

Historical Sketches of Charlestown Township

Table of Contents

FIGURES	IV
PREFACE	V
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND EARLY HISTORY	1
SUB DIVISIONS	3
SOIL FORMATION	5
MINERALS.....	6
INDIANS.....	7
CHAPTER 2: HOMES AND HOMESTEADS, MILLSITES AND DAMS	11
HOMES AND HOMESTEADS.....	11
MILLSITES AND DAMS	13
CHAPTER 3: LOCATIONS, ROADS AND HIGHWAYS	15
LOCATIONS OF MILLS AND FACTORIES	15
ROADS AND HIGHWAYS	18
<i>Conestoga Road</i>	18
<i>Egypt [now Charlestown] Road</i>	19
<i>Nutt Road</i>	20
<i>Main Street [Through Phoenixville's North Side]</i>	20
<i>White Horse Road</i>	20
<i>Gulph Road</i>	21
<i>Valley Forge Road</i>	21
<i>State Road (Route 29)</i>	22
<i>Pot House [Potthouse] Road</i>	23
<i>Yellow Springs Road</i>	24
<i>Glandy Hill [Charlestown] Road</i>	25
<i>Pikeland Road</i>	25
<i>Hollow Road</i>	25
<i>Union Hill Road</i>	26
<i>Lionville Road</i>	26
<i>Tinker Hill Road</i>	27
<i>Blackberry Pike [Lane]</i>	29
<i>Abandoned Road Parallel to Hollow Road</i>	30
<i>Bones Road</i>	31
<i>Township Line Road</i>	32
<i>Howell Road</i>	32
<i>Parrys Road [now Green Lane Road]</i>	33
<i>Paving Roads</i>	33
CHAPTER 4: BRIDGES AND MODES OF TRANSPORTATION	35
BRIDGES	35
MODES OF TRANSPORTATION	37
CHAPTER 5: RELIGIOUS LIFE	45
QUAKERS – FRIENDS	45
CHARLESTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.....	47
ST. PETERS EPISCOPAL CHURCH.....	57
CHARLESTOWN METHODIST CHURCH	59

<i>History of Charlestown Methodist Church by Harman D. Rees</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Ladies Aid Society</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>Gifts to the Charlestown United Methodist Church (October 25, 1942)</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>W.S.C.S.</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Excerpts from the October 1955 125th Anniv. Booklet of Charlestown Methodist Church.....</i>	<i>66</i>
MENNONITES	67
PIKELAND CHURCHES ATTENDED BY CHARLESTOWN RESIDENTS.....	69
SUMMARY	71
CHAPTER 6: EDUCATION.....	73
INTRODUCTION.....	73
EARLY ATTENDANCE AND EXPENSES.....	73
<i>Schuylkill Township</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Phoenixville</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Schuylkill</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Phoenixville</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Schuylkill</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Valley Forge School.....</i>	<i>84</i>
<i>Phoenixville</i>	<i>84</i>
<i>Valley Forge School.....</i>	<i>84</i>
<i>Phoenixville</i>	<i>84</i>
CHAPTER 7: ELECTION PLACES, POST OFFICES AND STORES	111
ELECTION PLACES FOR CHARLESTOWN TOWNSHIP.....	111
POST OFFICES	113
STORES	115
CHAPTER 8: OCCUPATIONS, CRAFTS AND CRAFTSMANSHIP	119
OCCUPATIONS.....	119
CRAFTS AND CRAFTSMANSHIP	136
CHAPTER 9: EARLY FAMILIES, ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS.....	145
FAMILIES.....	145
<i>Martin</i>	<i>145</i>
<i>Davis</i>	<i>145</i>
<i>Snyder</i>	<i>146</i>
<i>Young</i>	<i>146</i>
<i>Buckwalter.....</i>	<i>146</i>
<i>Byers.....</i>	<i>146</i>
<i>Coffman</i>	<i>146</i>
<i>Funk.....</i>	<i>146</i>
<i>Griffith.....</i>	<i>147</i>
<i>Jones.....</i>	<i>147</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>147</i>
<i>King.....</i>	<i>147</i>
<i>Little.....</i>	<i>147</i>
<i>Llewellyn.....</i>	<i>147</i>
<i>McCurdy.....</i>	<i>148</i>
<i>McVeigh.....</i>	<i>148</i>
<i>Pritchard.....</i>	<i>148</i>
<i>Peck.....</i>	<i>148</i>

Historical Sketches of Charlestown Township

<i>Rees</i>	148
<i>Thomas</i>	148
<i>Williams</i>	148
<i>Wells</i>	149
<i>Wersler</i>	149
SILVER.....	149
SLAVERY.....	149
CRIME.....	150
TEMPERANCE REFORM.....	150
LIBRARY.....	151
HORSE COMPANY.....	151
SPORTS.....	153
SLEIGH RIDES.....	154
BAND.....	154
LYCEUM.....	155
CHARLESTOWN CREAMERY.....	156
MILK ASSOCIATIONS.....	156
HOME AND SCHOOL LEAGUE.....	157
SCHOOL REUNIONS.....	157
GRANGE.....	157
CHAPTER 10: WAR, PUBLIC HOUSES, FINAL COMMENTS	159
CHARLESTOWN TOWNSHIP IN WAR.....	159
PUBLIC HOUSES.....	167
FINAL.....	167
INDEX	169

Figures

All images in Harman Rees's *Historical Sketches of Charlestown Township* with no "Figure" number are images that were included by Harman Rees in his original manuscript, though not necessarily in the same location as in the manuscript.

All images in this volume that are identified by "Figure" number and listed below have been included by the Charlestown Historical Society. Credits for figures are provided in Appendix B.

<i>Figure 1 - Charlestown Village Store with John R. Peirce proprietor (c. 1880)</i>	9
<i>Figure 2 - Charlestown Presbyterian Church with Amity School in background</i>	10
<i>Figure 3 - Rees Paper Mill in Aldham (by John R. Peirce)</i>	14
<i>Figure 4 - Stonorov Bridge over the Pickering Creek (c. 1909)</i>	34
<i>Figure 5 - State Road Bridge after 1902 flood that broke through the Ice Dam (in background)</i>	44
<i>Figure 6 - Yellow Springs Road with Weisner Rapp house in foreground (by Charles Segal)</i>	44
<i>Figure 7 - Charlestown Presbyterian Church from Revolutionary War Cemetery</i>	72
<i>Figure 8 - Presbyterian Church and Amity School on Charlestown Road (by John R. Peirce)</i>	87
<i>Figure 9 - Samuel Buckwalter</i>	110
<i>Figure 10 - Amity School</i>	110
<i>Figure 11 - The Bauchmans loading hay in the Village meadow</i>	143
<i>Figure 12 - Village Blacksmith Shop</i>	158
<i>Figure 13 - Job Harvey Home and The Village</i>	169
<i>Figure 14 - Charlestown Cornet Band Appearing in West Chester</i>	170
<i>Figure 15 - Hauling Hay on Fisher Hill</i>	170
<i>Figure 16 - Mill and Village</i>	172

Historical Sketches of Charlestown Township

Preface

Established in 1738, Charlestown Township is a small portion of approximately 45,000 square miles of land granted to William Penn by King Charles II. Located about 35 miles west of Philadelphia and originally bordering the Schuylkill River, Charlestown Township was reduced to approximately 8,000 acres in 1826 through subdivisions separating out what is now the Borough of Phoenixville and Schuylkill Township. The name "Charlestown" honors Charles Pickering, a friend to whom William Penn granted land along a creek subsequently named Pickering Creek.

The Charlestown Historical Society was established in 1973 as a non-profit, non-political organization whose aim was and is to provide future generations with a small "window on the past" - showing through artifacts, records and writings what life was like in this quiet farming community in the 19th Century. The society's goal of publishing a history of Charlestown Township is long-standing, and the publishing of Harman Rees's 1946 manuscript *Historical Sketches of Charlestown Township* is a step toward that goal.

Harman D. Rees (1873 – 19??) was born on March 27, 1873 in Mont Clare, PA, across the Schuylkill River from Phoenixville. Harman's father was in the coal and lumber business. Shortly after Harman's 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 in Phoenixville. Mr. Conway sold the business because of poor health in the fall of 1889.

In 1890 the Rees family moved to a farm in Charlestown Township where Harman remained for 18 years as a farm hand. In the spring of 1908 Mr. Rees married Mary Jacobs, and purchased the farm, which was the family homestead. Here he farmed for 19 years. In 1927 he sold the farm and moved to a home nearby. Mr. Rees served on the school board of the township for 28 years, a period during which the several one-room schools in the township were consolidated. Mr. Rees also served for many years on the township's board of supervisors and as roadmaster, his total service in township administrative positions totaling 52 years. Mr. Rees's many other contributions to the community through the Grange and other affiliations are chronicled in his biography, which follows this Preface. Many people who have read his *Historical Sketches of Charlestown Township* believe his 1946 manuscript to be Harman Rees's most enduring and endearing contribution to residents of Charlestown Township.

There is ample proof from his own writings that the spelling of Mr. Rees's first name is "Harman". However, it was common for others tasked with writing his name to spell his name "Harmon". (Less frequently his last name was misspelled "Reese".) Readers of this publication will find many exhibits provided by Mr. Rees in his original manuscript that include his name spelled "Harmon". One of the most glaring examples of this is in his biography written at the time of his retirement from township service. The biography is typed on township letterhead, in the heading of which both his first and last names are misspelled – "Harmon D. Reese". The very first words of the biography below the heading are "Harman D. Rees has served...".

One cannot help but be impressed with Harman Rees's approach to writing such a lengthy manuscript encompassing so many aspects of local history spanning more than a century. Given the original document was a bound book with pre-numbered pages, the author had no opportunity for rearranging his thoughts or altering the organization of his material after the fact. Mr. Rees must have devoted a considerable amount of time and thought outlining the structure of the book before he began writing.

Harman Rees's manuscript offered many challenges to the Charlestown Historical Society in the organization's efforts to publish the document. Mr. Rees wrote the original text in script in a bound, legal-size book with lined, pre-numbered pages, often writing from edge to edge, ignoring the pre-printed margins. His writing instrument was the lead pencil, supplemented in his many hand-drawn maps and sketches with red and blue pencils. Interpretation of his handwriting was hampered by, among other things, the yellowing of the paper with age, offering low contrast with the gray impression from the use of pencil.

Additional challenges to those reading the original manuscript are presented by Mr. Rees's concept of the rules of punctuation, grammar, spelling and capitalization, combined with a lack of standardization of these elements of his writing. It was not uncommon for him to leave out commas and periods and to begin a word in mid-sentence with a capital letter. While his handwriting was quite good, there were many instances where the reader could easily interpret Mr. Rees's script in different ways. Much as his own name was misspelled by others, Mr. Rees was sometimes inconsistent in the spelling of individuals' names in his manuscript. For example, he would often refer to the family name "Manovan" as "Monavon".

A very different challenge in publishing Mr. Rees's manuscript was the accuracy of his statements. There are a few instances where he contradicts himself, generally having to do with the date of events. More significant, however, is the inability in terms of time and available resources (including independent confirmations) for the Charlestown Historical Society to authenticate every statement made by Mr. Rees.

After a great deal of discussion, the Society chose to print the manuscript essentially "as-is", but to use various notational instruments to correct or clarify inaccuracies and misconceptions as they were identified by reviewers of the work in progress. Guidelines were established for addressing problems in the manuscript. Specifically –

- Misspelled words are left misspelled, but the correct spellings are presented in square brackets immediately following the misspelled words.
- Missing words are inserted in square brackets.
- Missing periods at the end of sentences have been inserted, mostly without brackets.
- Known inaccuracies are clarified via page footnotes. Mr. Rees's text itself is not altered. Footnotes are numbered independently for each page, starting at "1" for the first footnote on a page.
- Confusing sections of text are clarified via page footnotes. Mr. Rees's text itself is not altered.

Historical Sketches of Charlestown Township

Given the limited resources available for the publication of Mr. Rees's manuscript, it is important for the reader to understand the following disclaimers -

- This publication presents the work of one man who drew on resources available to him at the time, including previously published or otherwise written material and most importantly, his own perception of local history as represented by his memory and what he had been told by others. The Charlestown Historical Society takes no responsibility for inaccuracies, whether insignificant or profound.
- No claim is made by the Charlestown Historical Society that all misspelled words, including names, are identified and corrected.
- No claim is made by the Charlestown Historical Society that clarifications in footnotes are complete and accurate.

This publication contains a wide variety of images. Harman Rees himself inserted materials ranging from his own hand-drawn maps and sketches to photographs, newspaper clippings, booklets and bulletins. Mr. Rees's many maps are drawn directly on the pages with his corresponding text. Other materials Mr. Rees pasted in the book in line with his hand-written script. In some instances, the images illustrate something he had written about many pages prior. These images vary widely in quality. Some were of poor quality at the time he wrote the manuscript, while others were adversely affected by the passage of time.

In preparing materials for this publication, all images in the original manuscript were digitally scanned in color. In most cases, scanned images that were originally monochrome (black and white or shades of gray) were converted to true grayscale, removing the sepia tone that crept in with age and reducing the cost of printing the publication. Many of these gray images were newspaper clippings, correspondence or printed matter from other books and materials. In a few cases, these tinted black and white images were left in color. The sepia tone is apparent in these images.

Other images were not originally monochrome. When drawing maps in the manuscript, Mr. Rees often used a red or blue pencil to highlight attributes of the maps. All of these maps are reproduced in color in this publication. Other images reproduced in color are color illustrations or photographs from books or magazines that Mr. Rees inserted in-line with his hand-written text.

In producing this publication, none of the images from Harman Rees's original manuscript are captioned or assigned a figure number by the Charlestown Historical Society. This is in contrast to images from various sources included by the Charlestown Historical Society as supplementary material. These images comprise mostly old photographs of scenes in the township and images of paintings of scenes in the township. Several of these supplementary images are from the Society's archives. These supplementary images, not part of Mr. Rees's original document, are captioned, assigned a figure number, and listed in the "Table of Figures", immediately following the "Table of Contents" of this publication.

Harman Rees provides a great deal of detail in some sections of his *Historical Sketches of Charlestown Township*. Specifically, Mr. Rees identifies an incredible number of individuals by name. Knowing that a publication such as this may be of interest to persons researching their own family history as well as historians focusing on southeastern Pennsylv-

nia, the Charlestown Historical Society made the effort to provide a comprehensive index for Mr. Rees's manuscript. While undoubtedly less than 100% complete, the Index includes (almost) all individuals listed alphabetically by last name, as well as many place-names and topics of interest to the reader. In addition, the Index includes entries from this book's Epilogue (see below). Together with the Table of Contents, this publication is "research-friendly" for those looking for specific information and not reading the book from beginning to end.

As noted above, Harman Rees's *Historical Sketches of Charlestown Township* is one man's interpretation of the history of Charlestown Township. The Charlestown Historical Society elected to incorporate an Epilogue in this publication of Mr. Rees's manuscript. The purpose of the Epilogue is to clarify and expand upon a number of aspects of the manuscript based on memories of residents living at the time of publication and upon other materials available today for those who are willing to "dig" for information. As a result, this publication includes a series of brief, illustrated articles written by current members of the Charlestown Historical Society about multi-generation Charlestown families, events occurring in Charlestown history, and other aspects of life in the township. Many of the people and topics discussed in the Epilogue are cross-referenced with Mr. Rees's manuscript through page footnotes.

The Epilogue, including its own Table of Contents, follows Mr. Rees's manuscript. Entries in the Epilogue appear in the Index at the end of this volume.

STILL TO DO – INSERT AND REFERENCE SAMPLES
OF HAND-WRITTEN MANUSCRIPT.