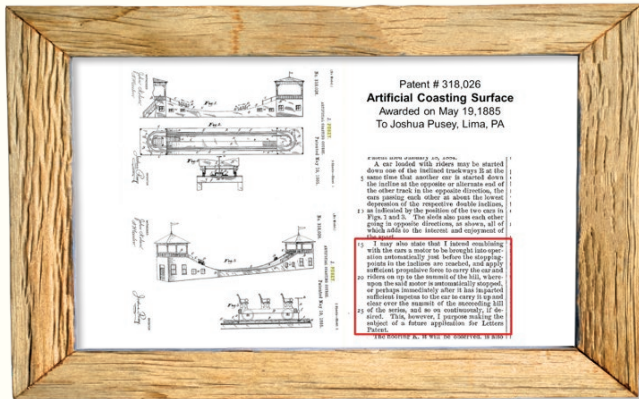


Neighbors in History

Submitted by Gary Grove, Middletown Township Historical Society Board Member



Last month our focus was on Maple Linden the once-stately 20 room mansion that was originally built by Abraham Pennell in the 1830's and the Pusey family homestead and working farm from 1890 to 1941. Despite efforts to save this historic building, by 2016 it deteriorated to the point that it had to be demolished for safety reasons. All that remains now is a historical marker along Middletown Road in front of Lima Estates.

This month our focus will be on Joshua Pusey, a very respected lawyer and the inventor of safety matches who can trace his roots back to an old Quaker Family that includes Caleb Pusey a friend and business partner of William Penn who came from England in 1682 to manage Penn's Chester Mills. Caleb's house in Upland still stands today. Joshua Pusey was born on March 27, 1842 in Delaware and grew up in the Kenneth Square area of Chester County. After graduating from E.T. Swayne's School, Joshua toured Europe for 2 years roughly following the path that is chronicled in Bayard Taylor's "View a-foot; Europe seen with Knapsack and Staff". Joshua sent back letters that were published in a column entitled "Our Foreign Correspondent" in the Philadelphia Inquirer starting in the June 30, 1860 issue. While in Europe, he served as the acting Consul to Genoa but upon learning about Fort Sumter, he abruptly stopped his trip and returned home.

Although a Quaker, he felt very strongly about abolishing slavery. Like many of the Chester County farmers, craftsmen & merchants associated with the Progressive Longwood Friends Meeting House, he joined the Wayne Independent Rifles which was recruited by Fred Taylor and financed by his famous brother Bayard selling some NY Tribune stock. It included 19 pairs of brothers and many cousins, most of whom were related to Fred Taylor. This group eventually became Co. H of the famed 1st Pennsylvania Rifles which were also known as the "Bucktails". Most of the other soldiers in this sharp shooting regiment were lumberjacks or raftsmen from the Wildcat District in Western PA. How these two such disparate groups came together is an interesting story that needs to be told at

a later time. What is important for today's story is that this group became the shock troops of the Army of the Potomac and saw considerable action in all of the major battles of the Eastern Theater. So much so that the Bucktails were the lead-off vignette of the award winning HBO Documentary "War Thorn, 1861-2010" on Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome. The tragic life of Bucktail Private Angelo Crespy is also covered in Dennis Brandt's "Pathway to Hell".

Due to the time it took for Joshua Pusey to return to the states, he missed the hard fought action at Antietam where the Bucktail's began the fight in Miller's Cornfield to what would become the bloodiest day in US history with 22,717 dead, wounded or missing on both sides. His letter to his sister describes the hardships he and the other Bucktails were suffering when he joined them a few weeks later...

A few weeks later the Bucktails were involved in the terrible Union defeat at Fredricksburg and the part of the battlefield where they fought is still justifiably called "the Slaughter Pen". Indeed, his friend Alexander McClurg was killed in action and Joshua was terribly wounded by a ball piercing his throat and coming out the opposite side, tearing away the jaw. He fell unconscious in a ditch, and his comrades thinking him dead, charged over him where he lay. He eventually regained consciousness and was able to crawl away for a long distance before being found by a Union ambulance crew. He was invalided out of service and eventually recovered after long and intense suffering. All his post war photos show a prominent beard to cover-up his war wounds.

Although Joshua is best known for his safety matches, the exhaustive records on Joshua Pusey compiled by Mrs. Nancy Pusey that are now archived at the MTHS in their museum at Roosevelt School include detailed descriptions of nearly 40 patents that were awarded to Joshua Pusey as the inventor. To me the most interesting one is Patent #318.026 Artificial Coasting Surface that was awarded on May 19, 1885.