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WERNERSVILLE - 3
ROBESONIA
NAMED FOR EARLY SETTLER
HENRY P. ROBESON
FOUNDED
1859

March/April 2013 | Vol. 36, No. 2

Pennsylvania

magazine

Skullduggery at Duffy's Cut p. 24

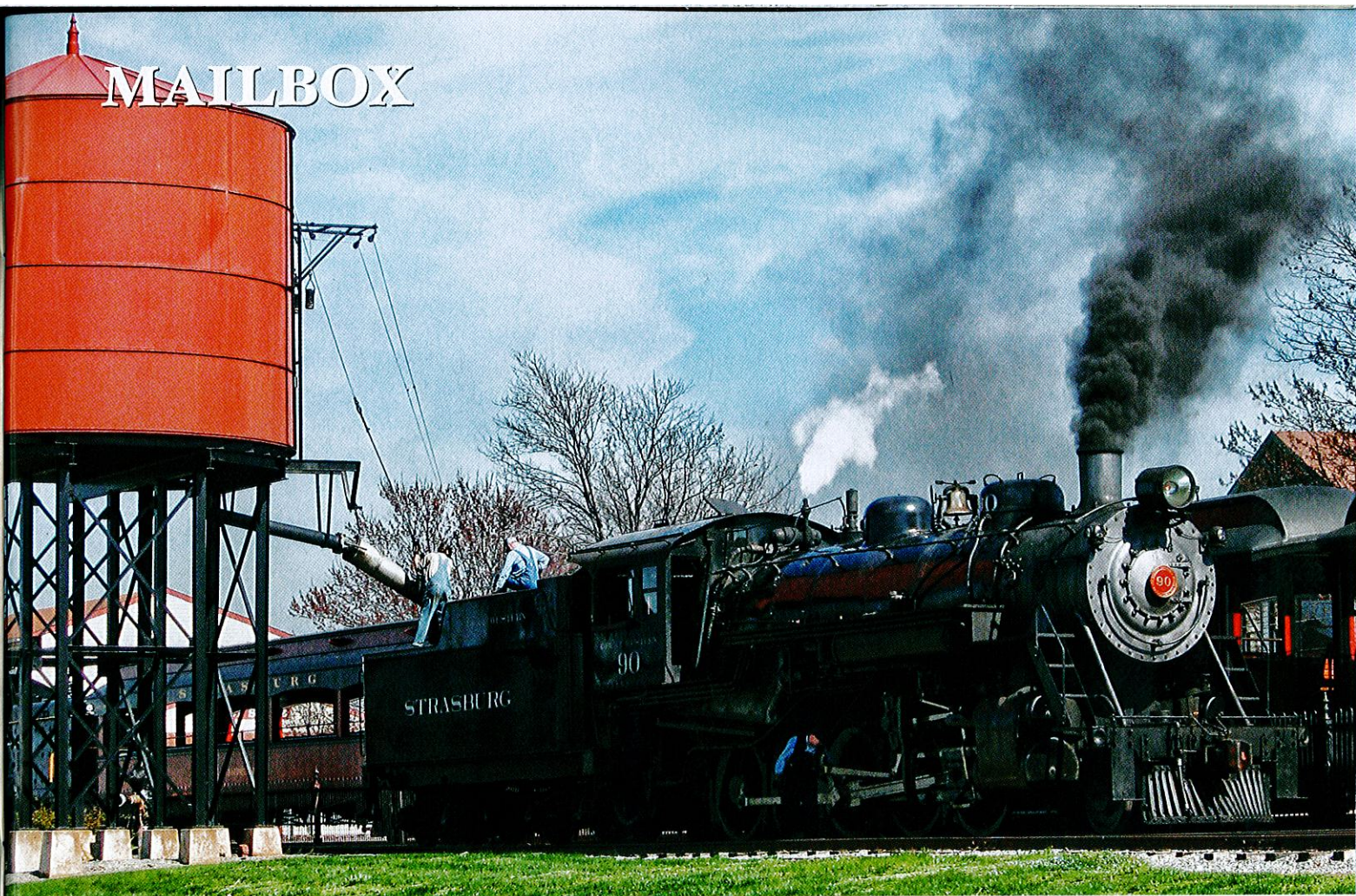
THE DISCOVERY OF SEVEN
MURDERED 19TH CENTURY
IRISH IMMIGRANTS

March/April 2013 | \$4.50



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MAILBOX



Find the Counties Contest?

I enjoyed your "find the trolley" contest in the Jan/Feb 2013 issue of Pennsylvania Magazine, although I was only able to find two. For a future issue perhaps you could consider a "find the county" contest, since I noticed that Juniata Co. was wrongly identified as Jefferson Co. on page 22, and Indiana Co. was apparently masquerading as Monroe Co. on page 12.

Dave Neimeyer, Fogelsville

▲ Time for a Drink

Strasburg Rail Road locomotive 90 has its tender filled with water at the station in Strasburg, Lancaster County. Strasburg begins weekend service in March and operates a full schedule all summer. Marcia Riegler of Lebanon took this image. PHOTO SPECS: CANON POWERSHOT A530, 13.7 MM, F 4.0, 1/800S

'A Guide of Pennsylvania Towns' available

AS MENTIONED IN the News & Views column at left, N. Clair Clawser has promoted the preservation of keystone markers, which we highlight in an article this issue.

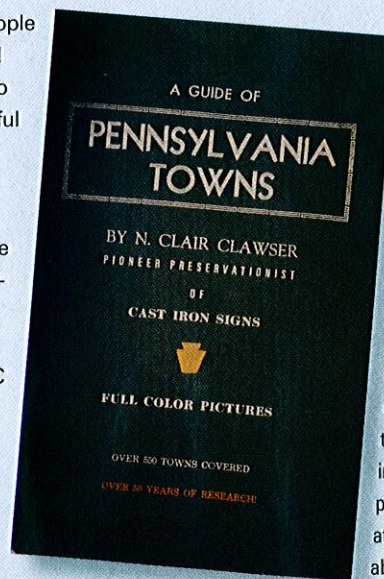
In his book, Clawser has an introduction where he shares a short plea for the markers that Pete Wambach wrote about in *Pennsylvania Illustrated* in 1978 as part of a review of an early version of the guide: "Unfortunately those seal-crested iron signs are no longer available. They became too costly an item in the state highways' budget.

"We suggest (and we know that Mr. Clawser would approve) that citizens in each community in Pennsylvania erect such informational signs at their boundaries in time for the Pennsylvania Tercentenary in 1982. That would be a real labor of love for all of

us, paid for by the townspeople and not by the government! The information signs are so much prettier and meaningful than the ordinary identification signs."

Today, that opportunity exists. Contact the Keystone Marker Trust for more information.

For a copy of the guide, contact N. Clair Clawser, AFC Press, P.O. Box 113, Campbelltown, PA 17010. The price is \$18, which includes sales tax and postage. Checks should be made out to N. Clair Clawser.



EDITOR'S NOTE:

Pennsylvania Illustrated was a predecessor of *Pennsylvania Magazine*, and the publisher of this magazine, Al Holliday, was the editor of *Pennsylvania Illustrated* in its early years, including when the late Pete Wambach wrote this review of Clawser's book. Wambach also had a column called Potpourri in this magazine for many years in which he ran down happenings, suggested events to attend and gave his musings about the wonders of the state.

Keystone Markers

What once numbered in the tens of thousands has dwindled to about 600

by Mark D. Marotta

TIME HAS TAKEN A TOLL ON Pennsylvania's old keystone-shaped highway markers, and a non-profit group wants to do something about it.

Between World War I and the 1940s, the state installed as many as 20,000 of the iconic blue-and-gold signs. Today, about 600 of these keystone markers remain, estimates Nathaniel Guest, the president of the Keystone Marker Trust. He says that highway projects have been a major culprit for the losses.

The trust aims "to repair and reinstall Pennsylvania's keystone markers and reestablish the keystone marker program as a way of strengthening community identity and reinvesting in our state," says Guest, a resident of Pottstown, Montgomery County.

No other system of signage is so closely identified with the state, he says, since the markers reflect Pennsylvania's leading role both in developing a good road system and pioneering the iron-making industry.

Restoring and Replacing Signs

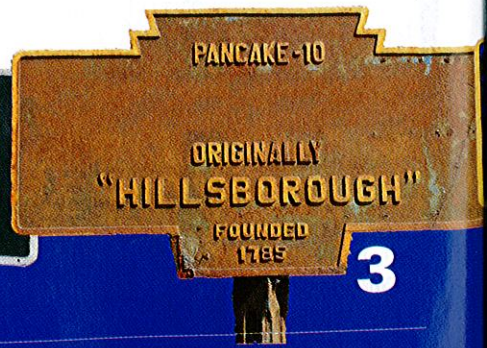
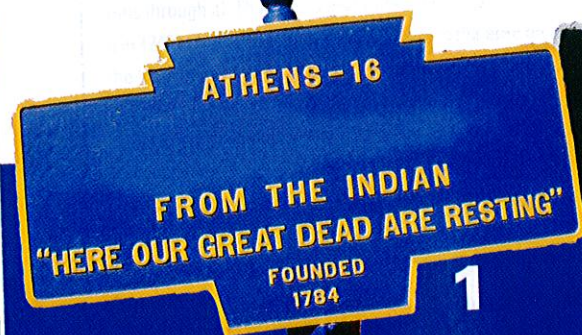
INSTALLED by PennDOT's predecessor, the Pennsylvania Department of Highways, in the first half of the 20th century, the markers followed a series of standardized designs and over the years served every purpose for which a sign was needed, including setting speed limits, providing directions, identifying school zones and marking towns and cities.

Each community had at least two markers, posted at the opposite sides of the town, both indicating and explaining its name and identifying the founding date, but each would have a different town and the distance to it in miles at the top.

Through community outreach, the trust seeks to make people aware of how to restore or replace the signs that still exist. The organization currently has a fairly informal process for forming partner-

Identify these towns and enter our contest

See page 42 for entry form



TOP: ERICH ARMPRIESTER, WERNERSVILLE; BOTTOM: JACK GRAHAM, ELLIOTTSBURG



COURTESY OF ERICH ARMPRESTER, WERNERSVILLE

sign can be fixed but a partner is not available, the trust may undertake the job itself.

Depending on their conditions, signs might need to be painted, patched, welded or propped up. Since the creation of the trust in late 2010, several dozen signs had been restored with the trust's help.

"We're also looking for folks who want to support us financially," says Guest. "We've had benefactors that have really facilitated the work, but for this to be a true statewide program, it's going to take more."

"This Is a Pretty Corner"

THROUGH A collaborative relationship between the trust and the Spring City Electrical Manufacturing Co., Inc., a foundry in Chester County, production of the first new keystone markers in 60 years was begun in October 2012. Within a few months of when the partnership was formed, several municipalities placed orders for about 15 keystone markers, says Tracie Wolf, Spring City Electrical's marketing coordinator.

Among the communities around the state getting new markers are Greensboro in Greene County, Seyfert in Robeson Township, Berks County, and Collegeville in Montgomery County. A new marker will also be installed some time this year for Hay Creek in Birdsboro, Berks County, where a number of markers are being restored.

The unincorporated village of Schoeneck, in northern Lancaster County, will also be receiving new keystone markers (*see accompanying article*). Located in West Cocalico Township, about five miles from Ephrata, Schoeneck was settled around 1732. The village takes its name from the Pennsylvania Dutch phrase meaning "this is a pretty corner," explains Elaine Bowman, a Schoeneck Area Civic Association member.

"When I was a kid growing up here, I'd say there were maybe 275 to 300 people at the most, in the immediate area of the village," says Bowman, who lives on land her ancestors received in a grant from Thomas and Richard Penn. As the population in the area increased over the years, the village has suffered something of a loss of identity, with the closing of its post office and elementary school.

Thanks to funding from the civic association, Schoeneck is getting five keystone markers that will

Robeson's sign was struck by a passing vehicle, resulting in breakage. The sign was repaired and repainted by Keystone Marker Trust in 2011, which included the replacement of the sign's original mounting bands, instead of the U-bolts that had been used to mount the sign to the post.

ships with municipalities, historical societies or individuals to work on marker projects. Someone so inclined to help with a project can contact the organization, which will then notify PennDOT and the municipality about the planned work.

The trust provides volunteer labor but generally asks for its partners to help with funding or materials. Alternatively, if someone wants to restore a marker on his or her own, the trust can provide guidelines for what to do. In some cases, if a



CONTEST SIGN PHOTOS COURTESY OF JIM CARN, WILLIAMSPORT, 1, 6; ROB MATHENY, MCKEES ROCKS, 3, 4, 5; CHRISTIAN BUSCH, ARDMORE 2

give the town's founding date, the Pennsylvania Dutch phrase from which its name is derived and the English translation.

"I think one of the main drives behind why we decided to proceed with signage is because we have lost our identity," Bowman says. "Older members [of the civic association's governing committee] also remembered, as kids, driving anywhere in Pennsylvania and seeing those signs. I think we just felt we wanted to be a part of that."

For more information about the trust and the signs, visit keystonemarkerttrust.org.

—Mark D. Marotta writes from Jeffersonville.

Keystone Towns Contest Entry Form

Do you know all nine of the town names that we removed from these signs? Give us the names on this form (or by using the online form at pa-mag.com/?p=3159) and enter to win one of 10 one-year subscriptions to *Pennsylvania Magazine*. HINT: The town name and number at the top of each sign is the next town and distance to it. One entry (online or paper) per person, please.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

your name _____

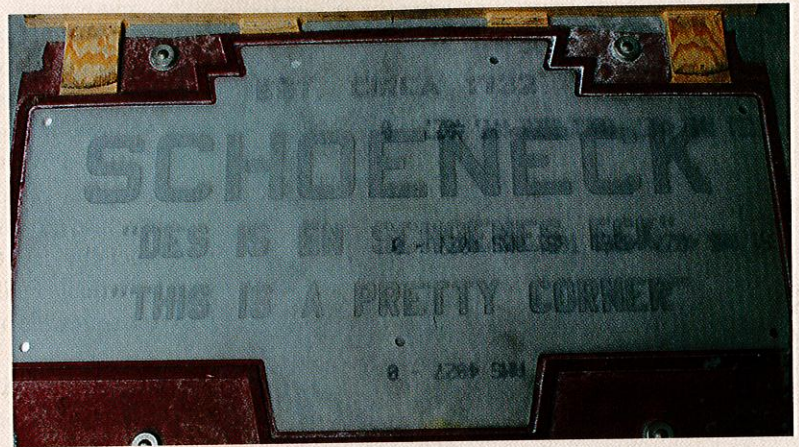
address _____

city/state/zip code _____

PHOTOCOPIES ARE OKAY

Mail your entry by April 25 to Keystone Towns Contest, *Pennsylvania Magazine*, PO Box 755, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0755. We'll announce the town names in the May/June 2013 issue and the winners in the July/August 2013 issue. See additional details of the contest online at pa-mag.com/?p=3159.

CONTEST SIGN PHOTOS COURTESY OF JACK GRAHAM, ELLIOTTSBURG, 7 & ROB MATHENY, MCKEES ROCKS, 9



New Markers for New Times

Spring City foundry making new markers for communities across Pennsylvania

by Mark D. Marotta

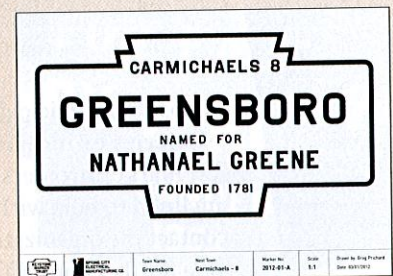
LOCATED NEAR THE SCHUYLKILL RIVER IN Spring City, Chester County, the Spring City Electrical Manufacturing Co., Inc., recently began producing keystone markers, new versions of the iconic blue-and-gold, keystone-shaped signs once a fixture in every Pennsylvania community.

Spring City Electrical, which began in 1843 manufacturing items such as stoves and pots, received its first order to produce street lighting for New York City in the early 1900s, says Tracie Wolf, the company's marketing coordinator.

Today, the 105-employee foundry has become the largest supplier of outdoor decorative lighting standards to major cities in the Northeast, including Boston, New York, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia. Smaller municipalities, such as Harrisburg and Spring City itself, also use the company's street lights.

"Production of the keystone markers was a natural segue for us," says

(top) A positive form for the Schoeneck Keystone Marker (an unincorporated village in northern Lancaster County) will be used to make an impression in casting sand, leaving the negative shape into which the molten metal is poured. The Greensboro sign (below) is a CAD drawing of the sign, from which a 3-D printer will create the positive like the one above.



Wolf, "because we make custom things, we like the history, and we're a Pennsylvania company."

The foundry provides "first-class" products at such a reasonable price that a town could replace the usual comple-



ment of four markers for around \$5,000, says Nathaniel Guest, president of the Keystone Marker Trust. One of the challenges in producing the signs is historical accuracy since no patterns remain from when the signs were originally produced more than 70 years ago.

"The markers have a very intricate design," Wolf says.

Since the type is different on each one of them, every marker is unique. After working out the text and layout, the trust passes that information on to the foundry to create shop drawings. Once the trust reviews and approves the drawings, production can begin.

A computerized system is used to machine the patterns for the markers, Wolf explains. The patterns, made from aluminum and resin, are placed in containers called flasks, which are filled with a particularly compactable type of sand. Machinery, including an air hammer, is used to pack down the sand, and then the pattern is removed, leaving an impression. To keep the marker post hollow, a core that is slightly smaller than the pattern and made from sand is placed into the void.

Next, molten metal, heated by electromagnetic energy to a temperature of 2,800 degrees, is poured into the mold. It takes about eight hours for the metal to cool down for further processing, Wolf says.

Once the metal has hardened, it is removed from the flasks. If a core has been used, it is broken up with a vibrating device and removed. Burned-on sand is blasted off of the marker, and any extraneous pieces of metal are cut and ground away. The last step is painting the marker.

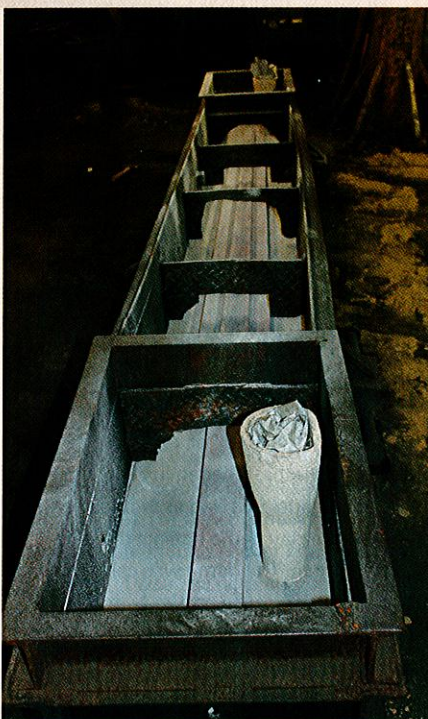
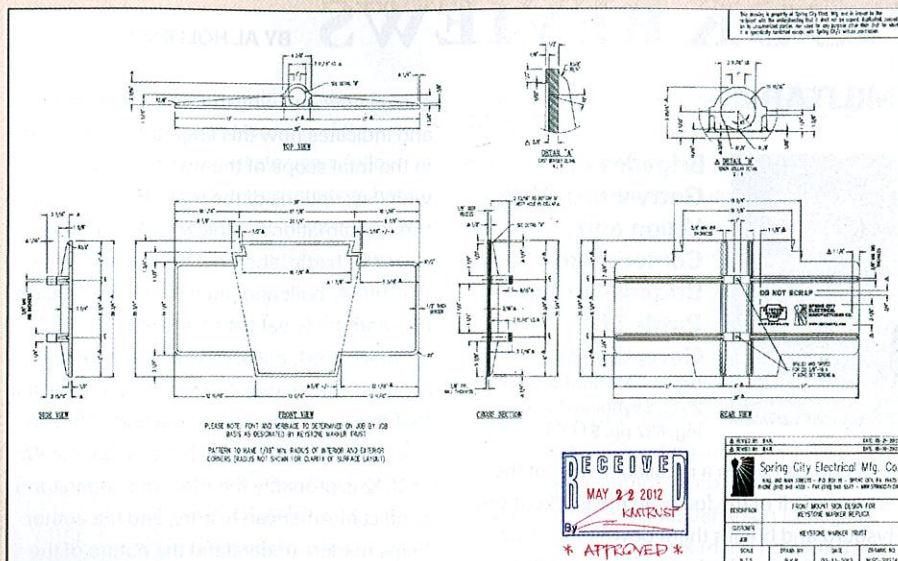
Keystone Marker Trust has done its homework to ensure the markers' authenticity, Wolf says.

Unlike the original signs, the new keystone markers are made from ductile iron, which contains magnesium for additional strength. Wolf explains that greater tensile strength means that, in the event of an impact, the markers are able to absorb the shock rather than snap.

Any community can order a keystone marker, even if it did not historically have any, says Wolf. The foundry will also produce markers that identify sponsorship, such as by a family or business.

"Some people are very tied into their town," she says. "They like doing things like that."

For more information about Spring City Electrical's relationship with the Keystone Marker Trust, visit springcity.com/news/Keystone-Markers.



(top) A schematic drawing shows the specifications of the new markers being manufactured by Spring City Electrical. (middle) Flasks containing forms for a Keystone Marker post awaits filling with foundry sand, which will take on the negative shape of the patterns that are inside the flasks. The patterns are then removed, and a core is added to allow the metal to be poured to make the final product. (bottom) A Spring City Electrical employee compacts foundry sand into flasks so that the sand will take the shape of the patterns in the flasks.

DRAWINGS COURTESY OF KEYSTONE MARKER TRUST AND SPRING CITY ELECTRICAL MANUFACTURING CO. INC. FOUNDRY PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPRING CITY ELECTRICAL MANUFACTURING CO. INC.

