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From the Collection: Strasburg Post Office Sign

by Joe Deery



Some readers can remember, while others are left to imagine, the feeling of a visit to Strasburg's Post Office at 10 East Main Street. This 57 inch wide by 23 inch high sign was hung above the old storefront, conspicuous but often unnoticed by those passing underneath. Through the large glass windows flanking the recessed double doors, it was easy to see the familiar face of the Postmaster, at work behind the counter. Familiar sounds followed in quick succession as you entered: the door's squeak, the muffled creaks of your footsteps on the wooden floorboards, and the bright greeting from the familiar voice of the person at the counter.

Sometimes the visit was just a quick in-and-out errand, without the slightest afterthought. Often though the trip was tinged or perhaps filled with emotion. Perhaps the envelope that you were carrying contained the order form for that special something you'd craved so many times in the Sears catalog. The Postmaster would cut a money order, you'd hand over your hard-earned cash, and that order would be on its way. So would your imagination, during the weeks that you spent anticipating the arrival of your package. It was an exciting day when you were back at the Post Office to retrieve your bundle. Or, perhaps you felt the holiday spirit as

you clutched a bundle of greeting cards, with wishes of blessings for your closest friends and family. Maybe you came to send a postcard from Chandler's Drug Store, dashing a quick note to remind somebody that you were thinking of them. Some, exchanging letters and packages with a soldier in harm's way, may have experienced emotion that overwhelmed all other thoughts.

The services provide by the post office have steadily increased over time. For much of American history, mail delivery was not available. Mail was held at post offices and advertised for recipients to retrieve. In the early colonial days, the only post offices were in the coastal cities. People in the "back country" of Lancaster and its surroundings would have to travel themselves or send an agent to Philadelphia to retrieve their mail. By the 1750s, a post office had been established in Lancaster. Arthur Hecht of the National Archives and Records Service lists the 59 post offices that had been established in Pennsylvania by 1799. Among them, the only post offices between Lancaster and Philadelphia were Strasburg, established February 2, 1793, and Downingtown, established in 1796.

Both Strasburg and Downingtown were situated along the Old Conestoga Road,

which ran from Philadelphia to the Susquehanna River. It was *the* route for commerce between Philadelphia and what is now Lancaster County. Strasburg was ideally situated about one day's travel from the Susquehanna, and developed as a resting place for tired, hungry, and thirsty drivers and their teams. For the sake of cost and efficiency in transporting the mail, the Postmaster General sometimes required post offices to be located near a tavern. As a town of taverns, Strasburg was an ideal location.

Neither the location of Strasburg's first post office nor the names of its earliest Postmasters are known. The first known Postmaster was James Whitehill, who was appointed in 1804. Whitehill was a merchant who kept a store in the limestone house that still stands at 33 East Main Street.

In 1810, revised postal laws required that postmasters keep their office open "on every day on which a mail bag ... shall arrive" - including Sundays. The reaction from Strasburg was in strong opposition. In a letter to the Postmaster General, this argument was made:

"Moreover, the indulgence granted to mail coaches to pursue their daily vocation on that day holds forth a demoralizing precedent to the citizens of the United States. Many teamsters, disposed to commit breaches of the Sabbath, by



top: Post Office location on Center Square, 1885-1913. The woman is standing in front of the Post Office door. Note the sign above the door.
 middle: Post Office location at 10 East Main Street, 1913-1966 (photo by Joe Deery)
 bottom: Post Office location at 4 North Decatur Street, 1966-2001.e

transporting merchandise on that day plead, in justification of their conduct, to be entitled to the same privileges as those which mail coaches enjoy."

In other words, if the teamsters see the mail carriers working on Sunday, they'll want to work too, and the people of Strasburg will never get a day of rest! Ultimately, the Sunday mail continued.

Postmasters changed from time to time, and when they did, usually the post office location changed as well. In 1866, the thirteenth person appointed since Whitehill was an African American woman named Ann McKinney. She was Postmistress for five years and conducted the post office business in the house at 20 West Main Street. Her relative, Allen, later ran a barber shop there. In 1885, when William F. Caruthers became postmaster, he moved the post office to 1 West Main Street, on the northwest corner of Center Square. When he died at the age of 36, his wife Mary became Postmistress. Mary was succeeded in 1892 by Miss Lillian Holl, who continued in the same location - until her surprise wedding in December of 1893 to Isaac N. Bachman. A married woman could not be Postmistress! She was replaced by D. Miller Aument 10 days later. During Postmaster Aument's watch, the post office became a money order office as well. Money orders had been established during the Civil War as a safe way for soldiers to send money home.

Home delivery of mail appeared first in cities, followed by rural delivery, and finally by village delivery. Rural Free Delivery (RFD) commenced in 1896 and reached Strasburg in 1903. Deliveries were made to home mailboxes outside of the village.

In 1911, the Postal Savings System was established, in response to complaints from farmers and others about the reliability of commercial banks. The system allowed the public to set up savings accounts at the post office, which then redeposited the money in designated banks. Strasburg became a Postal Savings Bank in 1912. The system was especially popular during the Great Depression, but eventually became unnecessary and was eliminated in 1967.

On April 1, 1913, the Post Office moved to 10 East Main Street, where our sign was displayed. Here, the Post Office played its part in life's dramas, large and small, for 53 years, much longer than at any other location. Isaac N. Bachman

was postmaster when the move took place. His successor J. Frank Johnston was in charge in March of 1920, when village delivery was finally established in Strasburg. Residents no longer had to go to the post office to send or receive their mail. F. Earl Rice was employed as the town's first mail carrier. Martin Weaver was postmaster for 10 years, followed by Charles Johnston, who served for 12. Walter Hoffman was the last postmaster at the East Main Street office.

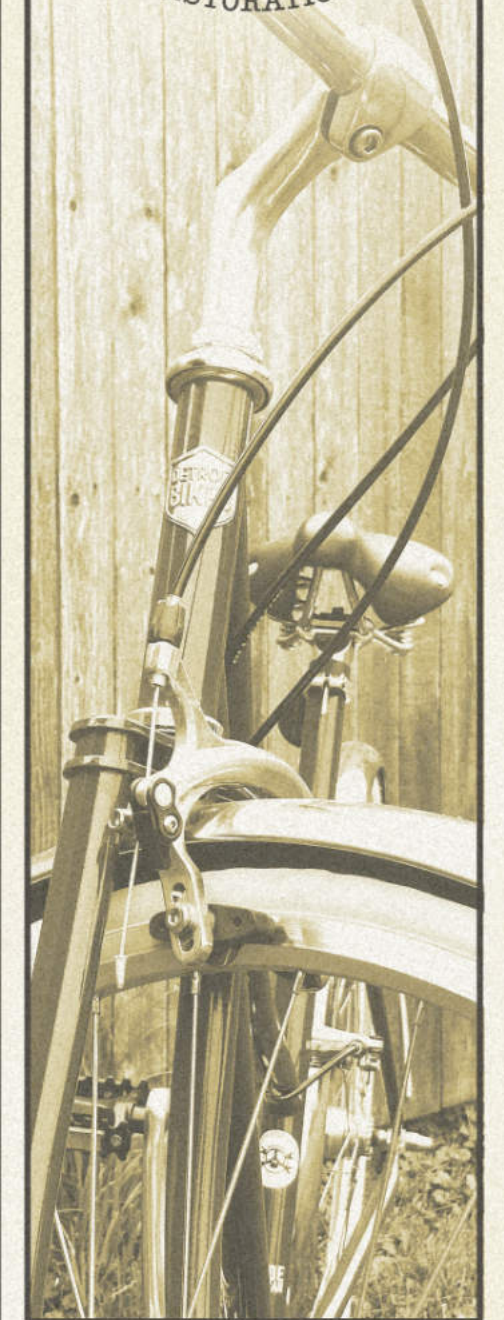
After a long period of stability, change finally came in 1965, when construction of a new and modern Post Office building commenced at 7 North Decatur Street. At that time, the 1964 razing of the "Washington House" on the northeast corner of Center Square was still a fresh wound. In a November 1965 article in the Strasburg Weekly News, the author bemoaned the new building's modern style, mused about the loss of Strasburg's charm, and worried that the old Post Office building might also meet the wrecking ball.

The old Post Office sign came down in 1966, when business moved to the new location. Somehow, the sign ended up stored in the back of Witmer's IGA grocery store, which occupied the adjacent building at 6 East Main. Witmer's closed in 1977, and the sign resurfaced at auction when the store's contents were sold. Purchased at the auction, the sign found its way to the Strasburg Heritage Society, which had formed in 1972.

Despite the previous year's disparaging comments about the new building, the North Decatur Post Office was completed and dedicated on June 26, 1966. A dedication committee of 13 Strasburg citizens provided a community-oriented event complete with VIPs, music by Lampeter-Strasburg Elementary Band, speeches, a flag raising, prayers and benediction, an open house, refreshments at Zeke's Restaurant, and "usherettes."

The most recent chapter took place in 2001, when the post office was relocated to the present site at 200 Historic Drive. Postmaster Mark Adams explained that space had become a problem at the North Decatur office, and the new building doubled the available space. You can think about the Strasburg Post Office's long history the next time you visit.

One last thing...
How did "May Post Office Road" get it's name?
 The road is named for the location at its southern terminus, where it meets Valley Road (Rt 372). In 1847, a post office was established in that area, and it needed a name. The name "May" was chosen. The post office was located in various stores in the vicinity over the years. But the name "May Post Office" gave an identity to a previously anonymous rural locale - and also to a road. The name has stood the test of time.



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THE HONORABLE HERBERT E. MILLEN

by Joe Deery



Barbara Bachman Mable grew up in the beautiful house at 7 South Decatur Street, where her parents operated the funeral home that has been a fixture in Strasburg for generations. Their home's backyard intersected the backyard of the house at 20 West Main Street, where a barbershop has operated since 1875. The funeral home Bachman family and the barbershop Stumpf family were familiar neighbors. So of course, Barbara knew of Herbert Millen, a relative of the Stumpfs. Born in 1888, Herbert had grown up in Strasburg. His career in law took him to Philadelphia, but he was well loved in Strasburg, and maintained close ties to his hometown. In 1947, he became the first African-American judge in Pennsylvania, serving in the Municipal Court system in Philadelphia.

When Judge Millen invited young Barbara and her friend Joan Reinhart to visit his court, they were thrilled! On the big day, they boarded a train to Philadelphia. About an hour and a half later, they stepped out into the bustling city, and made their way on foot to City Hall. The court-

room's size, or perhaps its import, impressed Barbara. When Judge Millen appeared, he was happy to see them. Before commencing with the day's proceedings, he asked his guests to stand, and he introduced them. Then he went on to fondly describe the little town of Strasburg, where he had grown up. He was very proud of his origins. Barbara felt pride too, appreciating that this esteemed man represented her home commu-

nity. When the session broke for lunch, Judge Millen treated the ladies to freshly cooked lobster at Bookbinder's restaurant. Soon they were on their way back to Strasburg, with a memory that is still cherished more than 60 years later.

Telling of Herbert Millen's life story would be incomplete without a portrayal of his character. For that reason, perhaps the best place to start is at the end; that is, at his funeral. Herbert died in July of 1959, while on vacation in San Francisco. He had been a long-time member and elder at the Reeves Memorial Presbyterian Church in West Philadelphia, and was a friend of pastor Rev. E. Luther Cunningham. At the funeral, Pastor Cunningham elaborated beautifully on the qualities that made Herbert Millen who he was. He illustrated the value of a per-

son like Herbert Millen, then and now. Here are a few excerpts:

"We live, today, in a world made desperate for lack of gratitude, for lack of understanding, for lack of love, for lack of courage."

He inspired reason for gratitude...

"Herbert Millen, by his gentleness, his compassion, his understanding, by his many sacrificial labors for the common good, by his sincere interest in the welfare of young people, earned our undying gratitude. ... He brought a sincerity of dedication, an integrity of mind, and a grasp of principle which commanded the respect of all associated with him. No question regarding the welfare of people was too insignificant, no personal problem of another was too unimportant for his concern. None of us ever discovered the boundary or depth of his kind and liberal heart."

He showed uncommon understanding...

"Herbert E. Millen understood the stark, desperate, yawning, colossal need abroad today, some of it the physical need for bread, some of it the mental need for intellectual understanding, and some of it the spiritual need for human friendship and divine

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Chip Snyder, Norm Mable, Chad Snyder



forgiveness. . . . Because he had the capacity for humane outreach and deep compassion — blended with a winsome sense of the human — he was aware of the existence of such need, and recognizing it, took his part in satisfying such need. And so, many a person among us is grateful to him for his compassionate understanding of the foibles and eccentricities of people, for his sympathy in our troubles, for his advice in our difficulties, and for his aid in our need.”

His was guided by love...

“In him, there was no search for self-aggrandizement; there was no grasp for place and preference, but only a permeating unrest in his quiet but relentless quest for a way to make life and living more tolerable for others. . . . You see, to Herbert Millen, men and women were not races or classes or groups. They were human beings, blundering toward a more ideal society. He was aware of the deceits of the unscrupulous; conversant with the techniques of the selfish, but always he was striving — by what he was and by what he did — to change human weaknesses into human assets for the common good. People, high and low, in all walks of life, trusted him implicitly because in him there was no guile. Really, he demonstrated to us that a man willing to forget self, willing to be utterly honest and unashamedly frank and candid, can break new pathways for human understanding and put new meaning into “the dignity of man.”

And, he demonstrated courage...

“Herbert E. Millen was a man of quiet, yet determined courage. Yet in him there was no vindictiveness. He could fight for what he believed to be the right, with an unwearying persistence that never counted the odds. He could stand up and carry on in the face of opposition, misrepresentation, repulse, even the failure of those on whom he counted.”



Judge Herbert E. Millen

colorization by palette.fm

“So, Herbert E. Millen [was] a humble man in whom there was no arrogance or vanity or selfish pride; a wise and honest man who strove always for constancy between his ideals and his deeds; a great and just judge because he was a good and understanding and compassionate man devoted to the protection of personal rights and the promotion of public ends.”

Pastor Cunningham was not alone in his assessment of Judge Millen. Raymond Pace Alexander, a now-famous African American lawyer in Philadelphia, was a contemporary of Millen. On the Judge’s passing, Alexander delivered remarks at a memorial service in City Hall,

Philadelphia. He offered this characterization:

“Judge Millen, as a practicing lawyer, possessed the same high qualities that endeared people to him... his unpretentious yet cultured manner, his modest eloquence, his candor and complete lack of obsequiousness or parochialism, yet at all times he was fluent and persuasive.

“He brought these same fine qualities . . . to the high office of Judge... More than that, Judge Millen possessed those attributes so necessary and all important to a great Judge. He had the rare capacity of a patient, intelligent, and courteous listener; the ability to work long and arduous hours, a carry-over from his work as a youth; and

the earnestness and love for his work in this great Court for the honor of which he dreamed long – and so cherished. His untimely death removed from our midst a man before whom his brethren at our Bar loved to appear, a man whom no other was received so well and whom no other was more courteous.

“Judge Millen’s life is a remarkable example of triumph over years, of patience and hope. Long may his example be followed. Long may his memory live.”

With these portraits in mind, it’s time to explore Herbert Millen’s life story.

The Millen name was well known in Lancaster. Herbert’s grandfather, Edward Millen had moved to Lancaster in 1870, and worked as a coachman for the Coleman family. He became a significant landowner and a community leader. Politically, he was a “Lincoln Republican,” as many African Americans were in the years following the Civil War, and he was active in promoting the party within Lancaster’s Black population. In 1900, he declined a nomination to run for a judgeship in the city.

Herbert’s father, John A. Millen, was a barber. In 1886, he married Mary Emma Stumpf. She was one of three sisters, and had three brothers who were also barbers. The Millens already had a 16-month old boy named Raymond when baby Herbert came along in June of 1888. Circumstances suggest that the small family was struggling, and when Herbert was six months old, the Millens moved into the house at 20 West Main Street in Strasburg. Allen McKinney operated a barbershop there with help from Mary Emma’s brothers John and Scott, while her sister Naomi worked as McKinney’s housekeeper. Perhaps the extended family helped the young mother to manage the work that comes with two little sons.

It’s not clear how long the Millens stayed in the small house at 20 West Main, but by 1894, they had moved to a rented house at 111 West

Main, just west of the intersection with Fulton Street. John Millen operated a barbershop of his own there. There were now two more children – Foster, and Mabel.

Barbershops were a prominent feature in Herbert’s young world. At the time, barbershops were a fraternal hangout as much as they were a place for a shave and haircut. In the barbershop, the men could be themselves. The full range of different personalities and points of view would be on display for an attentive boy or young man to absorb. The shops of his father and uncles were probably an early training ground as Herbert learned the ways of the world.

All of the Millen children attended the Strasburg Public School, just a block away. There would be no excuse for tardiness! And if something exciting happened there, they could easily sprint home at the end of the day to spill the thrilling details. The brothers all excelled at school; Raymond and Foster were their class valedictorians. The *Lancaster Intelligencer* newspaper’s account of Foster’s graduation dedicated a paragraph titled “A Model Pupil” to present Foster and the Millen family as exceptional, well liked, and well respected. The reporter expected a bright future for



Herbert Millen’s childhood home at 111 West Main Street (photo by Jim Croft)

Foster and his older brother Herbert. People who remembered Herbert growing up in Strasburg recalled that they thought of him as just another kid.

Herbert did not manage to become valedictorian of the 1906 class of Strasburg High. His commencement speech was, however, remarkable. In retrospect, it shows that he had already formed a moral basis that would guide the rest of his life. He chose to speak about “character,” saying:

“In its noblest embodiment, it exemplifies human nature in its highest forms, for it exhibits man at his best. Men of character are the conscience of the society to which they belong. . . . Use the experience of life, whether it be of joy or sorrow, as steps in an upward climb. There is only one thing you can carry into eternity – your character.”

Herbert honed his work ethic by working to earn money to pay for college. On Monday mornings in the summer, he would travel to the farm of Galen Barr, near New Providence, and would spend the entire week there, not returning home until Saturday night. He learned farm work, and also learned to speak the Pennsylvania German dialect fluently. On the sweltering hot days of late summer, Herbert helped with the tobacco harvest. In order to dry the tobacco leaves, the large plants were cut off at ground level, then the base of each stem was skewered onto a wooden pole called a lath. The laths would then be hung in a barn to dry. Spudding was a physically demanding job, but Herbert claimed that at age 14, he could spud tobacco as fast as the grown men.

When work on the farm was slow, Herbert found another demanding job. He went to work as a blacksmith’s helper, swinging a 16 pound sledge to shape red-hot iron. He was a muscular teenager, and was able to prove it by lifting a blacksmith’s anvil over his head.

Encouraged by his High School teacher Miss Annie Heibach and Presbyterian Church pastor Rev. Samuel D. Manifold, Herbert enrolled in Lin-

coln University in Oxford, PA, and began his studies in the fall of 1906. With close ties to the Presbyterian Church, the University had been established in 1854 “for the scientific, classical and theological education of colored youth of the male sex.” With a significant Princeton-educated staff and rigorous curriculum, this liberal arts university and seminary was also known as “the Black Princeton.” Herbert immersed himself in his studies, literally “burning the midnight oil,” as electric lighting had not yet come to Lincoln. His four-year education focused on Sociology and Economics, and he distinguished himself in oration competitions. The greening optimism of Spring framed the 1910 Commencement for Herbert and his classmates. It was time for this classically-educated barber’s son and farm boy from Strasburg to face the wider world.

Race had apparently not been much of a liability for Herbert as he was growing up in Strasburg or as he attended University. But that was to change when he moved to Philadelphia. In 1910, a mass exodus from the southern states had begun, as African Americans relocated to northern industrialized cities such as Philadelphia in search of better lives. In 1910, about 86,000 African Americans lived in Philadelphia. By 1920, that number was nearly 136,000, and 253,000 by 1940. A black person in the southern states lived under a system of legalized discrimination and segregation, codified in the so-called “Jim Crow” laws. They lived in fear of racially motivated violence. And the prospects for jobs was poor, as the cotton-eating insect called the boll weevil decimated southern agriculture. For many, the northern cities promised a pathway away from oppression, and a chance to build a full, free, and more prosperous life.

The reality in Philadelphia was far from ideal. Although there were no Jim Crow laws, segregation was widely practiced. Availability of jobs and

housing depended on race. Service was denied to blacks by many restaurants, hotels, banks, health care providers, and more. Even some churches and schools were segregated.

Facing these realities in Philadelphia, Herbert began to build a life. In October of 1913, he successfully navigated the housing and credit markets to purchase a row home at 25 N. Ruby Street in West Philadelphia, with a mortgage of \$1500. Later that year, he married Carrie W. Whiting of Alexandria, Virginia. He was earning a living as a postal clerk at Penn Square Station, near City Hall. Not much else is known from this time period, but the young couple must have been saving their money. In 1917, Herbert was accepted into the University of Pennsylvania Law School and began his studies.

The three years in Law School were intense, divided between study and earning money to pay the bills. Every night, he was on duty for a full shift at the Post Office, returning home in time to catch four hours of sleep. He kept up that pace, and graduated in 1920. That same year, he was admitted to practice in the Pennsylvania Bar. He quickly found employment with George W. Mitchell.

Mitchell had opened his practice in Philadelphia in 1898. He worked actively for racial justice using a two-pronged approach. The first part was to promote self-reliance for African Americans by helping them to establish businesses to serve their own communities. The second part was to advocate for civil rights through legal means. There were other people at the time who espoused alternative strategies – more radical or more passive. But Mitchell’s approach, which was pragmatic and reflected a faith in the justice system, was a natural fit for Herbert Millen.

George Mitchell had developed expertise in the real estate business. He saw that an unavailability of credit for African Americans made it difficult for them to purchase homes. So

he focused his energies on providing legal services to support building and loan associations that were being established by African Americans. Beyond providing counsel for the associations, Mitchell, and then Millen, kept busy “making settlements” for property sales. That included drafting and filing the deed and mortgage documents, arranging for title insurance, and other legal details. Millen was kept busy serving about 30 building and loan associations. The associations were successful in their mission. Foreclosures were rare, as the associations worked with borrowers to ensure successful repayment of loans.

The extreme racial violence in the Illinois capital of Springfield in 1908 called attention to the widespread national trauma that was the nightmare of African Americans. In response, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1909. When the Philadelphia Branch was formed in 1911, George Mitchell was one of the founding members.



Herbert Millen, from the Philadelphia Tribune, August 23, 1924.

When Herbert Millen joined the Philadelphia NAACP, there was plenty of civil rights work to be done. But there was also a need to keep new discriminatory practices from gaining a foothold as the African American population grew. On this front, he worked to resist segregation in Philadelphia public schools, investigating legal avenues to challenge the practice. He led the Legal Aid Committee which helped complainants secure legal representation, and he provided legal advice to the organization at the state level. In 1929, he became President of the NAACP's Philadelphia Branch.

Herbert Millen became involved in politics during the Great Depression years of the 1930s. He spoke persuasively and raised money on behalf of the Republican party, and campaigned for governor Gifford Pinchot. His prominence grew, and he was soon recognized as leader of the state's African American constituency.

In 1932, after constructing a new elementary school in the Philadelphia

suburb of Berwyn, the school district began segregating children by race. Six grades of African American children would be relegated to one room in the old school building, while white children would fill the new school. The black children's parents sued the school district and began a boycott of the school that dragged on for two years. Resolution was ultimately the result of the parents' persistence, the work of attorney Raymond Pace Alexander, support from NAACP and other civil rights organizations, and pressure on Pennsylvania Attorney General William Schnader as he was running for the office of governor. After delaying, Schnader finally joined the lawsuit and appointed Herbert Millen and Harry Cheatham as Deputy Attorneys General. They met with the school district and settled the case outside of court, ending the segregation.

Herbert returned to Lancaster County often. He was in demand as a speaker for all kinds of events. He spoke to school alumni,

church congregations, school assemblies, at political rallies, and a banquet for Olympian Barney Ewell. His trips home often included a simpler pleasure – he was known to enjoy stopping to talk to farmers in Pennsylvania German dialect.

Herbert would travel to York to visit his father. In Strasburg, he would be sure to visit his aunt Naomi Stumpf in the old house at 20 West Main in Strasburg where he had lived as an infant, and where uncles John and Scott Stumpf still kept the barbershop going. In 1936, Herbert and Foster jointly purchased that house and shop. They did some renovations, and Naomi continued to live there until her passing in 1947.

While Herbert's career was unfolding in Philadelphia, his brothers had a more difficult time. Foster had followed in Herbert's footsteps and graduated from Lincoln University in 1915, finding employment as a school teacher in Kennett Square, Pa. Raymond had a wife named Clara and lived in Asbury Park, N.J. With World War I escalating, all of the Millen "boys" submitted their draft cards in 1917. Raymond's indicated a hope that as a married man, he might be exempt. But luck was not with them – Foster was drafted in October of 1917, and Raymond six months later. Both saw action fighting in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in France. Foster served in the 368th Infantry, under French command. His unit was involved in heavy fighting between September until the Armistice in November, with many casualties. Raymond served in the 349th Field Artillery, which saw action in the final few weeks of the conflict.

By 1920, Herbert's mother and sister Mabel were living together in Philadelphia. Foster stayed with them after returning to civilian life. He never married, and found a job as a postal clerk. Raymond got a job in Philadelphia with Westinghouse. Both men kept these jobs until retirement.

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Herbert Millen, after swearing-in as Philadelphia Assistant Director of Public Safety
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Mabel wanted to become a nurse. As an African-American, her options to train as a nurse were limited, so in 1910, she moved to Philadelphia to attend nursing school at Mercy Hospital. The Mercy and nearby Frederic Douglass hospitals had been founded to serve patients and train medical professionals of all races and creeds. Practically, that meant that they served Philadelphia's African Americans, who were often denied care elsewhere. She married and had taken her husband's surname of Ferrill. Sadly, she passed away at age 34 from complications of appendicitis. The year before Mabel's death, Herbert became a trustee of Mercy Hospital. Perhaps Mabel had encouraged him. Whatever the reason, he tirelessly served the hospital for the rest of his life, and was instrumental in ensuring its ability to meet the needs of the community.

Mercy and Fredrick Douglass hospitals were located a few blocks apart, just south of City Hall. Their origin stories were linked, and they faced similar problems. Their facilities were old and not well suited to their needs. Both struggled to cover expenses because many of their patients were unable to pay. They were small, and without links to larger, more modern hospitals, they had trouble keeping up with modern methods and technologies. These problems, in turn, hurt their ability to attract patients and outside funding.

In the political world, Herbert had become adept at fundraising. As a new trustee at Mercy he began his unflagging work in fundraising. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, neither Mercy nor Douglass hospital were able to make ends meet; things were worse for Douglass. The idea to merge the hospitals surfaced in 1940. Together, the hospitals could benefit from economies that would allow them to stabilize finances and offer better services. The merger was initially rejected by the Directors at Mercy, but as the financial health of both organizations deteriorated, Herbert Millen's concern grew for those served by the hospitals. In 1947, he sponsored a movement that finally culminated in a creation of a unified Mercy-Douglass Hospital in March of 1948. He also became president of the Board of Directors in that year, a position he held for ten years. The need for a new building was obvious, so Millen secured over \$3,000,000. The dream materialized, and the new hospital opened in 1956. He received many awards in gratitude for his service.

Herbert Millen's quest for a seat on the judge's bench started in 1935, when he ran against a sitting judge and lost. He was appointed to an unpaid position on the Philadelphia County Board of Public Assistance in 1939. When a vacancy opened on the bench of Philadelphia's Municipal Court in early 1938, and then again in 1939, the Republican party endorsed Millen as a candidate, but he was passed over. He was, however, surprised to receive a significant appointment in March of 1940.

Philadelphia mayor Robert Lambertson tapped Millen to join the mayor's "Little Cabinet" as Assistant Director of Public Safety. The job paid \$4500 per year. At the swearing in ceremony, Mayor Lambertson explained "My appointment is based solely on recognition of Mr. Millen's ability as a lawyer, to get along with men, and to command men." The appointment was also seen as recognition of his work and leadership among Philadelphia's African American Republicans.

James H. Malone, Millen's boss, supervised the people of the Police and Fire Departments, Fire Marshals, the electric bureau, elevator operators, and building inspectors, totaling about 7500 people. The responsibilities that came with the new office in City Hall were quite varied. Herbert's background in law was an asset that had been sorely missing, as legal issues often arose in police work. As a leader, Herbert had to know how his reports were doing, so he would occasionally join them, for example by accompanying firefighters as they answered an alarm. There were routine tasks, such as swearing in of new employees. He might need to attend conferences on policing. Sometimes he would be at schools, to discuss problems of delinquency with the school staff, or to talk to students in an assembly about safety. In this job, he was gaining direct experience inside of the city's government – the legal considerations, City Hall dynamics, and the real functioning of the Police force.

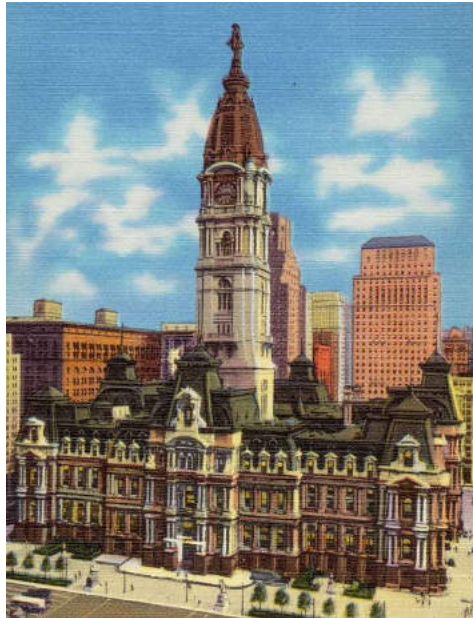
Millen's bid to become a judge continued. In 1941, backers lobbied unsuccessfully for his appointment to fill a vacancy. In June of 1943, he turned down an appointment to the State Parole Board. Instead, he announced in July that he was running for a seat on the Municipal Court. He ran on both Republican and Democratic tickets, although both parties endorsed the incumbents. Millen stated that he felt he should run "to keep alive the truth that Negroes should have recognition" on the Philadelphia Judiciary. His bid was not successful.

In 1946, a sitting judge's death led Millen's supporters to petition for his appointment to the open seat. When the job was given to someone else, Herbert Millen resigned from the position of Assistant Director of Public Safety, which he had held for six years. He was frustrated by yet another refusal to accept an African American as a judge, knowing that he was well qualified. He had worked persistently over the years to generate political support for those who now refused to make the appointment.

His departure sent shock waves through the Mayor's office, but Herbert would be fine. He had no problem resuming his private practice. He was very busy with Mercy Hospital. He had become president of Provident Home Industrial Mutual Life Insurance Company in 1943. He was serving as Grand Master of the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge. He raised money for the Community Chest and Negro College Funds. And as November 1946 approached, he went to work campaigning for the Republican tickets.

The end of World War II brought a housing crisis to Philadelphia, and rents skyrocketed. Millen was appointed to a City Housing Rent Commission, formed to stem the tide of evictions. In September, the Philadelphia Inquirer wrote "Millen deserves a bow for the fine, fair way he has been handling his cases." The statement foreshadowed what would happen next – in October, Pennsylvania Gov-

ernor James Duff appointed Millen to the bench in Philadelphia's Municipal Court, filling a seat left open by the death of a judge. Republican leaders spoke of the "overwhelming logic" of his appointment. At last, Herbert Millen had achieved his long-sought goal.



Philadelphia City Hall

“All rise! The Philadelphia Municipal Court is now in session, the Honorable Judge Herbert E. Millen presiding.” Judge Millen enters wearing his black robe, and takes his seat on the bench. His appearance and manner set the tone of professionalism and efficiency for everything that goes on in his courtroom. Bernard Nichols, better known as “Jim,” is the clerk, and it's his job to call the day's cases, in order. People of all dispositions appear in court, and “Jim” is uniformly courteous, respectful, and considerate to all of them. The first cases called are for litigants who have lawyers, in order to respect their time. This combined with his even-handed conduct of cases makes Judge Millen a favorite among attorneys. Seated in front of the bench, Assistant District Attorney Leon Higgenbotham represents the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The entrance to the court is guarded by deputy sheriff Walter Short. It's his job to make sure that those who

must remain in court do so. His purposeful stance communicates his authority. The court has a registered nurse ready to serve in an emergency. Marian Ray Harris fills this role with charm and efficiency.

This was the scene observed by Philadelphia Tribune reporter Washington Rhodes on a hot summer day in 1953. When Millen accepted his appointment in 1947, he said that he viewed it not as a personal triumph, but as a step forward for his race. His courtroom demonstrated the progress. When he became a judge, there were no African-American court officers within 100 miles of Philadelphia. In the 1953 scene depicted above, all of the named participants were African-Americans. These people were contributing in jobs important to running the city. And as they did so in this thoroughly interracial court, they demonstrated for skeptics that an integrated society could really work.

Judge Millen became sought after as his reputation grew. In 1951, he spoke on Edward R. Murrow's radio program called “This I Believe,” which featured the insights of prominent public figures. A transcription of Millen's presentation is featured in the box on the next page.

Already an ordained Ruling Elder at Reeves Presbyterian Church, in 1948 Millen was elected to the General Council of the Presbyterian Church, USA. In 1953, he became Vice President of Lincoln University's Board of Trustees. In 1950, he was appointed to Philadelphia's Charter Commission, where he was one of its most active members. On the verge of financial collapse, the city drafted the Home Rule Charter, a “constitution” that allowed it to structure its government and collect taxes independently of the state. Millen successfully pushed to include establishment of the Commission on Human Relations. Its mission is “to fight discrimination, ensure equal rights, and help build stronger communities.”

This I Believe: A Potential of Decency, by Herbert E. Millen

I find that a courtroom is a place which constantly taxes one's beliefs in life and humanity: The boy who robbed a service station knew it was wrong, but he did it anyway. The mother who abandoned her children in a cold flat while she went to a dance was sorry, but she would probably do it again. The list is endless, the misdeeds and misfortunes crowded into a court calendar often seem to make a mockery of the things we have been taught to regard as virtuous and good. Nevertheless, I am something of an optimist. I still believe that man is basically a positive creature capable of great things beyond himself.

It is ironic, perhaps, but it usually takes a disaster to bring out the best in people. Invariably in a flood or famine or in midst of war, we become a little more human, a little more brotherly toward our immediate neighbors. That proves, I think, that a potential of decency exists in us, but the constant strain of living can easily obscure that potential.

People are fallible and weak. When I was a boy, I remember there was a rocking chair in our house I kept tripping over. Every time, I would turn around and give it a vicious kick. Once, after I had nearly broken my foot, I realized that I wasn't hurting anybody but myself. I think it is important to discover and admit one's own imperfections, then it is easier to understand and endure them in somebody else.

Inevitably, I am sensitive to prejudice. I appreciate, now, that prejudice is a childish thing, as senseless a reaction as kicking a chair, but it does exist. It is a cause of artificial differences which separate people. However, these differences are worn down as people come to know each other. Strangers thrown together come to know themselves for what they are, not for what they thought they were. It has been my observation that no matter who they are or where they come from or what they look like, people do respond to kindness and understanding. Therein lies my belief that an operable brotherhood

of humans, while still a long way off, can be achieved if we can train ourselves to think and act first of all as human beings, not just as members of a certain group, race, creed, or even nationality.

There is no use denying that I sometimes become impatient and discouraged at the slowness of progress along these lines. When I do, I am frank to say that I find support in my religious beliefs. There is too much lip service being given to Christian ideals these days, and that applies both inside church and out. But I have yet to find a sounder code of ethics and behavior than the Sermon on the Mount, or a more reassuring message than the 23rd Psalm. When I come across a familiar passage in the Bible, it is like getting a letter from my mother when I am away in a strange place. It is a friendly and recognizable message, and it makes me feel calm and warm. I cannot analyze all the reasons for this, but that does not bother me. The experience of comfort is no less real, and I need it in order to face the harshness of reality.

"A Potential of Decency," written by Judge Herbert E. Millen, circa early 1950s, part of the This I Believe Essay Collection found at thisibelieve.org/essay16823/. Copyright ©2005–2023 by This I Believe, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

The Millens never had any children of their own, but they had raised Carrie's niece, Frances Whiting Edwards. Judge Millen was dedicated to the welfare of children, and served in the juvenile division of the Philadelphia Municipal Court. He turned down a "promotion" to the Common Pleas Court in 1953, preferring to keep his position. But escalating juvenile delinquency and the lack of action to improve the situation was deeply disheartening for a man who had spent his life working to improve the lives of others. In 1954 hearings on juvenile delinquency, he expressed that adults "don't understand that the greatest natural resource which we have in America is the youth. They don't understand that as they would have those children grow they must treat them, just like planting a tree. They have gotten away from the tenets of

the old faith." By 1957, the frustration of the cases before him prompted him to request and receive a transfer. He felt that the remedies available to him to help young people were terribly inadequate. "I always have been and I always will be interested in the welfare and well-being of children. But just sitting there and listening to the failings of boys and girls and seeing them go down further on each appearance before me has become too much."

Herbert's despair was heightened in 1956 by the death of his wife of 42 years, Carrie. Herbert would marry again, to Madeline Green, a teacher. They were wed only five months before his own passing in July of 1959.

Herbert Millen's interest in youth and his fondness for Strasburg drew him home for the dedication of the new Lampeter-Strasburg High School

in 1957. There, he spoke about the importance of unified efforts of the school, family, and church in helping children to become mature adults.

Herbert always enjoyed his trips back home to Strasburg. He returned for his final visit to see his friend Barbara Bachman, who had visited his court, wed to Ron Mable.

During a prior visit, he had spoken at Strasburg's Methodist Church. His message was "The universal unifying element that shall bring all mankind together into one band of brotherhood is *understanding*." Herbert Millen's life path exposed him to an uncommon variety of people, with a panoply of backgrounds, points of view, strengths, flaws, and beliefs. He knew well what understanding was and what it could do. He showed us the progress that can result when understanding motivates actions.

THE WILLIAM & ABIGAIL PHILLIPS HOUSE

20 WEST MAIN STREET, c.1751

BY TOM LAINHOFF

A pedestrian strolling past the white 1½ story house and barbershop at 20 West Main Street might never suspect the home's historic past. Beneath the siding hides an early log house. In its first days, this house was the setting for the daily struggle of colonial life in Pennsylvania's interior. The added barbershop has now been serving Strasburg customers for nearly 150 years. And during his infancy, this was the home of Judge Herbert E. Millen, the first African American to become a judge in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The artifacts pictured here are period examples similar to those listed in William Phillips' inventory of estate. They were made available for photography courtesy of Landis Valley Village & Farm Museum, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. (All photos by Joe Deevy)



The white siding on the house at 20 West Main Street conceals the original log structure built in William and Abigail Phillips circa 1751.

that had become a major transportation route leading from the port cities of Philadelphia and Wilmington west into Lancaster County and provided access to the wilderness beyond. The road originally ended at the Conestoga Indian village that was located near present-day Safe Harbor. The Phillips' land, which constituted more than 10% of Edward Dougherty's tract, extended from where St. Michael's Lutheran Church is located on East Main Street to about 22 or 24 West Main Street, and south as far as Funk's Lane.

That this log house was standing by the last decade of the 18th century is certain. It is quite likely, however, that this is the house built by William Phillips in 1751, which would make it the oldest house in Strasburg.

William and Abigail Phillips purchased 18 acres from Edward Dougharty on 1 May 1751. They were among the first to purchase land in the

300 acres that Dougharty and Christian Herr subdivided in the spring of that year. The land purchased by William and Abigail was located along the south side of what was then known as the Great Conestoga Road, an ancient Indian pathway

While most one-story log houses seem small when seen from a 21st century perspective, 20 West Main Street, at 780 square feet, was a bit larger than the average house (751 square feet) in Strasburg two centuries ago. Fifty years before that, when both the house and the village were new, it was probably quite a bit larger than average. The 1757 half-timber house of Frederick Klingel, at 15 Miller Street, was only 384 square feet, half the size of William and Abigail Phillips' house. And the 1758 Sandstone House, probably the largest house in the village at that time, was only 1,050 square feet.

Having said all that, how spacious a house really is depends in large measure upon the number of people living within it. While the house probably seemed comfortably large in 1751 with only William, Abigail, and baby Charles living there, the story would have been a different one at the time Charles sold it forty years later. The first census of the United States was taken in 1790 and at that time there were eight persons in Charles Phillips' household: himself and one other male above the age of 16, two males less than 16



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years old, and four females. That may well explain why he sold the house and land and moved away from Strasburg.

Unfortunately, William Phillips lived less than eight months after purchasing land in the newly established village of Strasburg. He died without leaving a will and on December 12, 1751, an inventory of estate of William Phillips was taken. This intestate inventory shows that he had built a house on his 18 acres and that his possessions were few. Those possessions do, however, help shed some light on this individual about whom little else is known. This inventory tells us that his household furnishings consisted of a bed, a table, four chairs, and a chest. Cooking utensils were limited to three pots¹ (probably iron, given their value) and several earthen (redware) pots². He is listed as having a cow, two hogs, a plow³, an ax, a mattock⁴ (a pick-like tool for digging), three hoes⁵, a spade⁶, a saddle⁷, and a gun⁸. Also listed is a spinning wheel⁹ and two cards¹⁰ (devices for straightening wool fibers before spinning them to make thread).

Wearing apparel listed includes a coat, waistcoat, and four hats. Four hats seem excessive for someone who owned so little else, but may be explained by two entries in the inventory: “two hatters bows” and “three hat irons.” It seems that William Phillips, in addition to farming was also a hatter, making hats during the Winter months and other times when not otherwise occupied.

Two other entries explain something about his house. The first, and most important, is the listing for “stove plates.”¹¹ Because they are included on the same line as his bed their value is difficult to ascertain, but together the “bed and stove plates” were valued at four pounds (£4). Considering that the total value of the

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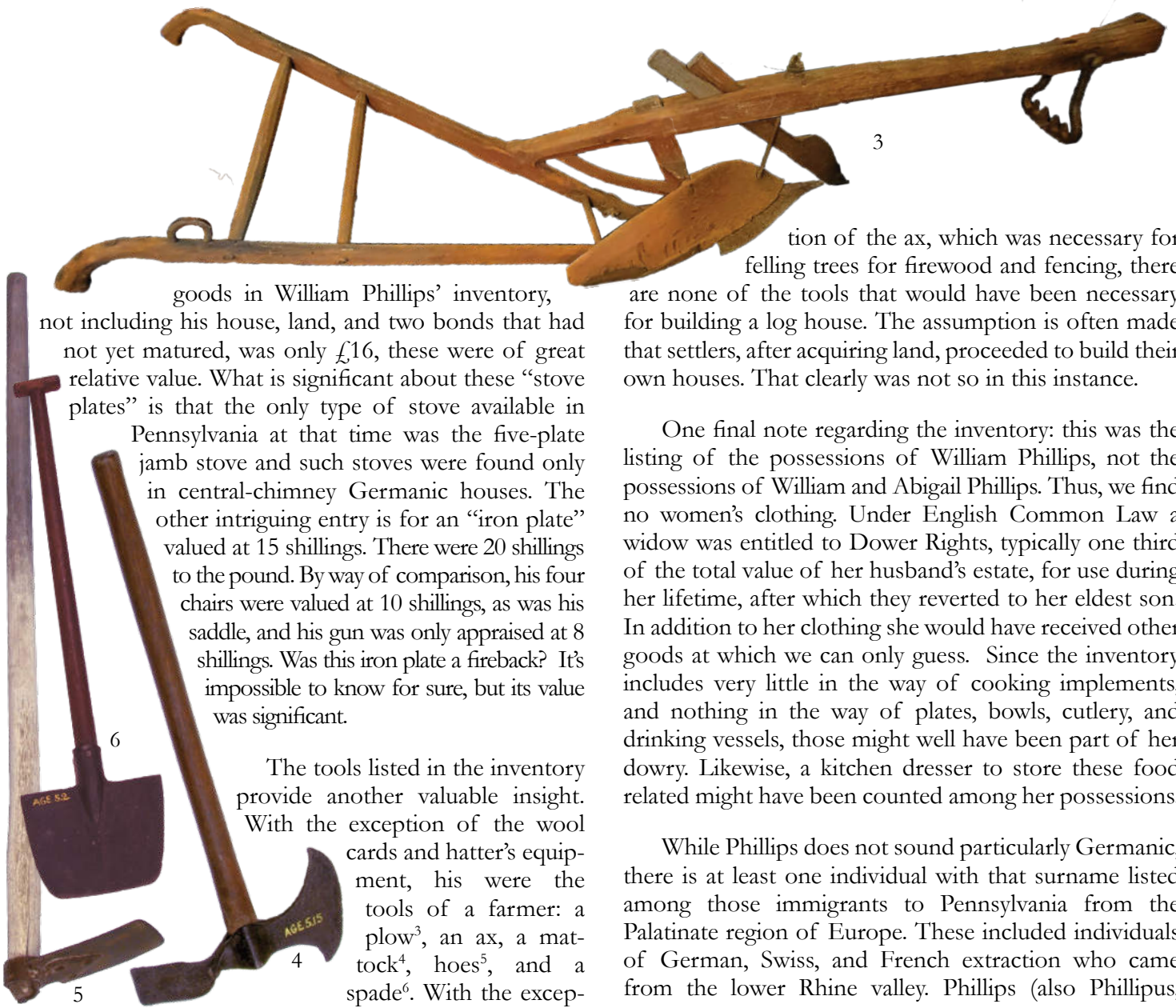
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goods in William Phillips' inventory, not including his house, land, and two bonds that had not yet matured, was only £16, these were of great relative value. What is significant about these "stove plates" is that the only type of stove available in Pennsylvania at that time was the five-plate jamb stove and such stoves were found only in central-chimney Germanic houses. The other intriguing entry is for an "iron plate" valued at 15 shillings. There were 20 shillings to the pound. By way of comparison, his four chairs were valued at 10 shillings, as was his saddle, and his gun was only appraised at 8 shillings. Was this iron plate a fireback? It's impossible to know for sure, but its value was significant.

The tools listed in the inventory provide another valuable insight. With the exception of the wool cards and hatter's equipment, his were the tools of a farmer: a plow³, an ax, a mattock⁴, hoes⁵, and a spade⁶. With the excep-

tion of the ax, which was necessary for felling trees for firewood and fencing, there are none of the tools that would have been necessary for building a log house. The assumption is often made that settlers, after acquiring land, proceeded to build their own houses. That clearly was not so in this instance.

One final note regarding the inventory: this was the listing of the possessions of William Phillips, not the possessions of William and Abigail Phillips. Thus, we find no women's clothing. Under English Common Law a widow was entitled to Dower Rights, typically one third of the total value of her husband's estate, for use during her lifetime, after which they reverted to her eldest son. In addition to her clothing she would have received other goods at which we can only guess. Since the inventory includes very little in the way of cooking implements, and nothing in the way of plates, bowls, cutlery, and drinking vessels, those might well have been part of her dowry. Likewise, a kitchen dresser to store these food related might have been counted among her possessions.

While Phillips does not sound particularly Germanic, there is at least one individual with that surname listed among those immigrants to Pennsylvania from the Palatinate region of Europe. These included individuals of German, Swiss, and French extraction who came from the lower Rhine valley. Phillips (also Phillipus,

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Phillipi, Phillipp, and Phillipot) is most likely of Huguenot ancestry, a descendant of the more than 200,000 French Protestants chased from their homeland following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. For a decade or more these French exiles lived among their German and Swiss neighbors. Ferree and Lefever are two of the best-known Huguenot names in Lancaster County.

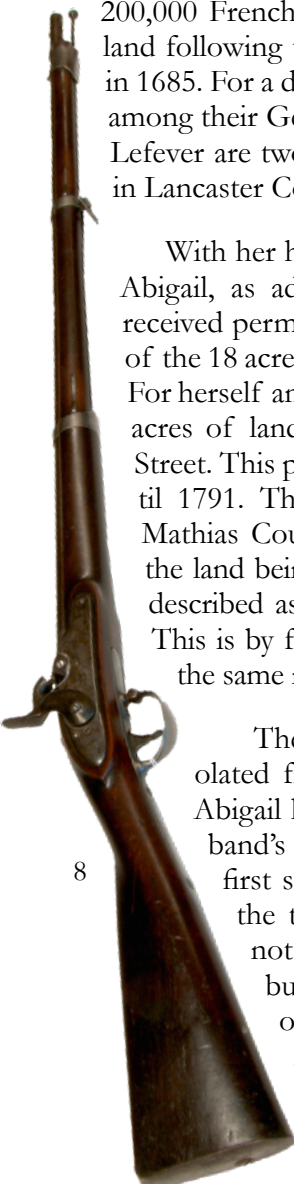
With her husband dead and a young son to raise, Abigail, as administrator for her husband's estate, received permission in 1754 to sell approximately 17 of the 18 acres they had purchased three years earlier. For herself and her son she kept the westernmost 1.4 acres of land, located on what is now West Main Street. This piece of land remained in her family until 1791. The 1754 sale from Abigail Phillips to Mathias Couser is important for another reason – the land being transferred by that deed of sale was described as located in the “Village of Strasburg.” This is by far the earliest reference to the town by the same name it still bears.

There are a few things that can be extrapolated from the tax records. The first is that Abigail had a young son to raise after her husband's death in 1751. Charles Phillips name first surfaces in 1769 when he is listed in the tax rolls as an “Inmate.” This does not mean that he was in jail at the time but rather that he was living in someone else's house, probably his mother's. That also means he must have turned 21 sometime in the previous year and inherited his father's estate. He could have been

no more than three years old at the time of his father's death. From 1770 until 1791 his name appears regularly on the tax lists.

His mother's name, on the other hand, appears much less frequently. In fact, the 1758 entry for “Widow Phillips” is the only time she is listed by name. In 1753 William Phillips' estate was taxed 1 shilling 6 pence. Otherwise, there is no surviving record for anyone named Phillips on the tax lists for Strasburg until Charles' name is listed in 1769. Although few tax records survive from the 1750s and 1760s, the absence of Abigail's name on the 1759 and 1769 tax lists is conspicuous because clearly she owned a house and lot at that time. In 1769 the category “house and lot” is specifically included yet her name is not. Perhaps she had remarried and although retaining title to the land, it was taxed under her husband's name.

The house that William and Abigail built was inherited by their son Charles, with his mother probably enjoying lifetime tenancy as part of her dower rights. Based upon surviving records, this is the only real estate in Strasburg he ever owned. Charles and his wife Esther divided the land into five small parcels and sold them between January and July of 1791.



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AT HOME IN STRASBURG



22 WEST MAIN STREET

by Joshua Stauffer

West Main Street presents an eclectic collection of building styles that reflect Strasburg's evolution from its beginning through the early 20th century. Among these, one two-story house with clapboard siding is particularly inviting, with an embellished number 22 artfully painted in gold in the red glass transom above the front door. Impeccably maintained, it is a beautiful example of a solidly built and well preserved house from the middle years of the 19th century. Under the careful stewardship of generations of owners, it has retained much of its original character and continues to contribute to Strasburg's unique charm.

The house was built around 1870 by David Reese, who was a chairmaker and painter. It sits on the site of an earlier, smaller house that was said to be the birthplace of Thomas H. Burrowes, an accomplished man who was influential in the establishment of Pennsylvania's public school system. Reese didn't stay in his new house though; by 1872, ownership had transferred to Henry and Annie Book. An 1875 map of Strasburg locates a chair-making shop almost directly across the street from the new house, but it is not apparent whether Mr. Reese had any connection with that shop.

The house at 22 West Main has come to be known as the Reese-Metzler house for David the builder, and for Charles and Sarah Metzler. The Metzlers owned the property and lived there for 35 years, from 1920-1955 – longer than anyone else. He worked as a cake and bread baker for Breuninger's Bakery at 27 W. Main Street. The bakery was a long lasting establishment in town, operating almost continuously from 1886-1952.



22 West Main prior to restoration, photo by Joe Hunt

Robert and Rita Myers. They stayed for 34 years. Robert was active in town, serving both on the Strasburg Borough Council and Borough Authority for many years. In September of 1999 the Myers sold to Cindy Drob. Cindy was also very involved locally as the Aquatics Director and as a swim coach at the Lampeter-Strasburg YMCA.

In May 2005, Strasburg Restoration & Preservation LLC (SR&P) purchased the 22 West Main property. SR&P was a non-profit organization started by Tony D'Alessandro, George Desmond, and Harold Wiker. Their vision was to rehabilitate a selection of historic homes in Strasburg to jumpstart a revitalization effort in the Historic District (See more in SHS Journal Issue 1). They hoped to attract residents who would have an interest in settling in and putting down roots.



*Bakers at Breuninger's Bakery;
Charlie Metzler on the right*

Other residents of 22 West Main have invested in both the house and in the life of the town. The Metzlers sold the property to Frank and Ethel Hoffman in 1955. Frank was a saddler and operated a saddle and shoe repair shop. The Hoffmans lived in the house for 10 years before selling it to



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Work on 22 West Main was supported by a partnership with the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County.

Our featured house was one of the first projects that SR&P worked on, and, according to Tony, it was one of the easiest. Very few major alterations had been made to the house and much of the original fabric of the building remained. When work began the goal was to restore and preserve as many of the original elements as possible while also weaving some modern conveniences into the plan. As SR&P was working through the renovation process, Tony D'Alessandro's daughter Ann would periodically stop by to check on the progress. She came to admire the house and, in due time, she and her husband Chuck were able to make it their own.

The dwelling is a framed structure with a side gabled roof and L-shaped wing to the rear. It is best described as a "vernacular" design. Vernacular buildings rely on the skills and traditions of local builders, rather than designs created by professional architects or pattern books. It is an approach to construction that is based on local needs, availability of materials and the practices of regional communities.

The house was built during the Victorian period. While elements of its design reflect that aesthetic, overall it retains a clean, simple, more traditional look. Inside, the pretty staircase features turned balusters and a newel post done in the Italianate style. Outside, the exterior is largely devoid of the ornate decoration that is usually associated with Victo-

rian homes. The new construction made use of two-pane window sashes, which had become affordable as a result of advances in glass manufacturing. These provided better visibility and interior light, and emphasized clean vertical lines. The upstairs windows were framed by operable louvered shutters, regulated by a tilt rod connecting the louvers. These manufactured shutters had first become available in the mid 1800s. The red stained-glass transom above the front door was a fashionable accent for the period. The red color was made by adding gold to the molten glass, so this pretty touch also showed a splash of extravagance.

Restoration work on the exterior began by replacing the metal roof with cedar shingles. Asbestos shingles were removed from the exterior walls at the rear to expose original clapboards. The siding and shutters were cleaned and painted. The concrete sidewalk and steps that fronted the house were torn up and replaced with brick. As a focal point, the front entry was further improved by replacing the non-original front door with a solid wood four-panel door. Finally, a panel above the door was removed to reveal the old red glass transom.

Changes to the interior were minimal. The electrical and HVAC systems were updated. The floors were refinished throughout. A half bath was added downstairs and the upstairs bathroom was remodeled. New cabinetry and a durable, dog-resistant, tile floor were added in the kitchen. Fresh paint was applied throughout the house.

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Ann's approach to decorating combines historic sensibility with cozy charm: formal furniture pieces are softened by neutral fabrics and plants throughout. Their admiration of art is evident in each room. The living room is filled with natural scenes done in the style of the Hudson River School. The theme of their dining room hangings is the sea, with nautical images abundant. The house has been featured on the Strasburg Holiday Home Tour. Out back, an impressive English style garden has been created which has been featured on the Strasburg Garden Tour.

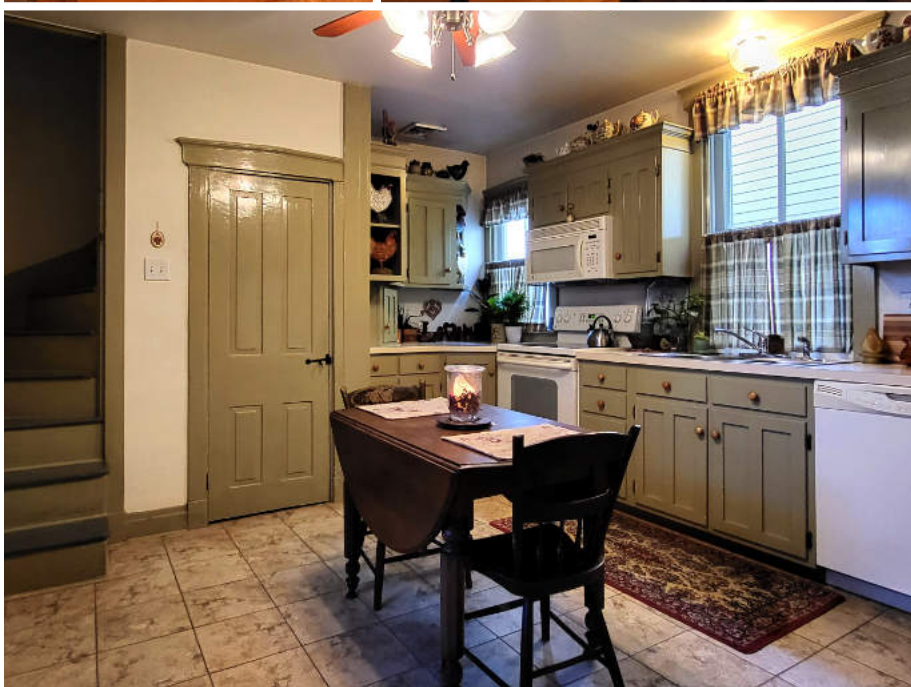
Like many previous residents of 22 West Main, Ann and Chuck are both engaged in the Strasburg community. Ann is active in the Strasburg Heritage Society (SHS), both as a Trustee and in leading the work to generate the funding that makes this publication possible. Chuck owns and operates SoundFocus LLC, an audio visual production company. He sponsors and provides sound solutions for many local events including The Sounds of Strasburg concerts and SHS events.

The Zucks also contribute to the community through the ongoing stewardship of their home. The beauty of Strasburg's Historic District is achieved one house at a time, thanks to the proactive efforts of individual property owners like them. Since 2008, SR&P has continued to support homeowner-led restoration projects both inside and outside of the Historic District through its Façade Loan program. Ann and Chuck have utilized this program to help with maintenance. Strasburg residents can contact the Strasburg Heritage Society for more information about the Façade Loan program.

The house at 22 West Main has been a part of Strasburg for over 150 years, providing protection and comfort for generations of families. Sitting just off the square, it has been an integral piece in the fabric of Strasburg's historic townscape. It has also been a launch pad for citizens who have been active and engaged in their local community. SR&P, in their mission to restore historic homes in town, recognized that houses have the ability to enrich both the individuals who live in them and the community at large. Through their restoration work, and the work of the past and present owners who have loved it and maintained it, this special old home can continue to give back for years to come.



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top to bottom:
interior photos by Joe Deery

- The front door features faux wood grain painting.
- Living room artwork depicts landscapes and animals.
- The dining room features pretty displays of ceramics and china, and paintings have a nautical theme.
- Charming decorations accent the cozy kitchen.
- Abbie is a constant companion in the kitchen.



Abbie's portrait by Ann D'Alessandro-Zuck

STRASBURG'S ENDURING BARBERSHOP

by Joe Deery

Almost continuously since about 1875, the little barbershop at 18 West Main Street, attached to the residence at number 20, has been helping the men of Strasburg to look their best. Allen McKinney was the first to set up a barbershop there. He had previously operated a barbershop in Millersville, but relocated to Strasburg when he inherited the property upon the death of Miss Ann McKinney. The title "Miss" suggests that she may have been Allen's sister or aunt. His family's tenure at 20 West Main may reach as far back as 1804, when George McCinney purchased the property – the "McCinney" spelling might be a variant of "McKinney."

Allen McKinney's obituary described him as "one of [Strasburg's] best and most highly-respected citizens," who "possessed a spirit of progression to a remarkable degree." McKinney was an African American man who had fought in the Civil War. He was active in the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), a Union army veterans' organization. During his many years as barber, he had made many close and lasting friends. His only son Sidney was an accomplished and respected musician. Allen's marriage did not last, but his relationship to his nieces and nephews did. From the Stumpf family (sometimes spelled Stump, Stomp, Stompf), niece Naomi became Allen's full-time housekeeper. He trained his nephews John and Scott Stumpf as barbers, and they worked with him in his shop. The photo at top right shows (left to right) John, Allen, and Scott seated in front of the shop. In 1888, Allen made room for a while for Mary Emma (Stumpf) Millen's young family, with her little boys Raymond and Herbert. Allen died in 1908, with Sidney, Naomi, John, Scott, and some faithful friends at his side.

After his passing, the Stumpf brothers continued barbering, with Naomi living in the attached house as the shop's manager. The photo at bottom right shows the brothers at work in their shop. In the days when men took pride in well-groomed beards and mustaches, and before the invention of the "safety razor," a weekly trip to the barbershop was common. The shop interior photo shows the wall of shelving filled with shaving cups and brushes reserved for the exclusive use of individual customers. In the early 1900s, a haircut cost 15¢, but in 1913 the Stumpfs increased the price on Saturday to 20¢. The barbershop was more than a place for shave and a haircut. It was a place where men could socialize, smoking and talking freely about local happenings,



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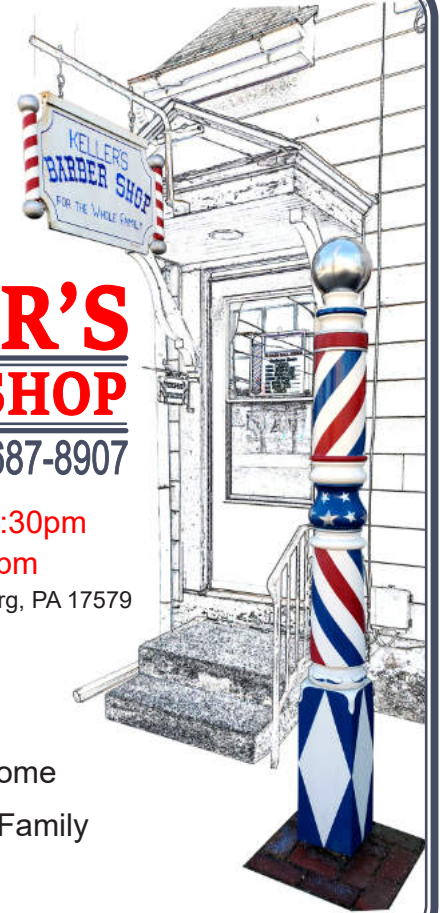
Ad appeared in 1898 in the Washington House hotel guest register.



business, politics, or solving the problems of the world. It was a relaxing little retreat from life.

In 1936, Foster and Herbert Millen purchased the property from their Aunt Naomi. They renovated the house, and Naomi continued to live there until her death in 1947. John Stumpf closed the barbershop in 1941. The Strasburg Weekly News urged old customers to stop by and pick up their personal shaving cups and brushes. The Millens sold the property in 1951 to Morris and Verna Hicks. Hicks was a World War II veteran, who had been working as a barber elsewhere in Strasburg since before the war. He reopened the barbershop at 18 West Main, and continued there until his retirement in 1965. D. Warren Aument took over as barber while Morris and Verna continued to live in the attached house. Even in his retirement, Morris would slip next door occasionally to give haircuts.

Warren Aument operated the shop until 2005. In that year, at age 97, Verna Hicks sold the property to her nephew Dale Smith and his wife Lois. Verna and the Smiths wished that somebody could keep the barbershop going, but didn't have anyone in mind. To their surprise, barber Amy Keller knocked on the door to inquire. They hit it off, and soon, Keller was setting up shop. She removed the old red-painted wicker seats for waiting customers, resurfaced the counter top that bore many scars from the cigars that had rested there, painted the tobacco-stained walls, and installed bright new flooring. She continues to carry on the barbering tradition today, surround by relics that recall the shop's long history.



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