

Issue No. 2 | Summer 2025

The Bell

A Publication of the Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association

CULTURE

Art in
the Open
Out Loud

HISTORY

People,
Places, and
Surprising
Things

COMMUNITY

If Not You,
Then Who?

From the Editor



Carla Cipro

Most rewarding about serving as your volunteer editor is in meeting new people in our community. I joined BHCA last summer with an altruistic mindset – thinking that it was time I gave back to Bellefonte. In doing so, I’ve met artists, authors, and historians who have broadened my understanding and expanded my knowledge. This is not to promise that every volunteer will have similar experiences; however, when you offer a little of your valuable time and energy, you might walk away with more than you imagined.

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

– Dr. Seuss

Adding to Dr. Seuss’s quote, the things we love to experience in our town can only continue if people like you and me care a whole awful lot – enough to act. Do you love, for example, events like The Cruise or the Victorian Christmas? They happen by involved volunteers, and some Bellefonte residents have been involved for years, even decades. Romaine Naylor is one, and you’ll read more about her here.

Ten caring volunteers contributed to the successful spring edition of The Bell. Some writers from the spring edition and seven additional contributors made the summer edition what it is. It feels good to work on a project together that benefits our community.

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

– Helen Keller

You’ll see in the 2025 Events Calendar that a lot of great activities are planned now through December, offering lots of opportunities for involvement. There’s a contact list there, too, for anyone interested in helping out and making new friends in the process.

When you read the articles written by Megan Strommer, Kathy Breidenbaugh, and Julia Spicher Kasdorf, please keep in mind that it’s volunteers who bring the events they describe into fruition.

Joanne Tosti-Vasey, Phil Ruth, and Chuck Young tell us about Bellefonte’s history in different time periods in their articles. Joseph Griffin’s President’s

Page describes how the Civil War Weekend will bring history to life in June. Carla Cipro tells us about her high school students taking up the challenge of documenting the history of two elementary schools. Will they be our historians of the future?

Speaking of high school students... Volunteering for specific events or getting involved with a local non-profit organization counts for the 30-hour community service hours required for graduation. Do you have children, grandchildren, or students you could pass this information on to?

I’ll end here from a quote closer to home. Joseph Griffin wrote this in the spring edition:

“If you like what BHCA is doing, why not help us do more of it and reap the reward of meeting people who feel as you do about our special town, its history, and the pleasures to be found in music, art, history, and literature?”

Sharon

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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; enriches the sensibilities of visitors and residents through literary, performing, and visual arts.

On the cover: Photograph by Carla Cipro and logo by Ashley Crosby

Spring edition correction: In the “Behind the Stone” article, the source of a letter written to James Gordon dated April 13, 1863, is “Robert Gordon,” Ancestry.com, accessed October 27, 2022. www.ancestry.com.

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2024 *Art in the Open* painting

President's Page

Sitting at my keyboard on this damp Monday morning, trying to write the piece you are now reading, I realize the task of composing this President's Page is a distraction, albeit a pleasant one, from my main responsibility. Simply put, that responsibility is making stuff happen. In fact, most of what BHCA does amounts to event planning. Today, I'm fretting about two events, one of which will be a faded blossom by the time this summer edition of *The Bell* is printed. The other will be a breaking bud as you read this.

I hope the faded blossom, our Sidewalk Easter Parade, proved to be fragrant and beautiful. Of course, it might also have been rained out or sadly revealed to be an under-attended flop. The breaking bud, our *Civil War Weekend in Bellefonte*, is a complex three-day event with thousands of dollars spent on advertising and its own website. The Easter Parade is now pinned down in the past by happy memories or stinging regrets and far beyond my help, so let me focus here on what is in both our futures, the upcoming *Civil War Weekend in Bellefonte*.

The generous marketing budget for the Weekend has been provided by the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau, which is interested in attracting visitors to Centre County. Accordingly, we designed an event that we hope will bring folks from far off places who will stay a night

or two in our community. The main attraction for out-of-towners is the Colloquium, which will be held during the afternoon and evening of Friday, June 6th. It kicks off at the American Philatelic Society (APS) with a reception featuring 19th century refreshments; continues with talks by Civil War scholars Scott Mingus and Derek Maxfield; and concludes with a dinner featuring Civil War-era dishes and drinks capped by a keynote presentation from Chris Mackowski, the co-founder of the popular and robust history-oriented platform, Emerging Civil War.

The Colloquium is the priciest part of our Weekend, but there is much, much more and quite a bit of it is free. On Friday night, Mike Kinney, who could easily pass for Honest Abe, will deliver Lincoln's First Inaugural Address at St. John's Episcopal Church. Earlier in the afternoon, Dr. W. Charles Young will give a tour of the Union Cemetery, paying special attention to the Civil War veterans buried there. Meanwhile, back at the APS, Connie Cole will give a talk about the many Civil War dead from Centre County who were laid to rest far from home.

On Saturday, the Weekend's activities pick up with the opening of Camp Songer, a reenactor encampment, on the Bellefonte Waterfront. Its name reflects the past: Camp Curtin, outside Harrisburg, was named after the most famous Gover-

nor from Bellefonte. But the camp's name also reflects the present: Tom Songer, a Civil War enthusiast who owns this ground along with Mark Morath under the name of Bellefonte Waterfront Associates, let us use the site without charge.

Visitors on Saturday will have a smorgasbord of Civil War activities to consider, many free and some requiring a modestly priced ticket. In the morning, there will be an opening ceremony and a reenactment of a Union recruiting rally at the Courthouse. Throughout the day at the APS, six experts will speak on a variety of topics, a panel of historians will offer a Civil War Q&A session, and the Civil War and More bookstore will curate an extensive sale of books about the Civil War. That evening, at the APS, Rudely Stamped Historical Productions will present a play about the evolving relationship between Generals Grant and Sherman over the course of the Civil War. In the late afternoon, a band concert of genuine Civil War era music will be presented at the Gazebo in Talleyrand Park. Finally, back at St. John's Episcopal Church, Frederick Douglass' stunning speech, *What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?* will be recreated by Dr. Wilson Okello.

The Weekend will wind down on Sunday. Camp Songer will remain open into the early afternoon and there will be another tour of the Union Ceme-

tery. The Roland Curtin Foundation will offer a train excursion from Bellefonte to Curtin Village and the Eagle Iron Works including a tour focusing on the role of the Iron Works, during the War. (Tickets may be purchased at bellefontetrain.org/american.) The Weekend will wrap up with a closing ceremony at the Union Cemetery, helping to remind us of the unavoidable outcome of violent conflict.

To read about the Weekend in detail, visit bellefontecivilwar-weekend.org/.

At the site, you can plan your own *Civil War Weekend in Belle-*

fonte and perhaps purchase a ticket so that you can see everything on offer.

It should be clear that the *Civil War Weekend in Bellefonte* came about because of significant investments of time and money by many parties. However, it would not exist without BHCA's catalytic involvement. If successful, the *Civil War Weekend in Bellefonte* may evolve into an informative and entertaining, albeit darker, summer-time counterpart to Victorian Christmas.

This President's Page has largely focused on a single event our organization is try-

ing to birth. However, the essential point I want to make is that BHCA is striving to enrich the cultural resources of our community, to make it a more interesting place. If you think this is a good idea, please consider helping us. Burnishing the sweet urban jewel that is Bellefonte is no easy task. We need your ideas, your money, and, more than anything, your involvement.

Joseph Griffin

Civil War Weekend in Bellefonte

BELLEFONTE, PENNSYLVANIA
JUNE 6 - 8, 2025

Visit bellefontecivilwarweekend.org to view our Weekend Schedule!

Get ready for three days of history, heritage, and entertainment!
Here's what you can expect:



Civil War Lectures and Performances



Camp Songer: Our Civil War Encampment



Tour of the Historic Union Cemetery



Train Ride to Curtin Village

Join us Saturday for a Special Event!

"Now We Stand By Each Other Always" is a historical docudrama about Union generals Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. Both men were shaped by the war in terms of reputation and renown, but they were also human—with all the humor, loss, ego, and ire that goes with it.

Come learn about the friendship that ended the Civil War Saturday June 7th at 4PM at the American Philatelic Center in Bellefonte, PA ★

Non-ticketed Weekend events are FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
Purchase a \$10 ticket for access to ALL Saturday Special Events at <http://bit.ly/4d3890G>

Hosted by the Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association

The People Behind BHCA: Meet Romaine Naylor

Community service was instilled in me from a very early age. The first volunteer job I can remember involved applying glitter to fish cutouts to decorate a fishing booth. A neighborhood committee was planning a street fair to raise money to buy equipment for the local playground. Everyone had to do their part, even the kids.

When the equipment arrived, I watched my maternal grandfather and great-uncle install it. I asked them, "Why are you doing this?" My grandfather answered, "It needs to be done." I asked again, "But why are you doing it?" His answer resonates with me to this day.

"If I don't do it, who will?"

He went on to explain that when you see a need in your community, it is up to you to help meet it.

My parents set a good example. Dad was a Jaycee, a volunteer fireman, ambulance crewman, and served on many boards and committees. Mom was a Cub Scout den mother and a Jaycette. They drafted us kids to help with whatever project arose.

When I went off to college, I took volunteerism with me. I was a tutor for high school biology students, the college newspaper sports editor, a scorekeeper for the wrestling team, and a substitute news reader on the campus radio sta-

tion. My sorority, Alpha Xi Delta, volunteered at a nursing home near campus to read, write letters, and host holiday celebrations.

After college, I worked in the Centre Community Hospital laboratory for about 15 years. Working second shift didn't allow many volunteer opportunities, but my husband and I would take time off to help with the Logan carnival, and I co-chaired the Children's Fair, raising money for the hospital's pediatric and neonatal units.

In 1989, I became the Senior Writer at "The Keystone Gazette." I won several writing awards, including Best News Writing and Best Feature Series from the Pennsylvania Newspaper Publishers Association and was honored with an American Chemical Society Science Writer's Fellowship. I volunteered as the media representative on the fledgling Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), which, under federal hazardous materials legislation, provides safety and response planning and resources for hazardous chemicals within Centre County.

But, best of all, the hours allowed me to get more involved with my Bellefonte community. I first became a Bellefonte Historical & Cultural Association (BHCA) member in 1990. I was quickly elected secretary and started helping with nearly every BHCA project, including the Victorian Christmas Arts &

Crafts Show and once chairing The Old House Fair. Eventually I became President, a position I held for so long that it became the running joke that I was "President for Life."

When the newspaper suspended publication, a group of its former employees volunteered for the Pennsylvania Special Olympics Summer Games. This led to my recruitment to the Summer Games Management Team as the volunteer coordinator and, later, to the State Games Management Team. I was appointed to the board of Central PA Community Action, a non-profit, federally mandated anti-poverty agency, and I joined Centre County Crimestoppers.

My LEPC involvement led to a job with Centre County Emergency Management Agency (EMA), managing compliance with then new federal requirements for hazardous chemical reporting and emergency response planning under the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act, Title III, Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA).

On my watch, Centre County was one of the first in the country to have 100% compliance with these requirements. This led to several presentations on hazmat compliance topics at Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) training events. The National Governors Associa-

tion invited me to present at the 1994 International Hazardous Materials Spills Prevention Conference. I became the editor of EPA's "Region III EPCRA Update" publication and was soon volunteering to plan these conferences. As the county's Radiological Defense Officer, I worked with PEMA and the PA Department of Environmental Protection evaluating nuclear power plant emergency operations plans across the Commonwealth.

After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, terrorism preparedness was added to my duties. I started writing on terrorism topics for assorted magazines and newspapers. In 2005, Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma shifted the national focus from terrorism to all-hazards preparedness. Just before I left EMA, the Hazards Mitigation Plan I wrote became the first in the nation with FEMA approval.

I next went to the National American Red Cross as an Emergency Services Director, responding to local disaster events, such as fires or floods, providing emergency food, clothing and housing for the victims. I also deployed to

large disasters across the country and represented the Red Cross on the Seven Mountains Emergency Medical Council.

Though an employee when at my home Chapter, I was a volunteer when deployed. Initially, I went as a community liaison, helping ravaged communities rally volunteer agencies to provide the resources needed, first in the emergency and then in the recovery. Experience led to becoming a government liaison, coordinating resources amongst the government and non-government response and recovery agencies. Finally, I stepped into Operations Management, taking the lead for Red Cross Disaster Relief Operations.

That experience allowed me to volunteer teaching at the Emergency Services Program Managers Institute at National Headquarters and to complete my national Certified Emergency Manager credentials. I filled the Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing and Human Services position in the PEMA Emergency Operations Center during state level emergencies. I became a Liaison Officer and Logistics Section Chief of Pennsylvania's South

Central Mountains All-Hazards Taskforce Incident Management Team. I was also an organizer and founding member of Pennsylvania Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster.

Upon retirement in 2013, I added Historic Bellefonte, Inc. (HBI) and Kiwanis Club to the mix. By now I've logged 35 years of service with the LEPC, BHCA and Community Action; 12 years with HBI and Kiwanis; and lesser amounts of time with several other organizations and causes.

Receiving the 2023-24 Kiwanis Heroes in Service award from Kiwanis International's Pennsylvania District for "Outstanding Service to Kiwanis, Community and Humanity" came as a great surprise, because I don't volunteer for recognition. Rather, my efforts are for the benefit of our community. It feels like a lifetime achievement award, but I am not done yet. I remain committed to my volunteerism and hope to have many more years of planning events, raising money for unmet needs, and serving my community, while encouraging others to do the same.



Photo of St. Paul AME Church by Carla Cipro

The Young Author and Illustrator Contest A - 40-Year Tradition

Community members visit the four branches of the Centre County Library in Bellefonte (library and Historical Museum), Centre Hall, and Philipsburg daily. Some, in search of books. Others in search of movies, computer access, or a place to simply be for the next few hours. However, there are also those coming to see the book they wrote when they were in elementary school.

The Young Author and Illustrator contest has been a community tradition for the last 40 years. Authors and Illustrators in grades 1-6 across Centre County are eligible to submit a story between February and April 1st each year. This year, across the county, the library received 122 submissions.

The history of the contest is believed to have begun with "Young Author's Day," an event sponsored by the Mid-State Council of the International Reading Association. This event, held at the Nittany Mall, took place in late May during the early 1980's.

Thousands of young authors, in grades K-12, displayed their work throughout the Nittany Mall. "The year I remember best is fourth grade. I wrote a mystery/thriller that year. It was so fun to go to the mall and see all the tables set up with stories from kids all over the county. There was such anticipation in finding your story and showing it off to your parents. It was a pretty big deal!" shares Julie Valora, who attended the event as a child.

Following this model, Schlow Centre Region Library began its "Write Your Own Book" contest, kicked off by then Children's Librarian Anita Ditz in 1985. The Centre County Library joined in the following year.

Winners have gone on to great things. For instance, Doug Sweetland, winner of the 1986 Contest with his book titled *Escape to Switzerland*, can also be found in the library catalog working for Pixar studios. Notable works include *Toy Story 1* and *2*, *A Bug's Life*, and *Storks*.

The contest has seen many changes over the years. Originally, the contest was for Grades 1-8. Eventually, this was changed to Grades 1-7 and finally Grades 1-6. Additionally, the name of the contest was changed to include the work of Illustrators. Participants can either work together, with one student being the author and one student being the illustrator, or independently.

The current version of the contest begins in February and goes until April 1st. Students can drop their submissions off at any of the Centre County Library branches, mail their submission, or email it to the library's email youngauthor@centrecountylibrary.org. Likewise, teachers in various schools, such as St. John the Evangelist Catholic School, annually utilize this contest as an opportunity for a class assignment, submitting dozens of stories per school.

"Student participation in the Centre County Library's Young Author and Illustrator Contest isn't just about writing



Megan Strommer

a story—it's about discovering their voice, building confidence, and realizing the power of their imagination." explains Natalie Stanton who is the Music, STREAM and Library Educator and Music Ministry Coordinator for the school.

Once the deadline for submissions has passed, the stories are sorted by grade level. After this, a panel of judges consisting of library staff, library Friends Groups, and various community members spends an afternoon meticulously reading the submissions. Judging sessions take place at the Centre County Library in Bellefonte, as well as the Centre Hall Area Branch Library.

David Stong of Bellefonte reflected on his many years of judging, "I usually come away from the judging wishing there were more ways to recognize young talent. Your contest is just phenomenal- the Centre County Library has built a touching resource with their collection of young authors and illustrators."

Judging is based on creativity, content, originality, grammar and punctuation. While illustrations are a valuable piece of a story, they themselves are not judged. Winners are selected with a First, Second, and Third place for each grade. Two Honorable Mentions from each grade are selected as well, highlighting unique or original submissions.

Finally, after judging, winners are notified and invited to an award's ceremony honoring students' achievements. The ceremony, generally held at the



2024 Art in the Open painting

Bellefonte Middle School, is attended by the Centre County Youth Service's Team, parents and families of winners, and a local author.

Denise Kaminsky, a local author whose works center around the Nittany Lion and Happy Valley, spoke to this year's winners about the importance of writing. She shared her own story as an author and encouraged students to continue writing what is important to them.

At the ceremony, all winners and honorable mentions receive a certificate of achievement and a medal. First place winners of each grade are given a further honor: a bound copy of their story that is added to the Centre County Library's permanent collection.

This honor has touched generations of community members. Some patrons visit the library after moving back to the area, only to find that their book is still in the library! A visiting teacher on a field trip men-

tioned his participation in the contest: this spurred a hunt for his story, resulting in him being a de facto rock star for the rest of the trip.

A story is also told of a winner returning to the world of writing. When the winner asked if they could have their book mailed out of state to them - their request had to be denied. First, as part of the arrangement for winning, books are part of the library's collection forever. Second, because the winner's book was actually checked out and being enjoyed by another patron!

This program is a powerful testament to tradition in Bellefonte and Centre County, PA. Spanning across generations, we continue to celebrate past and present winners alike. Next time you are at your local library, be sure to check out the Young Author and Illustrator Collection. You may find your new favorite book!

By Megan Strommer

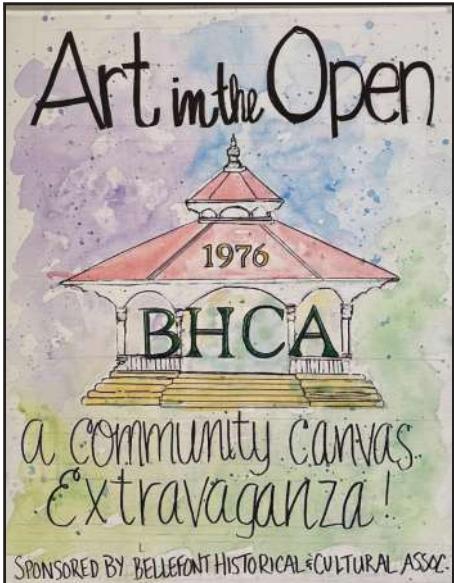
Bellefonte Paints Together: A Look Back at Art in the Open

Celebrating community creativity, collaboration, and life along Spring Creek

Last summer, the Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association (BHCA), in collaboration with the Centre County Library – Bellefonte Branch, brought the community together for a joyful, grassroots celebration of art and place through *Art in the Open: A Community Canvas Extravaganza*.

The project invited participants of all ages and skill levels to express their creativity around the theme "Our Town – Life along Spring Creek." Each artist received a 16"x20" canvas and an optional small paint set, courtesy of BHCA, for a refundable deposit. The Centre County Library played a key role in the effort, serving as both a pickup and drop-off point for supplies and completed canvases.

Art kits were distributed during regular open hours at the library beginning August 5, 2024. By the August 28, 2024 deadline, over 50 unique artworks had been returned—each one a personal and heartfelt interpretation of Belle-



Kathy Breidenbaugh, 2024 Art in the Open painting

fonte's natural beauty, people, and community life.

To kick off the public display, the Centre County Library hosted an indoor opening reception, complete with light snacks and colorful mocktails. Artists, families, and neighbors gathered to preview the community-made works and celebrate the shared effort behind the project.

The finished canvases were featured in a hybrid indoor/out-

door "art walk" exhibit during the month of September 2024. Rotated regularly to give all artworks equal exposure, the pieces were displayed along the sidewalks outside the library and throughout the library's interior. The resulting art walk invited passersby and library visitors alike to enjoy a colorful, ever-changing tribute to the town and its connection to Spring Creek.

From playful creek-side sketches and historic nods to vibrant abstracts and portraits of daily life, *Art in the Open* highlighted Bellefonte's creative spirit—and the power of community collaboration.

Stay tuned! Plans are already underway for this year's *Art in the Open*. Follow BHCA on social media for updates, announcements, and details on how you can participate in this year's creative celebration of Bellefonte.

By Kathy Breidenbaugh



2024 Art in the Open painting



2024 Art in the Open painting

2025 Events Calendar

June 1	Summer Sounds: Coal Aly (BHCA)
June 1	First Sunday Open Reception at the Bellefonte Art Museum
June 6-8	Civil War Weekend (BHCA)
June 8	The American Pioneer Historic Railcar Ride (BHRS)
June 8	Summer Sounds: Cat’s Eye Duo (BHCA)
June 13-14	The Cruise (HBI)
June 14	Nittany Valley Flyer Historic Railcar Ride (BHRS)
June 14	Jitterbug Dance Contest (BHCA)
June 15	Father’s Day
June 15	Summer Sounds: Nittany Valley Wranglers (BHCA)
June 19	Juneteenth National Independence Day
June 22	Summer Sounds: Lindy Sisters (BHCA)
June 29	Summer Sounds: Denny Taylor (BHCA)
July 4	Independence Day
July 4	Bellefonte Community Band and State College Area Municipal Band, Talleyrand Park Gazebo, 4pm (BHCA)
July 6	First Sunday Open Reception at the Bellefonte Art Museum
July 6	Summer Sounds: Jonny Bull (BHCA)
July 13	American Pioneer Historic Railcar Ride (BHRS)
July 13	Summer Sounds: Tommy Wareham (BHCA)
July 20	Summer Sounds: Deacons of Dixieland (BHCA)
July 27	Summer Sounds: Jimi Leary (BHCA)
August 1 – 2	42nd Annual Arts & Crafts Fair (HBI)
August 3	First Sunday Open Reception at the Bellefonte Art Museum
August 3	Summer Sounds: Tussey Mountain Moonshiners (BHCA)
August 10	Summer Sounds: Bellefonte Community Band (BHCA)
September 1	Labor Day
September 5	Out Loud at The Print Factory: Caroline Shea (BHCA)
September 7	First Sunday Open Reception at the Bellefonte Art Museum
October 3	Out Loud at The Print Factory: Teresa Hamilton (BHCA)
October 5	First Sunday Open Reception at the Bellefonte Art Museum

October 25	Halloween Parade (HBI)
October 31	Halloween
November 2	First Sunday Open Reception at the Bellefonte Art Museum
November 7	Out Loud at The Print Factory: Kayleb Rae Candrilli (BHCA)
November 27	Thanksgiving
November 29	Christmas Tree Lighting (DBI)
Nov. 29 – Dec. 21	Santa House (HBI)
December 7	First Sunday Open Reception at the Bellefonte Art Museum
December 12 – 14	Victorian Christmas (HBI)
December 12 – 14	Arts & Crafts Show (BHCA)
December 13	Winter Market (DBI)
December 14 – 22	Hanukkah
December 25	Christmas
December 26 – Jan. 1	Kwanzaa

Contacts for Volunteers

Bellefonte Historical & Cultural Association (BHCA)
Civil War Weekend and Jitterbug Dance Contest
Joseph Griffin, cbproduce@comcast.net

Arts & Crafts Show at the Victorian Christmas
Jim Dunne, jhdunne@outlook.com

Bellefonte Historical Railroad Society (BHRS)
American Pioneer Historic Railcar Ride
Nittany Valley Flyer Historic Railcar Ride
bellefontetrain.org/membership

Downtown Bellefonte, Inc. (DBI)
Christmas Tree Lighting
Winter Market
Lorraine Mulfinger, 814-548-7532

Historic Bellefonte, Inc. (HBI)
The Cruise and Halloween Parade
Pat McCool, 814-280-5881

Arts & Crafts Fair
Lisa DeHaas 814-582-0052
Romaine Naylor, 814-571-0106

Santa House
Romaine Naylor, 814-571-0106

Victorian Christmas
Dave Provan and Phil Breidenbaugh
christmasinbellefonte@gmail.com

Out Loud in Bellefonte at The Print Factory

Out Loud in Bellefonte, a literary arts series sponsored by Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association, has announced its line-up of events for first Fridays at the Print Factory this fall.

Kicking off the series on September 5, poet Caroline Shea will offer a reading of her own poems. Raised in State College, Shea now writes and lives in New York City. Her first collection of poems, *Lambflesh* (Kelsay Books, 2019), explores feelings of belonging and estrangement, grappling with the limits of the body and mind. Editor of *Best American Poetry 2019*, Major Jackson writes of the collection: “I confess: I am drawn to poems that break me into a tenderness I’d never known. Caroline Shea’s *Lambflesh* does it over and over.”

On October 3, Teresa Hamilton, one of the original ring-leaders of popular storytelling project “The State of the Story,” will return to The Print Factory to host a storytelling session titled, “Turning

the Page: Revelations, Transformations, Departures.” Hamilton recently demonstrated her skills in a revival of the Bellefonte Moth with a powerful session of stories about finding home. Potential tellers are invited to work with Hamilton in a coaching session designed to help them find and tell their stories. Look for more details in August on the The Print Factory web site and BHCA mailings.



Caroline Shea (September 5, 2025), Teresa Hamilton (October 3, 2025), and Kayleb Rae Candrilli (November 7, 2025)

On November 7, Kayleb Rae Candrilli, will read from the 2025 poetry collection, *Winter of Worship*. A 2014 graduate from Penn State, they hit the literary world with a splash, receiving a Whiting Award, a PEW fellowship, and of a fellowship from the National Endowment of the Arts. Earlier collections include *Water I*

Won’t Touch (Copper Canyon Press, 2021), *All the Gay Saints* (Saturnalia Books, 2020), and *What Runs Over* (YesYes Books, 2017). They grew up in north central Pennsylvania and now live in Philadelphia.

Organized by Julia Spicher Kasdorf, and funded by Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association, Out Loud in Bellefonte was named for a line attributed to Émile Zola: “If you ask me what I came to do in this world, I, an artist, will answer you: I am here to live out loud.” The project began in 2013, inspired by Colina Seeley (1928-2017), a local woman who also lived out loud.

Out Loud at The Print Factory resumed in 2025 as a literary series with readings scheduled for the first Fridays of February, April, and May, then September, October, and November.

By Julia Spicher Kasdorf



Carla Cipro

Students Documenting Local History



Bellefonte Elementary School photo by Carla Cipro

In the fall of 2026, a new elementary school will be opening its doors to the Bellefonte Area School District (BASD) young scholars, while the school buildings of Bellefonte Elementary and Benner Elementary will have closed their doors. In honor of the history of these elementary schools, the video production students and their teacher at Bellefonte Area High School are creating documentaries that feature the memories and experiences of the staff, community members, and former students of these respected academic institutions.

During the 2023-2024 school year, Mr. Michael Baughman, the principal of the Bellefonte Elementary School (BES), expressed interest in creating a video to honor the history of the school building. He knew that much of the community and the staff cared deeply about the school and believed that creating something visual to honor its history would provide a thoughtful means of saying farewell when closing its doors one last time. He reached out to Carla Cipro, the video production teacher at the Bellefonte Area High School

(BAHS), to see if she and her students would want to take on this project. Mrs. Cipro was excited to learn about his ideas and immediately began creating a plan.

“I have an excellent group of upperclassmen that I have worked with since many of them were freshmen. I knew it would be a great opportunity for them to take the skills and knowledge that they’ve learned in class and put it to use in a real-world situation,” explained Mrs. Cipro about her students that are working on the project. “These students were tasked with recording b-roll of the building, interviewing current staff and community members, and then helped to organize all of the footage for editing.”

Other individuals that helped with this project included Mr. Matt Maris, a history teacher at BAHS and local historian, Mr. Steve Klein, a retired BES teacher, and Dr. Duffy Besch, the current athletic director for BASD and former administrator and student of BES. Each of these members helped by telling their stories and sharing

their knowledge about the building’s history. Mr. Klein provided his end-of-the-year tour that he would give to his students on their last day of fourth grade. It covers the auditorium, the dirt cellar, the gymnasium and its locker rooms, along with the memorials that are on the outside of the building.

Mr. Klein was delighted to be a part of this project and said, “It was my pleasure to share the uniqueness of Bellefonte Elementary School with both former students of the school and also to introduce the school to students who attended different elementary schools. It is a school with a significant history and the students seemed honestly interested in what they were seeing and with the stories that accompanied each part of the school.”

The history teacher, Mr. Maris, was very interested and invested in this project as well. He noted, “The schools are the heart of our community. Working with Bellefonte students and staff to document the history of these schools has been



Left to right, back row: Zane Hummel, Tate Tooker, John Servant, Brady Miller, Colby Besch, Jaeden Gabrovsek, Peyton Vancas; front row: Austin Smith, Alaina Smith, Taryn Miller, Jordan Reilly, Ryder Hamilton (photo by Carla Cipro)

a very meaningful and reflective process.”

In addition to celebrating the chronicles of Bellefonte Elementary, the BAHS video production crew wanted to also take on a video about Benner Elementary. The Benner community is a very tight knit one that cares deeply about their elementary school. Many staff members have worked there for a number of years, and the neighborhoods in the area have many fond memories of their children attending the school.

“The video for Benner Elementary is more focused on the family and community atmosphere that this school has fostered. This building has a fierce loyalty among its families and staff, and it is evident by the interviews that we recorded while we were there,” stated Mrs. Cipro. “My students conducted a similar routine to



what they did at the Bellefonte Elementary. They recorded b-roll and interviews of both staff and community members. They also had the opportunity to see a few one-room schoolhouses that are in the Benner Township area. These will also be a part of this video, because they are an important part of the Benner Township history.”

Mr. Maris has also been a vital part of this production process. His knowledge of the one-room schoolhouses and of the community in general was very helpful. His family lives in the Benner community, and his son attends Benner Elementary. In his interview, Mr. Maris complimented the staff of Benner Elementary in saying, “We have had a wonderful experience with all of the teachers and principal, Mr. Park, and the culture here.”

Mrs. Cipro and her students are working on editing these documentaries. Both videos will be released at the same time in the fall of 2025. They will be available on the Bellefonte Area School District web-

site and the BASD YouTube page. The students involved in the creation of these videos are as follows: Colby Besch (12), Jaeden Gabrovsek (12), Ryder Hamilton (12), Zane Hummel (12), Brady Miller (12), Taryn Miller (12), Jordan Reilly (12), John Servant (11), Alaina Smith (12), Austin Smith (12), Tate Tooker (12), and Peyton Vancas (12).

By Carla Cipro



Mr. Matt Maris and Mrs. Carla Cipro

What If Our Home Could Talk?

Old buildings tell the stories of a community’s past. They stand witness to generations living within their walls. As Thompson Mayes writes in *Why Old Places Matter*, “...old places give us an understanding of history that no other documents or evidence possibly can.” We couldn’t agree more.

My husband, Joe Vasey, and I are lucky to live in such a historic treasure. Our home was built in 1865. It has seen a lot over the past 160 years. Several families have lived here, each adding a new chapter to the house’s story. We became curious about the people who came before us and decided to dig into the past. What we uncovered was fascinating, so we thought: why not let the house tell the story itself?

What style of home am I?

Hello there. I’m a two-story vernacular Gothic-style home with Queen Anne-style bay windows added in the late 1800s. I once had porches on my north side, though those were enclosed somewhere along the way. Despite the changes, I’ve aged with grace and character.

I’m built chiefly of wood, with a sturdy stone foundation and windows inviting the seasons’ changing light. Over time, I’ve been painted, patched, polished, and propped up, but my bones remain strong. And oh, the stories I could tell...

Who has called me home?

Starting as an empty lot, I needed something to improve my lot (pun intended). My seven caretakers included town leaders and everyday working folk. As a house, I did not exist before 1865. Two prominent citizens of Bellefonte owned me —James Linn and John McCoy. They were cousins and owned the Centre Furnace, a charcoal iron furnace located just north of what is now State College.

Over time, I’ve been home to many people—builders, shoemakers, civic leaders, railroad enthusiasts, and more. Each family that stepped through my doors brought their own dreams, struggles, and joys. Some stayed briefly; others raised generations under my roof. Here’s a glimpse into the lives I’ve sheltered:

Edward and Mary Graham (1864–1866)

Edward and Mary were the ones who gave me life. They purchased the land in 1864, and by 1865, I was standing tall. Their time here was short but essential. I still remember the sound of hammers and saws as I took shape under their care.

The Powers Family (1866–1918)

Three generations of the Powers family made me their home. John Powers was deeply involved in civic life—he brought a sense of energy and community pride through my doors. His son Edward, a hardworking shoemaker, lived here with

his wife Elizabeth. They had three children. After Edward passed away, Elizabeth and the kids stayed on before eventually moving in with her mother. It’s possible they rented me out for a time.

During that period, I welcomed a boarder named John Hoover. He lived with the family while working in town, likely helping make ends meet. His quiet presence added a layer of stability and companionship to my walls.

Reuben and Anna Spangler (1918–1948)

Reuben and Anna bought me for \$2,600—a solid investment for a growing family. They raised five children here. I remember the laughter, the dinners, the quiet evenings with the radio playing softly in the background. There’s even a 1927 photo of their son, John Jackson, standing proudly near my porch. Sadly, after World War II, the children moved away, and at some point before 1948, my front porch was removed. I felt bare without it—like losing a part of my personality.

Ben and Janice Herr (1948–1985)

Ben and Janice came next. They purchased me for just \$1—likely a family transfer—but they poured love and energy into me. Ben was a railroad enthusiast, turning one of my bedrooms into a train room with miniature tracks and tiny towns. He even installed a railroad signal bell outside. In



1927, Spring St.



2017, Spring St.



2024, Spring St.

1984, the community gave them an award for their dedication to Bellefonte and their founding of Skills of Central PA, a human services organization for people with disabilities. I was proud to be called the “Ben Herr” home.

Barry and Kathren Bitner (1985–1992)

The Bitners bought me in 1985 for \$49,000. Barry worked at Cerro Metals. Times were tough, and financial struggles forced them to sell. Still, they were kind to me while they were here. They did their best. For that, I’m thankful.

Joanne Tosti-Vasey and Joe Vasey (1992–Present)

That brings us to today. Joanne and Joe bought me in 1992 for \$80,000. Joe worked at Penn State before moving into

healthcare research. Now that he’s retired, he volunteers in the community. Joanne is an organizer, a member of the Bellefonte Borough Council, and a passionate advocate for historic preservation.

They’ve done so much to bring out my beauty. Joe learned the art of plastering to repair my walls, and they updated my details with elegant coving and trim. In 2019, they gave me back something I missed dearly—my front porch—rebuilding it to look like the one in that 1927 photo. When the porch came back, it felt like I could breathe again.

They host friends, family, and local events, filling me with laughter and warmth. On quiet mornings, I watch the sun rise through my windows and listen

to the creak of the floorboards as Joanne makes her way to her desk, Joe heads out for a walk, and their son Kenneth dives into his world of tech—studying, coding, and tinkering with his computer projects. These are the moments that make a house a home.

Every family that’s lived here has added something special. Their lives, laughter, and challenges helped shape me into what I am today. I’ve seen generations come and go, and I’m grateful to still be standing strong.

So, thank you to all who have cared for me. I can’t wait to see what happens next.

By Joanne Tosti-Vasey



Carla Cipro

KKK’s Rapid Rise & Faster Fall in the 1920s in Bellefonte and Vicinity

In the summertime a hundred years ago, the resurgent Ku Klux Klan reached its peak of political influence and membership, fueled by nativist and traditionalist backlash against rapid cultural change. In reading accounts of intertwined sociological developments in the 1920s, I have been struck by the many parallels between the American political landscapes of 1925 and 2025. They also stoked my curiosity about KKK activities in and around Bellefonte, of which I had heard only vague rumors.

Turns out there is plenty of documentation in Centre County newspapers of the mid-1920s. The earliest local activity I found reported was a cross-burning in Milesburg, carried out on Thursday night, June 21, 1923, and interpreted by observers as signaling the close of a Klan gathering. As reported in the *Democratic Watchman*, “Investigation revealed that kneeling about the flaming cross were thirty or more white hooded and white robed individuals whose identity, of course, was not revealed. Whether it was really just the formation of a Klan of disciples of the grand Kleagle or whether one had already been formed and this was a regular meeting is unknown.”

Subsequent newspaper reports noted cross-burnings in Blanchard (August 1923); twice behind Bellefonte’s St. Paul

African Methodist Episcopal Church on Halfmoon Hill (September 1923); twice in Beech Creek (September 1923 and June 1924); beside the Bellefonte Hospital (October 1923); in Millheim (November 1923); outside Howard (February 1924); in Philipsburg (February 1924); and in Pleasant Gap (March 1924). Klansmen customarily punctuated their cross-burnings by setting off at least one explosion of dynamite.

Early in 1924, local Klansmen began engaging in daytime activities, while maintaining their cloaked anonymity. As reported in the *Bellefonte Republican*, 70 masked and robed members of the Philipsburg KKK attended a church service in the borough on a Sunday in February 1924. One of them handed the pastor “a special [monetary] contribution”—an increasingly common practice of Klansmen attending religious services. The *Democratic Watchman* reported that on a Sunday morning several weeks later, “one hundred fully robed and hooded” Klansmen marched into a worship service in a Centre Hall church carrying “a small flag and an open bible” which they “deposited on a table in front of the pulpit” before being “ushered to a block of empty seats in the center of the church that had been reserved for them.” According to an observer, the sermon that followed “was directed more to the Ku

Klux than any of the other [attendees], and the spirit of [the pastor’s] remarks were construed as favoring the Klan. At the conclusion of the services, the hooded men were quick to leave the church and rapidly faded away.”

On Monday evening, March 31, 1924, upwards of 60 men attended a recruiting event in Bellefonte’s Odd Fellows Hall, where they heard from “Klan organizers from other sections of the State” (according to a *Democratic Watchman* report). Sensational appearances by Klan chapters (“klaverns”) further afield included a “hundred robed Knights of the Klan attend[ing] services at the Evangelical church at Millheim” in mid-May 1924, and a large group of Klansmen “in full regalia” attending a funeral for one of their fallen brethren in a church in Mt. Eagle in August (as reported in the *Bellefonte Republican*).

The Klan’s biggest local splashes, however, were made in and around the County seat beginning in midsummer 1924. On August 13, about 300 men in street clothes attended “a regularly scheduled Klan meeting” at the County Courthouse, according to a *Democratic Watchman* report. “Admission to the meeting was by card only, but anybody who wished to attend was given a card at the door, so that it was



c1910 postcard of Bellefonte Fairground provided by Phil Ruth

not entirely a secret affair.” Days later, the Bellefonte klavern held a public initiation at the old fairgrounds (now the site of Bellefonte’s Wastewater Treatment plant), attracting more than 500 spectators. The ceremony included bomb explosions signaling the start of the affair, and hymn-singing to mark its close. In between, 36 initiates pledged allegiance to the Klan, repeating an oath that likely included promises to not reveal the group’s secrets to outsiders, and to uphold its principles against perceived threats from Catholics, Jews, African Americans, and other groups deemed incompatible with the Klan’s vision of America.

A month later, local Klansmen mounted an even more ambitious “Demonstration” at the Grange Park in Centre Hall, drawing “several thousand spectators” to the exhibition partly through the promise of a “Big Display of Fireworks.” The schedule of band music, drills, parades, patriotic salutes, prayers, and public expressions of Klan principles culminated in the “naturalization of a class of 40 candidates under the light of a fiery cross.” Over the following months, and into 1925, groups of roused Klansmen and Klanswomen made showings in church services in Bellefonte, Hublersburg, Jacksonville, Pleasant Gap, and Runville.

Few newspaper reports addressed the animus driving local KKK activities. A rare exception was an account of a “meeting for women of the Klan held at Howard” in May 1925. As reported by the *Democratic Watchman*, a female speaker at the event “presented facts which were surprising to many, concerning the evils of our present

mode of living, and urged every christian [sic] man and woman to do their bit for humanity and generations to come.”

[She] explained the motto of the Klan as “not for self but always for others”; she also mentioned that the 12th chapter of Romans has been adopted by them as their law of life because it contains more of the practical rules for christian [sic] living than any other one chapter of the Bible; and also presents many of the sacred principles which the Klan seeks to stimulate. The creed of Klanswomen is to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior; the separation of church and State in administration and organization but united in their mission and purpose to serve mankind unselfishly; the American home as the foundation upon which rests secure the American Republic, the future of its institutions and liberties of its citizens; in the free public schools where our children are trained in the principles and ideals that make America the greatest of all nations; that the Stars and Stripes, most beautiful on earth, symbolizing the purity of race, the blood of martyrs, and the fidelity of patriots; in the supremacy the constitution of the United States, and consecrate ourselves to uphold them with emphasis on the 18th amendment; in the freedom of speech, of press and of worship, it is the right of all citizens whose allegiance and loyalty to our country are unquestioned; that the blood of white should not be mixed with other races; that the government of the United States must be kept from control of alien races and the influence of inferior peoples;

that the people are greater than any foreign power or potentate, prince or prelate, and that no other allegiance in America should be tolerated; that the future of the nation rests upon the purity and united effort of our native born, white Gentile, Protestant men and women; that under God the women of the Ku Klux Klan are sent to help preserve and protect our nation, our State, community, children and homes, and insure our happiness now and forever.

Five months after this meeting, Indiana KKK Grand Dragon D.C. Stephenson was put on trial for the rape and murder of his assistant Madge Oberholtzer. The proceedings exposed widespread criminal corruption and hypocrisy among Klan leaders, undermining their claims of moral integrity and lawfulness. In the face of growing public disillusionment, the Klan’s political influence and membership plummeted. By some estimates, the quarter-million Klan members in Pennsylvania in 1926 dwindled to fewer than 30,000 by the close of 1928, then to fewer than 4,000 by the early 1930s. When a cross was burned “on the mountain above Coleville” one night in January 1930—several years after the area’s most recent cross-burning—locals were “somewhat mystified as to whether it was the work of the Ku Klux Klan or merely a prank of mischievous boys” (according to the *Democratic Watchman*). The Klan’s rise and fall in Centre County had taken only a few years to play out.

By Phil Ruth

Behind the Stone: Henry Bockerhoff

Bellefonte underwent steady economic growth during the 19th century due to the expansion of the iron industry in the county. Besides spawning the rise of state and national political leaders, this growth attracted businessmen to the town and the establishment of many needed supports for the burgeoning population. One of the most successful businessmen to arrive in Bellefonte was Henry Bockerhoff.

Bockerhoff was born on June 11, 1794, in what today is Germany. His backstory may be one of the most interesting of any person who settled in Bellefonte. His birthplace was Ober Castle across from the city of Dusseldorf along the Rhine River. His early education is not clear. His obituary claims he was educated in Dusseldorf until the age of 16. However, the *History of Centre and Clinton Counties, Pennsylvania* by John Blair Linn (1883) claims his early education was conducted at Cologne, Germany. He then went to the Aix-la-Chapelle Commercial College in Aachen, Germany, and graduated in one year. Here again is some disagreement as to when he graduated—at 16 or 17.

From Aix-la-Chapelle, he went on to study at the University of Leipzig in Saxony, Germany, one of Europe’s oldest universities, having been founded in 1409. He was there in 1813 when French Emperor



“A Virtual Walking Tour of Bellefonte, PA” on bellefontearts.org

Napoleon Bonaparte fought the Battle of Leipzig on October 16-19, 1813. Bockerhoff was swept up in the ardor that surrounded Napoleon and joined the French Emperor as a clerk on his staff.

With Napoleon’s loss at Waterloo and banishment in 1815, Bockerhoff set sail for Australia. He was shipwrecked and rescued by an American vessel. He spent four months at sea before arriving in Philadelphia during which, with his background in German, French and Latin, he quickly learned English. He immediately found work as a peddler and after a year, moved to McKee’s Half Falls in Snyder County and established a mercantile business. On September 26, 1823, he became a naturalized American citizen in Philadelphia.

Bockerhoff arrived in Bellefonte in 1825 and began establishing himself as a merchant. In 1830, he started a partnership with F. Kekeler in a store later occupied by the Garman House Hotel. When that partnership dissolved, he moved to the lower floors of the Penn-

sylvania House Hotel, which he soon purchased. Bockerhoff made a trip to Europe in 1843-1844 and left his business in the safekeeping of a new partner, John Irwin, Jr. The required passport, in an era before passport photos, provides a description of Bockerhoff. He was described as five foot five and three-quarters inches tall

with a high forehead, gray eyes, ordinary nose, large mouth, ordinary chin, chestnut hair, fair complexion, and square face.

Bockerhoff retired in 1848. That lasted but a year as his circumstances changed. On November 19, 1849, Henry married Margaret Mullen (age 19 or 20), the daughter of Irish immigrant attorney Felix Mullen. They would have four children and reside in a large brick home at the corner of Bishop and Spring Streets. The front entry of this home is now in the State Museum in Harrisburg. The 1850’s would be a time of rapid growth in the wealth of the Bockerhoff family. The 1850 Census reports Bockerhoff’s real estate value as \$40,000. By the 1860 census, his real estate value was reported as \$80,000 with an additional personal property value of \$20,000.

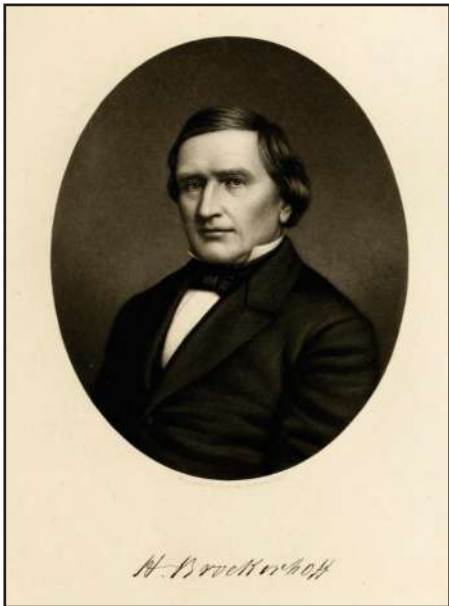
Over the course of Bockerhoff’s business career he would own a brewery along Spring Creek, build a massive grain mill in Roopsburg along Spring Creek, construct what became known as the Bockerhoff

Business Block on Allegheny Street and on Bishop Street, and become a partner in the establishment (1857) of The Farmers and Manufacturers Bank of Centre County. His business interests went well beyond Bellefonte to include holdings in West Virginia and Indiana. One example was an 1870 report in the Williamsport newspaper indicated that the firm of Huling, Bockerhoff and Co. moved 30 men from their operation on Charleston, WV to Will's Creek and Little Sandy, WV to cut four million feet of oak and poplar wood. He is also credited with establishing the town of Frenchville in Clearfield County.

Bockerhoff did have to navigate some adversity during this time as well. His biggest reverse was the February 1865 fire that burned the Pennsylvania House Hotel to the ground. Undaunted, he quickly set about rebuilding the hotel, reopening as the Bockerhoff House Hotel. On March 4, 1861, a part of the second floor of the Roopsburg Mill gave

way and crashed into the lower floor spilling 1,200 bushels of grain. His loss was only about \$50.00. In July of 1868, his hotel omnibus driver, Henry Fryer, was arrested at the hotel for theft of \$800 from U.S. Mailbags during his previous employment as a stage driver. Obviously, this was bad press for the hotel. More bad press occurred in February of 1873 when the omnibus was departing the train station, and the horses were frightened by steam from the locomotive. At that moment, two young boys were crossing the street in front of the Bush House. Calvin R. Taylor (age 9) was struck by the tongue of the omnibus, knocked to the ground, and run over by the front wheels. He was scooped up, taken into Green's drug store where medical aid was given, but he soon expired.

An 1873 report provides the first glimpse that Henry Bockerhoff's health was starting to deteriorate. The *Democratic Watchman* reported in January that Bockerhoff was seriously ill at Mr. Simpson's in Lock



Provided by History of Centre and Clinton Counties, Pennsylvania (John Blair Linn, 1883)

Haven for a period of ten days. Henry Bockerhoff died on October 6, 1878, at the age of 84. His remains were interred in St. John's Cemetery in Bellefonte. Historian Linn described him as "a kind-hearted though thorough businessman." Today, his memory is forever attached to his physical legacy which dominates central downtown—the Bockerhoff House Hotel.

By W. Charles Young



Provided by www.findagrave.com

2025 Easter Parade



James M. Puckett



Ryan Anderson



Ryan Anderson



Ryan Anderson

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