

Biography of Harman D. Rees
At the Time of His Retirement from Township Office

CHARLESTOWN TOWNSHIP
Chester County, PA

Harmon D. Rees has served the Township of Charlestown, Chester County, PA for 52 years and is now retiring as Township Treasurer.

Mr. Rees was born in Mont Clare on March 27, 1873, where his father was in the coal and lumber business. Shortly after his birth the family moved to Phoenixville. When 15 years of age his father hired him to Mr. John Conway who had a greenhouse and florist business on South Gay Street in Phoenixville. Mr. Conway sold the business because of poor health in the fall of 1889 to Joseph Pennypacker who moved the business to the South side of Nutt Road.

In 1890 the family moved to the farm where the subject of this sketch remained for 18 years as a farm hand.

In the spring of 1908 Mr. Rees married Miss Mary Jacobs, and purchased the farm which was the old family homestead--he being the fourth generation; here he farmed for 19 years. In 1927 he sold the farm and moved to his present home nearby.

Mr. Rees served on the school board of the township for 28 years -- treasurer of same for 22 years. During this period the schools of the Township were consolidated and Mr. Rees was chairman of the Ground Committee.

In 1927 he was appointed to fill the vacancy of the Supervision board and was elected Treasurer of the board which he has held ever since. He also became Road Master. He says, "I assumed a debt from the former board of \$8,700.00." He built the first hard black-top road in the township; today the township is black-topped all but about 2 miles of road, and the township is free of debt.

Mr. Rees says he became Supervisor when heavy trucking with single hard tires were very hard on roads and bridges.

Mr. Rees joined the Presbyterian Church in Phoenixville about 1889 and held his membership there till about 10 years ago when he moved his membership to the Charlestown Methodist Church. He says he saw 5 Churches go out that had served this area.

Mr. Rees has been a member of Mt. Pickering Lodge F. & A. M. for 56 years.



Mr. Rees joined Chester Valley Grange in 1912 and five months later he was elected master. The Grange met in the blacksmith shop on the Catauch farm. His desk was a 1 by 12 inch hemlock board 14 feet long on the top of the blacksmith's water barrel. His block was a brick. This building was not insulated so they were freezing in the winters and they melted in the summers.

When he became Master he recommended they build a Grange hall; this suggestion received 100 percent approval of the members, so he started out to see if he could find a Grange hall built for Grange purposes. All he could find were Grange meetings in second hand buildings here in S. E. Penna. Mr. Catauch, a former builder and Mr. Rees sat down and planned the present Grange structure. The walls were cellar high and joists in place about ready to lay the corner stone when his term of office expired.

He served as Grange Treasurer for over a quarter of a Century.

Mr. and Mrs. Rees received 7th degree at National Grange meeting in Wilmington, Del., 1914. Nine years later he was privileged to strike the match that burned the Mortgage.

He has belonged to the Chester County Historical Society for several years and has contributed a number of articles; the one which he says he cherished the most was the Communion set of the old Presbyterian Church of Charlestown, founded in 1741.

Mr. Rees has been on the board of the Phoenixville Community Chest ever since its organization. He is also a member of the Eight Sided Diamond Rock School Association.

Mr. Rees has been a member of the Chester County Game Association and president of same for 36 years.

He has compiled much information on the early days of Charlestown Township, and also has a copy of the deed of William Penn to Charles Pickering for 5300 acres now comprising portions of Charlestown and Schuylkill Townships.

