

History
of
Harrisville,
Pennsylvania

Eagle Scout Service Project
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Troop 380
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DEDICATION

I am dedicating this to my parents and grandparents, who have always encouraged me to read about the past and visit historical places. Through their efforts and the stories they have shared with me, I have gained an interest in the history of our country.

INTRODUCTION

When I first started this project, I thought it would simply be gathering information. As I started the interviews, I was amazed by the willingness of people to open their homes to me and share their memories. Not only did they share stories, but showed me toys, pictures, and letters from the past. The knowledge I gained from these interviews was not nearly as important as the time I spent with people willing to share and be a part of this project. To those who were interviewed, I would like to say thank you for your time and memories. I would also like to thank those who assisted me in completing this project - Eric D. Castor, Thomas L. Critchlow, Brian J.P. Donovan, Charles E. Porter III, and my parents.

History
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Harrisville, located in Mercer Township in Butler County, was originally two separate towns, Harrisville and Reedsville, named for the first two settlers, Ephraim Harris and Colonel Robert Reed. The first town of Harrisville was surveyed for Ephraim Harris in 1825. The sale of lots for the 287 acres began April 11, 1825. Ephraim Harris was the first postmaster and was succeeded by his son, Samuel E. Harris in 1826 after Ephraim's death in 1825. In 1833, the southern addition was surveyed on Colonel Robert Reed's farm and was named Reedsville. These two towns formed the borough that exists today.

Harrisville was known as "Prairie tract" and was used by the Indians as a cornfield. A road connecting Pittsburgh and Franklin, which passes through Harrisville, was well traveled by settlers and Indians. In fact, several settlers of Harrisville saw Chief Cornplanter and his son Silver Heels.

The first cabin built inside the town proper was built around 1800 by Old Zeke Bredin, a blacksmith. It stood north of the center of Harrisville. Two years after the survey of the townsite, Major John R. Harris, son of Ephraim, established himself as a merchant, built a carding mill, and opened a tavern. He continued in business here until his death in 1874. In the next several years, many settlers established businesses: James Lee erected a frame building and opened with a stock of goods, William McGill opened a blacksmith shop, Thomas McEltree opened business as a cabinet-maker, James and William Forker were hatters, Samuel E. Harris and Washington Parker opened small stores, and William P. Brown opened a furniture shop.

Harrisville was incorporated in 1846. The same year the first election of borough officers took place. The elected officials were as follows: Burgess - Lyman Howard; Councilmen - Robert Long, Samuel Brown, Washington Allen, John Hunter, and W.A. Gilmore; Overseer of the poor - P.D. Brumbaugh and R.K. Wick; Constable and Assessor - Robert Donaghy; Street Commissioners - John R. Harris and Hugh McCoy; Clerk - R.R. Walker and Justice of the Peace - William Gilmore.

Tavern-keeping was an old but flourishing business in Harrisville. Col. Reed

opened what was probably the first tavern in Butler County in 1797. From 1830 to 1847 there were ten distilleries within a three-mile radius of Harrisville. At one time, there were four taverns in the village. They were owned by Josiah Hardy, Major John Harris, John Dougherty, and John Kerr. Whiskey was sold for a shilling a quart or a quarter per gallon by the barrel. There was considerable patronage of the militia on training days. One day, Josiah Hardy induced the captain of a training company to halt his men at noon in front of his door. Just as the soldiers stopped, he rang the dinner bell. Josiah Hardy certainly enjoyed many customers that day!

Another business prospect was coal. In 1845, Thomas Kyle began to consider the development of coal veins in the area. At one time, about 1883, 200 to 300 tons of coal were being mined daily at Harrisville from the Harrisville vein of coal.

On September 16, 1861, Company I of Regiment 103 formed at the Methodist Church, including soldiers from Butler, Mercer, and Venango Counties. They traveled to Camp Orr in Kittanning and became part of the Army of the Potomac. During the Civil War, the basement of the R.P. Brown building was used as a refuge for slaves escaping north. At that time, the businesses of Harrisville consisted of four stores, a foundry, three blacksmith shops, G. W. Magee carriage shop, one tannery, one pottery, one cabinet shop, three shoe shops, two temperance hotels, one grocery, and one saloon. There were also three physicians, two common school teachers, one select teacher, and three churches. In 1870, the town had a population of 545 and ten years later, in 1880, of 544. The largest fire in Harrisville occurred on June 6, 1872 when a fire destroyed William Kirkpatrick's two-story house, Samuel Kerr's hotel, and threatened to destroy the whole town .

There were many businesses in Harrisville in 1883. A total of twenty-five businesses operated in the town of Harrisville. There were four general stores, two drug stores, one hotel, two livery stables, one general notion store, one tailor shop, three millinery stores, two shoe-maker shops, four blacksmith shops, one wagon shop, one furniture store, one hardware and tin shop, Bingham's foundry, and Kerr and

Walker's Mill.

Some of the businesses that have come and gone in the 1900's were McDonalds Blacksmith shop, MacCosges Electric shop, Brown's Furniture Store, F.F. Karns Grocery, H.C. Gibson, Forrest Barber, Walters Barber, Clarksons Second-hand store, Sabins store, Jacquiers Dress shop, Cathcarts Hotel; Brenneman's Hardware, Kand L Dress Shop, Herr's Cloverfarm Store and Sproulls Mill.

Present day business include Harrisville Pet Supplies, Yard's Antiques, Hanlon's Antiques, Gillray Inn, Jamison Funeral Home, Sheetz, Stillwagon's Gas Station, Cokain's Barber Shop, Henry's Market, Monkey's Puzzle, Specialty Insurance, Mellon Bank, Harrisville Hardware, Turner's Insurance, Harrisville Drugstore, Best Lawn and Garden, The Tinker's Dam, Bonnetti's Health Care Center, The Family Tradition Restaurant, Hughes Ice Cream Factory, Willie's Smokehouse, Taylor's Fruit and Garden Stand, Edward's Garage, Drenning Delivery, Showalter's Beauty Shop, Weldon Delp Nursery, Laundromat/Car Wash, The Country Attic, and Dr. Dunkle's Medical Office.

The first pioneer school in Butler County, a subscription school was started in Harrisville in 1799. The first teacher was Frederick Peel. Around 1800, Mrs. Harris's brother, Wright Elliot, was the first teacher of the first schoolhouse of Mercer township. Samuel Harris was the first teacher of the first schoolhouse in Harrisville. It was a frame building constructed in 1830.

In 1865, a high school or academy was established by W. Thomas of West Sunbury. Legislation in 1893 brought free books and the 1895 act called for compulsory attendance for all children under thirteen. In 1907, as a result of the continuing increase of tax levies and the enabling legislation, one of the high schools was established in Harrisville. It closed in 1958 when the Harrisville area joined the Slippery Rock Area Jointure.

Presently, grades kindergarten through fifth grade, are housed in the brick Har-Mer elementary school on Prairie Street. Grades six to eight attend Slippery Rock Area Middle School. Students in grades nine to twelve attend the Slippery Rock Area High

School.

The Christian Public School of Western Pennsylvania was established in Harrisville in September, 1974 at the Orthodox Church.

There have been at least four churches in Harrisville. In 1837, the Presbyterian Church erected a church in Harrisville. The church was strong in numbers for many years, but has since dissolved. In 1833, a group of Methodists began to meet. Services were generally held in the schoolhouse although sometimes they met in private homes. In 1842, the first church was built on Mill Street. In 1895, the old church was sold and a brick church was built. In 1969, it officially became the United Methodist Church.

Harmony United Presbyterian Church was first called Boiling Springs Church, but the name was later changed to Harmony Church. The first service was held in 1800 and it is assumed that it was organized that year. A small log cabin was used in the winter, and a tent was used in the summer. The next facility was a larger log structure, and then a frame building was built in 1836. In 1888, a large brick building was erected on the present site.

Faith Orthodox Presbyterian Church was organized in 1936, meeting at the Harrisville High School. In January of 1937, the first services were held in the new church built on Church Street. In 1966, Harrisville and New Hope churches became one under the present name of Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and a new church was built.

Some of the organizations that have been in Harrisville are: Harrisville Lodge, No. 2397 Knights of Honor; Z.C. Post No. 246 G.A.R.; Harrisville Council N. 427, Fr. O.U.A.M.; W.C.T.U.; Harrisville Women's Club; Boy Scouts of America; Girl Scouts of America; Harrisville Firemen's Association; Fireman's Auxiliary; Harrisville Art Group; Community Band; American Legion; Lion's Club; American Legion Auxiliary; Harrisville Deer Hunters; Har-Mer Home and School Association.

Presently, the town of Harrisville has approximately 846 residents.

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Interviews

Name: Marion Orr Barnes

Birthdate: July 5, 1911

Place of birth: Harrisville

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 78 years

Occupation: Retired teacher, housewife

Where did you go to school?:

Harrisville

How did you get to school?:

I walked.

How long did it take to get to school?:

5 to 10 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

I had understanding teachers. I enjoyed playing baseball, basketball, and playing in the Harrisville High School Orchestra. I got to see my friends.

What subjects were taught?:

I had reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, history, geography, and health in grade school. In high school, I had English, math, Latin, economics, civics, and music.

What extra activities were there?:

There was baseball, basketball, orchestra, and the football games.

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

Walking, until my father bought one of the first Model-T cars. My father hired a surrey for family vacations. We also had sleighs.

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

I admired many people. There was no one in particular.

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

We celebrated Christmas like now, except our Christmas tree was lit with candles. Christmas gifts were given and exchanged. We had a family dinner.

Describe your childhood home:

"In my early years the conveniences of life were as different from those of today as a microwave oven is from an outdoor baking oven. But to think how folks are reverting back to old-time ways; camping, cooking over an open fire, hay-hole cooking and refrigerating, tie-dying shirts, makeshift appliances, ect. To cook a meal we pumped our own water, carried it in buckets to the kitchen, heated the buckets on either the old coal or wood-burning kitchen range (where the cottage cheese may have been simmering) and the homemade bread baking) then the warm water was dumped into a wooden washing machine, which was loaded and run with a handle on a wooden wheel. The old scrub board was often used for extra dirty spots. Rinsing was done in either wooden or metal tubs on which a hand wringer was attached. Clothes were all hung on lines - or spread in the grass. The sun was our magic dryer. The ironing was done with flat irons. Two would heat while a third was in use. Finally electricity came to Harrisville and we were living 'in the Ritz.'

As for entertainment, we had many of things that were available and the fashion of the day: dolls, dishes, roller skates, ice skates, ect. The most fun was always ball games, with my brothers and neighbors. Then there was rolling hoops with a stick and playing 'skinny' with old tin cans. Indoor games were Parcheesi, flinch, ect., while a warm fire was in the back burner."

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. Churches had always played a big part in Harrisville.
2. The town has grown larger with most people keeping their properties in good shape.
3. Animal barns, chicken coupes, and privies all disappeared.
4. Electricity came to town and ever since, the first electric lights, washing machines, toasters, and appliances have increased in number and appearance.
5. The bricks on Main Street and dirt roads to Grove City and all of directions have been replaced with modern paving.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

"The best thing about growing up in Harrisville was that everybody seemed to be friends. (Sure, we had some squabbles.) People were mannerly and hard-working. There were big gardens for the winter's food supply. No fresh fruits or vegetables on the market, except oranges and bananas. People were church-minded and patriotic. Memorial Day and the preceding Sunday brought hundreds of people to town. All events were in the churches or school. Our High School rated high in sports and scholastics."

Interviewed by: Jeremy M. Donovan

Name: Jim Bennett

Birthdate: April 6, 1921

Place of birth: R.D. 5 Grove City, Pa

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 65 years

Occupation: Lumberman.

Where did you go to school?:

I went to Harrisville through eighth grade.

How did you get to school?:

I walked.

How long did it take to get to school?:

15 to 20 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

Playing ball.

What subjects were taught?:

Reading writing, arithmetic, history, health, and geography.

What extra activities were there?:

We played ball.

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

We used a car and a horse and buggy.

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

My granddads.

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

We celebrated Christmas at home. We had a Christmas tree and exchanged presents.

Describe your childhood home:

We had a pitcher pump to draw water. We used a hand washing machine, a dash butter churner, a coal stove for cooking. We had a fireplace for heating, oil lamps, and outdoor toilets. For toys we had trucks, sleds, and a wagon.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. The gas lights have been replaced by electric lights.
2. There are new homes.
3. There is a new church.
4. The Methodist church has been remodeled.
5. The blacksmith shops and the wagon shop are gone.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

I made good friends.

Interviewed by: Jeremy M. Donovan

Name: Bill Best

Birthdate: April 13, 1930

Place of birth: Erico, Pa

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 48 years

Occupation: Quality control

Where did you go to school?:
Harrisville

How did you get to school?:
I walked.

How long did it take to get to school?:
30 minutes

Favorite memory of school:
I met my wife.

What subjects were taught?:
General academics

What extra activities were there?:
Basketball, baseball, glee-club, civic club

What transportation was used when you were a child?:
Walking

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:
Franklin Roosevelt, General Patton

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:
It was a good occasion, nothing spectacular.

Describe your childhood home:
We had no indoor plumbing, just outside facilities. We had a coal-fired stove and very few toys.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. Many old landmark buildings are gone.
2. There are different stores and service stations.
3. Harrisville has a sewer system
4. There are many people moving in and out.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:
Freedom. I feel that Harrisville is a nice place to grow up.

Interviewed by: Brian J. P. Donovan

Name: Clif Cokain

Birthdate: September 21, 1907

Place of birth: Franklin, Pa

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 59 years

Occupation: Retired barber

Where did you go to school?:
Irwin Township

How did you get to school?:
Walked, horse, car

How long did it take to get to school?:
10 minutes to grade school, 30 minutes to high school

Favorite memory of school:
The Senior Banquet

What subjects were taught?:
Latin, Algebra, English, biology, science, and history

What extra activities were there?:
We played softball.

What transportation was used when you were a child?:
Horse, buggy, walking, and the automobile

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:
My father

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:
We had a Christmas dinner and gifts.

Describe your childhood home:

We lived in a farmhouse. It was heated by coal stove. We used a pitcher pump for water. There were outdoor toilet facilities and a tub and washboard for laundry. We had sleds and a wagon. The girls had dolls, cribs, and cradles. I studied schoolwork with an oil lamp.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. The high school moved to Slippery Rock.
2. The change in the business section of town.
3. There is better housing.
4. All streets and alleys have been paved, not just Route 8 and Route 58.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

Interviewed by: Jeremy M. Donovan

Name: Helen Cokain

Birthdate: July 21, 1910

Place of birth: Mercer Township

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 59 years

Occupation: Housewife

Where did you go to school?:

White Oaks for grade school, then Harrisville high School

How did you get to school?:

I walked.

How long did it take to get to school?:

30 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

Being with friends and different musical programs

What subjects were taught?:

Reading, writing, and arithmetic

What extra activities were there?:

Basketball, football, and the orchestra

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

Walking, horse and buggy

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

My mother and a neighbor lady

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

We celebrated Christmas right in home.

Describe your childhood home:

We did our laundry with a washboard. We got water with a pitcher pump or carried the water from a spring. There were outdoor toilets. We had a coal stove and used oil lamps.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. The roads have been paved
2. The housing has been improved.
3. Young people own businesses and homes.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

Interviewed by: Jeremy M. Donovan

Name: Dean E. Critchlow

Birthdate: July 10, 1921

Place of birth: Mercer Township

Number of years resided in Harrisville: All my life

Occupation: Dairy farmer

Where did you go to school?:

8 grades at Whiteoak and high school in Harrisville

How did you get to school?:

I walked

How long did it take to get to school?:

20 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

We had a box social and put in plays. We used lanterns to light the room.

What subjects were taught?:

Reading, writing, and arithmetic

What extra activities were there?:

We played ball some. We walked to coal mines, but didn't go in.

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

Most all people had buggies and half had cars. We used cars in the summer time.

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

Tom Mix

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

One year I got a scooter. I got a car and I still have it. Once, I got an orange and candy.

Describe your childhood home:

We had running water and an electric washing machine. We had a coal furnace. Outside toilet. We took our bath in a rinse tub. I had a mechanical set, that I made things. They were strips of metal with holes in and you used nuts and bolts to put the pieces together and make things.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. Blacksmith.
2. The meat market. The owners used to go to the farm and butcher veal calves.
3. The large garage across from Henry's Market was Walter Van Dyke.
4. Dr. Fulton, Dr. Campbell, Shoe repair.
5. Henry's Market was Rihel garage.
6. Dr. Imbrie lived where the funeral home is now, his dentist was on top of the bank.
7. Eating place beside the barber shop.
8. Magee wagon works handy Hanllan House.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

I knew everyone.

Interviewed by: Thomas L. Critchlow

Name: Velma Critchlow

Birthdate: October 17, 1921

Place of birth: Harrisville

Number of years resided in Harrisville: All my life

Occupation: Housewife

Where did you go to school?:

Grade school and High School in Harrisville

How did you get to school?:

We walked. We carried boiled eggs to keep our hands warm.

How long did it take to get to school?:

Half an hour

Favorite memory of school:

In first grade, we had double seats. We carried our lunches and sat outside in groups to eat.

What subjects were taught?:

We had about the same as now, but it wasn't pushed.

What extra activities were there?:

We just had basketball and I played.

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

My dad had a Buick and other people still had buggies.

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

I admired J. S. Wilson. He taught me the figure eight in basketball.

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

Many a Christmas went by and we didn't receive anything. We didn't have much food or clothes.

Describe your childhood home:

My mother had a Maytag washer run by battery. We hung clothes outside to dry. There was a coal stove in the living room and kitchen. We had a pump outside for water. Mom would heat water on the stove to take a bath every night. We would use the rinse tub to take our bath in. There was no electric, so we had lamps. Mother packed lunches every day. She baked bread and all of the dessert. Outside toilet.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. The main crossroad had two barber shops, Gibson store and a gas station.
2. The Presbyterian Church was taken down, Harmony Church was moved into town.
3. There was a grocery store where the barbaer shop is now.
4. Grade school and high school
5. The mill is gone. We used to get our feed there.
6. The old H + F Auto Building was Paul Brown Furniture and Funeral Home and part of the Underground Railroad. Slaves stayed in the daytime.
7. Cathcart Hotel and Restaurant used to be in the Sheetz parking lot.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

Harrisville was a small town, and you knew everyone. Everyone was friendly. My mother churned and Mr. Hughes at the Ice Cream Factory would exchange one quart of ice cream for buttermilk. That was a treat for us.

Interviewed by: Thomas L. Critchlow

Name: Ken Eakin

Birthdate: October 29, 1906

Place of birth: Hendersonville, Pa

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 78 years

Occupation: Postmaster of Harrisville, in mail service 38 years

Where did you go to school?:

1 year at Pine Hills, the rest at Harrisville

How did you get to school?:

I walked.

How long did it take to get to school?:

30 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

Sports. It was my first year in high school when the first Harrisville football team was started.

What subjects were taught?:

Mathematics, Latin, reading, physics, English, biology

What extra activities were there?:

We had football and one or two plays.

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

Horse and buggy, automobiles

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

My mother

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

We had a family get together and a small gift exchange.

Describe your childhood home:

We had a hand washing machine and running water. Everyone had gardens. We had a hand lawn mower.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. We have a paved road corner at the north part of Harrisville.
2. Raised the Methodist church in order to put down a foundation and basement
3. The Harmony Church was moved.
4. Five apartments moved from where Jay's gas station is.
5. A new school was built.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

You made your own entertainment.

Interviewed by: Jeremy M. Donovan

Name: Ralph Erb

Birthdate: October 11, 1919

Place of birth: Venango County

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 70 years

Occupation: Retired test engineer for Cooper-Bessemer

Where did you go to school?:

Harrisville

How did you get to school?:

I walked.

How long did it take to get to school?:

3 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

The teachers

What subjects were taught?:

Science, Algebra, Latin, health, civics, geometry, and Spanish

What extra activities were there?:

Basketball, and football (for a little bit)

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

Automobiles, sleigh, and some horse and buggy

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

My mother

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

We had a big meal and presents.

Describe your childhood home:

We had indoor water, but no other indoor plumbing. There was a pump and outdoor toilets. We used coal stoves for heat. Laundry was done in a wash boiler - used a stamper. Our toys were mostly wooden.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. Harrisville now has electricity.
2. The gas street lights are now electric.
3. The high school has been moved to Slippery Rock.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

We had outdoor freedom. Kids weren't confined by city.

Interviewed by: Jeremy M. Donovan

Name: Martha Grossman

Birthdate: February 19, 1910

Place of birth: Millcreek Township

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 54 years

Occupation: Housewife

Where did you go to school?:

Crowser School, then Sandy Lake High School

How did you get to school?:

I walked two years to Sandy Lake High School. I also rode two years by bus.

How long did it take to get to school?:

20 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

I liked being with other people that were the same age. I liked math. It was my favorite subject.

What subjects were taught?:

Reading, writing, arithmetic, history

What extra activities were there?:

Boy's basketball

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

Horse and buggy, surrey

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

My mother.

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

We had a chicken dinner and a Christmas tree. We had very few gifts.

Describe your childhood home:

We had a pitcher pump outside, outdoor bathrooms, a coal/wood stove for heating and cooking. Baths were taken in a washtub. We had no car. We baked our own bread, raised our own vegetables, heated water on a stove, and butchered pigs for meat. We had leather tick mattresses and washed our clothes with a washboard, later we used a non-electric washing machine.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. 4th of July celebrations.
2. There are not as many grocery stores.
3. There is no longer a high school.
4. The streets have been paved

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

Harrisville is a friendly town.

Interviewed by: Jeremy M. Donovan

Name: Marie Hanlon

Birthdate: August 30, 1912

Place of birth: Harrisville, Pa

Number of years resided in Harrisville: All my life

Occupation: Housewife, antique business

Where did you go to school?:

Harrisville for both elementary and high school

How did you get to school?:

I walked.

How long did it take to get to school?:

10 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

The basketball team and the people. I liked my teacher.

What subjects were taught?:

English, history, chemistry, biology, French, and Algebra I and II

What extra activities were there?:

Basketball, track, and football.

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

We walked. We didn't own a car. We rode a bus to Grove City.

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

My mother, my father, and Professor Wilson, the basketball coach, Algebra teacher, and history teacher.

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

We had a real (not artificial) Christmas tree decorated with strings of popcorn. We had a big dinner.

Describe your childhood home:

We had an indoor pump and an outdoor toilet. We had a coal stove for heating and used a board to do laundry by hand-boiling white clothes. For toys, we had roller skates, ice skates, and dolls. We didn't have much money, but no one did, so they didn't know it.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. There is no longer a Harrisville High School.
2. The school used to be heated by a pot-belly stove.
3. Teachers only earned \$100 a month.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

You knew everyone. You had good neighbors. You went sleighriding or played basketball.

Interviewed by: Charles E. Porter III

Name: Bill Hanlon* (answers are about the same as his wife, Maria.)

Birthdate: 1923

Place of birth: Clearfield County

Number of years resided in Harrisville:

Occupation:

Where did you go to school?:

How did you get to school?:

How long did it take to get to school?:

Favorite memory of school:

What subjects were taught?:

What extra activities were there?:

Football and basketball

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

Describe your childhood home:

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

Interviewed by: Charles E. Porter III

Name: EmmaLou Holtz

Birthdate: August 31, 1926

Place of birth: Slippery Rock Township

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 56 years

Occupation: Retired business manager of Slippery Rock Area High School

Where did you go to school?:

I went to Harrisville High School from grades five through twelve.

How did you get to school?:

I walked.

How long did it take to get to school?:

10 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

Rushing back to school after lunch to dance to jukebox; rivalry between Harrisville/Clintonville in girls basketball; and my teacher, Robert Henderson

What subjects were taught?:

Basics and business

What extra activities were there?:

Girl's and boy's basketball

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

Walking, railroads, and automobiles

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

Robert Henderson, my principal/Sunday school teacher, and Lou Gehrig.

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

Christmas was very special. For gifts, we received popcorn balls, oranges, and things mother made. We had a Christmas tree.

Describe your childhood home:

We had no indoor plumbing or electricity at first. We had gas lights for lighting. We had coal stoves, later oil stoves. We made our own games. I had a book of Peter Pan.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. The high school moved to Slippery Rock.
2. There is now a sewer system.
3. The old hotel was torn down.
4. The old mill was torn down. The baseball field was behind the mill.
5. The gas stations
6. Humphrey's Store was the social center. It closed.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

The close friendships

Interviewed by: Jeremy M. Donovan and Brian J. P.

Name: LeRoy Montgomery

Birthdate: January 30, 1909

Place of birth: Mercer County

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 68 years, since 1923

Occupation: I was in business for 40 years at the Cement Block Works.

Where did you go to school?:

I went to Grove City for grades one through four, then I attended Harrisville (Class of 1928.)

How did you get to school?:

I walked.

How long did it take to get to school?:

5 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

Football, track, science, and that there were seven people in my graduating class.

What subjects were taught?:

Latin, science, and math

What extra activities were there?:

Football, track, and high school parties

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

Walking, automobile, and skating

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

My old high school principal. He became a judge of Indiana County.

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

We didn't always have a tree. The whole family was always together.

Describe your childhood home:

We had running water, an outdoor bathroom, and a good house. I always went in my bare feet. We used coal heat and a hand washing machine with a handle to crank up and down. My grandfather made me a sled, and my uncle gave me a .22 caliber rifle. My dad gave me a trap. Now, people have wells.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. Harrisville now has a sewer system.
2. Taxes.
3. The Harrisville High School went to Slippery Rock.
4. The gas street lights have been replaced by electric ones.
5. The paved streets used to be ashed.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

There were people of the same age. The school activities, bicycling, and automobiling. The friendships among neighbors, and the football practices.

Interviewed by: Charles E. Porter III

Name: Catherine Simmons

Birthdate: May 25, 1911

Place of birth: Mercer Township

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 25 years

Occupation: Retired schoolteacher

Where did you go to school?:

Browntown school

How did you get to school?:

I walked three miles.

How long did it take to get to school?:

45 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

Some of the teachers

What subjects were taught?:

Reading, writing, arithmetic, health, and geography

What extra activities were there?:

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

Walking

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

My mother

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

We had a Christmas tree and hung stockings.

Describe your childhood home:

We carried water from a spring and washed clothes in wash water heated on a stove. We had oil lamps for light. Later, we had a hand-run washing machine and also a gasoline-powered washing machine. We got electricity in 1932. We had coal stoves; and cooked on them. We had an outside toilet and got inside water in the early 30's. For toys, we used a wagon, a chain of dandelions, jumpropes, marbles, balls and bats, dolls, dogs and cats, books. We would go and get the mail.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. The post office moved three times.
2. Houses and back streets of Harrisville replaced corn fields.
3. Two houses on the corner were torn down.
4. A barn used to be at the location of Bonetti's Nursing Home.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

We had freedom to wander around.

Interviewed by: Jeremy M. Donovan

Name: Edna Smith

Birthdate: March 23, 1914

Place of birth: Harrisville, Pa

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 25 years in town, 52 years two miles north of town

Occupation: Housewife

Where did you go to school?:

White Oaks School

How did you get to school?:

I walked

How long did it take to get to school?:

10 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

Baseball

What subjects were taught?:

Reading, writing, arithmetic, English, and geography

What extra activities were there?:

Pie socials

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

We used a car, before that we used a horse and buggy.

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

Ella Hamilton, a neighbor

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

We had a family Christmas gathering and gift exchange. We went to the candlelight service at church.

Describe your childhood home:

I lived in an eleven-room house. We had coal stoves, later a coal furnace. We had oil lamps, then we got carbide lamps. There were outside toilets, but indoor water. My house burned down when I was eleven years old. We had sleds and played ball.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. Harrisville now has a sewer system.
2. The businesses have changed.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

I had lots of friends and neighbors. People were always friendly and you always knew who your friends were.

Interviewed by: Jeremy M. Donovan

Name: Paul W. Taggart

Birthdate: May 26, 1925

Place of birth: Worth Township, Butler County

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 41 years

Occupation: Retired freight agent, Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad Company

Where did you go to school?:

I went eight years to Kelly School, a one-room school in Worth Township, and four years to Slippery Rock High School.

How did you get to school?:

I walked the first eight years, the first two years of high school, and walked two miles to a bus stop for the last two years of high school.

How long did it take to get to school?:

5 minutes to grade school, and 45 minutes to the bus stop for my last two years of high school

Favorite memory of school:

I attended a one-room school. It was small enough that you knew all of the students and their parents, not only in school together but also neighbors.

What subjects were taught?:

Mainly the "3 Rs," history, geography, and spelling.

What extra activities were there?:

There were none sponsored by the school. We provided our own in ball playing, sled riding, ect. after school.

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

I attended church by horse and buggy, by sleigh in the winter time, later by auto. A lot of walking was done.

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

My parents, minister, and teachers

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

We had a family get-together with grandparents, aunts, uncles, ect. for Christmas Dinner.

Describe your childhood home:

The House was heated by a coal cook stove in the kitchen and a heating stove in the living room. There was no heat on the second floor bedrooms. There was no indoor water. We carried water from a spring. Laundry was done by heating water on the kitchen stove and using either a "wash board" in a wash tub or in a hand-powered washing machine. There were very few toys. We had one sled (which I still have) and one used bike (cost \$4.00). The things we didn't have we didn't seem to miss. We did without or made do with what we had.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

1. The passing of "Humphrey's Store"
2. The hardware store moved from "Houstons" to where it is now.
3. The over-all change from the "Old Businesses" to the ones of today.

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

I did not grow up in Harrisville, but I think it would have been about the same as where I did. Everybody knew everybody. There were no problems with drugs or drinking. Life had a much slower pace than now.

Interviewed by: Eric D. Castor

Name: Katherine Jane Thompson Taggart

Birthdate: April 11, 1926

Place of birth: Branchton, Pa

Number of years resided in Harrisville: 41 years

Occupation: Housewife

Where did you go to school?:

I went eight years to one-room schoolhouse in Branchton, two years at Butler High School, and two years at Slippery Rock High School.

How did you get to school?:

I walked.

How long did it take to get to school?:

3 minutes

Favorite memory of school:

Being with the kids and learning the basics for life

What subjects were taught?:

Reading, arithmetic, geography, history, writing

What extra activities were there?:

None (At school we played Andy-Andy over the schoolhouse, tag, hide and seek, and ball.)

What transportation was used when you were a child?:

Train and car. I went two years to Butler high school and rode the train to get there. I got home about 6:00 in the evening.

Who was the person you most admired as you were growing up?:

My mom and dad

How did your family celebrate Christmas?:

By being together and having a big dinner

Describe your childhood home:

We had two coal stoves, one in the living room and one in the dining room. Only one register with heat went upstairs. In the winter time wool comforts felt really good. We had a pitcher pump in the kitchen. We went to the neighbors for our cooking and drinking water. My mother had barrels to catch rain water and heated the water in a copper boiler to wash. I didn't have many toys to play with. My sister had a baby buggy for her doll, cradle, high chair, and a rocker. She and I used them and she still has them.

Biggest changes in Harrisville:

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville:

I did not grow up in Harrisville. I was born and raised in Branchton and lived there until I moved here 41 years on February 19, 1950.

Interviewed by: Eric D. Castor

Appendix

P.O. Box
Harrisville, Pa 16038
May 1991

Dear

My name is Jeremy Donovan and I am a member of the Harrisville Boy Scout Troop 380. I am working on the project for my Eagle Scout Rank - a history of Harrisville. I have done library research for a factual written history of the town. I will interview Senior Citizens about their life growing up in this area questions about their school days, their holidays, their method of transportation, ect. All of the responses will become part of the written history of Harrisville and I will present a copy to the town as well as to the to the County Library.

I would like to talk with you about your early life in this area. I will talk be calling you soon to see if you are willing with this project. Then , another scout or myself will be contacting you to set up a convenient time for the interview. I sincerely hope that you will take time to share with us some memories about our town that we can preserve.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Donovan

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Birthdate _____ Place of Birth _____

Number of years resided in Harrisville _____

Occupation _____

Where did you go to School? _____

How did you get to school? _____

How long did it take to get to school? _____

Favorite memory of school? _____

What were the subjects taught? _____

What extra activities were there? _____

As you were growing up, who was the person you most admired?

What was the transportation used when you were a child?

How did you celebrate Christmas as a family when you were young?

Describe your childhood home? (heating, indoor water, laundry, toys)

Changes in Harrisville 1 _____
2 _____
3 _____

Best thing about growing up in Harrisville. _____

Interviewed by _____