

# Seventy-Five Years of Publishing Lancaster County History

by John Ward Willson Loose

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As the *Journal* of the Lancaster County Historical Society celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary, we are reminded it may be well to pause and to reflect on the history of that venerable publication. The reputation of the *Journal* among serious scholars and historians in the civilized world is pleasing to those of us who have tried to uphold a tradition of sound research and historiography. When we fulfill all of our objectives, the *Journal* meets with general approval among those who prefer their local history a bit on the light side as well as those pundits who weigh the notes and bibliographies before trusting the historical accuracy of the text.

What is not so well known is the fact the *Journal* nearly killed its "mother" during childbirth, a matter covered rather thoroughly in a delightful essay titled "Seedtime and Harvest" by Dr. F. R. Diffenderffer published in 1917. From its very beginning the founders of the Society stressed the importance of having essays published. After the Society was formed in late 1886, Dr. Joseph Henry Dubbs, newly-elected President, was directed to deliver an address on the purpose and objectives of the new organization. Dr. Dubbs stopped around shortly before the meeting to consult with his friend and co-founder, Dr. F. R. Diffenderffer, who was an editor of the *Lancaster New Era*, the Republican newspaper. The editor asserted publicity was essential for the fledgling society, and that it would be desirable for Dr. Dubbs' address to be printed in the newspapers. Dr. Dubbs agreed, and promised the manuscript to Diffenderffer after the address was delivered, for which the editor would have set in type, and proofs delivered to the other newspapers for their use. As soon as the address was finished. W. U. Hensel, another co-founder of the Society, and publisher of the *Democratic Intelligencer*, asked Dr. Dubbs for his manuscript, saying he would edit it, and place the proper headings before sending proofs to the other newspapers. Naively Dr. Dubbs handed him the address. When the *New Era's* editor reached Dr. Dubbs, only to discover the essay was in Hensel's possession, the enraged Dr. Diffenderffer demanded Dr. Dubbs keep his word, and retrieve the essay from Hensel. Dr. Dubbs demurred.

The editor left in quite a distressed mood; in older days this would have called for the decision to be made on the field of honor. The unhappy founders of the Society never got around to calling another meeting for nine years. Public ardor for a historical society subsided, and the initial urge had been dissipated. Finally, in April 1896, the founding fathers reconvened, and elected new officers under the earlier constitution. The Society's existence has never been threatened since that early fracas, and the papers and addresses presented before the Society dutifully appeared in the public press. Following publication in the newspaper, the type would be kept standing, and additional issues would be run off which were bound in booklet form. This was the start of our *Journal*. Volume I was called "Papers Read Before the Lancaster County Historical Society," and subsequent volumes were called "Papers and Addresses of the Lancaster County Historical Society" until 1956 when volume 60 appeared as a quarterly publication under the style, "Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society." Older members may remember the first twenty volumes appearing as little pamphlets with pink covers and containing text in narrow newspaper-width columns.

Founders of the historical society were an interesting group of gentlemen—all men, but no women were invited initially. It may be interesting and possibly revealing to look into the vital statistics of our founding fathers. We believe the quality of the conception has had a most beneficial impact upon the future conditions of the Society. Of the 34 "founding fathers," we have been able to ascertain the ages of 21 founders, and we find that the average age of these gentlemen was 47 years—rather young for being interested in the past! Numerous professions and occupations were represented:

10 attorneys	2 justices of the peace
5 editors and publishers	1 bookseller
4 merchants	1 civil engineer
3 ministers	1 coin dealer
3 educators	1 physician
2 political personalities	1 tanner
2 farmers	

Several founders had more than one profession or occupation, hence the larger number of occupations than founders.

Twelve of the founding fathers lived in the country; the remaining 22 men lived in the city of Lancaster. The rural section was represented with six in the northeastern area, one in the central eastern sector, four in southern Lancaster County, and one in Columbia in the central western area. The Marietta-Bainbridge-Mount Joy-Elizabethtown section was not represented, although that matter was corrected after a short time.

Among the founders were a former Pennsylvania Attorney General, a U.S. Congressman, three college presidents, and at least one

father-son team. Ministers represented the Reformed, Moravian and Presbyterian churches. One founder was a prominent Roman Catholic. A number of members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) were active in the early historical society.

From the beginning in 1896 until 1916 the Society's publications appeared in newspaper column width, much of the cost of set-



#### **FIRST EDITOR**

#### **H. FRANK ESHLEMAN, ESQ.**

Born 1869 near Marticville. Died 13 October 1953, aged 84. Mr. Eshleman was graduated from Millersville State College in 1890 (then a Normal School), and from the University of Michigan Law School. He was a practicing attorney, orator, and prolific writer. Mr. Eshleman was a member of Charles Howell Lodge, F. & A. M.; Sons of the Revolution; local, state and national bar associations; and First Presbyterian Church. He served as President of the Lancaster County Historical Society 1922 and 1923.

ting type being carried by the *Lancaster New Era* newspaper. In 1916 the New Era Press was engaged to print the publications in pamphlet form. By 1923 there was some dissatisfaction with the quality of printing. From May 1923 until early 1955 the publications were printed by the Conestoga Publishing Co., then owned by George Wolf. A change in ownership prompted the late M. Luther Heisey, editor, to have the Ensinger Printing Service in Adamstown print issue number 5 of volume 59 (The John Wise Story) in "cold type" or offset process.

The ordeal of changing printers and transporting manuscripts, not to mention the difficulty of adjusting to the new demands the new process made on illustrative matter persuaded Mr. Heisey to retire from the editorship after twenty years of extremely dedicated service. During his score of years at the helm of the Society's publication, M. Luther Heisey brought the reputation and quality of the Society's research output to a high level not attained by very many organizations. H. Frank Eshleman was the first editor of record in the late 1920s. In 1930 William F. Worner succeeded him, and in 1935 M. Luther Heisey became the Society's third editor, serving with uncommon distinction for twenty years. The change in column width from newspaper column to 4½ inches, or 27 ems, probably occurred during Eshleman's editorship.

From the minutes of the early days we can see that each publication was ordered on its own merits, with the secretary or some other officer merely adding minutes and reports to the papers read before the Society's meetings. Publications were issued without regard to a time schedule. Some volumes contained only five issues; others were fatted by the issuance of fourteen numbers. Frequently Mr. Worner found the supply of suitable manuscripts rather short, a problem he solved by printing interesting historical incidents from ancient newspapers of Lancaster. When the present editor assumed charge in 1955, he returned to the Conestoga Publishing Co. which now was operated under new management primarily for the purpose of putting out a newspaper to compete with the *Lancaster Intelligencer Journal* (morning Democratic paper) and the *Lancaster New Era* (evening Republican paper). The venture was an expression of remarkable optimism and quixotic ambition, and it ran its course in less than a year. With the demise of the *Lancaster Suburban Times*, the Conestoga Publishing Company came to an end. From 1956 to the present the *Journal*, as it is now called, has been printed by Forry and Hacker, two former employees of the old Conestoga Publishing Co., who struck out for themselves after analyzing the situation. The firm of Charles Forry and Lavinia Hacker is larger and more soundly established than was the Conestoga Publishing Company. Certainly Forry and Hacker have contributed much to the quality of the *Journal* in a material sense. The *Journal* was issued quarterly beginning with volume 60, but the extremely modest budget under which the publication must operate occasionally necessitated deviations from an established production

schedule. Nearly 100 copies of each *Journal* go to major libraries and universities throughout the United States and Europe, and to our loyal member in Australia, the University of Melbourne. Each institution has a sharp-eyed librarian whose task is to check on the prompt arrival of periodicals. We discovered that a two-week late *Journal* would result in countless postal inquiries from periodical librarians. Moreover, the seasons confused some persons. Was "Winter 1963" the first or last issue of the year? The *Journal* then was provided with new designations of issuance: from the terms of English courts, we borrowed Hilarymas, Easter, Trinity and Michaelmas. That further confused the librarians, but it did reduce the number of inquiries. Certainly it is different!

The cover of the *Journal* is supposed to reflect the dignity and soundness of the scholarship published therein. Achieving that has not always been easy, considering the availability of type. Dr. Burl N. Osburn, late Director of Industrial Arts at Millersville State College, and a recognized authority on graphic arts, kindly designed the cover that appeared on volumes 61 to 67 inclusively, but alas, the Caslon Old Style type face specified by Dr. Osburn was not available to us, and we had to use a rather garish Bodoni and later a regular Caslon. Volume 68 came out with the two-color cover containing a sketch purporting to be a bird's eye view of Lancaster from the late eighteenth century. We have received so many favorable comments on the cover we have no plans at present to change it.

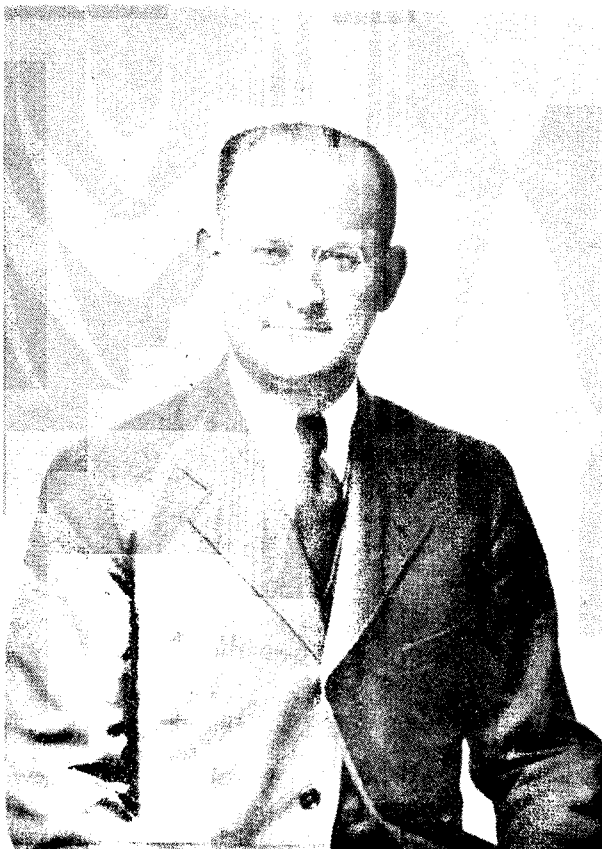
The content, of course, is the most important feature of the *Journal* and its predecessors. During the past 75 years acclaimed scholars as well as budding graduate students have written for the publication. We are proud of our authors, and follow their ascent through the academic ranks with a paternal feeling. Some have gone on to become nationally-recognized historians. Quite a number have earned or are earning the Ph.D. in history degrees. But the vast bulk of material published during the historical society's venerable existence is that produced by amateur local historians—men and women in the professions, the trades, the commercial world, the arts; and our countrymen. If we have an "elite," it is a distinctive group of persons interested only in bringing together the facts of history. Almost any day one can find in the historical society a coterie of researchers that will include a retired industrialist, a housewife, a used car salesman, a teacher, a master tool-and-die maker, and several college or graduate students.

There are styles in historiography other than in writing; what is thought proper to include also is governed by the "fashion" of the moment. Readers of our earlier publications will note much of the research and writing were done by attorneys and ministers whose interests in history rivalled their concern for their regular callings. Their research usually was quite careful, and attempts to hypothesize were characteristic of their respective professional methods. The old-time historian generally felt rather sure of his facts—after he

had decided their validity—and he presented them in a style that may be thought dogmatic. Certainly there was little suggestion other interpretations might be made, or other conclusions might be drawn, or even that sources employed might be incorrect or biased. Higher criticism was known to the clergymen-historians, but they often failed to apply it as vigorously in history as they were disposed to do in theology! Despite these limitations, the early writers did remarkably well, and their work stands up under modern methods far more than one would suspect. The modern historian, with a few exceptions, tends to be highly “conditional” about his findings. He expresses an almost apologetic air concerning his conclusions, as if some super-historian were peering over his shoulder, preparing to show him the error of his research, or the invalidity of his interpretations. When we come across a historian who asserts with finality exactly what happened and why, some of us automatically wonder if the maker of such statements is (1) very young or quite unsophisticated, or (2) is from the “Old School,” or (3) is an academic fool. Occasionally one is shocked to find there are a few writers that are firm in their convictions that their research has been conclusive, and no two ways about it!

One of our fairly prolific authors, once a professor in an area outside history, had a charming way of stating his conclusions that left no doubt in any person’s mind as to the validity of the facts. As we look back over the years and literary efforts of that esteemed gentleman, we are obliged to reconsider many of his profound deductions. When one has reached a lofty pinnacle in the eyes of his contemporaries, “who” made the statement, rather than “what” are the actual facts, tends to cloak the assertion with the respectability of the maker. As years pass, these statements take on the armor-plated indestructibility of a divine revelation. Those of us who are forced to set things aright in the world of local history find the correction of respectable myths to be a greater task than ploughing completely new fields of research. With that caveat the reader of the *Journal* is cautioned not to accept everything he reads as infallible fact beyond dispute. We try to be perfect, but we do not succeed more than any other editor who tries quite hard to issue the last word on “truth.”

Styles in content, too, are evident in the list of subjects published. From the beginning in 1896 until William F. Worner assumed the editorship, the subjects were inclined to be factual, non-controversial, and wholly objective. Mr. Worner, a high-minded gentleman of intense loyalty to his convictions, at times became the knight in shining armor setting out to join battle with the interests who were using historical “facts” to suit their own purposes. In 1927, Mr. Worner discovered the Pennsylvania Department of Highways recently erected signs along the highways leading into Lancaster City, and that the offending signs stated “Lancaster was founded in 1721.” The editor wrote to the state officials, providing the facts supported by good evidence that the date should be 1730.



**SECOND EDITOR**

**WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER**

Born 1888 in Lancaster County. Died 30 November 1944, aged 56. Mr. Worner was graduated from the local public schools, and pursued studies in business practice. He was employed for many years by the Stehli Silk Mills, rising through the ranks from bookkeeping clerk to company auditor. He was librarian of the Society from 1923 until his removal from Lancaster in 1935. During that period he compiled indexes of cemeteries, and indexes of the Society's authors' and personal names. Mr. Worner was an extremely prolific writer, and a most careful one.

The Deputy Secretary of Highways informed Mr. Worner the date of 1721 had come from Colonel Henry Shoemaker, at that time of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission. This was the same Col. Shoemaker who decided that Henry William Stiegel of late eighteenth century glass and iron fame at Manheim was really a Hollander, a distortion of fact that sent recognized historians into howls of laughter. The most charitable thing we can say about Col. Henry Shoemaker's contributions to Lancaster County history is that they

should be examined carefully with a most critical approach. Mr. Worner then tackled Col. Shoemaker, who agreed that the date of 1730 was correct, but excused himself by stating the nucleus of Lancaster was begun in 1721. H. Frank Eshleman of the Society promptly informed the Colonel even that excuse was incorrect, because there wasn't the "smallest nucleus of a town in 1721," that event occurring about 1728 according to the best evidence. At other times Mr. Worner found it necessary to take the Chamber of Commerce to task for distortions of fact. The Chamber generally agreed with Mr. Worner's criticism, but took no action to make amends.

On 30 May 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited Lancaster aboard his special train for nine minutes during which time he posed for photographs, greeted several dozen of the area's most distinguished citizens—including William F. Worner—and spoke a few words over Radio WGAL. In his brief statement the President mentioned his father had been secretary to James Buchanan while Buchanan was Minister to England. Worner went into rapture in writing about this visit to Lancaster of Roosevelt, describing it in extravagant terms. But when he heard Roosevelt say his father was secretary to Buchanan, Worner immediately dashed off a letter to the President, suggesting that he was in error, and had intended to say, 'his grandfather' was secretary to Buchanan. The President replied that he had always understood it was his father, James Roosevelt, that had acted as secretary to Buchanan for several months at the British Legation, owing to the staff being undermanned.

Mr. Worner's contributions to the *Journal*, as we continue to call the predecessor publications, were enormous. Over a six-year period, he compiled the following record:

	Worner	Other Authors
Vol. 33(1929)	41	9
34(1930)	91	8
35(1931)	37	17
36(1932)	13	9
37(1933)	9	8
38(1934)	4	8

Institutional history was fashionable in the early years of the Society's publication. Churches, literary associations and other socially-approved organizations had their histories chronicled in the Society's pages. Not until recent years were organizations, institutions and social movements not considered "nice" recognized for their existence. Peter Bett's paper on Lancaster Law and Order Society (vol. 69) revealed to readers of the *Journal* that Lancaster had a somewhat seamy past, a fact one would never imagine from the usual treatment of the celestial city in Pennsylvania Dutchland! That the tolerant folk of Lancaster County could and did support a Ku Klux Klan movement in the 1920s came as a shock to many





### **THIRD EDITOR**

#### **MARTIN LUTHER HEISEY**

**Born 31 October 1881 in Lancaster. Died 23 February 1964, aged 82. M. Luther Heisey was born, reared, worked and died in the shadow of Grace Lutheran Church, figuratively speaking. After receiving a sound education in the public schools, including tutelage under Professor J. P. McCaskey, Mr. Heisey learned the printing business, from inking rollers to editing manuscripts. In 1907 he entered the postal service as a clerk where he remained until retirement, after which he was Franklin and Marshall College postmaster. From 1935 until 1955 Mr. Heisey was editor of the Society's publication. During his many years of devoted service to the Society, Mr. Heisey found time to hold the offices of librarian (1935-1937) and corresponding secretary (1935, 1937-1964). Like his predecessors, he was a prolific writer.**

who read Don Crownover's piece in volume 68. Mr. Crownover became our first author to be given State Police protection until it was ascertained he had no plans to examine KKK strength in the Garden Spot today! When Jack Loose and Charles Lynch came out with their "A History of Brewing in Lancaster County, Legal and Otherwise," nice people in the community were horrified. A distinguished attorney and several dowagers scolded bitterly that "brewing" was not a proper subject for history, and the activities of "bootleggers" were absolutely unmentionable in any proper publication. That criticism didn't stop the issue from becoming a best-seller! After two printings, we find that single copies have been sold for

as much as \$15 on the used book market. Crime allegedly doesn't pay, but the history of sin seems profitable.

Although Lancaster's population is largely Protestant, its Roman Catholic parishes have played an imposing role in the community since the early eighteenth century. We were not surprised, however, when criticism followed publication of the history of St. Mary's and St. Anthony's churches in volumes 71, 73, and 74—the first suggestion that the Catholic churches of Lancaster had a past. What will happen when we publish articles on the history of churches such as the Christian Scientists, Swedenborgians, Unitarian-Universalists, Eastern Orthodox, and Jews is exciting to ponder. One person pointedly made the suggestion we confine our church histories to the 'nice' churches, a policy we most assuredly will not follow. However, some of the most substantial and historically-significant congregations in Lancaster County have yet to produce suitable histories for publication. In the city, we would very much like to see well-researched and carefully written histories of First Presbyterian Church, and Zion Lutheran Church, and First Baptist Church. No one has written for us a meaningful history of the movement that produced such independent churches as the active and imposing Calvary Independent Church. The Assembly of God, Pentecostal, church has an interesting history some person should write. Thirty or fifty years hence scholars will wonder what happened in Lancaster (and elsewhere) when the liberal factions confronted the status quo advocates in the local churches. We should have some contemporary interpretations to publish.

It is understandable why sin and religion are considered subjects "too hot to touch" by many persons, but we wonder why more work on technological and economic history has not been done. In the early years some of our contributors did quite well in work on mills along the streams of Lancaster County. Many of these enterprises are gone now. Flourmilling was the county's major dollar-producer in the mid-nineteenth century. Shoe and boot-making was another large industry that should be covered thoroughly.

Political history never seems to seize control; it is content to be an old stalwart. In recent years we have published some exceptionally well-researched political histories covering the period from 1800 to 1856 except for the era of Democratic factions in the 1840s.

We suggest some ambitious graduate student study the numerous Democratic factions that contended in Lancaster County between the Whig decline and the Republican ascendancy.

Intellectual history—the study of ideas and movements that grew and had some impact on Lancaster County—should receive a great deal more attention than it has been getting.

When we say a "history" of this or of that, we are using the term in a more restricted sense. We mean more than facts; we mean an intelligent effort to relate the facts to answer questions on



#### **FOURTH EDITOR**

#### **JOHN WARD WILLSON LOOSE**

Born 25 December 1927 in Manheim. He was educated in the local schools, Millersville State College (B.S., 1947; M.Ed., 1967) and The Penna. State University. After a career as a production manager and serving as Prothonotary of Lancaster County, Mr. Loose returned to education. He is a teacher and department chairman in history and social sciences at Donegal High School. His specialization is economic history. He has been secretary of the Society since 1948. Other memberships include American Historical Association, Organization of American Historians, Economic History Association, Newcomen Society for Study of Business history, Early American Industries Association, American Assoc. for State and Local History, Penna. Historical Association, Southern Lancaster County Historical Society, and numerous patriotic hereditary societies. Phi Sigma Pi and Phi Delta Kappa. He is secretary of the Lancaster County Revolutionary War Bicentennial Corporation.

"why events occurred" and "what happened as a result." Not long ago a worthy gentleman in Lancaster asked this writer, "What is the job of a historian?" He admitted to being appointed historian of an organization of which he was an active member. We commonly refer to all persons engaged in the study of history—local, state, na-

tional or worldwide; or in some specialty such as economic, social, political, technological or intellectual history—as historians. Some study history as a hobby, others have been trained on the college or university level, and a few, relatively speaking, earn their living by writing history. Most trained historians are engaged either in teaching or research. But the training is not as important as the ability of the “trainee” to use the proper methods of research, to perceive insights, and to know where the sources exist. We who deal with writers of local history see so often the student with his B.A. or M.A. in history floundering about with no sense of direction, no real sense of history, and only a lukewarm attachment to the hard work of research. On the other hand, we find unlettered persons doing a first rate task of research; their insights are phenomenal; and their sense of history is a joy to behold. Being a historian, then, is a personal thing. Perhaps it is like learning to become a salesman.

Not on quite the same level as historian is the person who compiles annals or chronicles. He gathers together facts of one kind or another, and makes them available without interpretation. For example, some one might comb through the minute books of his church, and compile a record of all the ministers, all the church school superintendents, all the officers of the church board, all the building committees, and when all the structures, organs, memorial windows, and educational wings were built. That does not tell us why the church was more active at one time than another. We are not informed what role, if any, the congregation played in meeting the challenges of “liberalism” or “conservatism.” We are in the dark as to the effect other churches had upon this church. Has the ethnic composition of the neighborhood changed? Despite his lack of interpretation, the person who compiles these records is furnishing “grist” for the historian’s “mill.”

Over the past seventy-five years, then, we have come to a more sophisticated understanding of our position in historiography. It is our hope to continue in this tradition of scholarship.