

THE LANDMARK

Volume XXXVI, No. IV

July/August 2016

Newsletter of the Friends of Old Annville
P.O. Box 99, Annville, PA 17003

Cherishing the Past, Looking to the Future

President's Message, by Michael Schroeder

For the past 14 years, Valerie Weiner has lived in one of Annville's most prominent and iconic historic homes, known locally as the J. D. Biever Home at 49 S. White Oak St. For much of that time, Val also served on the Board of Directors of the Friends of Old Annville, undertaking sundry tasks but mainly serving as the editor of (and the unsung hero behind) our bi-monthly newsletter, *The Landmark*. In this President's Message, I'd like to spotlight not only the beauty, grace, and charm of Val's historic home, but also her irrepressible energy and warm affection for the Friends of Old Annville, and for the town she's come to call home (*right: the historic J. D. Biever Home*).



Born in Bethlehem PA and raised in Allentown, Val spent most of her professional career working for and often directing a series of non-profit corporations, most geared toward helping the disadvantaged – starting with the Pennsylvania Council of Farmworkers, dedicated to improving the lives of area migrants and seasonal farmworkers, and including the Pennsylvania Association for the Blind and the Pennsylvania Association of Area Agencies on Aging. Formally “retired,” she now works full time at the Goodwill Store & Donation Center in Palmyra, and until recently was the Director of the Pennsylvania State Snowmobile Association (even though she's never ridden a snowmobile!).

“I got involved in FOOA after a program on postcards of the area held at the Free Library,” says Val, who recalled that one of FOOA's Board members mentioned that the organization needed help with its bi-monthly newsletter. Computer savvy and looking for a way to become more involved in the community, Val volunteered to help with the newsletter and soon found herself on the FOOA Board.

Looking back at her eight years of service – and comparing her service on the boards of many other non-profit corporations – Val holds FOOA and its leadership in exceptionally high regard. “I am truly impressed with FOOA,” she says. Citing the façade grant program, Historic Old Annville Day, and FOOA's seasonal cycle of distinctive events and programs, she feels that “the Board has been so amazingly productive, it's almost become as much a community service organization as an organization devoted to historic preservation.”

Given the prominence and beauty of her historic home, it's understandable that Val would hold such keen interest in historic preservation. Placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976, the J. D. Biever



Home took up to five years to build, starting in 1799 and continuing into 1804. Its 20-plus inch limestone walls effectively shield the interior from the noise and vibrations of the 18-wheelers and other vehicles rumbling up and down White Oak St.

The three-story addition on the home's west side was added sometime in the early to mid-19th century, and the little brick summer kitchen built around the same time. During the hot summer months, the out-kitchen served the house, as well as the employees of the tannery which operated at the site through most of the 19th century. The tornado that ripped through Annville in September 1915 destroyed the tannery barns (as seen in the photo at left), and the early 2000s the home lost its lovely hedge and some of its front yard to a substantially widened White Oak Street.

Seated with a guest at her dining room table and dusting off an old photo album, Val thumbs through a series of snapshots showing the deplorable condition of the house when she bought it back in 2004. "It was pretty much a disaster," she says. Systematically refurbishing both the interior and exterior, over the past 14 years Val has transformed a dilapidated and outdated home into a magnificent example of what can be done to restore the beauty and charm of late 18th-century limestone architecture.

The 15-inch window sills throughout convey a sense of solidity and Old-World craftsmanship, as do the nine-foot high ceilings, the visibly hand-planed plank walls in the stairway and attic, and the walk-in fireplace on the main floor, with its massive beam construction, original folding doors, and handmade brick hearth. The arch-door cherry corner cupboard in the dining room – original to the home – is complemented by the wide plank floors of pine, cherry, and oak in the living and dining rooms. The original woodwork has been largely preserved, with simple heavy trim throughout and dressier pick-work and "Adams Flute" chair rail in the front parlor. The concrete basement – full under the main house – was deeply-dug to create a higher ceiling, while the pegged "tree trunk" construction remains fully visible. The three-bay attic, in two separate sections covering the original house and the addition, features wide pine plank floors and walls erected for the original bedrooms, with hand-wrought iron thumb latches on the doors.¹ (Right: *Lavina Biever doing yard-work in her backyard, the last member of the Biever family to reside in the home.*)



Circling back to her time on the FOOA Board, Val notes that "What's especially impressive about FOOA is its efforts to work with the community, the township, and the College to help make Annville the very special place it is." The entire FOOA Board extends its heartfelt appreciation to Val for her many years of exemplary service. Thank you, Valerie!

¹ Portions of these descriptions are quoted or paraphrased from "Summary of History & Features: J. D. Biever Home," undated manuscript kindly provided, along with the photos, by Val Weiner (now also accessible in the FOOA Electronic Archives).

Twenty-Eighth Annual Historic Old Annville Day a Historic Success

By Douglas L. Nyce, HOAD Vendor Coordinator

The Board of the Friends of Old Annville extends a hearty and sincere thank-you to all of the participants in Historic Old Annville Day 2016. Historic Old Annville Day (HOAD) is a revival of the “Annville Days” at Hershey Park when residents would board the trolley at the Annville Station with a picnic lunch for a day in Hershey. In recent years, HOAD has evolved into a large and festive street fair showcasing the historic architecture, beautiful streetscape, and vibrant businesses of downtown Annville.

This year, over 140 vendors, local businesses, and non-profits plied their wares, services, and ideas to several thousand attendees. A favorite for the crowd is always the variety and quality of food, much of it from local businesses and non-profits. FOOA Board members are especially grateful to the many sponsors who made contributions to help offset expenses for the Friends. We are also thankful for the many vendors who paid to participate in this annual community event and fundraiser, and to Annville Township Police and Public Works for their tireless help with the event. Special thanks go to Fundraising Coordinator Laura Charelian; Advertising Coordinator Michelle Poorman; Music Coordinator

Lee Smedley; and Pennsy Supply, which generously paid for the design, manufacture, and erection of a large advertising billboard on the north side of Route 422.

The purposes of HOAD are many: to bring the people of Annville together for a day of fellowship and community; to allow former residents of Annville a chance to return and meet old friends; to create an opportunity for local businesses to participate in a street fair and get their products and services better known in the community; and to raise funds for the FOOA Façade Grant Program. Façade grants of up to \$4,000 are available to owners of properties in the Annville Township Historic District to assist them with restoration and maintenance of the exteriors of their historic properties visible from the street. Funds permitting, the grants are awarded annually to applicants who meet the FOOA’s criteria. Applications can be downloaded from www.fooa.org and are accepted on a rolling basis.

Again, thank you all for a very successful Historic Old Annville Day, 2016. See you on June 10, 2017! *(Below: thousands of visitors flock to West Main Street at Historic Old Annville Day 2016.)*



A Glimpse into the Life of a Young Woman at Lebanon Valley College in 1923

By Karen M. Feather, FOOA Board Member

The year is 1923, and nineteen-year-old Kathryn Nisley is finishing her second year at Lebanon Valley College. In March she begins to keep a diary, addressed to her future self, wondering what kind of woman she will become. In *Dear Woman of My Dreams* (Bloomington, IN: Exlibris, 2016), her daughter Lois Kathryn Herr reprints a lightly annotated and edited version of this diary – a book that offers some captivating anecdotes about and insights into society and culture in Annville, Lebanon Valley College, and the Lebanon Valley during this period. (Right: Kathryn Nisley “in a play costume” at Lebanon Valley College, ca. 1923.)

In her first entry, dated March 6, 1923, Kathryn asks her future self for help in seeing the path ahead: “Mother wants me home each weekend, Carl wants me to marry him, and Grandma wants to take me out West to visit distant relatives. Who am I, and where am I going?”

In an interview about her mother’s diary, Lois marveled at the wide range of options she considered: becoming a foreign missionary, a scientist, or a professional violinist. She credited Lebanon Valley College in part for creating an atmosphere of opportunity for its students, but also noted that the mood of the country in the 1920s was expansive and optimistic for young women.

Kathryn's diary reveals her to be a confident young woman, fully engaged in the world. On March 29, she wrote that she and her friend Cynthia “sallied up Front Street to the governor's mansion” where they were able to meet Mrs. Pinchot personally and apparently without an appointment. Mrs. Pinchot told them that she would probably be able to accept their invitation for her to speak at LVC once she returned from traveling abroad.

Intriguing details about life at LVC are sprinkled throughout the diary. On October 22, Kathryn noted that “The funeral of F&M football team was held at six thirty in the chapel. Then we marched to the athletic field for the burial and a bonfire.” Her friend Maude is a prankster who has a habit of setting



her alarm clock at “unearthly hours” and then hiding it in hard-to-find places in her dorm room. Numerous friends accompany her to musical performances, athletic contests, and other social activities on campus.

Much of the diary is focused on the extraordinary two-month train trip across the United States that Kathryn takes with her 68 year-old grandmother, Rebecca Stober Hassler. In addition to visiting relatives spread across the country, Kathryn's grandmother made sure they visited Stillwater, Oklahoma, where Kathryn's former LVC classmate Carl is now a minister. A few days after the visit, Kathryn records her grandmother's quiet question: “I don't suppose you are going to marry him, are you?” Kathryn writes that she almost cried and said

she didn't know. But two days earlier she had written that she couldn't see herself living in Stillwater with Carl. "Dear Woman of My Dreams, help me get out of this," she wrote. Although she remained in touch with Carl throughout his life, they never married.

In fact, fourteen years pass before she marries Ira Herr, with whom she had a long and happy marriage, according to Lois. We learn about the life Kathryn lived in the second part of the book, in which Lois imagines the response her 100-year-old mother gives to her 19-year-old self. Kathryn taught French and directed plays at Elizabethtown High School, where

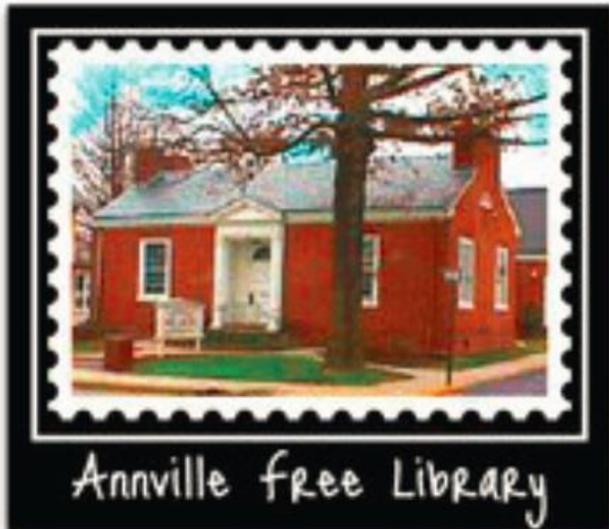
she met her husband, who was a coach. After the birth of Lois in 1941, Kathryn joined him on the faculty of Elizabethtown College and taught French for two decades. She lived to be 103 and for some time was the oldest living LVC alumna, staying loyal over all those years to her beloved *alma mater*.

Lois has spent a great deal of time researching her family's history and plans a series of books on other members of the family. Information about how to order the book is available via www.loiskathrynherr.com.

The Friends of Old Annville, Inc., an all-volunteer, non-profit corporation with over 380 members, offers annual memberships at the ridiculously low price of \$5 for individuals, \$10 for families, and \$25 for businesses — a great yet affordable way to become involved in your local community. Gift memberships can be a wonderful way to welcome your new neighbors, demonstrate pride in your community, or show you remember an old friend. Membership fees support our Façade Grant, seasonal programs, and other initiatives.

Save the Date!

Sunday, October 9
Starting at 2:00 PM



“Oh the Places We’ve Been!”

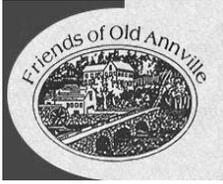
**A Tour of the Six Sites of the
Annville Free Library**

A project of the Annville Free Library

For a fun & amusing video montage of Historic Old Annville Day 2016,

see the YouTube video produced & posted by Rosalind & Katie Nyce. Go to YouTube and search for “Old Annville Day 2016”. Or, type into your browser `v=mWVEhEsIsZE` immediately after typing `www.youtube.com/watch?` Or, if you’re reading this on your computer, click on the image below:





Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lebanon, PA
17042
Permit No. 184

Box 99, Annville, PA 17003

Address Service Requested

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Please note that your MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DATE can be found on the mailing label of this issue of *The Landmark*. Please send your dues and address change to Rachel Noll, 1673 Louser Road, Annville, PA, 17003-8856. Questions? Call Rachel at (717) 867-2137.

Individual & Student \$ 5.00 Family (2+ persons) \$ 10.00 Business \$ 25.00 Friend of FOOA \$ 50.00 ★
Benefactor \$100.00 §

RENEWALS

Fife & Drum on Main
Patriot House B&B
Mrs. John E. Albright
Iris Berliner Alster
Ruth Baker
Mrs. Joan Bernardo
Kenneth Binkley/Elaine Smart
M/M Howard Bixler
Virginia T. Bowman
Tom & Beth Brandt
Marty & Patti Brandt ★
Mr. Donald R. Brown
Rev/M Norman Bucher, Jr.
Rose Marie Caswell
Robert & Thelma T. Clark
Mr. Gerald A. Collins
Mrs. Jeanne DeLong
Thomas & Gwenn Embich ★
Betty Evans
M/M Philip Feather
Linda L. Felty
Jay A. Felty, DDS
Helen L. Ferguson
John & Carolyn Fetter
Gene & Janice Fortna

Robert & Sue Ann (Kreamer) Freeman
Mr. Carl S. Fry
Maryann Hanley
Martin & Barbara Haubrich
Larry Hess
Bill Hopple
Mrs. Christine Hopple
Sylvia & Darlene Hurlbert
Carole Kline
M/M David H. Kling
Fred & Joanne Kreider
Mr. Jeffrey Kreider
Verna Ziegler Kwiatkowski
Barbara J. (Light) Lacy
Dan Massad/Scott Eggert ★
Julie A. Maurer
Carol Meininger
M/M Charles W. Miller II
Dr/M Owen Moe §
Jim & Claire Moyer
M/M Ralph F. Munz §
Mike & Janice Orehek ★
Mrs. Stephanie Rauch
M/M Allen Rhine
Dave & Joy Leland Riegert
Bonnie Bernardo Rieker

Linda L. Rohland
Ms Alexis I. Schaeffer
M/M James H. Schaeffer
Mike & Melanie Semrau
Dick & Lois Smith
M/M Larry L. Smith
Marilyn W. Smith §
Diane Summers
M/M Edgar Teahl, Jr.
Jay & Kim Kreider Umble
M/M David Wentling
Robert & Sally Wentling
M/M Jack L. Williams, Jr.
Mrs. Mary B. Willman
M/M John Witmer
Mrs. Ruth Wolfe
Mrs. Glenn Woods
Steve Yeakel ★
Bob & Doris Yorty

NEW MEMBERS

Gregory & Deeann Goodman
John & Cindy Hostetter
Drs. Mark & Danielle Leshner
Victoria Mumma