

Origin and Construction of State College's "Sinkhole" Memorial Field

Sunday, July 10 at 3:00 p.m.

by Ronald A. Smith, Penn State University Professor Emeritus

Please join us at the Centre Furnace Mansion on **Sunday, July 10 at 3:00 p.m.** for a special presentation on Memorial Field by Ronald A. Smith, Penn State University Professor Emeritus.

When State College was incorporated in 1896, it had one elementary school, built by College Township, and a high school would not even be created until the next decade. There were no interscholastic athletics and no athletic field, except on the Penn State campus. There was, however, a sinkhole on a farm on the outskirts of State College that, when purchased in 1914, became a playground for a new school on Nittany Avenue.

The sinkhole was not prime agricultural land and was used by some in State College to deposit their garbage. When purchased, the objective was not to use it as an athletic field, but rather as a school play area. But it wasn't long before it became a place for the baseball team to play its games and a practice field for football, as the State College boys already played their games on the Penn State campus.

By the mid-1920s, the Chamber of Commerce saw the "Hollow" as a future athletic stadium, and soon John Bracken, head of Penn State's Landscape Architecture Department, had drawings of an expanded State College school campus, including a stadium.

Little progress was made on the "Hollow" until the Great Depression in the 1930s. At the height of the Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president and the New Deal attempted to come to the rescue by building government projects and putting millions to work on those projects. The most prominent program was the Works Progress Administration, created in 1935. The largest government project in the world's history made possible the building of a stadium in State College, following the leadership of the head of the State College schools, Jo Hays.



Works Progress Administration workers during the construction of Memorial Field, circa 1937. Photo provided.

The nearly \$100,000 project, paid principally from WPA funds, created the limestone-adorned athletic field that was eventually called Memorial Field.

This is the illustrated story of a sinkhole in the "Hollow" that was developed first into a baseball field, and then soon became the target of the State College Borough for an engineering project to drain surface water from Allen Street and elsewhere. How the School Board negoti-

ated the draining of State College run-off water into the sinkhole with the State College Borough will be part of the discussion.

With CCHS and Penn State Archives photos from the 1800s through the construction of the stadium, and material gleaned from newspapers, School Board and Borough minutes, a story will be told about the creation of State College's iconic "Sinkhole" Memorial Field.

About the Centre County Historical Society

Centre County Historical Society
 Centre Furnace Mansion
 1001 East College Avenue
 State College, PA 16801
 814.234.4779
 info@centrecountyhistory.org
 http://www.centrecountyhistory.org

The Centre County Historical Society operates the Centre Furnace Mansion as an historic house museum. The Mansion is open to the public for tours and library use on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and by appointment. The Society's hours of operation are Mondays through Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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Founded in 1904, the Centre County Historical Society (CCHS) is the oldest and largest history organization in the county, serving as the official historical society of Centre County. It is a community and volunteer based non-profit educational organization that works collaboratively with local, regional, county, and state organizations in helping to preserve and promote the area's historic, cultural, and natural resources.

CCHS is headquartered in the Centre Furnace Mansion, a restored and furnished ironmaster's home listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This historic mansion and nearby iron furnace stack represent the 18th-century beginnings of the charcoal iron industry in this area, and the 19th-century beginnings of Penn State University, originally located on furnace lands. The site offers more than eight acres of landscaped grounds and gardens.

CCHS disseminates historical information about Centre County; offers programs and exhibits of historical and cultural interest for children and adults; marks and helps preserve and protect the Centre Furnace Mansion property and grounds, our newly acquired Boogersburg School, and other historical sites and landscapes in Centre County; maintains a collection of artifacts, books, manuscripts, maps and photographs; and publishes and promotes interest in historically significant publications relating to Centre County.

Society members and others in the community are invited to support these activities by contributing to the Centre County Historical Society Endowment Fund, managed by the Centre County Community Foundation.

Mansion Notes is published as a benefit of membership in the Centre County Historical Society, which is made possible through the Keatley Fund.

The Centre County Historical Society (CCHS) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, under Section 501(c)(3) of the I.R.S. Code. Donations are tax deductible. Official registration and financial information about CCHS may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.



Upcoming Events

July

- ☞ **Sunday, July 10**
Origin and Construction of State College's "Sinkhole" Memorial Field
@ Centre Furnace Mansion
3:00 p.m.



A special presentation on the history of Memorial Field by Ronald A. Smith, Professor Emeritus of Penn State University. Free and open to the public.

August

- ☞ **Sunday, August 21**
Open House
@ Boegersburg School
2:00–5:00 p.m.

See page 5 for more details.

September

- ☞ **Sunday, September 11**
Our Forefathers Workshop, Tools of the 18th and 19th Century
@ Centre Furnace Mansion
2:00 p.m.

A special presentation by Dick Penceck. Free and open to the public.

President's Corner

History Sleuths and Storytellers

A series of CCHS programs scheduled for this summer and fall will provide some intriguing examples of history sleuthing and storytelling. Beginning on Sunday, July 10, Ron Smith, Penn State professor emeritus of sports history, will share his research and tell the story, Origin and Construction of State College's "Sinkhole" Memorial Field. Don't miss the opportunity to hear more about the history of this open area of green at the edge of State College's downtown business district.

While Memorial Field is a known location and entity, often clues to stories are less obvious, sometimes deeply hidden and not visible but, instead, "underfoot". They reveal themselves through archaeology, and then through research explorations that put found foundations and artifacts into context. Examples of two such hidden stories will be on exhibit at the Centre Furnace Mansion in the next few months.

The first involves the re-finding of a long forgotten late 19th century industrial site. It was revealed during a preliminary investigation at the new Benner Township Industrial Park location on a portion of former Rockview land. Gary Coppock, an archaeologist with Heberling Associates, has led the investigation and assembled a fascinating story about a large ore washer operation, related to the county's early iron making. The story, combining text, photographs, and artifacts, will be on exhibit at Centre Furnace before it travels to other county locations. Developed by CCHS's heritage preservation committee – a group of historians representing several county organizations, this exhibit will be supported by funding through the Centre County Industrial Development Corporation.

The second exhibit, to open in October at Centre Furnace, will feature a fascinating exploration of Centre County's Native American pre-history revealed through archaeological artifacts and research. This exhibit is being developed by CCHS and was initiated by Board member Bob Donaldson, and by archaeologists from the Bald Eagle Archaeological Society and Penn State's Matson Museum. While there is some knowledge of the area's earliest occupants, the goal of this exhibit is to provide a more complete and meaningful narrative in order to better understand the area's long and rarely told Native American story. An introductory lecture and other events to complement the exhibit are being planned to run through October, 2011.

These are just some of the programs being provided by the Centre County Historical Society to highlight the accomplishments of area history sleuths and storytellers. You won't want to miss them! Additional details with specific times, dates, and locations will be headed your way soon.

~ Jackie Melander

New York, New York – It’s a Wonderful Town

Rhiannon McClintock, CCHS’s longtime and valued program coordinator, website maestro, and handler of a multitude of other specialties, is leaving at the end of June to head to The Big Apple, sometimes known as New York City. As many of you know, Rhiannon has a strong interest in theatre and the arts, and she is ready to launch her exploration into the city and its many rich facets. While we are saying goodbye with sincere regret, and with an enthusiastic thank you for all she has accomplished for CCHS over the last several years, we sincerely wish her our best as she enters into an exciting new set of adventures.

Bon Voyage, Rhiannon. We will miss you, and will be looking forward to your communiqués.



From the Program Coordinator

When I sent an email to the Centre County Historical Society looking to volunteer almost eight years ago, I had no idea what was in store for me. What started off as temporary, unpaid work that was meant to occupy my time after graduation and boost my resume turned into a full time job.

I am incredibly lucky to have found such a wonderful place to work – especially right out of college – but this has been more than just a job for me. That’s why choosing to leave was one of the hardest decisions I’ve had to make. I love what I have done with the Historical Society for the past seven years, and I love the people I’ve met and the experiences I’ve had. I have learned to love the place I’ve called home for the past 30 years, and I know one day I will come back – but for now, it’s time for me to discover a world outside of Centre County.

I am looking forward to diving into the big city, but I’m lucky enough to still have family in the area so that I can always call State College home, no matter where I end up. I hope to continue my museum career in New York, and will also keep my fingers crossed that some acting opportunities will come my way! Those who are interested in what I get up to in New York are encouraged to follow the updates on my website: <http://rhimc.com>.

Rhiannon

A Warm Welcome To . . .

As Rhiannon heads off to New York, we are pleased to report on two new members of the CCHS community. A warm welcome to **Megan Orient** and **Susan Bowser**, who temporarily will be sharing Rhiannon’s responsibilities as well as taking on some new ones of their own. Both come with special talents and experience.

Originally from New Stanton, PA, Megan is a 1999 Penn State graduate with a B.S. in Secondary Education (French). She moved back to State College in 2009 with her husband Erik, who is currently assigned as the Marine Corps Officer Instructor to the Penn State NROTC unit. Megan has worked with non-profit organizations and local governments for over ten years. During her military moves, her non-profit work included time as a membership manager for the Percussive Arts Society (OK) and Jacksonville-Onslow Chamber of Commerce (NC). She also served as a manager for Stafford County Tourism (VA) and Bettering Our Local Downtown (NC). Now a grant writer and tourism consultant, Megan is also pursuing a certificate in Historic Preservation. She will begin working with CCHS in July part time and full time by January of 2012.

Susan will be covering the position the other three days of the week until the end of the year, providing her know how in, among other things, records management. Susan is no stranger to the Mansion, having been a member of the garden committee for years. We look forward to working with Megan and Susan, and know you will too. Megan can be reached at morient@centrefurnace.org and Susan can be reached at sbowser@centrefurnace.org.

~ Jackie Melander

Boogersburg School Update



In a collaborative effort over the past year, what was an open acre of land adjacent to Boogersburg School is now taking shape to become a natural park area for ‘recess’ and outdoor educational opportunities during school field trips to Boogersburg. When the native plantings develop, students will be able to learn more about these plants on their visit to the school.

We began in the spring of 2010 with a thoughtfully designed plan by Penn State students in the Landscape Contracting program. Thanks to a grant from the Lumber Heritage Region, the Historical Society was able to fund plantings of trees and shrubs, install a water source, picnic tables, interpretive sign and a small pedestrian bridge that visually connects the school to the acre.

Several trees and shrubs were planted and many invasive plants were removed last fall during the Centre County United Way Day of Caring. The plantings and CCHS were fortunate to have the benefit of abundant rainfall in the following months for the plants to become established. The remaining larger trees will be planted this month by **Fox Hill Gardens Nursery**.

Earlier this spring, with materials funded by the grant, **Glenn O. Hawbaker** generously donated the use of equipment and professionals to install a water line to care for the new plantings.

Currently, Eagle Scout applicant, **Blaise Contino**, along with **Boy Scout Troop 367**, is working on the pedestrian bridge and wood mulch trail that will visually connect the open acre with the school.

Mark your calendars for an open house scheduled for Boogersburg on **Sunday, August 21 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.** to showcase the landscape improvements.

Our sincerest thanks go to the **Lumber Heritage Region, Glenn O. Hawbaker, Inc., Penn State Office of Physical Plant, Penn State Landscape Contracting,**

Fox Hill Gardens Nursery, State College Borough Water Authority, and Eagle Scout **Blaise Contino** and **Boy Scout Troop 367** for their tremendous and generous efforts. Many thanks also to the individuals who have helped make the planning and implementation of the Boogersburg landscape projects go smoothly, including **Bryce Boyer, Sharon Childs, Jeff Dice, Bob Donaldson, Martin McGann, Jackie Melander, Jeff Sturniolo,** and **Suzanne Thompson.**



Penn State Pioneers Discover the Birthplace of the University by Steve and Carol Gentry

For Penn State alumni, the All Class Reunion each June means reacquainting themselves with their classmates and revisiting their beloved haunts on campus and in town. This year a pleasant surprise for the new “Pioneers” (those celebrating the 50th anniversary of their graduation) was the opportunity to visit a site vital to Penn State’s history, yet mostly unknown to them – Centre Furnace and the Centre Furnace Mansion.

Seventy-five members of the Class of 1961 were welcomed to the birthplace of Penn State and spent time touring the mansion where Moses Thompson and the early Trustees met and where Mary Thompson entertained them. The highlight was visiting the very room where the deed was signed to establish the Farmers’ High School of Pennsylvania. When these graduates were undergrads, the Mansion was a rental property owned by the Garver family, and hence, was a private residence only visited by guests. Most of the Pioneers confessed that they did not know that the Mansion existed and were totally unaware that it had any connection to Penn State. Their delight in the discovery of this unknown history was evident on their faces and in their comments and compliments.

Sharing this moment with these appreciative alums was a joy both for them and for the docents who hope that this event becomes an annual feature of the All Class Reunion. After all, there are generations of Penn Staters who have yet to be welcomed “home” to the birthplace of Nittany Nation.

Plant Celebration & Garden Sale



A million thanks to the Centre Furnace Mansion Garden Committee for their attention to detail and persistence in preparing for the Plant Celebration! Nearly 1,000 plants were potted up for sale, many directly from the CFM gardens. The rains of spring made potting plants for the Plant Celebration a particular challenge.

Many Plant Celebration visitors took advantage of Mansion tours during the sale and several visitors had questions for Master Gardeners who were available to answer plant and garden related questions.

Special thanks to **Carol Baney, Elaine Barch, Cliff Bastuscheck, Susan Bowser, Jim Broyles, Joyce Christini, Katie Frieden, Cassandra Godbey, Judy Heberling, Mike Husband, Marshall Garrett, Bob Hazelton, Chris Igo, Beverly Lipski, Jo Merrell, Jan May, Lou Mayer, Jackie Melander, Ruth Merritt, Ann Moellenbrock, Fran Nuhfer, Mary Osborn,**



Carol Phillips, Beth Ricker, Pam Steranka, Teresa Tassotti, Suzanne Thompson, Suzann Tedesco, Susan Toby Evans, Jan Villastrigo, and Bonnie Walter.

Businesses and organizations who participated, donated and helped with this event include **Sarah Berndt "Orchid Lady", Boomerang Glass Art, Common Ground Organic Farm, Deb's Flower Farm, Effie's Common Scents, Jim Eisenstein, Garden Fairies by Design, Go Native Tree Farm, Cindy Hiles Herbs, Rose Franklin's Perennials, Penn State Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners of Centre County, Shuey's Market, Tait Farm, and Young American Growers.**

For all of the hard work, preparation, set up, cleanup and delicious baked goods that made the Plant Celebration a success, a huge thank you from CCHS!

Heirloom Bulb Workshop



On April 28, as a follow up to Scott Kunst's March presentation, members of the Centre Furnace Mansion Garden Committee pulled together their knowledge of flowering bulbs to do a presentation about the heirloom bulbs that we have planted at the Centre Furnace Mansion. The presentation also covered how to grow various bulbs, their flowering times and where to get them. This was followed by a tour of the gardens at the Mansion to see bulbs that were in bloom including *Anemone blanda*, *Chionodoxa luciliae*, *Fritillaria meleagris*, *Grape Hyacinth*, *Narcissus "Thalia"* and other mixed *Narcissus*, *Pushkinia scilloides 'libanotica'*, *Trillium grandiflorum* to name a few. Thank you to **Susan Toby Evans, Katie Frieden, Chris Igo, Beverly Lipski, Ruth Merritt, and Vicki Spadaccio** for doing an excellent job on this presentation.

Centre Furnace Mansion Garden Gala



After a brief morning rain, clouds and humidity moved aside to create a beautiful day for the 2011 Garden Gala to enjoy an afternoon in the Centre Furnace Mansion gardens, good food, good music and the good company of nearly 100 guests.

In commemoration of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, the 46th Pennsylvania Regiment Band entertained throughout the afternoon, using period instruments. The silent auction was filled with an interesting range of items that were generously donated by area businesses and individuals, and over 30 visitors toured the Centre Furnace Mansion with Centre Furnace Mansion docents Mary Osborn and Cliff Bastuscheck.

Many, many thanks to our sponsors and the many people that made the Garden Gala a success:

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Thank you for helping where needed in preparation: **Jill Aller, Cliff Bastuscheck, Jim Broyles, Pam Calkins, Centre Furnace Mansion Garden Committee, Katie Frieden, Joel Greene, Larry Harpster, Bob Hazelton, Mike Husband, Rhiannon McClintock, Deb McManus, Jackie and Gene Melander, Lauren Milideo, Ann and George Moellenbrock, Megan Orient, Mary Osborn, Carol Phillips, Beth Ricker, Johanna Sedgwick, Dolores Simpson, Peter Sorensen, Suzann and Vin Tedesco, John Ziegler.**

The Docents' Diary

by Mary Osborn, Docent Coordinator

Spring 2011 Mansion School Tours

From late April until early June, Centre Furnace Mansion hosted young visitors from three State College area elementary schools: Houserville, Easterly Parkway and Corl Street. This experience is one of the most important annual educational programs CCHS offers, and is a partnership with the school district to enhance students' knowledge and understanding of local history. The program has been in place for many years; this year the Mansion hosted 15 tours, connecting more than 300 third and fourth graders with 19th century life in Centre County.

In preparation for their visits, classroom teachers shared background information about Centre Furnace and the Mansion. During their visits, most students were able to explain the four elements essential to making "pig iron" – iron ore, limestone, trees (for charcoal), and swiftly flowing water. Some created their own unique calling cards which they placed on the silver calling card receiver in the front hall, just as Mansion guests did when visiting the Thompson family. All students were full of interest, energy and questions for their gracious volunteer docents.

Many thanks to our wonderful docents who each hosted multiple tours – **Cliff Bastuscheck, Carol and Steve Gentry, Rhiannon McClintock, Gloria Nieweg, Mary Osborn, Pat Potter, Beth Ricker, Betty Shields, and Dolores Simpson.**

Special thanks to SCASD school coordinators **Sheila Abruzzo, Mary Beth Hoffman, and Diane Reed** for their remarkable scheduling and coordination. They and the classroom teachers they represent help support our educational mission: To increase the public's awareness, understanding and appreciation of the role this site played in the history of Centre County, and to be an advocate for its preservation and the development of its historic story through educational interpretation.

Lilies in the Mansion Gardens by Beverly Lipski

*I like the chaliced lilies,
The heavy Eastern lilies,
The gorgeous tiger-lilies,
That in our garden grow.*

(Tiger Lilies, Thomas Bailey Aldrich,
American poet, 1836-1907)

Summer brings to the garden drowsy heat, buzzing bees and elegant lilies to the Centre Furnace Mansion Gardens. Victorians prized lilies of all sorts – heirlooms brought over from Europe that had been in cultivation for centuries, native North American varieties as well as new species from Asia that plant hunters of the period were introducing to Western gardeners.

The crown jewel and earliest flowering is the fragrant white Madonna lily (*Lilium candidum*) with outward-facing trumpet-shaped flowers sited in the upper bed. A plant with a long and storied history, it is depicted in prehistoric paintings around the Mediterranean. Later religious associations with the Virgin Mary were carried into the Victorian language of flowers, where the white lily represented purity. Horticulturally, Madonna is a difficult lily, persnickety about planting conditions and subject to disease, but rewarding in its beauty.

Following along in quick succession are an old lily and a new lily:

Martagon or turk's cap lilies (*Lilium martagon*) were listed by the great Elizabethan gardener John Gerard as growing in his garden in 1596. Thought to have been brought to Europe during the Crusades, martagon lilies were displaced in many gardens from the mid- to late 19th century by the more colorful and larger flowering Asiatic varieties that entered Western horticultural trade. The scented flowers are pinkish purple with darker spots and downward facing with recurved petals, hence the allusion to martagon (Turkish for a kind of turban) or cap. Located in the Spring House Garden, the one plant is tall (4-6 ft.), branching and vigorous with many flowers.

Lilium leichtlinii is a newer arrival, first described in horticultural literature in 1867. Hailing from Japan, China and Russia, this lily is amazingly easy to grow, adapting to virtually any garden condition with sufficient drainage. Another "hulk" coming in at 4-6 ft. with multiple branches, the flowers are butter yellow with purple-brown freckles in the turk's cap form. Somehow, the bulbs in the Gardners' Garden have survived repeated depredations by groundhogs.



Tiger lily (*Lilium lancifolium*, formerly *L. tigrinum*) graces the Parlor Garden. The variety is Flore Pleno, signifying a doubled flower with up to thirty-six petals appearing as caps in caps. Orange coloring with brown spots undoubtedly led to the appellation of tiger lily. While *L. lancifolium* was one of the first Asian lily introductions to North America (1804), Flore Pleno dates later to 1870. Tiger lily's main drawback as a garden plant is susceptibility to virus, which generally does not affect the plant. However, the plant should be sited well away from other lilies to reduce the risk of spreading disease, which is carried by aphids.

Rounding out the growing year is *Lilium speciosum* 'Album,' a late flowering white turk's cap located in the Anne Johnstone Garden. Coming in at 2-4 ft., this lily fits well into the mid-border unlike the taller varieties above that usually require back of the border placement. The combination of white flower with incredible fragrance makes *L. speciosum* 'Album' a good selection for an evening garden. *L. speciosum* was first described in 1841 by the famous German doctor and plants man, Philipp von Siebold, from his extraordinary travels in isolated Japan from 1823-1829, as part of the limited Dutch trading delegation.

Water Line Repaired



In April, College Township Water Authority discovered that a water service line to the Centre Furnace Mansion had sprung a leak that was amounting to the loss of several thousand gallons per week.

A considerable amount of detective work, time, equipment and materials were needed to get to the source of the leak and repair it. This is a project that could have cost CCHS thousands of dollars and disturbed portions of the walkway and driveway. Instead, through a cooperative effort, CTWA donated their services, State College Borough Water Authority donated their services and specialized equipment to find the specific location of the leak, and Stone Valley Construction donated their equipment and services to do the necessary repair work.

With the financial responsibility that CCHS shoulders to maintain two historic sites and in light of state funding cuts, this was an extremely generous and timely gift. All of us associated with the Centre County Historical Society owe **Stone Valley Construction, College Township Water Authority and State College Borough Water Authority** a grateful thank you for all of their work!

~ Mary Sorensen

Centre Crossings Hospice Memorial Butterfly Release

Sunday, August 7 at 2:00 p.m.

Centre Crossings Hospice of Centre HomeCare will hold its 12th annual butterfly release the Centre Furnace Mansion on Sunday, August 7 at 2:00 p.m. To sponsor a butterfly in honor or memory of a loved one, please call Centre Crossings Hospice at (814) 237-7400.

Around the County

July

July 14 – 17

Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts, State College

<http://www.arts-festival.com>

Saturday, July 23 from 1:00-3:00 p.m.

“Alphabet Marsh” Family Scavenger Hunt at Millbrook Marsh Nature Center, State College

<http://www.crpr.org/Millbrook/MMNC-Menu.html>

August

August 16 – 18

Ag Progress Days, Rock Springs

<http://apd.psu.edu>

August 25 – September 1

Centre County Grange Encampment and Fair, Centre Hall

<http://www.grangefair.net>

September

Thursday, September 22 – 7:00 p.m.

Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival at the State Theatre, State College

<http://www.clearwaterconservancy.org>

Ongoing

Through August 30 – Tuesdays & Saturdays, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

PA Civil War 150 Commemoration at the Boalsburg Heritage Museum

<http://www.boalsburgheritagemuseum.org>

Through October – Saturdays, 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Vintage Wedding Gowns and Accompanying Wedding Memorabilia at the Penns Valley Area Historical Museum, Aaronsburg

<http://www.pennsvalleymuseum.org>



CENTRE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CENTRE FURNACE MANSION

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Membership



Your membership supports all aspects of the Historical Society's operations. Membership benefits include: quarterly issues of *Mansion Notes*, the Society's newsletter; *Centre County Heritage*, the Society's journal; advance notice of programs; and a 10% discount on all Society publications.

Thank you to all of our new and continuing members. We hope you value your membership in the Centre County Historical Society as much as we have valued having your support and participation. We invite you to return your membership renewal, if you have not yet renewed for this year. Make checks payable to CCHS and send to 1001 E. College Avenue, State College, PA 16801.

Membership year runs January 1 - December 31

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