

# VIGNETTES OF MYERSTOWN OVER 250 YEARS, 1768-2018

By Donald Brown

Myerstown Borough is fortunate to have a resident who is an expert on the topic of historical geography. Donald Brown, a native of Lebanon and current resident of Myerstown, has amassed an impressive collection of postcards over his lifetime, and his desire to make these cards available for research led him to establish the [Institute of American Deltiology](#), which is located in the Borough at 300 West Main Avenue. On March 24, 2018, he gave a presentation in honor of the 250th Anniversary of Myerstown entitled, "Vignettes of Myerstown over 250 Years, 1768-2018." Twenty-two "vignettes" were presented to a crowd of over 100 Myerstown residents at the Sestercentennial Kickoff Luncheon in the Theater Room at StoneRidge Poplar Run. The following is a transcript of the presentation.

## Vignette #1 - Isaac Meier

The Meier Homestead as we know it today looked much the same as when Isaac Meier laid out streets and sold lots for houses on his plantation in 1768, except its setting would have been more rural. Valentine Herchelrode/Hergelrode, father in law of Meier, built the original house several decades earlier when he acquired the land from Caspar Wistar of Philadelphia, who in turn had acquired it from descendants of William Penn. Germanic features on the kitchen side of the house diminish in the central hall and rooms on the west side where there is evidence that Isaac had made interior changes toward the Palladian, or Georgian, fashionable among wealthy landowners at the time.

What is important for our community's 250th anniversary this year is to know that by 1768, Isaac Meier had made a decision to develop a town on his plantation, and that it contained a tavern - the Heinrich Buch Tavern - where on a day in July of 1770, someone, never identified, shot him through the window - and that the founder of our town that he called Tulpehockentown - was carried to the homestead where he died the next day, July 14, 1770. Meier was prominent in the region, not the least of which was his role as a lender of money. Meier died without having made a Will. Well-known Wm. Henry Stiegel of Lancaster was involved in assessing Meier's estate that included several plantations & a sizeable number of white shirts, the latter a sign of wealth in colonial times.

Half of the Buch Tavern still stands, remodeled of course, and is the home of the Vincent Podolski family in 2018.

## Vignette #2 - The Revolutionary War Years, 1775-1784

It is difficult to provide population figures for Myerstown in the years before any census was taken, or before Myerstown became a borough with definite boundaries in 1912. That's because data for the town was included with that of the larger municipality surrounding it. At the time of the American Revolution, we were part of Heidelberg Township in the northern part of original Lancaster County (that had been separated from Chester back in 1729). By the Revolutionary

1770s, fertile land along both sides of the Tulpehocken Creek had long been claimed & cultivated for several generations by pioneer families. Research conducted fifty years ago at the time of Myerstown's Bicentennial determined that 46 men from Myerstown served in the Continental Army at one time or another; most can be identified as owners of land between a line east of Millardsville and halfway toward Lebanon to the west, and within a mile or two north and south of the Tulpehocken. Seven are identified as officers in the Continental Army: Michael and Christian Lei, Thomas Koppenhaffer, Michael Spendler, Peter Berry, Leonard Immel, and John Mosser. "Our men were at Valley Forge, and during the winter the people of Myerstown sent wagon loads of food, and clothing to the men. The women spun wool and wove coverlets. Leather was tanned in our tanneries and shoes made."  
*(Quote from the Myerstown Bicentennial History, 1968)*

### Vignette #3 - The 1790s in Myerstown

The population estimate for the village area of Myerstown by the early 1790s is between 150 and 200 individuals; and the village had a tavern or two. On Dec. 26, 1793, at the Pohlman Tavern, German farmer Martin Glass complained of being insulted by Irish laborers working on the canal. The Pohlman Tavern was located on the south side of what today is the 100 block of W. Main Ave (Coover House by 1890s). Scots-Irish workers hired to dig a canal for the Schuylkill & Susquehanna Navigation Co., imbibed their whiskey at Millard's Tavern, some distance east. Word got around to German farmers and town folk of the insult to Mr. Glass. Drinking continued past midnight, tempers flared, and the Germans decided to march to Millard's Tavern where a fight broke out with the Irish. That was not the end of things. The next day, more than 100 Irishmen returned to Myerstown carrying clubs, tools, rocks as well as pistols, to find Mr. Glass & his buddies who were not in town. Unfortunately innocent residents of Myerstown were seen. Since the Irish were looking for a fight, anybody was fair game. Homes were broken into and property destroyed. Gov. Thomas Mifflin was sent a letter signed by more than 100 residents asking for protection for town folk & punishment for the rioters. The case went to Harrisburg, & in March 1794, a jury found both guilty, *but surprise*, the stiffer fines for the town folk.

*Earlier that year, President Washington had visited several locks of the canal in Myerstown, and to the west, pronouncing them to be "admirably constructed."*

### Vignette #4 - Lebanon County Created: February 16, 1813

Now for an historical geography lesson: if a person who was born before 1729 in a house on land that later became Myerstown, *and* if he or she were living in that same house on February 16, 1813, they had the experience of having lived in four Pennsylvania counties without ever moving: Chester, Lancaster, Dauphin and Lebanon. Chester, one of William Penn's three original counties; Lancaster, separated from Chester in 1729; Dauphin, separated from Lancaster County in 1785; and Lebanon, separated from Dauphin County in 1813. Six townships were designated within Lebanon County at its creation in 1813, one of which was Heidelberg, a township that had been created in 1739 in the northern part of older original Lancaster County. It is estimated that the village of Myerstown contained at least 200 inhabitants, and possibly a few dozen more, in 1813.

## Vignette #5 - Jackson Township Created: April 5, 1820

Myerstown had spent 81 years in Heidelberg Township until April 5, 1820 when the new township of Jackson was created out of the northern half of Heidelberg. Myerstown, located at the center of Jackson Township was now poised to experience economic growth for several reasons: A turnpike -- the Berks and Dauphin -- was being built in 1816 and opened by 1817. Also, there was renewed enthusiasm through the sale of lotteries to complete a canal across Pennsylvania that had been started in the 1790s. New York State was working steadily on building its Erie Canal to connect with the Great Lakes at Buffalo, and Philadelphia in particular feared the loss of a competitive route of commerce to the west. Both canals were opened to traffic by the mid-1820s: the Erie in 1825, and our Union Canal by 1828. The first boat traveling on the Union Canal was built at Myerstown. Called the Alpha of the Tulpehocken, it could go only as far as Lebanon in 1827 because the tunnel connecting the Swatara and Tulpehocken watersheds was not completed until the next year. During those years when the Union Canal was under completion, John Andrew Melchior Schulze was governor of Pennsylvania (1823-1829). Although not born in Myerstown, he had had a mercantile business here for about ten years starting in 1804.

## Vignette #6 - The 1840s and 1850s: Westward Ho!

Postcard view is of the series of locks on the Erie Canal at Lockport, NY that carried the boats up and over the Niagara Escarpment to the Great Lakes. This was an engineering marvel completed by 1825. The opening of the Erie Canal that year caused pressure here in Pennsylvania to finish the Union Canal, especially to tunnel through rock northwest of Lebanon. Opened by 1828, the Union Canal was never sufficiently wide to compete successfully with the Erie; therefore, it never became as famous as was the Erie Canal for carrying immigrants from Europe to settle the Middle Western states. However, the Union Canal served many families re-locating within Pennsylvania. One branch of my ancestors in northern Lebanon County arrived by canal boat from Montgomery County at the Union Waterworks in 1840. Dozens of Europeans curious to study our American experiment with democracy traveled on the canals; however, the best known such traveler - Charles Dickens - did not pass through Myerstown on his way from Philadelphia to Harrisburg (He went first to Baltimore, then up along the Susquehanna to Harrisburg). Boats traveling east carried lumber, wheat, rye, corn, flour, eggs, iron, leather & potatoes. Going west they carried fish, merchandise, limestone, salt and iron ore. The peak year for the Union Canal was 1856 when 267 tons of cargo were carried. The next year, 1857, the railroad arrived through Myerstown, a harbinger of future competition for the canal. As Myerstown was growing from a village into a small town during the 1850s, these also were the years of growing discord between the South and the North; and a second American Revolution was beckoning.

## Vignette #7 - The Civil War and Myerstown

Myerstown was much affected by the Civil War, and that was true of all the other towns in the Lebanon Valley. Older residents living here when I was young told me that noise from the Battle of Gettysburg could be heard here at the time, that *their* parents had said so. Research done in 1968 identified forty four soldiers buried in the two Union cemeteries and that at least 300 men from Myerstown and Jackson served at various times and places between 1861 and 1865.

Myerstown produced well-remembered heroes such as Color Sgt. Harry Brehm who died from his wounds and others at Gettysburg who were wounded, but lived to write lengthy accounts of the war. One such hero was Captain John Henry Bassler, who raised a full company of volunteers in 1862, Co. C in the 149th Regiment of PA Volunteers, earlier known as the "Jackson Guards", that later became better known as the Second Bucktail Regiment.

With regard to activities on the home front in Myerstown, one can imagine the many adjustments and sacrifices that had to be made. If anyone has family accounts or diaries of such activities, contact Ellen Kramer who is writing the 250th history of Myerstown and Jackson.

### Vignette #8 - Myerstown, a Large Village in 1867

A description of Myerstown two years after the Civil War ended in 1867 is as follows: The town was referred to as a village of approximately 800 inhabitants that extended along the Berks & Dauphin Turnpike from Owl Creek on the east to West Myerstown. Most dwellings were along the turnpike (the main street) with only a few along Railroad Street, some along Cherry and Mill streets, and a few on Locust street at the west end of the village. There were five hotels, however: 4 were on the main street and one on the street toward the railroad. The Lebanon Valley Railroad had been in operation for ten years by this time (it was the Philadelphia and Reading RR in 1867), and a horse drawn omnibus operated between the railroad station and the Washington House in the center of the town. In the village were several cabinet makers, tinsmiths and blacksmiths, and several shoemakers, tailors, weavers, hatters, a bakery and some butcher shops. Several general merchandise stores, one on the west end at Locust Street (very familiar to me: Moses Bowman's), were in operation. There was also a tannery, a bark mill, a grist mill, and a boat builder! (the Union Canal was still an important factor in local commerce during the 1860s). Four churches serviced the village: Frieden's Lutheran, a United Brethren Church on Cherry Street, a German Reformed on west Main and a meetinghouse of the Evangelical Association. Although a small fire engine house had existed on Main Street for some time *before* 1867, it was on May 3, 1867 that the Goodwill Fire Co. as we know it today was organized.

### Vignette #9 - 1870s & 1880s in Myerstown: Horses!

Known as the Gilded Age in America, the 1870s and 1880s in Myerstown saw the growth of iron foundries and the trade in horses of all kinds. When Jacob Baney arrived in 1870 and settled his family and business on Railroad Street, his Lebanon Valley Stock Farms and Myerstown became nationally known in horse trading circles for the next two decades. Draft and general purpose horses were most in demand, but at times Percherons and Clydesdales were imported from Europe. Carloads were shipped by rail from the west, and customers included buyers from major cities with their need for horses to draw street cars, police and fire hose wagons, omnibuses, bakery and butcher wagons before the advent of motorized vehicles. Breweries and canal companies were customers, as was Ringling Bros. Circus. Anywhere from 250-850 horses & mules were constantly on hand. Buyers from great distances came to the auctions; so Mr. Baney purchased the Washington House, added a 4th floor and rear wing for accommodation of his customers, renaming it the Baney House. (no "H" in Baney). (One of Myerstown's little mysteries is how the "H" got into the hotel's name; the Bahney's of the furniture family say there's no connection.) A major epidemic among horses in 1888, followed by the financial panic of 1893 (the same one that ruined Robt. Coleman of Cornwall) ended Mr. Baney's stock farm

business as well.

## Vignette #10 - 1870s, 1880s, 1890s: Other than Horses!

The first iron foundry in Myerstown was built as early as 1838 by Daniel Meyer, then was operated by his son William along the canal and in connection with a steam grist mill and saw mill. In 18772, Joseph Painter, Sr. moved from Bernville to Myerstown because of access to rail transportation here, purchasing land along the Union Canal at S. Cherry Street where he developed an iron foundry, Joseph Painter & Sons, that existed well into the 20th century. By 1947, the firm was incorporated as Myerstown Foundry & Machine Works by his great grandson, Rodney P. Steltz. (Mr. Steltz was Mayor of Myerstown at the time of our Bicentennial in 1968). Another large foundry established in the 19th century was Stoever Foundry & Manufacturing Co that in the 20th century became the Myerstown Foundry and Manufacturing Co. under Leighton Krum until the 1930s. By the 1950s, these foundry sites were operating as Quaker Alloy, Inc.

Lumber Yards were another basic industry in 19th century Myerstown. Best known names in lumber were Haak, Kalbach and Loose. Charles C. Loose & Son, dealers in lumber and millwork originated in the 1860s, flourished during the Gilded Age and lasted through most of the 20th century. (Photo of lumber wagon includes 2 children of Chas. Loose: Richard who eventually took charge of the business, and Sara: who later in life wrote an historical novel, *Laura Drescher* 1987 set in Brockton PA. fictitious name for Myerstown.)

## Vignette #11 - The 1890s: A Decade of Transition

Throughout America, the 1890s became a watershed in our history, forecasting new roles for our nation. The World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893 offered demonstrations of new industrial & mechanical products, provided a setting where many professional organizations got started, and where M.S. Hershey got the idea for making chocolate instead of caramels. Also, a new form of communication, the picture postcard, surfaced as a souvenir of that Fair! Here in Myerstown, higher education was in transition in the nineties. Palatinate College failed financially in the fall of 1894, but a hopeful new one opened on the same site after New Year's 1895 as Albright Collegiate Institute, with Charles S. "Pop" Kelchner as its very first graduate! Kelchner's father-in-law, James B. Moyer of Myerstown, published birds-eye views of dozens of Pennsylvania cities and towns as he assisted the nationally-known Thaddeus Mortimer Fowler producing panoramic views between 1889 and 1902. Here's the panoramic view of Myerstown that Fowler sketched in 1888 during which time he met Moyer. During the half century that was to follow, "Pop" Kelchner would make both Albright College and the St. Louis Cardinals better known.

Postcard is proof that Albright was co-educational from its start. Middle of decade, June 7, 1895, Myerstown Water Co. was created.

Myerstown's second high school built, 1895, at S. Railroad & Park Ave.

## Vignette #12 - Turn-of-the-Century Myerstown, 1901-1911

Kohl Brothers Well Drillers began as Kohl & Son in 1900 and would become the largest and

best equipped well drilling firm in Pennsylvania by the time they won the contract in the 1930s for drilling the original Pennsylvania Turnpike. The first decade of the 20th century in Myerstown witnessed continued growth of businesses, and in 1905, two industries that anchored employees here. That year, a gray iron foundry was established by David Dubble & Harry K. Zinn south along the railroad, and on East Main, S. Liebovitz & Sons, a New York garment firm, established a plant in Myerstown that would grow in size and employ hundreds of local citizens during its 81-year stay here. Albright College teams under Coach "Pop" Kelchner were playing larger schools such as Temple, Bucknell and Rutgers, and professors at the college were building houses on West Park Avenue as it became known as "Faculty Heights". Few streets were yet paved, and many homes depended upon cisterns on their property for water. Church and school libraries supplied books and reading materials; and fraternal organizations provided insurance and funeral benefits for families that could afford memberships.

### Vignette #13 - Birth of the Borough, 1912

As early as November 1909, a group of citizens held a meeting at the Keystone Fire Hall to form an organization to petition for borough government. Dr. A.E. Gobble of Albright College was chairman of a committee that conducted a campaign, the result of which was that Myerstown became incorporated as a borough on February 5, 1912 with a population of 2,335. First Burgess was Addison Bower, member of a well-known family of physicians. Following are surnames of other leaders of the borough movement: Beekey, Bleistine, Corl, Dongas, Greenawalt, Haak, Honker, Kalbach, Lindenmuth, Loose, Noll, Painter, Spangler, Uhruch and Wilhelm.

Photo of Edwin R. Noll, well-known community leader & banker during first half of 20th century.

Keystone Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1, whose hall was the site of meetings, and early movies, had been chartered on April 29, 1874 as Myerstown's second fire company.

Besides the birth of the borough in 1912, there was also the birth of the straight pretzel. George Holtzman invented the machine to bake Pretz sticks in 1912 at a bakery that he and George Karsnitz started on South Railroad Street.

### Vignette #14 - The First World War Years

The number of citizens from Myerstown Borough who served in our nation's military forces during WWI was 132 (130 in the Army and 2 in the Navy). Six men made the supreme sacrifice: George Gass, Ralph Haag, Ira Keller, John Peiffer, Ira Steiner, Elmer Woomer and Ira. I. Uhrich, the first casualty from Myerstown and for whom the American Legion Post No. 55, chartered in 1923, was named. Tragic as World War I *was*, our citizens at home also suffered a disaster that took more lives than the war: the Spanish influenza epidemic that reached its peak in late summer and fall of 1918, the very same time that the battles at the Meuse-Argonne were raging over in France.

### Vignette #15 - Myerstown During the Roaring Twenties

At the start of this decade, movies were silent and shown at the Keystone Fire Hall as well as at a building on West Carpenter Avenue that later became the Witter Cigar Factory. Many streets

had been paved by the early years of the decade, and electric street lights installed. Several women's groups took leadership roles in our community during the 1920s. The Woman's Club of Myerstown was organized in the fall of 1921 and has been very active in the community to this day. Also, a Girl Scout Troop, the Bluebirds, organized by Mrs. Carl Karman y in 1919, became very active during the 1920s. A Boy Scout Troop that had been chartered in 1915, did not become active until the end of the decade. Starting in the 1890s, Immigrants from Italy arrived in the Lebanon Valley to work in our limestone quarries; by 1926, when Mary, Gate of Heaven Church opened on South Railroad Street, they no longer had to go to Lebanon to worship. Also in 1926, Isaac & Edgar Bahney erected the first home solely for funeral purposes in Lebanon County. It stood aside of the furniture store on North College Street. On June 1, 1929, it felt like a *town* funeral when a motor caravan carrying the faculty and students of Albright College left Myerstown to relocate in Reading.

By the end of the decade, moving pictures that "talked" were shown at the Majestic Theater on Main Street, that later became the Hi-Way.

### Vignette #16 - The Depression Thirties in Myerstown

The Nineteen Thirties are remembered around the nation as a decade of economic depression, of hobo's tapping on the door for egg sandwiches (if you raised chickens as my family did), and of actually seeing dirty brown soil from the Dust Bowl of Oklahoma and the Plains states, flying high in the skies. Myerstonians apparently decided to make the best of it and fight depression by holding fairs and starting civic organizations. Incubated as an idea for a county fair, the Myerstown Community Fair started in 1934 and was held annually every October until 1958 at the high school - with large tents on the playground and displays of home-grown foods and flowers, and homemade clothes inside the building. With the exception of three WWII years, that fair, along with the town's annual picnic at Hershey each August, was a highlight of the year for townsfolk of all ages. An important industry was started in 1931 by CW. Whitmoyer in his Myerstown garage that by mid-century came to be widely known in the poultry pharmaceutical world: Whitmoyer Laboratories, Inc. By 1932, a Civic Club was formed to foster growth of the business & cultural life of our town. One of their ideas that did not take off: renaming Railroad Street, Tulpehocken Avenue. In 1936, the Myerstown Community Library was started, and by 1938, a Rotary Club had been organized in Myerstown. Toward the end of the decade, Pennsylvania Motor Police lived and trained for 2 years on the former Albright campus, and they trained on motorcycles.

### Vignette #17 - The 1940s - The Second World War

More than five hundred men and women from Myerstown served their country during World War II. Fifteen gave their lives: Frederick Boyer, Carl Boehler, Walter Firestine, Harry Forry, Richard Hibshman, Kenneth Line, Kenneth Leshner, Charles Long, Paul Leffler, Jr., George Ernfield, Elmer Becker, John W. Yeakley, Nelson Bennethum, Kenneth Hippert, Raymond Harshberger, and Homer Husler. On the home front, citizens planted victory gardens and conducted scrap drives, took shifts at Calcite Quarry to report every airplane that flew over our part of the Lebanon Valley and accepted rationing in many things, from gasoline to sugar. Harold F. Mohn of Myerstown, now in his 102nd year, was a participant in the invasion of Normandy in June 1944. In the years since, he has written dozens of patriotic poems, a fair number now cut in stone on monuments in Europe, as well as here in the US. Harold also wrote

a Bicentennial poem dedicated to Myerstown included in the 1968 history and that he has updated for our Sestercentennial.

After the war in 1947, a newly-merged industry - Winthrop-Stearns, Inc. a division of Sterling Drug - came to Myerstown, and it was a harbinger for the future that would bring the production of Bayer Aspirin here by 1964.

### Vignette #18 - Myerstown in the Nineteen Fifties

Despite the rise of Soviet Communism and Soviet Union's threats to use nuclear weapons, I doubt whether any folks in Myerstown built underground bomb shelters in the 1950s. By the end of this decade, not only were millions of houses built in the suburbs of America, but also a fleet of Veteran's Hospitals. Veterans were attending colleges on the GI Bill, as well as getting loans for homes and businesses. Television was in most of our homes, and the Ed Sullivan Show and Elvis Presley were household names. Cars had fins like this one: (slide #, & more folks took vacations oversea by air. In 1954, Quaker Alloy Casting Co. set up shop where Krum's Foundry had dried up in the 1930s and would employ over 700 workers in a short span of time. Many other new businesses, including Wenger's Farm Machinery in 1958, got started.

I left town for the Midwest during this decade, but friends here tell me that the 1950s in Myerstown still felt like the late 1940s after the War. However, when I came home for my mother's funeral in 1957, I discovered that the Hi-Way Theater had closed the year before... and in another year, the annual Community Fair also would be gone with the winds of time. However, the shirt factory was still operating, but soon to have a new name, Publix.

### Vignette #19 - Industries in the 1960s

In addition to pharmaceutical companies, during the 1960s, Myerstown was home to a fleet of other firms with sizeable numbers of employees: Durable Shoe Company owned by the George Karsnitz family, the Crescent Plastics Company, and the Quaker Alloy Company all experienced growth in the nineteen sixties. Still producing shirts, the Liebovitz family changed the name of their factory to Publix Shirt Co. Allen Holtzman who had been making ice cream at the Old Mill since 1938 was still in business & operating a frozen food locker as well.

In 1964, Whitmoyer Laboratories became a subsidiary of Rohm & Haas Co. of Philadelphia; and Sterling Drug began its production of Bayer Aspirin at its Myerstown plant. In 1968, Myerstown celebrated its bicentennial with diverse family, church and group related activities, and a huge parade, along with publication of a history book, and the start of restoration at the Isaac Meier Homestead.

### Vignette #20 - The Nineteen Seventies (USA Bicentennial Era)

Myerstown in the 1970s kept shifting gears as cybernetic applications continued to be studied and applied by many businesses and all large industries during this decade. Quaker Alloy Casting Company & Quaker Alloy Development Company, along with the Publix Corporation's garment factory and Sterling Drug's several divisions provided employment to hundreds of citizens in our town and from a wide area. Cybernetic operations invaded the business and industrial worlds at an accelerating pace during this decade.



Myerstown had a spirited and sizeable parade in the summer of 1976 to celebrate the nation's bicentennial; it was the only time during that decade that I visited Myerstown, and I watched the parade at the corner of West Main and Locust streets, not knowing then how prophetic a location that would turn out to be for my future here in my hometown. It would be on a visit 5 years later that I noticed a "For Sale" sign on the old Bowman Store building where Nora Yost more recently had operated a Pennsylvania Dutch Gift Haus store.

## Vignette #21 - The 1980s and 1990s in Myerstown

Cybernetic applications in all levels of business and industrial operations were being applied at an accelerating pace during this decade throughout America and the world. Small tailored businesses such as barber shops could still avoid computerization, but not educational institutions and libraries. Libraries were computerizing their card catalogs and circulation systems at rapid pace in the nineteen eighties. However, in Myerstown, Publix Shirt factory closed down in 1986, and the Quaker Alloy plants were showing signs of fatigue. However new businesses along Rte. 422 north of the borough & many outside of the borough in Jackson Township, such as Farmer Boy AG, kept on sprouting and growing. By the 1990s, economic signs for some industries in Myerstown improved. Agri-business, construction-related industries and pharmaceutical industries were among these. That was the case in the pharmaceutical industry, especially after the original Bayer firm of Germany regained ownership of American Bayer in the 1990s. Near the end of the 20th century, a huge new industry producing building shingles - Elk Corp. of Texas - chose to locate at the edge of the borough.

## Vignette #22(a) - The Twenty First Century

..... arrived with new concerns. People worried that cybernetic computerized applications that had developed in the last half century of the 20th century could cause confusion when the calendar reads "2000" instead of a "1" and a "9" (Y2K we called it). It turned out not to be the case. Our clocks still worked on New Year's 2000, and again, on New Year's 2001 (the date when the 21st century actually began).

By 2001, the Rte. 422 highway bypass built north of town in the 1940s had become our new main street with businesses and restaurants locating there. The segment that went through the borough was named Lincoln Avenue. A century ago where the highway is today, looked like this view (postcard) taken by Daniel Holtzman in 1908 from the steeple of the Reformed Church looking north over Old Union Cemetery.

Well before the start of this 21st century, Jackson Township surrounding Myerstown had developed a reputation as a retirement haven with communities such as Arbor Gate, developing. New "bedroom communities" such as Wheatland and Graystone, and The Gables at Jackson sprouted in the township. Then there's StoneRidge Community east of town, part in and part outside the borough line, the seed of which had been the Burd & Rodger's Home of the Evangelical Congregational Church located across from the Seminary (postcard) along Railroad Street during the 1940s.

## Vignette #22(b) - The Twenty First Century

There's also hope for a rebirth of activity along Main street in the downtown, and not only by those of us who yearn for the return of Embich's Taste Good, McQuate's five & dime, movies at the Hi-Way and the Soda Shack at Stitzel's, but because of two church-related organizations - *On Fire Youth Ministry* and *Fireplace Christian Fellowship* that are restoring buildings as well as faith, in the center of Myerstown. The *Fireplace* group has restored the Bahney House that now has several businesses as well as rooms and suites for rent. Across the street, Stitzel's Drugstore has been replaced by True Care Pharmacy and the Northwest Bank on the corner. East on Main in a former auto dealership showroom and garage is located Enck's Gun Barn providing space for the safe practice of weaponry. Still farther east in the former shirt factory, local entrepreneurs under the corporate name of *Dunamis Holdings* have provided spaces for well over a dozen small businesses to operate, and several large areas where collectibles can be sold. Many of us are eagerly awaiting the construction that is taking place at the former site of Wilhelm's Hardware.

Along the southern border inside our borough, Farmer Boy AG and the Bayer Corporation are growing at a healthy pace, as are Wenger's of Myerstown and the GAF Corporation across the borough line. Although the population of Myerstown has remained static at 3,100, Jackson Township keeps growing toward the 9,000 mark or higher.

Our former greystone school building is now our Borough Hall (postcard) and we have easy access to our latest library and post office structures as can be seen on this aerial view of Myerstown (postcard #7 in the 250th anniversary series).

It has been fun, as well as a history lesson for myself, to share Myerstown's heritage over 250 years with you today... .. and here's the Meier Homestead as restored, taken last fall... (postcard #11)

## Vignette #22(c) - The Twenty First Century

Harold F. Mohn, now in his 102nd year, wrote a 250th anniversary poem tribute to Myerstown, and asked me to read it because he could not be here today due to a health issue that developed the past week. He said that he would try to attend future 250th events.

Harold sends his best wishes to everyone here today, and asked that I read the poem that he wrote for our Sestercentennial...entitled... "*The 250th Anniversary of Myerstown*"

### *The 250th Anniversary of Myerstown*

*Almighty God, we ask your blessing  
On our beloved town  
And the 250th anniversary  
Of its founding and renown.*

*Myerstown was named for Isaac Meier  
The founder of our town.  
A man of wealth who was murdered  
But his murderer never found.*

*The landmarks of our lovely town  
We cherish and hold dear.  
Today they stand in memory  
Of our town's founding years.*

*The tombstones in the churchyards  
Where early settlers rest  
Date back to our town's infancy  
A visit will attest.*

*The Meier House as it was known  
Where Meier lived and died  
Has been restored and preserved  
And once more stands with pride.*

*On the 250th anniversary  
Of our beloved town  
Myerstown adds another chapter  
To its history and renown.*

*- Harold F. Mohn, January 2018*