

2020

Hours

After the sure passing of the Covid-19 virus pandemic, the Osceola Mills Community Historical Foundation will safely resume its regular museum visitation hours of **Sundays, from 2:00 until 4:00, from Memorial Day weekend until the end of October.** The museum is located at 600 Lingle Street Osceola Mills PA 16666. **The OMCHF meets at 7:00 on the first Wednesday of each month; excluding December through February.**

Remember, all are welcome to visit our museum and attend our monthly meetings. The OMCHF wants and needs you! Come to our museum and experience the rich local history of the Osceola Mills area! The displayed artifacts, books, photos, etc. have all been donated by those, near and far, with a warm attachment to Osceola Mills. Community pride is on display at our museum!

President's Report

2020 has been a year like no other. The pandemic has caused the OMCHF's activities to come to a halt. The Annual Car Show, the participation in the July 4 Parade, Osceola Spirit Day, museum visitations, and the Annual Dinner have, for the sake of health and safety, been canceled this year. None of us knows what the future will hold, but let us hope and pray that 2021 may bring us better and a return to some semblance of our accustomed and normal way of life.

But the OMCHF's active members have indeed been busy! An entirely new and far more efficient heating system has been installed in the Brisbin House. It is a much needed improvement! The second floor walls and ceiling, stairwell and foyer have been painted to add a fresh atmosphere of brightness to the interior of the building.

Members gathered to move and then rearrange displays after the completion of the painting. Masks

and distancing were worn and observed! The fine wool cloth Osceola Mills High School banners and pennants were carefully dry cleaned and again hung. Some date back nearly a century!

Plans are still in the process for a design and installation of a chair lift from the foyer's entrance to the second floor museum. Next year, hopefully, it will be the basement's turn to have the walls and ceiling painted. The coal mining and other displays there will be cleaned and rearranged. Again, let us hope that better days are ahead.



Best Wishes!

The **Osceola Mills American Legion Post #313** celebrated its 100th anniversary of its 1919 founding. The establishment of Legion Posts grew rapidly throughout the US during the immediate years following the end of World War I. The Post was featured in last year's OMCHF annual bulletin and was the OMCHF's July 4 Parade theme.



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Best Wishes! (continued)

The Legion Post, decades ago, bought the historic Brisbin House, that now houses both the Osceola Mills Community Library and the OMCHF. Use of the building was given by the Post in the 1980's. Post members still meet there regularly.



Next year, in 2021, the **Osceola Mills Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #5020** will mark the 75th anniversary of its founding, in 1946, after the end of World War II.

The Burns Hotel In Frenchtown

By David Wulderk

Frenchtown is a part of Decatur Township that borders on the western end of Osceola Mills borough. It is called Frenchtown because an early French immigrant family, named Coudriet, settled there in the immediate years following the Civil War.

Frenchtown, today, is primarily a residential community but it does not have the population that it once did. Families were larger and many men were employed at the nearby *Osceola Silica Fire Brick Company* which closed in 1974. The brickyard, as it was locally known, was within walking distance of many workers in the Osceola Mills and Frenchtown areas. Brick manufacturing became more

and more automated and the demand for high quality fire bricks decreased over the years; especially after the decline of the US steel industry.

Both native born and immigrant families settled in Frenchtown. Elementary schools were built as was the Nativity of the Theotokas (Mother of God) Orthodox Church. Small businesses came and went.

The Slovak Club is a social establishment that survives to this day. The Tee was a renowned and roomy bar and dance hall that was famous for providing great big band music. Guy Lombardo's band played there.

John Burns was an early businessman in Frenchtown, who operated the *Decatur House*; known also as the Burns Hotel and Livery Stable. Travelers could be fed and put up for the night. They wanted a decent meal, some washing facilities and a clean room. And of course the bar was open.

Brickyard workers didn't have much spare cash, but to stop for a cold beer after a day's work near the hot kilns would have been a relief. Like any bar owner of the time, Burns would have to keep order in his establishment.

Mr. Burns and his family would have been continually busy. He also ran a livery stable to house and care for the large bred horses that hauled coal ash waste from the brickyard ash heap. It would likely be used as fill.



The c. 1910 photo shows the Burns family, likely dressed in their Sunday best, posing on the porch of their neatly kept hotel. They looked to be proud of their success.

A Good & Faithful Servant: A Story of Dr. James Henderson's Household & Sarah Hittle

By Dave Caslow, in collaboration with Jerry Fritz

Why did a diminutive full-blooded Winnebago Indian woman come from Nebraska to live at 409 Curtin Street, Osceola Mills for fifty-seven years? How was she linked with Dr. James Linn Henderson, a prominent Osceola Mills physician? The following is a captivating story that has escaped our town's recent memory and needs to be told.

DR. JAMES & FRANCES OLIVIA HUGHES HENDERSON

James Linn Henderson was born in Lewistown on February 20, 1853. His father, Dr. Joseph Henderson graduated from the Jefferson Medical College at Philadelphia in 1813 and successfully commanded a regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers during the War of 1812. Following the war, he practiced medicine at Browns Mills, Pennsylvania and was elected to serve in US Congress from 1833 to 1837. Dr. Joseph Henderson then moved to Lewistown, where he practiced medicine and raised his family. All three of his sons became medical doctors. Two of them, James and William, practiced long successful careers in the Philipsburg-Osceola Area.

James, the oldest son, acquired his medical degree from the University of Cincinnati about 1879. At age 27, he married his first wife, Frances Olivia Hughes on June of 1880. Frances was an Ohio native, born in Canton on December 31, 1859.

The couple moved to Clearfield County, Pennsylvania where Dr. Henderson first practiced medicine in Karthaus. James and Frances produced three sons. William, was born in April 23, 1884 at Keewaydin. Joseph Linn, called Linn as a child, was born on April 5, 1888 at Cataract. After the family moved to Osceola Mills, Mrs. Frances Olivia Henderson delivered a third son, Francis, on September 14th, 1897. Sadly, Mrs. Henderson died two days later from apparent complications of childbirth. The death of Frances left the three young sons, William 12, Joseph Linn 9 and Francis 2 days, without a mother. Dr. Henderson, a very busy physician, was suddenly confronted with the ability to care for his three young children.

DR. WILLIAM BAIRD HENDERSON

Dr. James Henderson resolved his challenging situation by taking two actions. His first and most immediate need was to find childcare for two-day-old baby Francis. Fortunately, help could be found in nearby Philipsburg where his youngest brother William lived. The two brothers had boarded together in 1880 at Putnam County, in northwest Ohio. James, at age 27 was beginning his first medical practice, while William was a 20 year-old college student. The brothers eventually got back together in central Pennsylvania following William's graduation from University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1886.

Dr. William Baird Henderson entered his first medical practice as an associate of Dr. Hobart Allport of Philipsburg. Eventually, he became Surgeon in Chief at Cottage State Hospital in Philipsburg. He was also a surgeon for the local Pennsylvania and New York Central railroads. William and Matilda produced four children and spent the remainder of their lives in Philipsburg.

It is likely that Dr. James Henderson sent his infant son Francis to be cared for by his younger brother's wife, Matilda. More permanent help would arrive in his Osceola home during the latter part of 1899. Dr. James Henderson's two older sons, William and Linn, remained at the Osceola Mills home during the two-year ordeal following the death of their mother.



Dr. James Henderson's Brother and Wife: Passport photos of Matilda Allport Henderson and Dr. William Henderson, prior to a South American tour. William was the Chief Surgeon at Philipsburg State Hospital. He was also a surgeon for the New York Central and Pennsylvania Railroads.

A Good & Faithful Servant... (continued)

ANNIE ALLEN HENDERSON

In 1899, Dr. James Henderson entered into a second marriage with Miss Annie Allen. Annie was the daughter of George Allen, who had been born in England. The Allen family had lived in Lewistown, Pennsylvania, the same town where the Henderson brothers grew up. Furthermore, James and Annie were almost the same age. Annie had never been married and likely had some kind of a previous relationship with the Henderson family.

Annie had early experience as an 18 year old Lewistown school teacher in 1870. In the late 1880's, Annie was again employed as a teacher at the Lincoln Institute in Philadelphia. One of her students was a young Winnebago Indian girl from Nebraska named Sarah Walker Hittle. The connection would eventually link Annie and Sarah together at 409 Curtin Street, Osceola Mills until the death of Annie in 1933.

THE LINCOLN INSTITUTE OF PHILADELPHIA

The Lincoln Institute was one of many boarding schools for Indians. It had previously been a school for Civil War Orphans from 1866 to 1883, but shifted its emphasis following the Indian wars and tribal relocation to reservations during the 1870's and 1880's. The United States Government granted citizenship to all Indians and passed legislation imposing compulsory education on all United States citizens. At first, most Indians were educated at nearby reservation day schools. When cultural assimilation was not occurring at the day schools, the U.S. Government promoted the growth of far-away boarding schools by providing grants for funding these schools.

Indian boarding schools eventually became criticized for controversial curriculum and harsh methods of student management. The boarding schools also proved to be ineffective at converting Indians to practice conventional white man's ways. Peak attendance at Indian boarding schools occurred between 1890 to 1900. This was the period of time that Sarah Walker Hittle, who would spend most of her life in Osceola Mills, received an eight year education at the Lincoln Institute in Philadelphia.

SARAH WALKER HITTLE

Sarah was a full-blooded Winnebago Indian from the Wind Walker Band. The Winnebago Tribe originated somewhere near salt water (Winnebago means smelly) but was forced to Wisconsin, North Dakota and eventually placed on a reservation near Omaha, Nebraska. Their numbers were in great decline, due to wars, diseases and famine.

Sarah "Walker" first arrived by train at the Carlisle Indian Boarding School in September of 1890. She had her photo taken but did not enroll. Perhaps she went back homesick, which was a very common problem for the children who were suddenly separated from loved ones and culture. There is also much confusion about the origin of Sarah's name and age. She arrived at boarding school with the surname of "Walker". That changed after 1897, as all known documents list her name as Sarah "Hittle", until her gravestone was inscribed. Walker is definitely a Winnebago clan name, while Hittle is not. Since Indian boarding school students were required to take Christian names and speak English, Hittle was probably assigned to Sarah as part of the culture assimilation process.

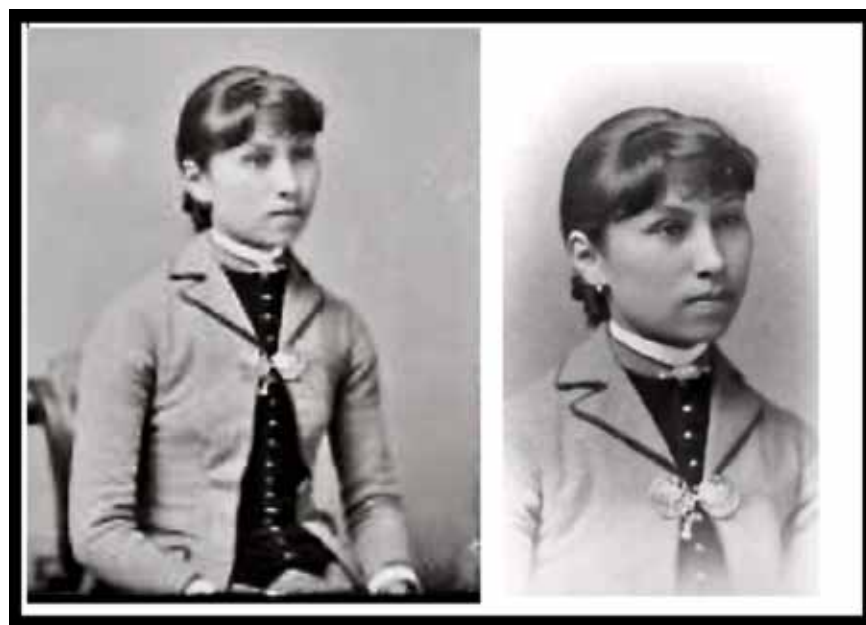
On August 1st, 1891, Sarah once again transferred from the Winnebago Reservation in Nebraska. On this occasion, she was sent to the Lincoln Institute in Philadelphia. The Lincoln Institute was a much smaller Indian boarding school and by the time of Sarah's departure as a student, would be on the verge of closure with financial problems.

Upon her second arrival from the Winnebago Reservation, Sarah's transfer papers listed her as 14 years old, 5'1", 105-pounds. Her mother had died, and young Sarah was certainly disadvantaged. At Lincoln Institute, girls were taught to bake, sew, wash, iron, and make dresses. However, the primary focus was learning to adopt the ways of English culture. Sarah successfully adjusted and completed eight years at Lincoln Institute. This is commendable, since most Indian boarding school students failed to graduate for various reasons. She was confirmed under the name Sarah "Hittle" at an Episcopal Church near the Lincoln Institute, on April 4, 1897. She would continue to use the surname

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"Hittle" for the remainder of her life. Sarah would also become an active member in the St. Laurence Episcopal Church after arriving in Osceola Mills.

While at Lincoln Institute, Sarah studied under a teacher named Annie Allen from Lewistown. Apparently, Annie grew very fond of Sarah. Somehow, Dr. James Henderson also established a strong relationship with Annie Allen, perhaps when they grew up together in Lewistown. In 1899, Annie wedded Dr. James Henderson, becoming his second wife and moving to Osceola Mills.



These photos of Sarah Walker Hittle were taken when she arrived as a teenager from a Winnebago Indian Reservation in Nebraska. In 1891, she became a student at Lincoln Institute in Philadelphia, until assuming her role as servant for the Dr. Henderson family. Sarah lived in Osceola Mills from 1900 to the time of her death in 1957.

Meanwhile, Sarah was facing a very uncertain future. The Lincoln Institute was preparing to close in 1900 and its enrollment declined from 200 to 100 students. Sarah was one of four former students who were employed privately, but still living with the younger students at the Lincoln Institute. Simultaneously, the Henderson home in Osceola Mills was still in need of a caretaker for two year old Frances. Whether by chance or destiny, arrangements were made for the Lincoln Institute to place Sarah with the Henderson family. Sarah Hittle arrived in

Osceola Mills by early 1900 to assume her role as a servant in the Henderson Household. Annie and Sarah transitioned their teacher/student relationship into a lifetime team that managed the Dr. James Henderson household.

Dr. Henderson's two oldest sons, William, 26 and Joseph Linn, 22 departed the Osceola Mills home by 1910. William graduated from Penn State University and married Mae Hoffman of Tyrone in 1908, raising one daughter, Hazel. William became employed by steel mills in Pittsburgh, Youngstown and Boardman. He settled in Mahoning County, Ohio, where his death occurred in 1949.

Middle son, Joseph Linn, married Mary Burns from Osceola in 1912 and had a daughter, Louise. They moved to Bisbee Arizona to work in a copper mine. The three later moved to New Orleans, where Joseph was listed as unemployed in 1942. He died in Supreme, Assumption County in 1966.

EDITH ALLEN ENDSLOW

As two members departed, Annie Henderson's niece, Edith Allen Endslow arrived to join the Dr. James Henderson household between 1910 and 1920. While living conditions were pretty good in Osceola Mills, Edith had faced much misfortune while living in Mifflin County. Edith's mother, Sarah Allen Endslow, was the sister of Annie. Edith had been living with her parents in Derry Township, when they both died suddenly in 1905 and 1906. Her father, Samuel Endslow, was a laborer and watchman, and the Endslovs lived modestly. Edith never married and had no living siblings. Apparently homeless, the Hendersons welcomed Edith, and she fit right in. Edith and Sarah Hittle were both about forty years old and single. Edith became employed as a railroad office clerk at the Osceola Mills Freight Station.

Youngest son, Francis, joined the Army in January of 1919, acquiring the rank of Sergeant. He came back home in 1920 and joined Edith Endslow as an employed clerk in the railroad freight office. Francis

A Good & Faithful Servant... (continued)

married Eva Kennedy in 1929 and moved to Milesburg, working as a Pennsylvania Railroad policeman. He then became an administrator for the U.S. Veterans Bureau and died at Philadelphia in 1972.

The entire nation suffered difficult times during the Great Depression, but Henderson family events of the 1930's were devastating. Dr. James Henderson's brother, Dr. William Baird Henderson, died in Philipsburg in 1931 at the age of 71. Two years later in 1933, Dr. James Henderson's second wife, Annie, died at the age of 72.

Dr. James Henderson practiced medicine up until his death in April, 1936. However, after 1913, his practice became limited for health reasons. These limitations may have been due to epilepsy, as it was written as an underlying health issue on his death certificate. Dr. Henderson's death was caused by a stroke at age 83.



The 1936 death of Dr. Henderson left Edith Endslow and Sarah Hittle as the only remaining members of the Osceola Mills household. Edith was listed as head of household with Sarah continuing to serve as maid. This arrangement existed until January 10, 1955, when Edith, at age 75, died of a heart attack while visiting in Centre, a small village two miles outside Osceola Mills.

Sarah Hittle, the quiet diminutive Winnebago Indian from Nebraska, then emerged from her dutiful role as a servant to become the sole occupant of the large red brick house at 409 Curtin Street for the next three years. Sadly, Sarah suffered a stroke and died suddenly at her home on December 7, 1957.

When Sarah arrived at the Henderson household in 1900, the local economy was booming and many of Osceola Mills' prominent families had the privilege of employing servants. Over the next half-century, Sarah struggled through significant declines involving Dr. Henderson's health, family income and the local economy. She also struggled through the emotional departure and deaths of each Henderson household member. Although the trials she experienced upon departure from her Winnebago Indian Reservation were monumental, her devoted service to those around her remained constant.

It is ironic that within the Osceola Mills School District, Osceola Mills area inhabitants adopted the Indian mascot/logo and nicknamed themselves Indians during the same period of time that Sarah lived here. In reality, Sarah Hittle Walker was the one Osceola Mills Indian resident who literally lived up to her name for 57 years. Her far greater legacy is the relentless loyalty and devotion she displayed as a servant in the Henderson household. Sarah's "Well done, my good and faithful servant" story deserves to be told, admired and remembered as an inspirational example for all of us.





Books and DVDs for Sale

- Osceola Mills From The Beginning*
by Jasper Fritz \$10.00
- Hills of Penn* by Jim McNeish \$6.00
- Chief Osceola, Patriot and Warrior* \$2.50
- Days and Events That I Remember*
by Bud Hollis \$6.00
- Osceola Mills Photo Slide Show DVD*
by David Caslow. \$12.00
- Osceola Mills From the Beginning DVD Volume 2*
by Jerry Fritz \$12.00

**Books and DVDs can be ordered from the OMCHF.
See address below.**

Clothing for Sale

The Osceola Mills Community Library continues to sell Osceola Mills and Cowtail logo tee shirts, sweat shirts and ball caps. **These items make great gifts and are a good way to show your Osceola Mills pride!** Please contact them at 814-339-5134 for information regarding designs and shipping.

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|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| Tee Shirts | \$12.00 | Sweatshirts . . . | \$20.00 |
| Hoodies | \$30.00 | Ball Caps | \$12.00 |

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND/OR ANNUAL DUES RENEWAL

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

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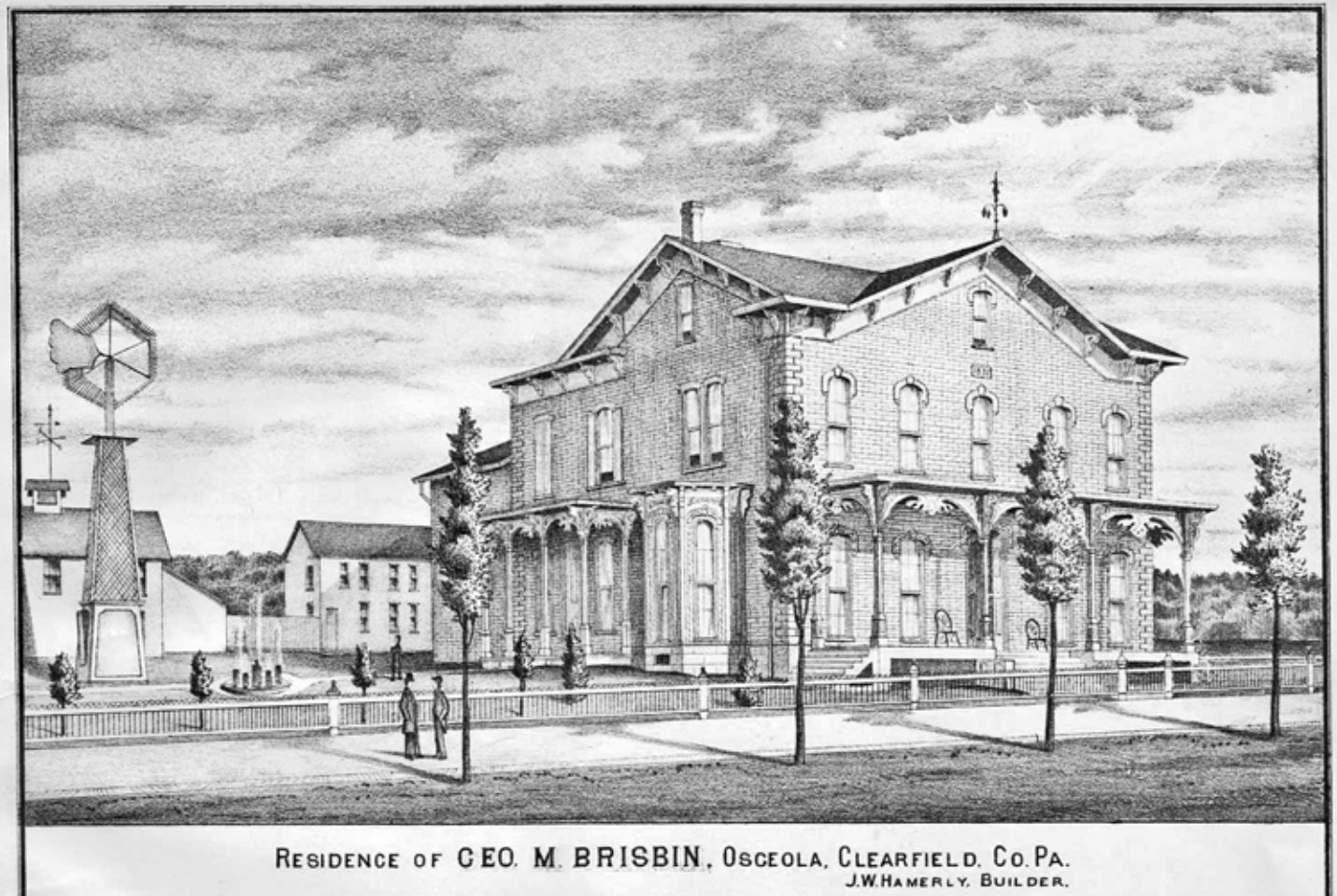
Type of Membership (please list and circle one): _____

Individual \$5.00 Family \$15.00 Organization/Business \$25.00 Lifetime \$100.00

**Please enclose a check payable to OMCHF and mail to: OMCHF
600 Lingle St
PO Box 212
Osceola Mills, PA 16666**

Memorials and donations accepted

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