

Local Penny Dispatch and Internal Revenue Stamps

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Benjamin Franklin was appointed postmaster at Philadelphia in 1737. About the same time he organized a postal system for the colonies, which was the basis of the present United States Post Office.

For more than one hundred years after Franklin's initial efforts, letter sheets or envelopes—now called "stampless covers"—were marked "Paid" or "Due" either with pen and ink or handstamps of various designs. The former indicated that the sender had paid the postage at the time of mailing; the latter that the postage was to be collected from the addressee. Sometimes the words sufficed but usually the amount of the postage and date were added, together with the town postmark.

Then the Act of Congress of March 3, 1845, effective July 1, 1845, established uniform rates of postage as follows:

"For every single letter in manuscript or paper of any kind by or upon which information shall be asked or communicated in writing or by marks or signs, conveyed in the mail, for any distance under 300 miles, five cents; and for any distance over 300 miles, ten cents"

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The Congress on March 3, 1847, authorized the Postmaster General to issue stamps which when affixed indicated the postage was prepaid. These first United States stamps, in 5c and 10c denominations, bore portraits of Franklin and Washington, respectively.

But as will be noted to mail a letter one had to deposit it in the post office,—and incoming mail was delivered there. No provisions had then been made for establishing post routes or for carrier service. So it was that enterprising men in many of the larger cities, and some in cities the size of Lancaster and Wilmington, started a receiving and delivery service under local management. The general public, appreciating the moderate charges and the celerity of the private companies, bestowed its patronage accordingly.²

Barr's Penny Dispatch

Here in Lancaster, an ambitious bookseller, newsagent and publisher, Elias Barr, had established such a service as early as 1854. The book store was continued by his son, Charles H. Barr, and at the present time is known as the Barr-Hurst Book Store, conducted by Hervey Hurst.

Mr. Barr advertised the fact that he would receive letters for carriage to the post office or for delivery within the limits of the town, or he would receive mail matter at the post office and deliver the same to the addressee. For this service he charged one cent each way. In order to properly compensate himself, he issued stamps, known as *Barr's Penny Dispatch*, which could be purchased at the jewelry store of Zahm and Jackson, 15 North Queen Street. He erected boxes at suitable places about the city, and collected the deposited mail three times daily, employing three men for this work.

There were two varieties of stamps—red and green. These were typeset, and therefore showed many slight variations. Genuine copies have been in demand for some years, and they are catalogued at \$75.00 to \$125.00. A red stamp of this series was shown at the Lancaster Stamp Club exhibit in 1935, and the writer saw a specimen of the black on green paper (as well as the 4c S. B. Hartman and Co., "Mishler's Herb Bitters," internal revenue stamp—a description of which follows farther on in this article) in the Congressional Library, in a special philatelic display in June, 1940. The exact dimensions of the stamp are 21 x 14 mm.

The United States Stamp Catalogue lists among the "locals":

Barr's Penny Dispatch Lancaster, Pa.

Established by Elias Barr for local collection and delivery, as well as to and from the post office.

1855 Typeset on wove paper, several varieties of each.

| | | | | | |
|-----------|------------|--------|---------|------|----------|
| No. 8 L 1 | (1c) red | Unused | \$75.00 | Used | \$100.00 |
| | On cover | | | | |
| No. 8 L 2 | (1c) green | " | 5.00 | " | 100.00 |
| | On cover | | | | 125.00 |

² In 1863 Postmaster General Montgomery Blair introduced the free delivery or letter carrier service in forty-nine of the largest cities.

The relatively high prices of the red stamp unused and both stamps used and on cover indicates they are scarce and seldom encountered. On the other hand it is likely there were remainders of the green stamp unused which found their way to collectors after operation of the business ceased.

Mr. Jere Hess Barr, of Reading, Pa., a descendant of Elias Barr, and a well-known philatelist, has the following Barr's Penny Dispatch stamps on the original envelopes:

Green stamp, pen cancelled, letter addressed to the Hon. Benjamin Champneys, Lancaster, Pa.

Barr's Penny Dispatch tied with black oval PAID 3 with LANCASTER, PA. postmark dated 15 Jan., addressed to Mrs. Sarah Ann Brooks, care of Mrs. Elizabeth J. Dawson, 29 Washington Street, Spring Garden, Philadelphia, Pa. This is a green stamp.

Barr's Penny Dispatch not tied, with green oval PAID 3 with LANCASTER, PA. postmark dated Feb. 6., addressed to M. S. Potter & Co., 36 North Front Street, Philadelphia, Pa. Green stamp.

Barr's Penny Dispatch, red stamp, pen cancellation on red valentine envelope with valentine. Addressed to Miss Kate Long, Lancaster, Pa.

It will be seen that the "Local Posts"—of which Barr's Penny Dispatch was one of many—owed their origin to the management of the Post Office Department without due consideration of the patrons' needs.

When the Act of 1851 came to be enforced it was quite usual to demand that every carrier be bonded. This was the cause of numerous local posts retiring from business. It was taken as a hardship that the proprietors and carriers of the local posts, to whom valuable mail matter had been delivered daily, should be required to give security for the faithful performance of their duties.

For several years the Government used every means to crush these private enterprises. Finally, the Post Office reduced its rates and effected needed reforms in the service, and legislated the private posts out of business.

Some of the "Local Posts" appeared prior to 1847 and the method of operation, developed by these pioneer mail carriers, was followed when the Government insisted upon its legal right to carry all the mail.

In the Lancaster directories, we find Mr. Barr listed as follows: in 1857, "Barr, Elias, news agent, home Orange Street near North Queen Street;" in 1858 to 1870, "Barr's Book Store, 29 East King Street, opposite Court House," or "Elias Barr & Co., 31 East King Street;" in 1870, "Elias Barr, publisher, home Lime near Church Street."

Mishler's 4c and 6c Internal Revenue Stamps

The debts incurred because of the War Between the States were responsible for the inception of an organized revenue system in the United States. On July 2, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln approved and signed, "An act to provide internal revenue to support the Government and pay interest on

the public debt," H. R. No. 312, better known as the Revenue Act of 1862. As a result, largely by means of adhesive stamps, a steady income was provided by taxing trade and commerce, nominally of course, but in every practicable manner. Hence, a large part of the cost of the War was paid with money collected thru these revenues.

The Act required that a revenue stamp be affixed to bottles or containers of medicines, perfumery, cosmetics and the like—the tax rate being one cent for each twenty-five cents of the retail price and two cents for each fifty cents or fraction thereof over a dollar. For example, a box of pills which sold for twenty-five cents had a 1c stamp; a bottle of medicine priced at \$1.50 had a 6c stamp and so on.

Two citizens of Lancaster successively manufactured a proprietary medicine on which the tax was required to be paid. Here is the interesting story of the men, the medicine and the stamps they used.

BENJAMIN MISHLER was born in Reamstown, Pennsylvania, sixteen miles northeast of Lancaster on the Reading Pike. He first saw the light of day on August 12, 1814. Little is known of his early years but it may be presumed he took advantage of the limited educational facilities of that locality. He married in 1840 and the union was blessed with a son, Henry L., on June 9, 1841.

In 1857 or before, Benjamin and his brother, Isaac, were in the liquor business. They had a distillery in East Cocalico Township, three miles northwest of Reamstown. It was about this time that *Mishler's Herb Bitters* was first concocted. Meeting with considerable success in the farming communities, it was said "when you felt bad you got some Mishler's Bitters." The *Bitters* apparently were the invention of Benjamin, for in 1859 he sold his interest in the liquor business to his brother and devoted himself to making this preparation. The manufacturing was carried on in a building on the southeast angle of Center Square, now called Penn Square, in the very heart of Lancaster. This site was afterward, and still is, occupied by the firm of Watt & Shand. The former structure has now been replaced with a modern fireproof department store.

Undoubtedly soon after the Revenue Act of 1862, passed by the 37th Congress in 2d Session, became effective, Benjamin Mishler complied with its provisions by affixing a stamp to each bottle of *Bitters* as an indication the tax had been paid. Although stamps of the regular government issue must have been used, apparently they were not canceled in such a manner that they can now be identified.

The Directory of Lancaster County for 1866 indicates that besides manufacturing *Mishler's Herb Bitters*, Benjamin Mishler served as Treasurer of the Conestoga Vineyard Company. At the same time Henry L. Mishler, now grown to young manhood, was engaged on the opposite angle of Center Square, in the manufacture of a preparation called *Keystone Bitters*.

SAMUEL B. HARTMAN was born two and a half miles east of Harrisburg, in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, April 1, 1830. His father, who was a

farmer, died when Samuel was a mere child leaving the mother penniless with eight children—five boys and three girls—looking to her for support. An uncle of the children brought them and their mother to Lancaster County, conveying all their effects in a four-horse wagon. The family took possession of a log cabin in Manor Township, and the older children were apprenticed.

Samuel lived for a time with his uncle, and was then sent to the home of John Charles, who became his guardian, the lad having received \$150 as a bequest from an aunt. Young Hartman spent some time at Medway, Ohio; attended Farmers College, a literary institution at College Hill, Cincinnati, and then took up the study of medicine, under Dr. Shackelford at Medway, later attending lectures in the Medical Department of the Western Reserve College at Cleveland, Ohio.

At twenty-four he began the practice of his profession at Tippecanoe City, Ohio, and remained there for a period of two years. He then entered Jefferson Medical College at Philadelphia, from which famous school he was graduated in 1857.

Dr. Hartman married Miss Sallie Martzell (1835-1930), whose father came from a family of substantial farmers, but who chose hotel-keeping as a business and was for an ordinary lifetime the owner and keeper of the Plow Tavern on West King Street in Lancaster. To them came two children, John Henry Hartman (1863-1881) and Maribel Hartman (Shoemaker).

Settling in Millersville, Lancaster County, Dr. Hartman practiced for nearly ten years and became so forehanded that he thought he might retire from active work and devote his time to study and research. To his surprise, in six months he found himself as penniless as when his father died, having in his open-handed and generous manner given away all his possessions. So this indefatigable worker started anew. Then he met the man who was to somewhat change the course of his life.



A MISHLER ADVERTISING STUNT.

This print simulated the ten-dollar bill of the early 1860's, and was used to promote the sales of the Bitters.

About the year 1867 Benjamin Mishler and Samuel Brubaker Hartman, M.D., entered into a deal whereby the latter became the sole proprietor of *Mishler's Herb Bitters*. The manufacture continued from the building overlooking Center Square until 1874, when it was removed to 7 West Mifflin Street.

One of the very first things Dr. Hartman did was to take steps to have a private die revenue stamp prepared for his exclusive use. In due course the firm of Butler & Carpenter in Philadelphia, who held the initial government printing contract, was directed to engrave a die. A proof from this die was approved in the office of the Hon. Edward A. Rollins, Commissioner of Internal Revenue, on September 20, 1867.

As *Mishler's Herb Bitters* was put up in bottles retailing at \$1.50, the tax required was 6 cents and this figure was included in the design. In the center is a three-quarter portrait of Benjamin Mishler. On a circular band in colorless letters is Nil Desperandum³ (Nothing must be despaired of), and the name of the proprietary. On a colorless oval to the left "S. B. Hartman & Co.—Successors—to B. Mishler." and similarly at the right "Proprietors of —Mishler's—Herb Bitters—Lancaster, Pa."

To this 6c black perforated stamp the *United States Stamp Catalogue* assigns the number RS 100 (former No. 5375). The first printing on thin old paper was delivered sometime in January, 1868. Measuring 100 by 24 mm., the stamps were printed in sheets of 42, laid down 3 by 14. There were additional printings on old paper for the total issue on this paper amounted to some 133,515 stamps, or about 3,180 sheets. But one printing was made on silk paper of 1,033 stamps—maybe 25 sheets. The date of last issue is given as May, 1875.

At the expiration of his contract on August 31, 1875, Joseph R. Carpenter, according to the records, turned over to the Government 661 17/42 sheets—27,779 stamps—of the 6c value. These had been printed in anticipation of orders which had not come from the Hartman firm and presumably they were destroyed.

Sterling in the Fifth Edition of his *Revenue Catalogue 1888* priced the old paper \$2 and the silk \$1. The current quotations are \$15 and \$3.50. These stamps were not used in multiple and a vertical pair on silk paper, which is extant, probably came from the remainder. The stamps were intended to be affixed over the cork and down the neck of the bottle, hence it was unnecessary to cancel them.

Less than a year after the 6c stamps were first issued Dr. Hartman decided to put up *Mishler's Herb Bitters* in a smaller bottle to retail at \$1. This required the payment of a 4c tax for which a new stamp was necessary. Mr. Butler was then deceased and the firm of Joseph R. Carpenter & Co., who carried on the contract, was directed to prepare a new die. A proof from this

³ Could it be that the Mishlers surreptitiously took this motto from the coat of arms of the Scotch-Irish family of Nevins? John Williamson Nevin was president of Franklin and Marshall College from 1866 to 1876.

die was approved in the office of Commissioner Rollins on August 25, 1868. The stamps on thin old paper were first printed during October of the same year.

The design of the stamp was changed, probably to facilitate it being affixed as a cork seal. It measured 103 to 104½ by 15½ mm.—there was slight variation in the length probably due to shrinkage of the paper. The same portrait of Benjamin Mishler was placed sideways in the center. The inscription on a colorless background at the left reads "Dr. S. B. Hartman & Co.—Successors—to B. Mishler" and at the right "Dr. S. B. Hartman & Co.—Proprietors,—Lancaster &—Pittsburg, Pa."

To this 4c black, perforated, strip stamp the *United States Stamp Catalogue* gives the number RS 99 (former No. 5374). It was printed in sheets of 51 stamps, laid down 3 by 17. There were subsequent printings on old, silk, pink and watermarked papers by Carpenter and the National-American Bank Note companies. According to the *Boston Revenue Book* the final issue was "Prior to October 1, 1880" indicating the exact date was unknown and that there never was a printing at the Bureau of Engraving & Printing in Washington. These stamps were never used in multiple and none have been reported.

On August 31, 1875, at the expiration of his contract, Joseph R. Carpenter turned over to the government some 771 23/51 sheets—39,344 stamps—of the 4c value for which orders had never been received. Information is lacking but it may be these were handed to the National Bank Note Co. for delivery on later orders, when this firm assumed the printing contract.

In 1888 Sterling listed the four papers, \$1.50, 50c, \$2 and \$1. More than half a century later the quotations are \$40, \$1.50, \$10 and \$100. The latter is seldom seen—probably few more than a dozen copies are extant today.

The Directory of Lancaster County, 1870, had this announcement on page 390 of the advertising section:

GET THE BEST! MISHLER'S HERB BITTERS!

This is sound advice, especially since we give it in reference to medicine, and in order to learn which is "the best," let merit be the test. The American market is flooded with all sorts of vile and dangerous nostrums, and thousands of human lives are constantly placed in jeopardy by them. But there are several really invaluable medicinal preparations which every family in the land ought to possess at all times. Foremost among them is Mishler's Herb Bitters, which has fully established its claim as the most efficacious compound extant for purifying the blood and eradicating diseases arising from a disordered stomach, liver, kidneys, intestines, &c.

For CHOLERA, CHOLERA MORBUS, SUMMER COMPLAINTS OF CHILDREN, INDIGESTION, DYSPEPSIA, GENERAL DEBILITY, INTERMITTENT FEVER, FEVER AND AGUE, NEURALGIA, &c. there is no remedy in the world equal to it. It will not only cure these distressing disorders but it will fortify the human system against their return. It is a pure and wholesome stomachic, an unequalled appetizer, a Tonic without a rival, and a panacea for all the diseases for which it is recommended.

HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH ANY ARTICLE PURPORTING TO BE MISHLER'S HERB BITTERS, WHICH IS OFFERED FOR SALE BY THE BARREL, GALLON, QUART, PINT, OR GILL, &c. THE GENUINE ARTICLE IS SOLD ONLY IN BOTTLES.

CAUTION !

We beg to state for the information of all respectable persons, that we are the sole proprietors of MISHLER'S BITTERS, which is put up only in SQUARE GLASS BOTTLES, with a GRADUATED measure of DOSES blown on the rear panel, and the words, MISHLER'S HERB BITTERS on the side panel. A neat WHITE label is placed on the front panel. OVER THE CORK and extending down the sides of the neck of each bottle is OUR OWN Internal Revenue Stamp, with a portrait of DR. BENJAMIN MISHLER directly in the centre. Every bottle is wrapped in a large Circular, and is again enclosed in a YELLOW OUTSIDE WRAPPER, on the front of which is our Trade-Mark, and also, the words, MISHLER'S HERB BITTERS. On the sides of this wrapper are the words, THE GREAT HOUSEHOLD REMEDY. If the article that is offered for sale does not answer in EVERY PARTICULAR to the foregoing description it is not genuine, and any information accorded to us of such being in the market will be received as a marked favor.

N. B.—Beware of re-filled bottles. See that the stamp over the cork has not been tampered with.

DR. S. B. HARTMAN & CO.,
Lancaster, Penna.

Although the main office and factory was located in Lancaster, the firm maintained what was presumably a sales office at 26 Market Street, in Pittsburgh, for a number of years. For their business correspondence Dr. S. B. Hartman & Co. used a corner card envelope printed in black giving both cities, name of the proprietary and the firm's trade mark. The latter consisted of an anchor, with the sea and setting sun in the background, a twined ribbon at the top inscribed "HOPE." Whether they *hoped* the medicine would benefit the user or just *hoped* it might find a ready sale is not indicated.

Apparently in the fall of 1879 a new firm, the

MISHLER HERB BITTERS CO.

was organized to take over the manufacture. In due course the American Bank Note Co. of New York was directed to engrave a new die. A proof from this die was approved in the office of the Hon. Green B. Raum, Commissioner of Internal Revenue, sometime in January, 1880. The first printing from American plate number 109 was shipped a few weeks later.

The United States Stamp Catalogue accords the number RS 181 (former No. 5456) to this 4c black perforated strip stamp. The *Boston Revenue Book* states: "Design the same as that of Dr. S. B. Hartman & Co., excepting that the inscription at left is altered to 'MISHLER HERB BITTERS Co.—SUCCESSORS TO—DR. S. B. HARTMAN & Co.' and the upper line of the inscription at right to 'MISHLER HERB BITTERS Co.'"

Measuring 103 to 104½ by 15½ mm., the stamps were printed in sheets of 51, laid down 3 by 17, as was its predecessor. A total of 46,968 stamps (about 921 sheets) were issued on watermarked paper only, with the final printing recorded as being shipped from Washington on April 6, 1883. It seems unlikely that there were more than two issues. A block of six, two by three, exists which probably came from the remainder. The stamps were never used in multiple.

In 1888 the Mishler Herb Bitters Co. stamp was priced at 25 cents. For many recent years the quotation was \$1, the Second Edition of 1936 raised it to \$1.25, in 1938 it rose to \$2.50 and the 1940 catalogue boosted it to \$5. Why? Surely a quarter of this figure would be a fair price to part with for a fine specimen!

Over a period of some fourteen and a half years 968,996 private die proprietary stamps with a total face value of \$41,450.80 were affixed to bottles of *Mishler's Herb Bitters* manufactured and sold. This indicates gross retail sales of \$1,036,270 or an annual average business of approximately \$71,467.

When the repeal of the stamp tax became effective on July 1, 1883, the firm was loathe to part with its stamp which had proven so effective an advertising medium and at the same time had discouraged others from imitating the preparation. Accordingly the stamp was altered to what we now know as a facsimile label. The letters "FOUR" and figures "4" became "ONE" and "1"; "INTERNAL REVENUE" vertically at the right end was replaced with "OF AMERICA". The inscription on the left tablet was:

"\$0.01

Lancaster, Pa.

July 1st, 1883

On demand, for value received we promise to pay the bearer one cent.

Mishler Herb Bitters Co."

and similarly on the right tablet:

"See that the stamp
over the cork has not been
tampered with.

Mishler Herb Bitters Co.

Proprietors

Lancaster & Pittsburg, Pa."

The facsimile labels were the same size as the stamps previously used, lithographed in black and imperforate.

BENJAMIN MISHLER, after disposing of his Bitters business in 1867, conducted the old Lion Brewery at Middle and Church streets in Lancaster for several years. In 1873, Mr. Mishler built the "ten-hour" house on South Prince Street. (Read the complete story in vol. 12, p. 47.)

In 1873 Mr. Mishler was engaged in manufacturing gold and sodium at 22 Center Square and the following year sold patent medicines at 27 East

German Street. He passed away on June 8, 1876, and was laid to rest in Woodward Hill Cemetery, Lancaster.

HENRY L. MISHLER continued the manufacture of Keystone Bitters while associated with his father; first in the gold and sodium business and later in the drug store at 27 East German Street. He made and sold these bitters from the latter address until shortly before his decease on April 21, 1882, when he was buried beside his father.

SAMUEL BRUBAKER HARTMAN, M.D., engaged in private practice at 305 Penn Avenue in Pittsburgh for several years after he had retired from active participation in the manufacture of *Mishler's Herb Bitters*. In 1888 he removed to Columbus, Ohio, and soon afterward The Peruna Company was established at 242-248 South Lazelle Street in that city.

Even before the turn of the century, Peruna, or Pe-ru-na as Dr. Hartman liked to call it, was the most prominent proprietary nostrum in the country. It had taken the place once held by Dr. Greene's Nervura and by Paine's Celery Compound; and for the same reason which made them popular—alcohol. Peruna, purely and simply, was a stimulant and it was the more dangerous in that it sailed under the false colors of benign purpose.

It was once stated that: "More alcohol was consumed in this country in patent medicines than was dispensed in a legal way by licensed liquor vendors—not including the sale of ales and beer." Peruna is said to have contained 28% alcohol. It would, therefore, have taken almost six bottles of 5% beer to put as much alcohol into a thirsty man's system as a temperance advocate would get by drinking a single bottle of Peruna. As a fact, a "Peruna jag" was so common forty to fifty years ago that many drug stores had difficulty in keeping Peruna on their shelves.

The truth is, Peruna was no better and no worse than many other remedies then before the public. Numerous others could have been the same—because the chief medicinal ingredient in the majority of the remedies was alcohol.

Dr. Hartman published a booklet, titled "The Ills of Life." Although many words were used, the only real claim was that Peruna would cure catarrh. No matter what you might have had, after reading the book, you would be not only enabled but compelled to diagnose your illness as catarrh. For example, "pneumonia is catarrh of the lungs; so is consumption—heart disease is catarrh of the heart—appendicitis is catarrh of the appendix," and so on.

The passage of the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906 presumably caused some changes to be made in the advertising of Peruna—and probably a revision of the formula.

Dr. Hartman pressed the manufacture and sale of Peruna with all his energy. The remedy attained an enormous sale all over the United States. By 1901 the demand had become so widespread that a branch office was opened in Montreal, Canada, to handle the foreign distribution.

With Peruna firmly established, Dr. Hartman built the celebrated Hartman Sanitarium and the Hotel Hartman in Columbus. A princely income combined with profitable investments had made him a very wealthy man. His hobby was a stock farm of some 5,000 acres, on which were raised the finest breed of horses and cattle in America.

Even in his later years, Dr. Hartman was devoted to the noble profession of which he had so long been a close student, and in which he had done so much to relieve suffering humanity. He passed away on January 30, 1918, in his eighty-eighth year, at the Hotel Hartman. He lies buried in a beautiful well-kept plot in Lancaster Cemetery.

Other Stamps of Local Interest

A two-cent commemorative stamp, known as the "Hudson-Fulton Celebration" issue, was first placed on sale September 25, 1909. It marked in part the centennial of navigation by steam, depicting Fulton's Clermont on the Hudson River. The issuance of this special stamp was suggested and urged by Congressman William Walton Griest, to honor Robert Fulton because of his nativity in Lancaster County.

Another stamp, which was printed by the Post Office Department at the suggestion of local men, was the two-cent "Valley Forge" issue. Through the suggestion and efforts of Hon. A. G. Seyfert and Congressman W. W. Griest, this stamp showing Washington in prayer in the woods at Valley Forge, was printed and first placed on sale on May 26, 1928, at Lancaster and six other preferred cities.

Mr. Seyfert remarked: "The Post Office Department made a most happy selection in depicting this reverent incident to remind the world that Washington was a Christian in the full sense of that great word, and the founder of a Christian nation. The Father of His Country on his knees as pictured on fifty million stamps with the words "Valley Forge 1778-1926," is a sermonette on every letter to which the stamp is affixed."

Mr. Seyfert bought the first sheet of one hundred stamps at the Lancaster post office, and Mr. C. H. Martin the second sheet. Two of the stamps from Mr. Seyfert's sheet were presented to the local Historical Society.