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BCHA Party Line Volume 14 Issue 10 October 2024



Pastor Ron Kelly from Williamsport PA, who has been a volunteer here at the museum since 2005 has retired at the close of this year's Pennsylvania Heritage Festival. During the Festival and at the annual '1866 Farm Days' educational event for area 4th grade students, he portrayed a Civil War Chaplin.

Pastor Ron Kelly, By C. R. Wagner

As you walk along the sidewalk in the Heritage Village, passing by the Carriage House on your left, a gentleman approaches you. He is dressed in black, except for his white shirt sleeves, including a black hat on his head. He is walking along with a woman in a long purple gown. They are talking and laughing. You notice that the gentleman's eyes are laughing as he gives you a friendly "hello."

That friendly gentleman in black is Pastor Ron Kelly. He has been an icon at the Heritage Village and Farm Museum, mainly in the little Children's Church – a donation from Charlie Rockwell. He has recently researched and revised the Children's Church brochure

According to Pastor Kelly it was Melba Campbell who invited him to go through the village on a tour.

"I was really impressed with the enthusiasm of everyone," said Pastor Kelly, who had come with his wife, CeCe.

As a result, Pastor Kelly decided to volunteer his time as the pastor of the little Children's Church. In doing so, he got to know Charlie Rockwell. He enjoyed talking with him and his family and still stays in touch with Stuart Rockwell, Charlie's son. A history lover, Pastor Kelly was especially interested in learning more about the diary that Charlie's great grandfather Martin Luther Rockwell kept.

He portrays a Civil War chaplain at the Heritage Festival. During the years that he was a volunteer he did two weddings and three baptisms, including a Civil War re-enactment wedding. He actually married them twice – once in the church and again out in the Civil War Encampment.

"A couple I met walking around the village at that time found out about the wedding and asked if I could do theirs," explained Pastor Kelly. "They had everything all ready. I talked with them and I was very pleased with both. I did their wedding in the little Church that day."

Pastor Kelly has many fond memories of volunteering at the village. During 'Farm Days 1866', he related to two of the chapters from the book *Farmer Boy* by Laura Ingalls Wilder – Saturday night and Sunday going to church.

"I always pointed out to the kids that Almanzo Wilder and his family were so wealthy but in four years they lost everything due to crop failure. They moved west to DeSmet, South Dakota – a small town. They had a hard winter and almost starved," explained Pastor Kelly. "Almanzo heard a rumor that a farmer had wheat. He found the farmer, got the wheat and brought it back to save the whole town right before a four-day blizzard hit."

Pastor Kelly tells the kids that Almanzo learned selflessness that day and continued to do so while he was going to church.



When Casey and Remington Smith were just kids and volunteering at the Heritage Festival, they had a special role in the Civil War reenactments. "They were supposed to run out in the field and soldiers were supposed to shoot them," explained Pastor Kelly. "I told them to get a soldier to shoot them and then fall down.

I went over to them to pray for them. They loved it!"

As time went on, Pastor Kelly noticed that some of the kids who were at the village for 'Farm Days 1866' came back to the Heritage Festival when they were older and talked to him about their memories of 'Farm Days'.

At the Heritage Festival one year, in front of the Gregory Inn, a young guy walked by Pastor Kelly with a boom box that didn't work on his shoulder. Pastor Kelly told him to bring it to him. He prayed for the boom box and when the young man walked by him again, it was working! "Oh, the power of prayer!" said Pastor Kelly.

While he was watching volunteer Mike Kelly on a parade horse, Pastor Kelly's hat blew off. While trying to catch it, he spilled his potato soup. Mike got him another cup. Later, Pastor Kelly tapped Mike on the chest quite forcefully and said to him, "There's a service tomorrow morning in the Children's Church. I want you there!"

Mike was the first one there! Mike was one of those baptized by Pastor Kelly. And after he was baptized, volunteer Terren Smith burst into tears and said, "Mike, you have no idea how long I've been praying for you!"

We are going to miss Pastor Kelly's smiling face at these events. Commitments closer to home will take up most of his time. This includes chaplain of the Christian Motorcyclists Association, an international organization.

Pastor Kelly, thank you for all your smiling years!

As the election season draws to a close and reflecting on past years, here are two related artifacts.

Many factors, including changes in technology and the emotionally charged issues of the day, led to an explosion of campaign items in the 1896 presidential election. Of the more than 2000 varieties produced, none was more unusual than the soap baby.

The campaigns of both the Democratic nominee William Jennings Bryan and his Republican opponent and eventual winner William McKinley featured individual infant-shaped soaps each of which rested in a cardboard box with a tag promoting the policies of the relevant party. Future politicians abandoned these items apparently because voters thought they looked too much like babies in coffins.

Ralph E. Becker Collection of Political Americana

Barry Goldwater's 1964 Presidential campaign used the classic Republican Party symbol, the elephant, and added Goldwater's trademark horn-rimmed glasses for one of the most memorable American campaign graphics of all time.



Upcoming Events

The museum has closed for the season, however we will be hosting a series of special events.

7 Dwarf Cake Decorating Workshop

Tuesday November 12, 2024 10AM, Main Museum Community Room

No Cake decorating experience necessary.

Assemble this adorable cake for a gift or party. Cost \$30 covers all materials, instruction and you take home your creation.

An excellent hands on activity to share with children and grandchildren using the take home instructions.

Reservations required, payment at door

Contact Barbara Berrett bbarrett362@comcast.net 570-786-9482



Museum volunteer Chelsea Wagner is coordinating with Stacey Hare for a family oriented event at State Farm Insurance at Troy's **Home Town Christmas** Saturday Nov 30. 9AM-3PM

Children and adults can make cards for shut-ins, all materials provided. Sponsored by the Heritage Village and Farm Museum This event will also offer Free Gift wrapping, Pet & Santa Pictures (donation) by Lady Nightmare Softball; and refreshments of hot chocolate and cookies.



Christmas in the Village event will not be held this year, instead the museum will be participating in Troy's Home Town Christmas Saturday Nov. 30 at State Farm Insurance with a table selling 2025 Museum Calendars, a great idea for a Christmas gift and supporting the museum.

All of you probably had a **Gingerbread House** decorated for Christmas at least once, but have you ever wondered how the history of it started? A Gingerbread House is a confectionary that is made of cookie dough and has the shape of a house. The records of this honey cake can be traced back to *ancient Rome*.

The tradition of making decorated Gingerbread Houses started in the 1800s in Germany. The first Gingerbread Houses were the result of the famous Grimm's tale "Hansel and Gretel", in which two abandoned children find an edible house in the forest, made of bread with sugar decorations. snackhistory.com/christmas



Tuesday Work Days are well attended and our volunteers are willing to tackle a variety of projects. Chelsea Wagner took advantage of the cooperating weather to add some finishing touches to the

Ye Olde Library

Now open to the public, stop by take a book/leave a book

BCHA Party Line October pg. 3



1822 Gregory Inn south end, completed project