St. Paul AME Church: A New Beginning on Halfmoon Hill



View of the second St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church, January 2018.

When the flames devouring Bellefonte's 50-year-old frame AME church on Sunday morning, February 20, 1910, were finally doused, Pastor Philip E. Paul and his stunned congregation found "all that was left of the building were the blackened ruins of two walls, and these so badly damaged that they [would] have to be taken down." The *Bellefonte Republican* further reported, "the loss [at] about \$2,500, on which there is \$1,000 insurance" (roughly \$85,000 and \$34,000 in 2026 dollars). A closer inspection of the cooled remnants revealed severely scorched but largely intact limestone foundation and basement walls, strewn with charred but possibly salvageable wooden beams. Those observations factored into the congregation's

decision to rebuild their church home "at once." Even though significant debt remained on the destroyed building—partly accrued through late-nineteenth-century improvements including electrification, furnace heating, and the addition of a functional basement—the 60-member congregation "stepped out in faith" to raise a brick replacement on the foun-



An opening in the basement's modern drop ceiling reveals charred beams salvaged from the burned church and incorporated into its successor.

dation of its wooden predecessor, incorporating components that had survived the flames.

Two weeks after the fire, St. Paul's trustees took the first concrete step toward reconstruction by securing the congregation's title to the site. As secretary William Mills reported in his 1909 congregational history, William and Eliza Thomas had "deeded to the A.M.E. society the lot upon which the [frame] church edifice [was] erected [in 1859-60], and which [was] to be retained by the A.M.E. church as long as religious services [were] conducted by them in this edifice." "Legally signed" by the Thomases, the deed "remain[ed] in the possession of the trustees of the A.M.E. church" in 1909, according to Mills. The deed's ultimate fate is unknown — perhaps it burned in the 1910 fire—but no such document is listed in Centre County's database of recorded deeds. In any case, St. Paul's trustees settled the matter on Sunday, March 6, 1910, by paying an administrator of William Thomas' estate \$100 for the 0.17-acre church parcel. The deed documenting that conveyance, recorded three weeks later, gave the congregation a clear title to the church lot — a prerequisite for serious fundraising.

By early April, the congregation was "engaged in soliciting funds" and planning fundraising efforts, reported the *Altoona Tribune*. The efforts included an initiative by a women's auxiliary known as "the Benjamin Wheeler Society" to sew and sell aprons. Through the following eight months, the

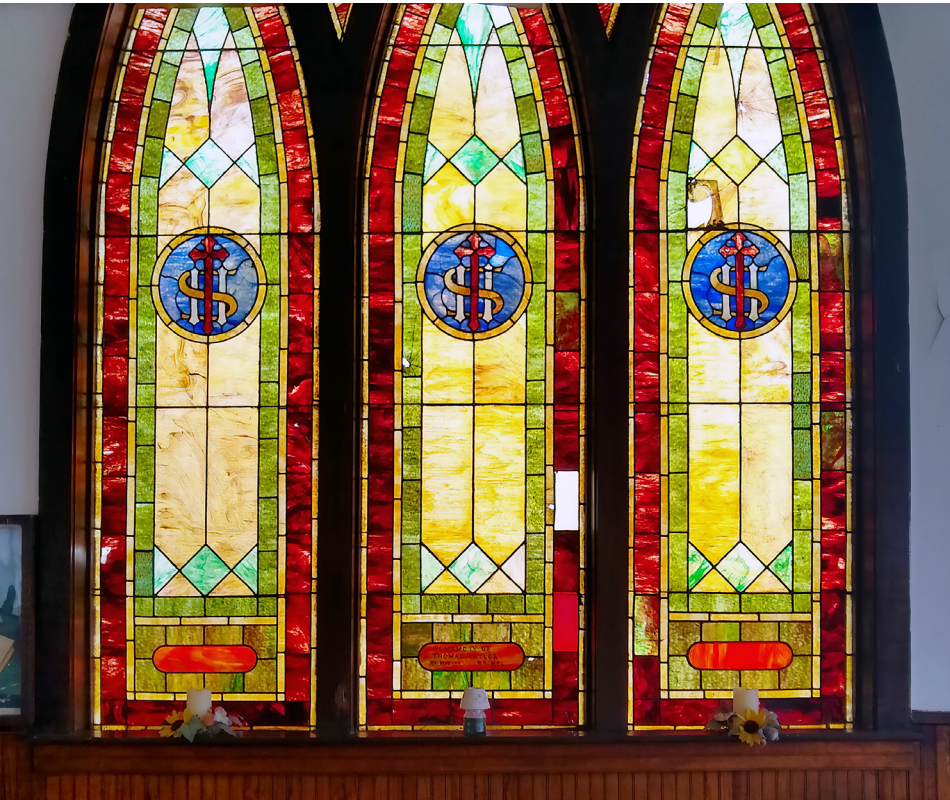
“Wheelers” produced and fulfilled orders for aprons in a range of colors, patterns, sizes, and styles, collectively earning \$2-\$3 per week for the building fund. Some members raised money on their own. Adeline Lawson Graham, having moved from Bellefonte to Emporium a decade earlier with her new husband, Henry Graham, and now “desirous of assisting her friends in Bellefonte to rebuild the A.M.E. church,” held “an Ice Cream and Cake Social in her comfortable home” on August 18, 1910, reported an Emporium newspaper. A few weeks later, Bellefonte’s *Democratic Watchman* reported that Adeline had mailed a check for \$30 (the equivalent of \$1,000) to the St. Paul congregation “to help pay the debt on their new church.”

Around that time, AME pastor Isaiah Henderson Welch sent his second donation from Chattanooga, Tennessee. As a youth, he had helped his father, John Welch — a founding member and longtime lay leader of the St. Paul congregation—work the farm of attorney Hugh N. McAllister just east of Bellefonte. Isaiah left to attend Wilberforce University just prior to the Civil War, but then joined the United States Colored Troops’ 54th Massachusetts Volunteers in 1863. Having last visited Bellefonte in March 1878 for the funeral of his father, Isaiah’s attachment to the St. Paul congregation remained strong 30 years later. After “learning of the destruction of the A.M.E. church” and sending an initial gift to the rebuilding fund, Isaiah heard from his old army comrade Gen. James A.

Beaver “that there were still some living [in Bellefonte] who knew him,” prompting Isaiah to not only make a second donation but to plan a return to Bellefonte for the dedication of the new church.

Meanwhile, several women of the St. Paul congregation organized an Emergency Club devoted to equipping and furnishing the new building. The Club raised enough money to purchase and donate “pulpit furniture” to accompany a wooden pulpit and communion table crafted and contributed without charge by cabinetmaker James Foreman, who had been born to enslaved parents in Virginia early in the Civil War. Widow Rachel Harding Taylor commissioned and donated a set of three lancet-shaped stained-glass windows for the building’s front façade. A painted plate in the central light dedicated the windows to the memory of Rachel’s recently deceased husband, Thomas Taylor, who had served during the Civil War as a private in Company B of the 2nd United States Colored Infantry.

“The foundation walls for the new A. M. E. church, on the old foundation on St. Paul street, [sic] [were] completed” in time for a corner stone-laying service on Saturday, July 2, 1910, reported the *Democratic Watchman*. The Rev. William B. Anderson, Presiding Elder of the East Pittsburgh District of the AME Church, joined Pastor Paul in officiating the ceremony. Fifteen weeks later, the building was ready for use. A service of dedication held on Sun-



Stained-glass windows donated by widow Rachel Taylor in memory of her late husband, Thomas Taylor.



Panoramic view of the church's sanctuary, April 2024.

day, October 14, 1910, attracted a large crowd to the new “church on the hill.” Adeline Lawson Graham and Isaiah Welch were among the celebrants who heard “unusually able discourses filled with serious thought and religious truths that went home to every hearer,” observed the *Centre Democrat*. “Offerings of the day amounted to over \$200, leaving a balance of \$800 for the con-

gregation to liquidate later, and this can be met in due time if the members of the congregation display the same zeal for the church as in the past year. Their new house of worship is a credit to the town and of which they can justly be proud. . . We are confident that our people will liberally aid them in the future, until every cent of indebtedness is met.”

As it turned out, the congregation’s indebtedness persisted several more years. It was not until the winter of 1913-14 that new St. Paul pastor Edward Daniel Robinson finally “lifted the \$118 mortgage at Bellefonte.”

By Phil Ruth



Photo by Carla Cipro

Starlings

Black starlings,
darlings of aereography

First merging,
surging murmuration

Then spreading,
shredding the image

Progressing,
expressing creation

Magnetic,
kinetic iron filings

Attracting,
contract and expand

Releasing,
crease and flatten

Synchrony,
ballet unplanned

Avian,
wavy in pulses

Together,
they feather the sky

Augmenting,
consenting to open

Diminish,
finish call reply

Bib Polak
September 2015

CENTRE GIVES 2026

MAY 6 & 7

Bellefonte Historial
& Cultural Society



Support BHCA

Centre County's Bells Across PA Bells Dedicated

Two and a half centuries ago, the Liberty Bell rang to “Proclaim Liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.” Its iconic message has come to represent the ideals of freedom and democracy that have been the hallmarks of our country since its inception. So, when it came time to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the United States of America, the Liberty Bell was chosen to symbolize the nationwide celebration.

In 2018, the Pennsylvania Legislature and then-governor, Tom Wolf, established the Pennsylvania Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial, a.k.a. America 250 PA. It was tasked with planning the Commonwealth’s recognition of this milestone, Pennsylvania’s integral role in the founding of our country, and the impact of its people on the nation’s past, present, and future. The Commission decided to honor the Liberty Bell with “Bells Across PA,” and to place three-foot-tall, fiberglass Liberty Bell replicas in all sixty-seven counties, telling the stories that made America. Through the process of artist application and sponsor recruitment, four Centre County organizations won the honor of hosting four bells: Bellefonte Historical Railroad Society, Eagle Iron Works, Philipsburg Historical Foundation, and the Centre County Historical Society.



The BHRS bell was installed at the front of the Train Station in Talleyrand Park and was unveiled and dedicated on December 19, 2025. Designed by Holly Foy and James Farrah, it depicts “Stories of Our Railroad.” There is a map of the railroad’s route and photos of assorted trains in various time periods at several locations along the way. Not to be forgotten, a Curtis “Jenny” Bi-plane honoring Bellefonte’s stint as the first stop on the first east-to-west route of the U.S. Air Mail Service, 1918-1925, caps the bell.



Bell photos courtesy of america250pa.org

Eagle Iron Works’ bell was unveiled and dedicated on November 21, 2025, and is on display at Curtin Village. It was designed by Elody Gyekis to show the steps in manufacturing and shipping charcoal iron at Eagle Iron Works, beginning with the cutting and drying of the hardwood trees, the making of the charcoal, the dumping of charcoal, iron ore and limestone into the furnace top for smelting, the molten iron released into sand



molds carved into the floor of the casting house at the base of the furnace, the hauling of the ingots to the nearby Eagle Forge for heating and hammering into wrought iron bars and finally the hauling of this merchant iron to market by mule-drawn boats of the Bald Eagle and Spring Creek Navigation canal. This iron works opened in 1810 and continued production until 1921. It is the last surviving charcoal-fueled iron

furnace in Pennsylvania.

Also dedicated on November 21, 2025, is the bell at Centre Furnace, in College Township. Centre Furnace Iron Works was the first iron furnace in Centre County, operating from 1791 to 1858. This bell was designed by Jeff Mathison. It depicts the founders of Centre Furnace and their contributions to the area that surrounds present day State College and Penn State University.

Centre County’s final bell was sponsored by the Philipsburg Historical Foundation. Due to poor weather, it was unveiled



indoors on December 19, 2025, with plans to move it to an outdoor location as weather permits. It shows vignettes from Philipsburg’s past as portrayed by artist

Pamela Etters and honors a wide variety of things unique to the history of Philipsburg, from its screw factory to its famous giant wooden Santa.

“These fiberglass bells may not ring; however, they are far from silent,” said Cassandra Coleman, Executive Director of America 250 PA. “Each one tells a story about a community. Each one tells a story about creativity. And, most importantly, each one tells a story about local pride.”

By Romaine B. Naylor



Photo by James Dunne



Like many nonprofits, BHCA mails an end-of-year solicitation to its members, friends, and past donors. We call this our annual fund. A few months later, we participate in a more contemporary local fundraising program, Centre Gives. These two activities produce the bulk of our gifts from individuals. The balance of BHCA's income comes from grants, sponsorships, membership dues, and advertisements in *The Bell*. Since BHCA almost never charges for its programming, these income sources are essential. Now that we have the vehicle of *The Bell*, we plan to list the donors to our annual

fund each year in the spring edition. Philanthropy deserves recognition. If your name appears below, we thank you. If it doesn't, maybe you will consider placing it there next year.

Our 2024 annual fund brought in \$1,612. We did better in 2025, receiving \$4,355. The remarkable 170% increase is explained by one outstanding gift. However, even discounting this amazing donation, we still raised 46% more than the preceding year. The following people are making the good work of BHCA possible.

Paulette Lorraine Berner Serendipity Fund	Betty Kantner
Joseph Griffin In Memory of Melady Kehm	Mrs. Molly Schwartz & Mr. Ed Olsen In Memory of Charlotte and William Rumberger
Cindy Evic, State Farm Insurance	Doug & Sharon Johnson
Bonnie & Denny Leathers In Memory of Melady Kehm	Bob & Candice Dannaker
	Tom & Sara Songer

Rosalie Bailey	Anonymous
Gloria Rogers In Memory of Dr. Hugh Rogers	Nancy Noll
Carla & Ted Conklin	Tom Wilson
Harry & Denise Wells	Nancy Perkins
Christine Mulfinger	Karen Grine
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Lisa Schwartz	Delores Bracken In Memory of W. T. Bracken & Charles E. Harpster
Tamara Schuster	Jack Schuster
Dona Goldman	Kathy & Phil Bridenbaugh
John Roberts	James & Gay Dunne



Bellefonte to Celebrate America 250

Give Deb Burger a reason to throw a patriotic party, and she will seize it.

At a recent meeting of Historic Bellefonte, Inc., the subject of America’s 250th Anniversary came up. Burger first asked how this momentous milestone would be marked in Bellefonte. When it seemed that nothing concrete was known to have been planned beyond the America 250 PA bell dedications, her ideas started to flow.

“We should have a parade, like the one we used to have for the Fourth of July,” she said, referencing the tradition of the Logan Fire Company’s Fourth of July Parade that was discontinued a few years ago.

In short order, it was decided that the new round of Hometown Heroes Banners should be dedicated at the parade’s end at Talleyrand Park. And, there should be a community celebration in the park, suggested another HBI member. And a big cake, said someone else. And patriotic music . . . and . . . and . . . and . . . And a community celebration was born.

“We asked the Logan Fire Company to help us with the parade,” said Burger. “When it comes to parades in Bellefonte, they are the experts. They agreed to help right away.”



Recruitment of veteran groups to lead the parade and local veterans to ride on a float and function as the parade’s Grand Marshalls, as well as bands, police departments, fire companies, emergency medical services, twirling groups, churches, community groups, service organizations, and youth groups, is underway.

“We welcome anyone who wants to help celebrate our nation’s 250th Anniversary to join our parade,” Burger said. “If anyone wants to build a float or to march as a group, they should go to our website and find the application, which they can complete and submit.”

That website is www.visitbellefonte.com. Also found on that website are applications for the Hometown Heroes Banners. This

program is a project of HBI that allows individuals and sponsors to honor veterans, law enforcement, emergency medical service, and fire personnel by purchasing banners that are hung from downtown light poles.

“This is our sixth round of the Hometown Heroes Banners,” Burger stated. “This year, because of the planned celebration to honor our country’s 250th Anniversary, we plan to dedicate the banners during the after-parade celebration in Talleyrand Park instead of on Veterans’ Day as we usually do.”

The banner dedication will be followed by a concert of patriotic music performed by the combined Bellefonte and State College Community Bands and other family-friendly events.

As planning for this celebration progresses, more organizations are joining in the planning process. When a tasting of ethnic foods to celebrate America’s melting pot tradition was proposed, Downtown Bellefonte, Inc. president, Lorraine Mulfinger, stepped up to coordinate it. The Melting Pot Food Tasting will feature samplings of an assortment of foods of a variety of ethnic origins. Mulfinger is recruiting churches, clubs, and others who would like to feature a specific food that celebrates any of the diverse cultures that have blended into America’s national identity. Any group wishing to bring an ethnic food to share should contact Mulfinger at mulfinger@downtownbellefonteinco.com.

“This will be an All-American, family event,” said HBI president

Pat McCool. Noting that there will be free hot dogs donated by Giant Market, an HBI sponsor, he added, “What is more American than a hot dog? And there is going to be a big birthday cake.” The free food will be first-come, first-served until it is gone, with a priority service line for the veterans.

The celebration is still in the planning stages, but this is what is on the schedule so far: The parade will step off from the Bellefonte High School at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, July 3, 2026. It will proceed down Bishop Street, onto Allegheny Street, where emcees Rich Fornicola and Paul Kline will announce each unit as it passes The Diamond and turns onto High Street, and then continues to Talleyrand Park. Immediately following the parade will be the

dedication of the latest round of Hometown Heroes Banners. The banner dedication will be followed by a patriotic concert, an ethnic food tasting, hot dogs, and a big birthday cake. To alleviate parking congestion near Talleyrand Park, a shuttle will run from Faith United Methodist Church to Talleyrand Park and back. The pre-parade shuttle will run from 4:30-5:15 p.m. After the parade, the shuttles will resume and continue until 9 p.m.

“We invite everyone to join us in our celebration,” said Burger. “America only turns 250 years old once, and we want to make this a memorable commemoration of that historic milestone.”

By Romaine B. Naylor





Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association

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