

Schuylkill River Heritage Center

Phoenix Columns

Winter 2023

It was a unique coincidence that on October 13th 2022, the Schuylkill River Heritage Center held our 13th Heritage Award Celebration at The Foundry. It was also the Foundry's 140th birthday since it began operations for the Phoenix Iron Company in October 1882. This event, being held in this historic building, symbolizes the value of saving historic places that benefit everyone in the regional community.

We were proud to honor **David and Susan Meadows** for their extraordinary leadership and their lifetime commitment to Phoenixville and what they achieved over their many years of service to the community.

It is ironic that the Foundry might not exist without David Meadows' leadership at Phoenixville's volunteer fire company. In 1996, a fire broke out inside the Foundry building which had not yet been restored. It was David who got the fire company volunteers to immediately respond to put out the fire. This rapid response saved the building from being destroyed beyond repair. He continues to have a leadership role in the fire company, and also has a major leadership role in the **Phoenixville Area Historical Society**. His leadership and participation have fostered a sense of community benevolence and support for both organizations.

Susan Meadows continues to serve on the Phoenixville Area Economic Development Corporation (PAEDCO) Board of Directors as well as being President of the Board of the **Phoenixville Library Foundation**. It was Susan who encouraged the PAEDCO board to support the re-creation of the Phoenixville Mural and Renaissance Park. It was her strong **leadership** that enabled the SRHC to purchase the property from PAEDCO and have the opportunity to bring back the mural and reinvent Renaissance Park. Susan's creation of the **Generations** store is a unique and special attraction in the Downtown Historic District.

Special guests **Dan Stine** and **Kay Harris** from the **Asbury Park Historical Society** came all the way from NJ to attend the Oct. 13th Celebration. They shared historic images of the Phoenix Wheel that were transformed onto large screens at this event and also gave the SRHC historic tickets from those who were taking a ride on the wheel a long time ago.

The Heritage Center gratefully thanks our generous sponsors who made this event so successful. They include Aqua an Essential Utilities Co. Beausang Butera Cohen & Brennan Attorneys at Law, Dorothy Bedford & Rush Taggart, Carnevale Eustis Architects, Caroll Engineering Corp. Chester County Economic Development Council, Colonial Gardens, Gern & Whitney Jaeger, Richard Kunsch, James & Joan Moore, Phoenixville Federal Bank & Trust, James & Janet Reading, Sly Fox Brewing Company, Specialty Metals and Dan & Sharon Yonker.



Shown here are David and Susan Meadows with Mayor Pete Urscheler who presented the award to them.



Dan Stine and Kay Harris are pictured here with Barbara Cohen.

Here is a Photo Collage of many of the Oct. 13th Celebration guests



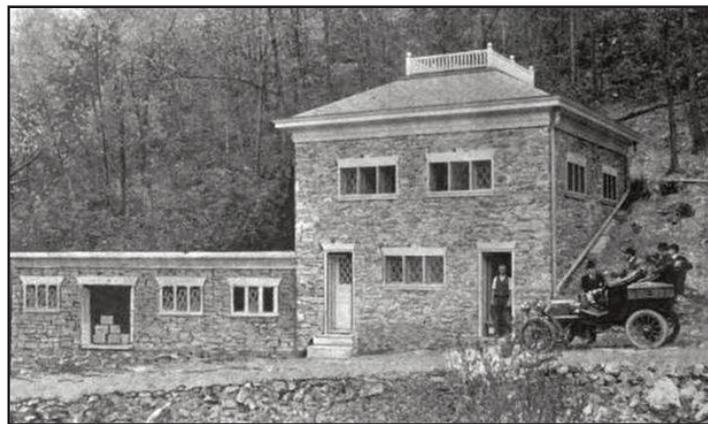
The Industrial Story of Valley Forge

In September, SRHC Board member and Co-Secretary **Dorothy Bedford** presented the industrial history of Valley Forge. Her background experience is extraordinary. She graduated from Princeton University with a degree in International Affairs and has a Master's Degree from Harvard's Business School. She was also the Director of Princeton's 250th Anniversary Committee. She moved to Schuylkill Township several years ago, and now serves on the township's Historical Commission and is also a board member of the French & Pickering Conservation Trust.

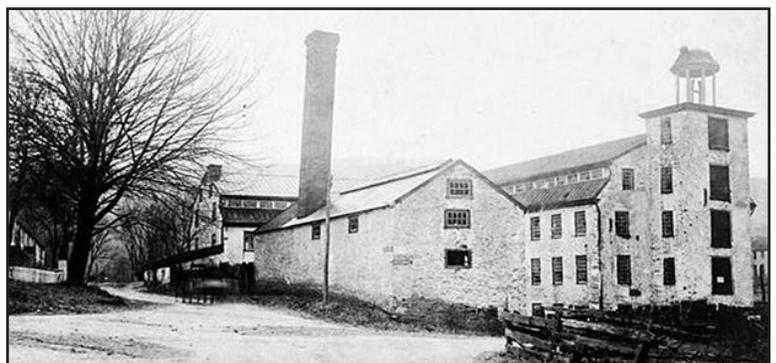
Before it became a state park in the 1920's and a national park in 1976, the village at Valley Forge was an early industrial place where iron forges were established in the early 1800's because of the water wheel power that was made possible by placing dams along Valley Creek. In fact, it was named because of the upper and lower iron forges that were situated along the creek. The cast iron for the forges located here was transported from Warwick Furnace. In 1773 David Potts and William Dewees, who was related by marriage to the Potts family, acquired the forge. He managed the operation at Valley Forge and David Potts sold the wrought iron products made there to a store in Philadelphia. The Potts family owned the forge at Valley Creek for many years.

The village at Valley Forge also hosted mills for other important products. Along with a lead mine near the Schuylkill River there was a grist mill, a clothing mill and the Colonial Springs Water bottling plant. Opened in 1895 by Ben Fisher, it was later sold to Charles Hires. The root beer was manufactured in Malvern, but Colonial Springs provided the water used for this famous beverage.

Here is an image of the water bottling plant.



Pictured here (l. to r.) are David Meadows, Dorothy Bedford and Neil & Lydia Sardinas



Pictured here is the clothing mill that manufactured uniforms for the army during the Civil War.

Experiencing Art & Nature to Conserve the Schuylkill River Watershed

In November **Jolie Chylack**, an SRHC Board member and Co-Secretary, presented a unique and creative way that everyone can experience nature and could help to conserve the environment as well. She has a Master's Degree in Biology from Ursinus College where she also minored in Fine Art.

Her past leadership experience includes serving as the Lehigh Valley Conservation District's Outreach and Coordination Director, working at the Rails to Trails Conservancy as the Youth Engagement Coordinator in Philadelphia, and served for several years at the Great Valley Nature Center as their Director of Development. She is an extraordinary artist as well. She currently has her own studio in a transformed former industrial building in Spring City.

She also created the Kids Leadership Academy in Royersford for middle and high school students so they could develop strong and creative skills through their exploration and conservation activities along the Schuylkill River watershed.

Jolie combined her knowledge of how plants grow and how appreciating their presence in our lives can provide a way that nature is perceived to explain how everyone can gain a better understanding of the trail on which someone is walking or riding the bicycle. She led the audience through each month of a year and explained how being outdoors could make a difference in their lives by combining art with nature.



Pictured here (l. to r.) are Susan Meadows and Bob Steinger with Jolie Chylack



Here are SRHC members (l. to r.) Rebecca Glover, Jolie Chylack and Kathy Tauber



Shown here is an image of an animal encountered during a walk on a trail in March.



Here is one of Jolie's wonderful paintings using nature as its subject.

Schuylkill School Second Graders – Fall Visit

In October, over 100 second graders visited the Schuylkill River Heritage Center. They came in five separate groups, and they were all very excited and enthusiastic about their trip!



Our young visitors at the Sculpture Garden in front of the Foundry

Here they are at the Phoenix Column Bridge



The students are pictured here inside the Heritage Center

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Nr. Richard Burdo

Dr. & Mrs. John & Pam Freehafer

Mr. & Mrs. Frank & Melinda Mercurio

Ms. Kathleen Welch & M. Alan McGillivray

Mr. & Mrs John & Kathleen Mraz

Mr. & Mrs. George & Jeanne Sillip

Ms. Rita Wanner

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE HERITAGE CENTER

Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at 7:30 PM

Barbara Cohen, President of our Heritage Center Board will share the story of **William Penn's Legacy**. She will tell how his Charter of Religious Toleration planted the seed of our nation through the prism of architecture.

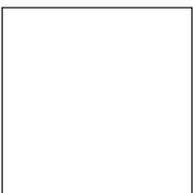
Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at 7:30 PM

Sandy Sorlien, who works at the Fairmount Water Works as an environmental photographer and develops outdoors tours, will give a presentation about **The Schuylkill Navigation Canals in Chester County**. The Heritage Center is partnering with the French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust for this event.

Tuesday, May 9, 2023 - This will be announced when plans are finalized.

The Schuylkill River Heritage Center continues to welcome visitors. We hope that you will visit our museum and explore our exhibits and interactive kiosks. Most especially, you will want to explore the Chester County interactive unit's **Path to Freedom Trail** that tells the story of the Underground Railroad throughout the county.

We are open every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM



Schuylkill River Heritage Center
P.O. Box 427
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