

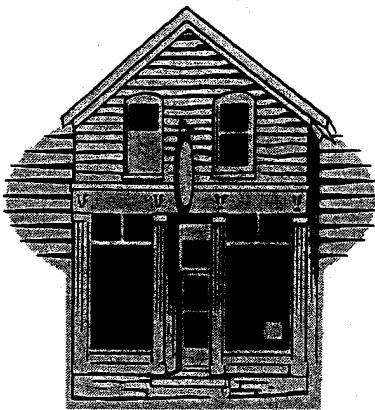
A Brief History of the Corner Stores

(Part 7 of a series of Articles)

Corner Stores name was originated from the four corners, made by Nutt and White Horse Roads, being occupied by stores. Corner Stores, or Village as it was also named, was Phoenixville's only shopping district for a very long period of time. It was built before any other part of town. Corner Stores had a significant impact on the surrounding area in the 1800s. The first store to be opened was in 1749 by Philip Housekeeper. The second store did not open until 1784, by John Longstreh. Shortly after, Solomon Fussel opened the third store in 1791. The fourth store was opened before the 1800s. Corner Stores were the important commercial base of the neighborhood. It was customary for people to make many of their purchases at the Corner Stores, except for the every day needs. The Stage Coach's route from the Philadelphia to the Reading area, would pass by Corner Stores.

Interestingly, a new school was started on the second floor of one of the stores. The school was used as a center for religious and educational interests as well as civic and social services. The school expanded and became the Quaker Meeting House in 1818. Also known as the Society of Friends' Meetinghouse, it became a rallying ground for the Anti-Slavery Society even before 1850. Elijah Funk Pennypacker, who was

prominent in early Schuylkill Township history and whose home was a short distance south of Corner Stores, and his wife Hannah Adamson, served the Anti-Slavery Society and has been noted as actively aiding run away slaves through the Underground Railroad. Some early settlers would come from miles away in to attend the religious services. Many notables have addressed gatherings there such as Lucretia Mott, George Truman, Elijah F. Pennypacker and Charles Burleigh. There is also some historical reference that Sojourner Truth, and John Greenleaf Whittier were among the notables that spoke at gatherings.



The Schuylkill Post Office was opened there in 1826. It was named after the then new Township of Schuylkill. Before 1849, Charlestown Library and Lyceum contributed largely to the existence and essence of the social and intellectual aspects of the neighborhood by opening its doors to public lectures and concerts. The Post Office closed in 1903 due to Rural Free Delivery being instituted and Schuylkill Township lost all claims to the Corner Stores.

Corner Stores has played various roles up to present-day. Store occupants have used them as a watch repair and jewelry shop, dress shop, cabinet shop, tailoring shop, blacksmith, millinery, and general store, which contained the Post Office, among various other commercial establishments. In 1870, along with the continuation of the general store, there was a grain and lumber dealer and also a Justice of the Peace. It has been noted that Daniel Webster may have passed through Corner Stores on his way to Valley Forge during a political campaign at which time he visited resident and shopkeeper Charles Adamson. Today the buildings that remain still prosper as commercial establishments. Three gas stations and a bank have replaced five other Corner Store buildings.

(Schuylkill Township sincerely thanks the Phoenixville Historical Society for their research in developing this article, Miss Angela Volpe, a Phoenixville Area High Student for developing the article, and Dr. Lukacs, a long time Township resident and Planning Commission member for his review of the article.)

An article expanding on the Quaker Meeting House is planned in a future Township newsletter. Should you have any information that you would like to share concerning this aspect of the history of the Township, please contact the Township Secretary.