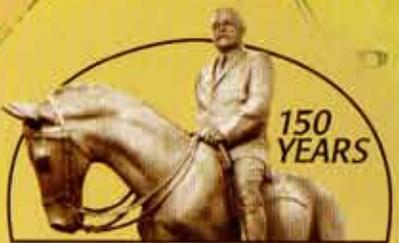


Harry C. Trexler:

His Life and Legacy



Celebrate the Legacy
HARRY C. TREXLER TRUST



TRELERTOWN FARMS



Cover Art: Full color map of the Trexler Farms in Lehigh County in 1933. Borrowed from a publication "A Trek Over Trexler Farms with Captain Nolan P. Benner."



Harry C. Trexler: His Life and Legacy
by Frank A. Whelan

FOREWORD

“Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.”

The words are Horace's, but the thought is a perfect one for the sesquicentennial celebration of General Harry C. Trexler's birth: “If you need a monument, look around you.” If you need a reminder of who General Trexler was and what he did, look around you. Wherever one goes in the city of Allentown or the County of Lehigh, reminders of the General's legacy abound. His shadow is long; his footprints large. The good he did and continues to do through his Estate is awe-inspiring and immeasurable.

Take a walk in any of Allentown's 2,000 acres of parks: the General created the park system. Look up at the PPL tower: the General was a founder of the Company. Drive across the Eighth Street bridge: the General had it built. Spend an afternoon at the Game Preserve: the General donated the land to the County. Read the Morning Call: the General once owned it. Have fun at Romper Day: it was created and funded by the General and his wife. Read a book in the Trexler Library at Muhlenberg College or visit a sick friend in the Trexler Wing of Sacred Heart Hospital: these and countless other buildings in Lehigh County were made possible by generous grants from the General's Estate.

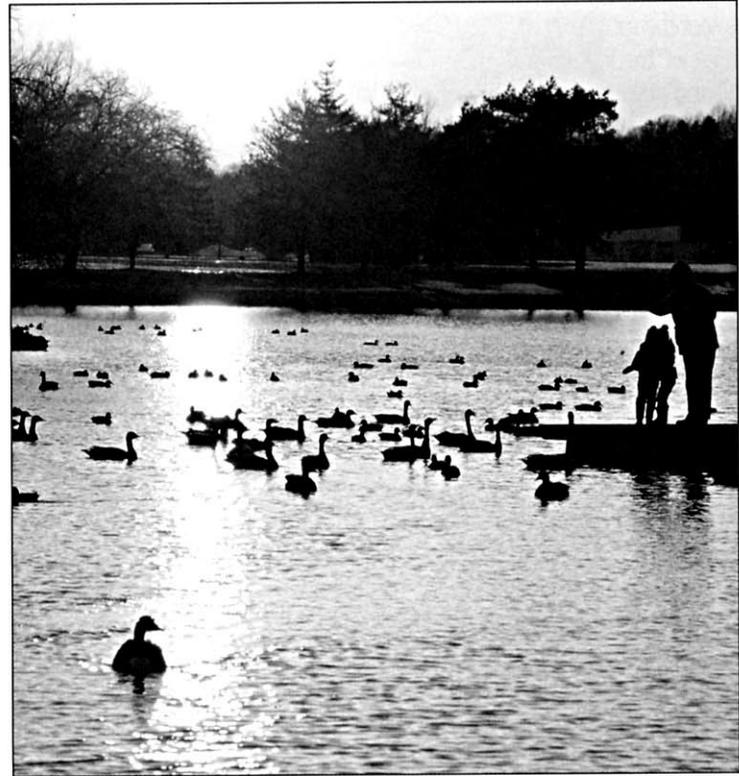
It has been 150 years since Harry Clay Trexler was born, and three generations have passed since he died. Over time, the public's collective memory of him has dimmed. Many recognize his name, but few know the man. Children especially – tomorrow's leaders – have little idea of who he was or what he did. The Trustees of the Trexler Estate – Dexter F. Baker, Kathryn Stephanoff, Malcolm J. Gross, Robert C. Wood, and the undersigned – want to refresh and inform the public's understanding and appreciation of the General; raise their level of awareness about his life and legacy; and propose him to all as a model to be admired and imitated. We hope to accomplish our purpose through the publication of this biographical essay – the only comprehensive treatment of the General's life and work available today – and a variety of other sesquicentennial events and initiatives.

We are deeply grateful to Frank Whelan for accepting the challenge of writing this piece and meeting our challenge so successfully and to Kathryn Stephanoff and Malcolm Gross for their contributions to this essay. Also, thank you to the Lehigh County Historical Society and the Morning Call for their special assistance.

General Harry Clay Trexler was a truly extraordinary human being. A man of genius and of vision. A man of goodness and caring. His life and legacy are an amalgam of virtues Americans and citizens of Lehigh County - the General's County - hold most dear: loyalty to country, reverence for God, and concern for the common weal, compassion for the less fortunate, and, not least, generosity. May these virtues serve as an inspiration and example for all who follow the General and, echoing the words of the Reverend Charles Trexler, may the name of Harry C. Trexler be written high in the hearts of our community for generations to come.

Reverend Daniel G. Gambet, O.S.F.S.

Trustee
Harry C. Trexler Estate
April 17, 2004



Introduction

It is a late fall afternoon, and Allentown's Trexler Memorial Park is crowded. Warmer than normal weather has brought out old and young, black and white. Spanish, French, and German are being spoken by some as they walk, jog, or run around the winding asphalted drives that were once bridle paths. It is not uncommon to see Indian women dressed in saris or hear words in Vietnamese spoken here.

Above this cross-section of a Lehigh Valley far different from the one he left 71 years ago, is a statue of the park's namesake, General Harry C. Trexler. Since May 9, 1981, the image of the industrialist and community benefactor, presented to the city by the Trexler Trust, which administers his will, has presided over the grounds of his former estate. That afternoon a little girl passing by with her mother turns to look up and says in cheery greeting, "Hi, General Trexler."

Trexler's statue seems to invite this kind of familiarity. Despite his military title, and unlike many equestrian statues, Trexler's is a particularly approachable piece of art. Sculptor Charles C. Parks shows Trexler paused in a moment of reflection. He is dressed in a civilian jacket and tie and wearing jodhpurs, standard riding dress of its

day. What draws the attention is Trexler's visionary gaze, as if through his rimless eye-glasses he sees the future.

The image of Trexler as a man of vision, as one who looked beyond the narrow confines of his time and place to create a legacy, is the one that has come to be accepted since his death in 1933. His will, establishing the Trexler Trust, and the donations of parks and parkland to the city and county, have made him a revered figure.

Now, 150 years after his birth, the question of who was General Harry C. Trexler becomes more important than ever, and, more difficult to answer. By chance or design, Trexler left behind almost no personal or business papers. Thus he cannot be written about in the standard biographical sense. We do have the memories of his friends, particularly that of his longtime aide, Nolan Benner, Sr. But as wonderfully candid as they sometimes are, Benner's remembrances are the reflections of someone who saw only a part of the man's life.

Benner went to work for Trexler in 1916. By then, the most significant part of Trexler's fortune had been established. Although he would engage in some major consolidations of local industries, like the creation of the Pennsylvania Power and Light Company in 1920 and the merging of the local phone system with the Bell network in 1926, Trexler's fortune had been shaped in the late 19th century.

The problem with all this "white space" in Trexler's biography is that it opens him up to a number of interpretations. "Debunking" articles have begun to appear. Some have accused him of being little more than just another plundering robber baron.

In 1981, a Yale-trained scholar, Peter Dobkin Hall, published a pamphlet, "A Salute to General Harry C. Trexler," for the Lehigh County Historical Society. It attempted to put Trexler in the context of the Progressive Era, a figure who used his position in the community to bring order out of the chaos of free-wheeling 19th century capitalism. It is a plausible view. But Hall seems more interested in Trexler as a type than as an individual.

How then to answer the question: Who was General Harry C. Trexler? This biographical essay, without claiming to be definitive, will attempt to give as clear a view of Trexler's life as is possible. Hopefully, using a wide variety of sources, it will show the man in his time and place, tell a little about those times, 1854 to 1933, and show how they shaped his legacy.

It will show Trexler's twin driving forces of civic pride and entrepreneurial spirit grow and develop throughout his life. It will also show Trexler's philanthropy and patriotism as he used them to further his community and business projects.



General Trexler at his 79th birthday

Chapter 1: Under His Own Power

It is Thursday, November 16, 1933. In Paris, the French government is about to fall. At Geneva, frustrated British diplomats have spent a fruitless day trying to get German dictator Adolf Hitler's representatives to return to arms talks. That afternoon, a federal judge in New York upheld President Franklin Roosevelt's edict against gold hoarding. And in Los Angeles, opera singer Mary McCormic told another judge why she had slugged a female newspaper gossip columnist in the jaw.

At roughly 5:50 p.m. that evening a black Cadillac Town Sedan glides across western New Jersey. Two men sit in the front seat. The driver, dressed in his chauffeur's uniform, is Charles DeLong. Beside him is his employer, Allentown's leading citizen and one of the wealthiest men in the Lehigh Valley, 79-year-old General Harry Clay Trexler.

They are returning from a meeting in New York of the board of the National Power and Light Company, on which Trexler sits. Shortly after the meeting broke up, Trexler's friend and fellow board member, Philadelphia banker George Frazier, stopped him. The meeting had been long, said Frazier. Wouldn't Trexler rather take the train with him to Philadelphia and then ride up the next morning?

Trexler thanked him but noted he had told his wife, Mary, that they would have supper together, and he did not want to disappoint her. Frazier and Trexler parted for the last time. A week later, Frazier would be dead after his car collided with a streetcar in the Elkins Park section of Philadelphia.

By the time Trexler and DeLong had crossed into Pennsylvania the November twilight had turned to darkness. It would not be too much longer before they were in the Lehigh Valley. Perhaps Trexler, as was his custom, pounded his cane on the floor of the car to urge DeLong to speed up as they passed the Taylor Wharton plant that loomed on the other side of the William Penn Highway.

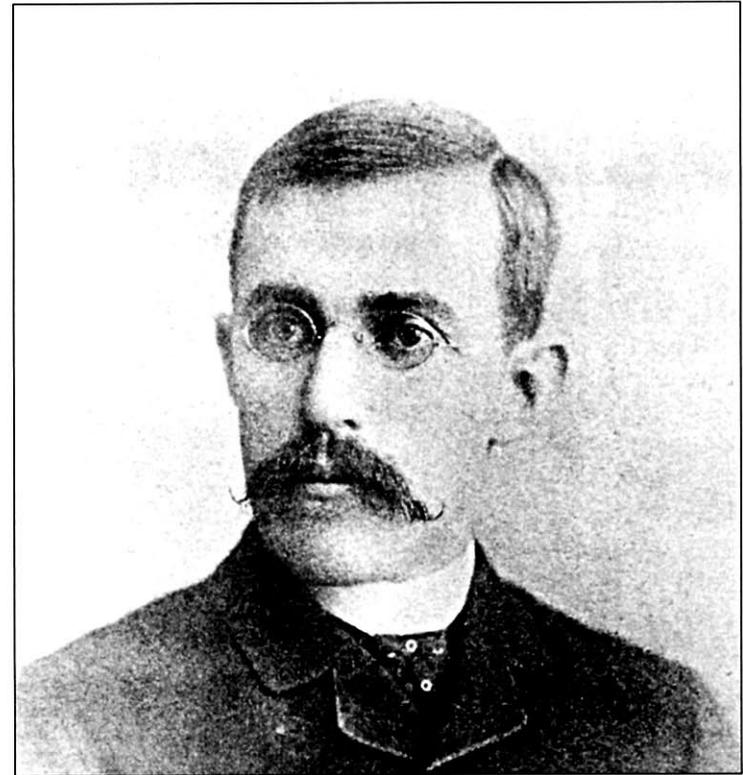
Unknown to Trexler and DeLong, ahead of them was fuel truck driver William Krick of Fullerton. Krick was not having a good day. His truck's battery had died. He had managed to get the vehicle to the side of the road, but the narrow shoulder of the highway left the back end of the truck stuck out in the traffic. Krick had phoned ahead to the Miller Motor Company in Bethlehem for a new battery. Now there was nothing he could do but wait. Holding out his flashlight he tried to do what he could to warn others of his presence.

DeLong was just upping the car's speed from 40 miles an hour when he saw, too late, Krick and his flashlight. The frantic truck driver signaled for DeLong to slow. But the chauffeur, fighting a head cold that left him groggy, could not react fast enough. The Cadillac caught the left wheel hub of the fuel truck and slammed the car's right side into the stalled vehicle. The almost 80-year-old Trexler took the full force of the impact. When the car finally came to a stop, its front and rear doors were hanging open, with broken glass everywhere.

DeLong and Krick flagged down a passing motorist. They removed Trexler and had him driven to Easton Hospital. Doctors were later to note that along with a shattered collarbone and broken ribs, Trexler was suffering from massive internal injuries. Despite this, he remained alert and, to the astonishment of everyone, including the doctors, walked up the steps and into the hospital under his own power.

As word of the accident spread through the Lehigh Valley, Trexler's wife, friends, and business associates rushed to Easton Hospital. Nolan Benner recalls that the General was conscious when they entered his hospital room "and recognized us with a nod of his head."

But there was apparently to be no "Rosebud" moment for Trexler. If he spoke in any significant way or uttered any last words, no one heard them or wrote them down. As the vigil wore on, Benner sat in an outer room and waited with the others. Alone, as was her wish, stoic Mary Trexler, her hand holding that of her husband's, waited as the night wore on. Then at 3:55 a.m. on November 17, 1933, Trexler died. Hours later, early risers in the Lehigh Valley were greeted by the Morning Call headline, GEN. H. C. TREXLER FATALLY INJURED.



Trexler as a young man

Chapter 2: The Roots of Harry C. Trexler

It would have seemed strange to the people who opened their newspapers that morning to have asked: Who was Harry Trexler? He had been a presence in their lives for over half a century and had only loomed larger with each passing year.

But it would be wrong to think, as some now do, that Trexler in his lifetime was universally loved. He was generally respected as a businessman, an organizer, and a leader. The good things that he had done, like creating West Park, were certainly appreciated. Yet there were some, particularly in that Depression year of 1933, who distrusted anyone of great wealth.

But if asked to explain Harry Trexler, most folks in Allentown probably would have pointed first to his ancestry. Before he was anything else, Harry Trexler was Pennsylvania German – or, as he would probably have said, Pennsylvania Dutch. A photo of Trexler with a group of sportsmen shows a very German face with the sad pensive eyes of his forebearers. It also shows the then brown and later white mustache that was to give Trexler a certain additional strength in appearance. Trexler had the

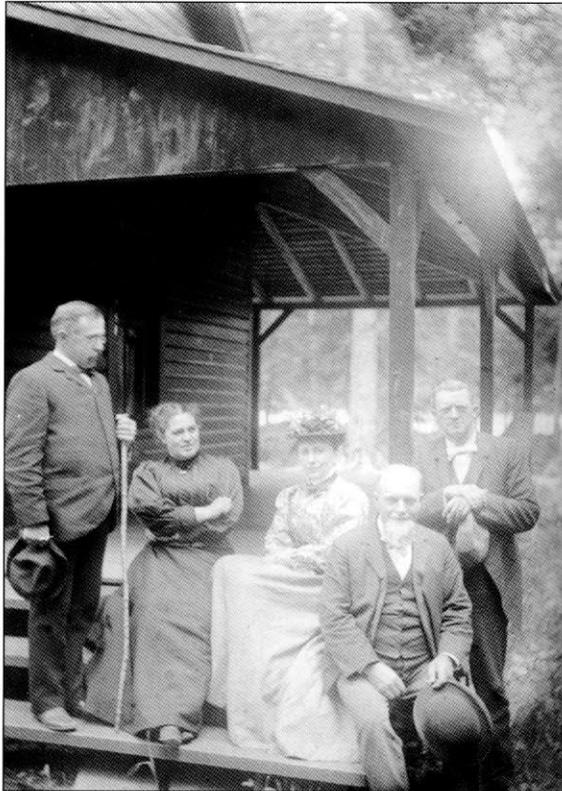
hawk-like face for a mustache and the new safety razor that made a trim mustache possible in the 1880's and 1890's, which gave him and other men of the time a perfect reason to discard the shaggy beards of their fathers.

Henry Clay Trexler was born to Edwin W. and Matilda Sauerpeck (sometimes spelled Sauerbeck) Trexler on April 17, 1854, probably at 78 N. 3rd Street in Easton, his parents' home, according to the 1855 city directory for that growing town. His parents had been married exactly a year earlier, on April 20, 1853, in the parsonage of Easton's St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Nineteenth century Protestant American parents disdained "Popish" saint's names for their children, and the age of movie and rock stars names belonged in the future. National political figures were the heroes of the day. His parents' choice of a first and middle name for their firstborn child may therefore suggest something about Edwin and Matilda Trexler's political allegiance. Henry Clay was the former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, United States Senator, Secretary of State, and three-time unsuccessful candidate for the White House of the pro-business Whig party. He died in 1852 still the national hero of his party.

Due perhaps to some error in transcribing the date, the church's records give April 20, 1854, as the date of Trexler's birth. His baptismal date at St. John's Lutheran was February 23, 1856. That Trexler regarded his birthday as the 17th is clear from the fact that he never celebrated it on any other date.

Most of the rural folks in Lehigh and Northampton County were strong Democrats. As an ambitious small businessman, Edwin Trexler seemed to have a different point of view. If he had not, we might be remembering Andrew Jackson Trexler or Thomas Jefferson Trexler.

How and by whom he came to be named "Harry" is unknown. However, the Pennsylvania Dutch liked nicknames ending in an "e" sound, which may be where



Trexler family members

Harry came from. Whatever the reason, by age 14 he was signing it as his first name on letters.

Although married in the Lutheran Church, sometime after their return to Allentown in 1856, the Trexlers joined the First Presbyterian Church. Harry's mother was raised a Presbyterian. Her mother, Jane Magee Sauerbeck, was a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian. According to the federal census of 1870, which gave her age as 77, she had been born in Virginia. Some sources call Edwin Trexler a Lutheran, which he may very well have been raised. But the obituaries of both Trexler parents mention their active role in the Presbyterian Church.

In later life, Harry Trexler would have little tolerance for what he regarded as "the false pretenses" of church members. Benner notes that he often heard Trexler say, "I have never been affiliated with a church, but I would not want to live in a community that had no churches." At the same time, Benner would often hear Trexler humming popular hymns to himself. Arthur Sullivan's "Onward Christian Soldiers" was his favorite.

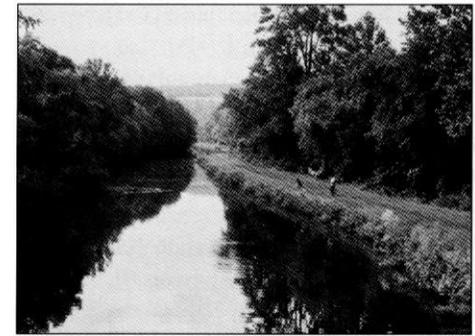
The elder Trexlers' interest in the Presbyterian Church later in life does not alter the fact that they were descended from a German ancestry rooted in the traditions of Lutheran and Reformed churches. The Rev. Monsignor Leo Gregory Fink, the leading Catholic clergyman in the Lehigh Valley during Trexler's later years and a friend of the General, claimed that the name Trexler was a derivation of the name Drechsler, from the German verb drechseln, which means, "to turn on a lathe."

The Trexlers came from the western German town of Dettingen on the Mainz River, today on the border of the state of Hesse Darmstadt. The American founder of the clan was John Peter Trexler. Before he left Germany in 1709, he married Catherine Breinig. They came first to New York.

In their 1999 book "Gotham: A History of New York to 1898," historians Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace give a harrowing account of those New York-bound German immigrants called "Palatinates," after the Palatinate, the region in western Germany from which many of them originated.

Their long sea voyages, anywhere from three to six months, were particularly difficult. Once in America, hundreds starved or died of typhus on Governors Island in New York Harbor. They had believed they were coming to America to be settlers, but colonial officials informed them that instead they were to be indentured servants of the British crown, "herded...into labor gangs to do the noisome unfamiliar work of extracting turpentine, tar, and pitch from pitch pines."

The Germans were so outraged they revolted. Their rebellion was put down by armed troops. Only when it was discovered that the land on which they had been



Lehigh Canal

placed could not grow pitch pines did the governor “turn them loose to fend for themselves.”

Were Trexler’s ancestors among these early Palatines? It is known that a number of them fled north to the Mohawk River Valley, where John Peter Trexler lived between 1710 and 1712.

John Peter appears next on the historical record on September 5, 1720. His name is attached to a petition for the creation of Oley Township in Pennsylvania. On November 18, 1729, he was granted a deed to 238 acres of land in Upper Macungie Township. Along with being successful farmers, Harry Trexler’s ancestors were tavern keepers, a justice of the peace, a state legislator, and a lieutenant colonel in the colonial militia. Many are buried at a small, fenced family cemetery still existing along Route 222 near the Berks County line.

Edwin Trexler’s parents, Reuben and Sarah Trexler, were farm people who had a property, then just outside Emmaus, in Upper Milford Township. Today, it is within the borough not far from Emmaus High School. Reuben died in 1840 at the relatively young age of 36.

The couple had four children, Edwin, Jonas, Willoughby, and Sallie. Edwin, Harry’s father, was born October 27, 1826. He seemed to have a mercantile bent from the start. He worked on the family farm in the summer and attended township schools in the winter. At age 14 he was already working in an Emmaus dry goods store. It is not quite clear when Edwin left, but the 1850 U.S. Census finds him and his brother Jonas working in a dry goods store in Easton.

Jonas, born in 1828, was 12 when his father died. He left home at age 19 and attended the Norton school in Belvidere, New Jersey. He clerked at two other dry goods stores before joining his brother Edwin in Easton.

The Trexlers’ presence in Easton says something about their spirit of enterprise. Located at the point where the Lehigh, Delaware, and Morris canals came together, it was the most business-minded and growing community in the Lehigh Valley at the time.

Easton’s population was nearly 8,000. Canal boats with goods from New York and Philadelphia came there to re-supply. The Lehigh Canal’s boats, carrying the anthracite coal that warmed the homes of the big cities and fueled the furnaces of the Valley’s booming iron industry, all passed through the community at the forks of the Delaware.

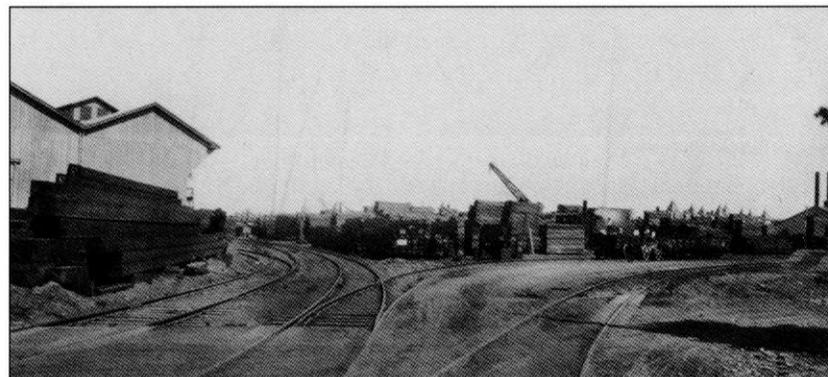
Trexler’s business was called Yeager & Trexler. We know nothing of Mr. Yeager. Located at 166 Northampton Street, roughly where the Hotel Easton is today, its primary merchandise was carpets. “Brussels, Tapestry, Three Ply and Ingrain” was how the 1850 Easton City directory put it.

How Edwin met Harry’s mother, Matilda, is unknown. Her father, William Sauerpeck, was a cooper, or barrel maker. Matilda was born in Easton on September 3, 1827. She lived a long life, dying in Allentown on November 7, 1914, at age 88 in a home next to those of her son and grandson.

Although all histories of Harry Trexler dwell on the influence of his father, it is

impossible to imagine that his mother did not also have an impact on his life. In its obituary of her, Allentown’s Chronicle and News said this: “Mrs. Trexler was a woman of strong will and extraordinary energy of character, and she conducted her affairs with independence and success.”

Despite his drive to succeed, things apparently did not go well for Edwin Trexler in Easton. Several sources suggest that his health was a factor, the indoor sedentary life of a merchant apparently taking its toll. His obituary says he spent the year 1855 back in Emmaus, restoring his health. Presumably his wife and child were with him. But they did return to Easton to have Harry baptized. It was sometime in 1856 that the Trexlers, Edwin, Matilda and young Harry, gave their attention to Allentown. Brothers Edwin and Frank were born - Edwin in 1858 and Frank in 1861. Brother William died in infancy.



E.W. Trexler & Company, lumber yard

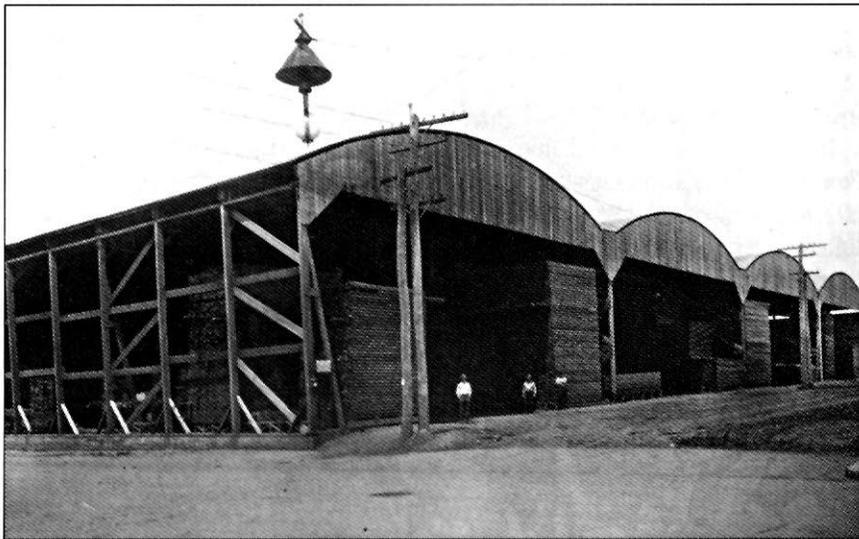
On November 5, 1856, the first ad for E.W. Trexler & Company, lumber dealers, appeared in the Allentown newspapers.

“TO BUILDERS,” it began. “The subscribers having some time since purchased the stock and good will of DRESHER’S well known LUMBER YARD now invite the attention of the public to the fact that they have lately replenished the Yard and that it now contains the most extensive and best selected stock of all kinds of LUMBER ever seen in Allentown which we intend to sell at the lowest possible prices.” The ad went on to describe the stock: “boards, planks, joists, rafters, laths, fence boards, scantling, shingles and clapboards.”

This business, which would become the basis of Harry Trexler’s future fortune, entered the family thanks to his uncle Jonas.

According to Jonas’ obituary in the Chronicle and News on February 1, 1908, he had traveled in “the West” during 1855 and returned to Allentown in 1856. “In the same year he bought out the Drescher lumber business,” the obituary reads, and, “had connected himself, Edwin Trexler and William Drescher under the firm name E.W. Trexler & Co.”

How Jonas made his money out West (panning for gold in the California gold fields? selling scarce flour to miners at \$500 a barrel? shrewdly investing in land transactions?)



E.W. Trexler & Company storage sheds

is unknown. But it was his bankroll that founded the family lumber business.

In 1864 Edwin sold his interest in the business to brother Willoughby. Willoughby and Jonas ran the lumber company until 1867. Brother Edwin rejoined them that year. It operated as Trexler Brothers until 1870, when the firm was dissolved. Edwin got the company which he continued to operate at its old location. His brothers, Jonas and Willoughby, moved up the street to 10th and Hamilton to start their own lumber yard, which they ran until retiring from active business life entirely in 1876.

That Edwin Trexler's brothers opened a lumber business just up the block from that of their brother suggests friction between them. Jonas appears to have had the reputation, deserved or not, of being a "moneybags" as well as something of a miser. In one of the few letters from him that exists, his 14-year-old nephew, Harry, takes Jonas to task for being so tight with his purse strings. Perhaps these attitudes toward his uncle were shared by Harry's father. To have his younger brother, who a few years before had been his clerk, accumulating enough money to start a competing business must have rankled Edwin Trexler.

Harry Trexler's growing years were difficult ones for the nation and the Lehigh Valley. It was six days before his seventh birthday, on April 12, 1861, that the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter, starting the Civil War. Trexler was almost 11 when it ended with Lee's surrender on April 9, 1865. Although the marching of troops up and down Hamilton Street, and the constant coming and going, must have been exciting, Trexler could not have been unaware of the tension among the grownups around him.

To say that the Civil War was largely unpopular in the Lehigh Valley would be an understatement. In rural Lehigh and Northampton counties, the Democratic Party was strong and vocal. There were two factions. One, the War Democrats, did not want to

free slaves but felt the union must be preserved. The other faction, the Copperheads, felt that a civil war would serve no purpose other than the killing of young men. The Copperheads believed a deal should be worked out to divide the Union and let the South depart in peace, taking her slaves with her. A strong and determined minority, however, particularly in the cities, supported the effort to hold the Union together and backed the policy of Abraham Lincoln's Republicans for all-out war with the Slave States. Among them were the iron makers, masters of what was then the most important industry in the Valley.

Where the Trexlers stood on these burning issues of the day is unknown. Although Edwin Trexler's 1900 obituary calls him a "staunch Republican," was he one in the 1860's? As a businessman/merchant, he would certainly have liked the high tariff policy of the Republicans. But if the Trexlers were like most people, they must have had mixed views, shifting as the fortunes of the Union army rose, fell and rose again. Although Edwin Trexler and his other children were active Republicans, Harry was a Democrat, at least in the 1880's. In fact, his brother Frank records in his diary that on February 20, 1883, while Frank was running for Judge of Elections as a Republican, Harry ran as a Democrat for Allentown's Select Council and was "elected, having secured a large number of Republican votes." On September 15, 1883, Harry was a delegate to the Democratic Party's county convention of Allentown's Seventh Ward so he must have been prominent in county Democratic politics. Frank, disgustedly, records Harry following the lead of Bob Wright, the party "boss," even to the point of voting for Boss Wright's incompetent brother for nominee for District Attorney at the convention.

Frank also records what may have been the beginning of Harry's disillusion with the Democrats, when he broke with the party and supported Republican Samuel MacHose in the February 20, 1884, local election because of a personal dislike of Frank Fogel, and electioneered against Fogel very actively. Harry's dislike of Mr. Fogel was earlier described as "intense disgust" by Frank. As a result of breaking party ranks, Harry apparently came under criticism by "some Democrats who are now pouring vials of wrath on his head."

In 1864-1866, Edwin Trexler left the lumber business for a time and took his family from Allentown to the Trexler farm near Emmaus. Was he perhaps once again concerned about his health? Or did he fear that if the state should be invaded again, as it had been at Gettysburg in 1863, Allentown or any city just might not be a good place to be?

It is impossible to know. We do know that in later life his son demonstrated a detailed knowledge of obscure Civil War battles and Confederate commanders that sometimes surprised his business associates.

We know little about Harry Trexler's youth in Emmaus. He began his education at Henninger's public schoolhouse. Fink records that it was while living on the farm that Trexler, who hunted and fished from his youth, wrote letters to wholesale game merchants to try to persuade them to buy the quail he shot. Trexler's later skills as an entrepreneur were already evident.

Fink also notes two other stories about Trexler that may have occurred when he was working on the farm but was no longer living there. Since he was a friend of Trexler's, he might very well have heard these stories from the General himself.

The first had to do with an attempt to ride an unruly horse. Trexler lost control of the animal, which threw him. "The horse dashed toward the stables without its rider, while in the distance amid a cloud of dust came the humiliated Harry Clay Trexler," Fink wrote. Throughout his life friends could always get a rise out of the General by bringing up the incident.

The other story told by Fink also had to do with horses. Apparently, as a young teenager, Trexler decided to plow the farm field using the two most unmanageable horses in his father's barn. Things went well at first, but without warning the horses panicked. They overturned the harrow, threw Trexler forward, and almost trampled him. At the last moment, the horses turned in another direction. "From those who fully understood the nature of the experience, it was acknowledged as life's first warning of the proximity of death for the ambitious youth," Fink wrote.

Frank Trexler's diary records a final horse story about Harry as a young man. On September 24, 1882, Frank notes "Ed and I bought Harry's horse 'Riley', carriage, saddle, harness for \$175." However, by Wednesday, October 4, 1882, Frank notes, with a trace of humor, "Harry took his horse back again. The reason was he used him so much that we concluded he had better keep him." Two years later in January 1884, Riley again is mentioned as having run away with Harry in a sleigh which was smashed to "smithereens."

Edwin Trexler clearly intended that his son follow him in the family business. When they moved back to the city in 1867, Harry attended the Allentown public schools. Then, from 1869-70, Trexler went to the Tremont Seminary in Norristown. According to Fink, the non-sectarian school was run by a professor John Locke.

Although he remained only a year, Trexler never forgot his time at the school, which was all the "higher" education he ever received. In 1928, he would hold a dinner, well covered in the press, for the surviving members of his class.

However, the Pennsylvania Dutch valued experience in business over a degree. Like the generation of Trexlers before him, in the early 1870's Harry Trexler took up a clerk's position in his family lumber business. Upon reaching majority at age 21, he was admitted to the firm as a partner. He was later joined in the business by his brother, Edwin. Their father then proudly renamed the firm E.W. Trexler & Sons.

Frank Trexler's diary also gives us a picture of Harry in the 1880's. For instance, on December 21, 1882, Frank recorded that Harry attended the Americus Club Ball and "stayed until 3 AM." On December 1, 1883, he notes Harry attended Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice* and raved about the lead actor. Frank's first mention of his brother's intent to marry appears August 26, 1884, when he notes "Harry bought Sweitzer property a few days ago and intends to move into it and marry." He also notes on Saturday, November 1, 1884, that "the matrimonial market is quite lively at present – Harry is going to marry Mary Mosser" and that, probably as a result, "Harry is fixing up his house" at 926 Hamilton Street.

At Christmas 1883, we find Harry presenting his younger brother Frank (then an aspiring young lawyer and later a judge) with a subscription to a legal case service. On January 9, 1885, we learn that Harry's new house is expected to be completed by February 1, 1885, and Frank describes it as "the event" in the family.



Mary and Harry Trexler

Harry Trexler married Mary Mosser, the daughter of a prosperous tanner, at a private ceremony at the bride's home on January 22, 1885. The couple left immediately by train for a honeymoon in Baltimore and Washington. Mary's family wealth was to support several of Trexler's early ventures. Much speculation has been made in recent years about the nature of Harry and Mary's relationship, spurred along by the revelation in Benner's memoirs of Trexler's affair with a certain Madame X. As both Harry and Mary Trexler were products of the Victorian era, when a double standard between husbands and wives prevailed, it would not be surprising if their marriage was sometimes a less than perfect modern partnership between equals.

But there are some things that are clear about their life together. Trexler did not dismiss his wife's opinions. "He had great respect for her judgment in business matters," Benner notes. Trexler always praised the way she ran the house and did not try to intervene in the kitchen or in dealing with the help. They spent most of their evenings at home alone together, he reading, she doing needlework. The Trexlers were often partners in philanthropic work. But Mary Trexler had been raised to understand that she should never make an attempt to outshine her husband. She did, however, engage in a lifelong feud with Jennie Shilling, Frank's wife, which estranged the brothers as well as their wives.

Frank's diary records in 1887, that Harry and Mary gave Frank an umbrella for

Christmas and the entire family celebrated Christmas dinner on Sunday of that year. That Christmas contrasts with the one of 1889, the year that Frank married Jennie Shilling, when Frank notes the absence of any gift from Harry and Mary. By then, the split between the brothers and their wives had apparently developed to the point that ended any exchange of gifts. At a later time, Frank again notes in detail the various Christmas gifts exchanged describing the holiday as “the warmest x-mas known for years” with nothing from Harry and Mary. The diary continues until April 2, 1891, with numerous other references to their parents and, particularly, brother “Ed.” Harry is never mentioned again.

By 1890, 64-year-old Edwin Trexler was ready to retire. His sons – Edwin, who never married, and Harry – took over the business for themselves. The elder Edwin, while continuing to live in Allentown at 927 Hamilton Street, took over supervision of the farm outside Emmaus. He occupied himself with the duties of a gentlemen farmer, breeding Holstein and Jersey cattle and was “largely instrumental in getting Holsteins in this section of the state,” noted the Chronicle and News.

On July 10, 1900, Edwin, still vigorous at 74, was anxious to see how haying operations were going at the farm. At 6 a.m., climbing into his simple one-horse vehicle, described in the Call as “a piano box buggy,” he grabbed the reins and was off to Emmaus.

This was not work for Trexler but something he enjoyed doing. During haying or harvest seasons, early risers would often see Trexler, white beard blowing in the wind as he headed out of town.

Things had gone so well that day that by 11 a.m. Trexler was heading home for lunch. It was just 11:30 when Calvin Beaker saw him nearing the crossing of the East Penn Railroad tracks at the Emmaus Junction. “The road is flanked on either side by houses and trees, and travelers find it difficult to see approaching trains,” noted the Chronicle and News. “As Mr. Trexler had traveled the road hundreds of times he entertained no such fears.”

Beaker was later to recall that he tried to warn Trexler that a westbound freight had just passed and that an eastbound train would be along in short order. Maybe, because he was a little deaf, Trexler did not hear Beaker’s caution or the frantic whistle of the approaching train. Some observers wondered, judging his rate of speed, if Trexler wasn’t trying to outrace the train.

Whatever the reason, Trexler was right in the center of the eastbound track when East Penn freight No. 350 pulled by locomotive 730, with George Gable at the controls, plowed into him. The train was moving at 25 miles an hour.

Beaker saw Trexler’s body hurled from the buggy and into the air, coming to rest about 30 yards up the westbound track. With only a bruise over his right eye but with massive internal injuries, Trexler died about a minute after the accident, the Morning Call reported. His horse died about a half-hour later. After an inspection by the coroner, Edwin Trexler’s body was returned to his home; he was buried a few days later at Fairview Cemetery.



Chapter 3: The Rise to Great Wealth

At the time of his father’s death in 1900, Harry Trexler was 46 years old and on the verge of becoming one of the Lehigh Valley’s richest men. From that day in the early 1870’s, when he had begun to work as his father’s clerk in the family lumber business, he had seen the Lehigh Valley undergo an economic transformation. It was one that was not without pain, but it was also one from which Harry Trexler and many Allentown businessmen would learn valuable lessons.

Harry Trexler had grown up in the Lehigh Valley’s Iron Age. On July 4, 1840, David Thomas, a Welsh-born iron maker, relocated to what is now Catasauqua, where he created the first commercially successful anthracite coal-powered iron furnace in the United States. Thomas was brought to America by Lehigh Canal builders Josiah White and Erskine Hazard, who were seeking new ways to use the vast amounts of hard coal they owned.

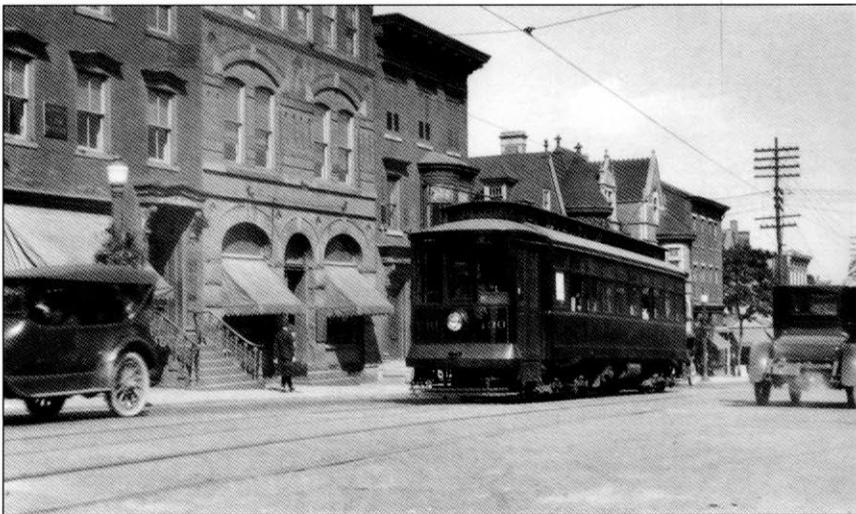
By 1865 the Lehigh Valley was the iron-making capital of North America. Farmers were accustomed to seeing hordes of people swarming over their property looking for iron ore. Easton was a bustling iron-making and shipping center. Bethlehem Iron

Company, later Bethlehem Steel, was turning out iron railroad rails both for the Lehigh Valley Railroad and for the rest of the country. They even sold rails to the Central Pacific Railroad which had to be shipped around Cape Horn to California, then back East to join the Union Pacific Railroad for the construction of the first transcontinental railroad across America.

On Allentown's east side, it was said one could read a newspaper at 3 a.m. by the light of the iron furnaces that operated around the clock.

So strongly had iron mania taken hold that by 1870, even little towns like Emmaus and Macungie were putting up iron furnaces in hopes of becoming the next industrial center of the Lehigh Valley. Pennsylvania German farm boys flocked to Allentown to make the good wages the new industry offered. And local businessmen and bankers invested heavily in iron, dreaming of traveling the same road to great wealth that had made Catasauqua's Thomas family one of the richest in the region.

But like all booms, the iron craze could not last forever. It ended with the Panic of 1873, when Jay Cooke & Company of Philadelphia collapsed in a sea of debt and bad paper. Suddenly, the demand for iron railroad rails that was making the Lehigh Valley roar ceased.



Lehigh Valley Transit Company Trolley

Bethlehem Iron survived, cushioned by revenue from the coal-carrying Lehigh Valley Railroad. The company had just installed new Bessemer steel-making technology from Britain, which enabled Bethlehem Iron to remain solvent until prosperity returned. But the Lehigh Valley's other iron furnaces had no such resources. The iron-making technology that was central to profits was now hopelessly obsolete. Who would want to buy iron rails when steel rails were more durable?

Coupled with the rise of steel makers like Andrew Carnegie in western Pennsylvania in the 1880's and '90's, the panic spelled the doom of the Lehigh Valley Iron Age. Smaller, marginal furnaces closed, never to reopen. Big ones, like Allentown Iron



Announcing the new home of PP&L

Furnace and the rail maker, Allentown Rolling Mill, struggled along, closing and reopening as the market for iron rose and fell. Some companies lasted through the turn of the century, but only a few were still around in 1920, industrial specters, phantoms of their once-mighty past.

The depression that followed the Panic of 1873 was particularly hard on the Lehigh Valley. Men were thrown out of work with nothing to fall back on. Newspaper accounts show that local churches and church-related charities did what they could to offer relief. But the press also suggests a world of crowded bars, where frustrated men drank up what was left of their lost wages trying to forget the pain of unemployment.

In 1877 violence from a national railroad strike spilled over to the Lehigh Valley. Nearby Reading witnessed a riot among unemployed railroad workers. Even men from Allentown's normally conservative Pennsylvania German workforce confronted the Mayor. Only his quick thinking and cool head prevented worse violence. But rather than riot, what most folks did was leave. Some Allentown residents went north to the coal regions, others headed west.

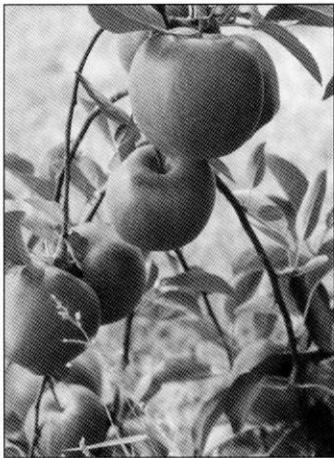
Harry Trexler saw these events not as dry-as-dust historical dates but as real economic and social pain, observed in the form of human beings walking the streets of his city. The Pennsylvania German traditions of order and generosity to neighbors in times of trouble were strained by this wave of economic chaos.

The Trexlers continued to invest in the iron business into the 1880's, which Frank's diary often refers to as "flat." So Harry himself must have seen some of his wealth lost in the iron industry during those years. But there was another lesson Harry Trexler learned during Allentown's period of despair, one that showed him how businessmen and communities that succeeded were those willing to try something new and work together to achieve it.

In 1880 a member of Allentown's Board of Trade, the forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce, noticed an ad in the national edition of the New York Tribune. A Paterson,



Trexler Orchards



New Jersey, silk company wanted to relocate to a spot that had good transportation links, an industrially trained work force and a cheap source of water power. Knowing they had those things, Allentown's business community began wooing the silk makers.

Some of what they did would be familiar today – the visit by the company's president, the examination of potential sites and meetings to promote the city's assets. Competition was keen since the manufacturer was already being courted by other cities. What clinched it was Allentown's offer to not only provide a welcome but to build and equip an entire mill for the company.

When the Adelaide Silk Mill, named after the owner's wife, opened in January, 1881, it was an event the likes of which Allentown had not experienced before. A huge party, including a dinner catered by a leading New York restaurant and a fancy dress ball, was the kickoff.

The same issue of the newspaper that carried a report of the event contained a list of the local members of the business community who had contributed to the construction and the outfitting of the sprawling new factory along the banks of the Jordan Creek, near Third and Hamilton streets. On the list were Edwin Trexler and his son Harry, reported as giving more than \$700. Although the donation was certainly not the largest, it was an important contribution that expressed the Trexlers' belief in the concepts of community benefit and enlightened self-interest. It is the first hint on the public record of the Harry Trexler that the community would come to know in future years.

Since there are few business records from Harry Trexler's early years, it is impossible

to know for certain his role in the Trexler family business or how independent he was allowed to be. Harry did begin some independent business ventures as early as October 14, 1882, and Frank noted in his diary that he "wrote one lease for John Blank and Harry." Frank, who carefully noted every fee he received in the diary, then wrote "no pay." However, the first definitive record of Harry acting on his own occurs in 1887. That year, Trexler and a group of investors formed what came to be known as the Allentown Steam Heat Company.



Trexler in his orchards

By the late 19th century, it was accepted that steam heat, like electric lights and gas, still available only in cities and towns, was among the benefits of living in the modern age.

Trexler's new Allentown Steam Heat Company built a steam heat generation plant just off Center Square on what is now the parking lot behind Wachovia Bank at 702 Hamilton Street, and this plant served much of the core area of the growing new town. An added benefit was that the Company's pipes ran underneath the streets and sidewalks. The radiated warmth helped keep the walkways and thoroughfares at the center of town relatively ice free.

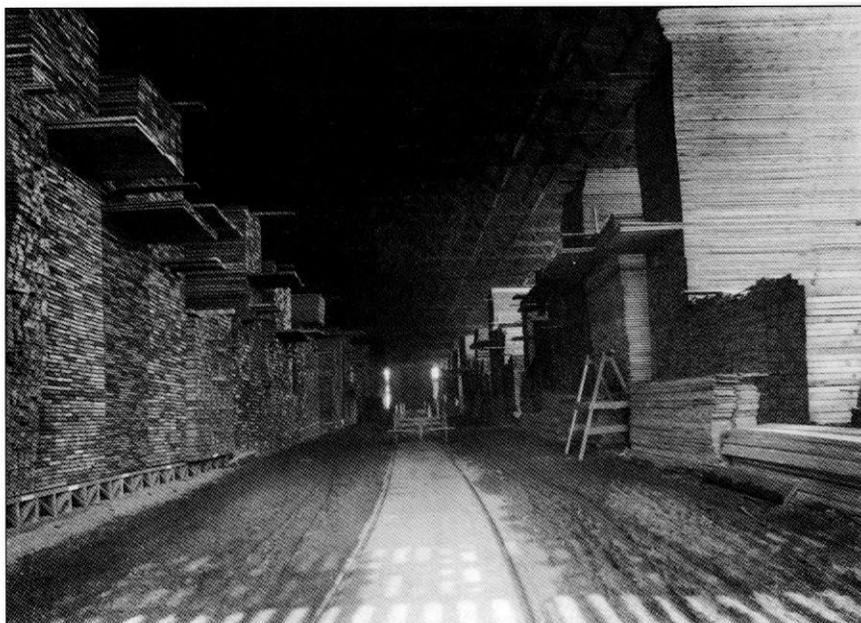
This venture into steam heat presages the course Trexler's business life would take in the future. It is the beginning of what would become Trexler's involvement with utilities, his eventual ties to the Lehigh Valley Transit Company, the electric trolley line, and his role in the formation of the Pennsylvania Power & Light Co. It's also an early indication of his later interest in the downtown business district and keeping it up to date.

But the Allentown Steam Heat Company was a very minor part of the business world of Harry Trexler. In 1890, with their father's retirement, Trexler brothers Harry and Edwin took over the family lumber business. In later life, Trexler was much praised as

a conservationist, and the many parks he promoted and supported show that this was more than dutiful praise. But it can't be denied that the bulk of Trexler's fortune from 1890 to 1913 was acquired cutting down rather than saving trees.

When Harry Trexler took over total leadership of the lumber company after his father's death in 1900, he began what his 1933 Morning Call obituary called an "ambitious expansion of the enterprise until its ramifications covered a large part of the country with large forests under lease in the northwest, South Carolina, Mississippi and other states and the (lumber) yards at tidewater at Newark then the largest and the finest in the world."

Perhaps the most detailed account of Trexler's lumber ventures was written in 1991



Trexler Lumber Company

by F. Charles Petrillo. Titled "Ghost Towns of North Mountain," the book tells the story of the town of Ricketts at the border of Sullivan and Wyoming counties. A ghost town today, from 1890 to 1913 it was a thriving community of 800 created by Trexler and James Henry Turrell for the sole purpose of harvesting virgin timber.

It was Harry's brother Edwin who was the firm's representative, acting as postmaster for a time and also setting up a Sunday school. Huge mills worked all year round. "The Trexler and Turrell mill at Ricketts had an easy capacity of 75,000 to 80,000 board feet daily," writes Petrillo, "and generally cut 10 to 12 million feet annually." Another Trexler mill at nearby Lopez would cut 50,000 feet daily.

In 1906 Trexler paid his workers, known as wood hicks, \$1.60 a day. "Room and board cost 60 cents a day," writes Petrillo. "Board included breakfast, noon dinner pail and supper. If there were any purchases at the company store for clothes, tobacco or

other items, those charges also were deducted from the employee's pay at the end of the month."

The housing in Ricketts was leased from the Trexler Company. "A typical charge was \$2.50 a month for a four room house," writes Petrillo "The first floor would have kitchen and living area; two bedrooms were on the second floor." The houses had no running water, electricity, or indoor plumbing. The town was dry — meaning no drinking — to the distress of the workers who traveled to nearby Lopez for a drink.

The workers were largely German or "Hungarians," a general term used to cover a number of eastern European immigrants from the multi-ethnic empire of Austria-Hungary. Sometimes, but not always, they were segregated in camps by ethnic group.

Accidents were common in all 19th century industries, and lumbering was especially dangerous. Petrillo believes the first person killed at Ricketts was 24-year-old Frank Farrell, who died when a large tree he was cutting fell on him in 1891. It was also common for men to lose an arm or leg in the sawmill.

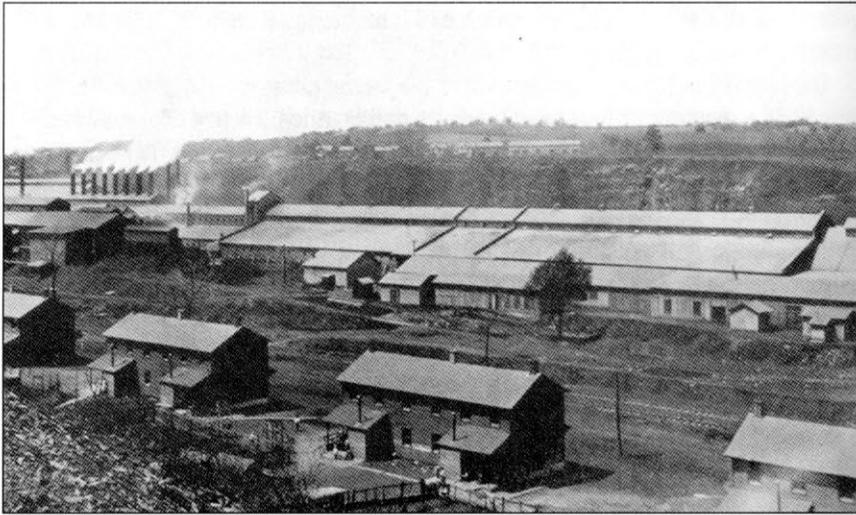
But working conditions in Ricketts apparently were neither better nor worse than most of the other lumber camp towns of late 19th century Pennsylvania. And if Trexler was not overly generous to his workforce, he was not particularly harsh to them.

In 1911, it was estimated, Trexler and Turrell had cut over 500 million feet of lumber since 1890. By then, there was not much timber left. When the company failed to acquire more land from the nearby Central Pennsylvania Lumber Company, Trexler and Turrell decided to close down Ricketts. By 1913, only 5 families continued to live in a town that had 800 just two years before.

By 1913, writes Petrillo, the lumber business was "a relatively small enterprise for Harry C. Trexler compared to his other Lehigh Valley enterprises." Among the best known of those enterprises was the Lehigh Portland Cement Company. The cement industry had been in the Lehigh Valley for at least as far back as the 1820's, when it was made into concrete and used on the Lehigh Canal. But it was really in the 1870's, when David O. Saylor and the Portland cement he created was used for the Eads Bridge across the Mississippi River at St. Louis, that the process acquired a national reputation. In 1897 Trexler joined with business associate Colonel Edward Young and wealthy Allentown coal and iron pipe maker George Ormrod to create the Lehigh Portland Cement Company.

The creation of Lehigh Portland, which by the late 1920's would become the largest producer of cement in the world, was accomplished with \$200,000 in capital. Trexler, who served in the first quarter of the 20th century as president of the firm, took 50 percent of the original stock issue of 4,000 shares and was still drawing a salary of \$900 per month at his death. It was this stock that was to make Harry Trexler one of the richest men in Pennsylvania. It also shows the principle of consolidation, the mantra of big business in early 20th century America, was one to which Trexler subscribed.

The "cutthroat capitalism" of the 1860's, '70's, '80's and '90's taught Trexler's generation of big businessmen that the economy had become too complex to be conducted by small firms so vulnerable to the whims of the business cycle. Consolidation of rail-

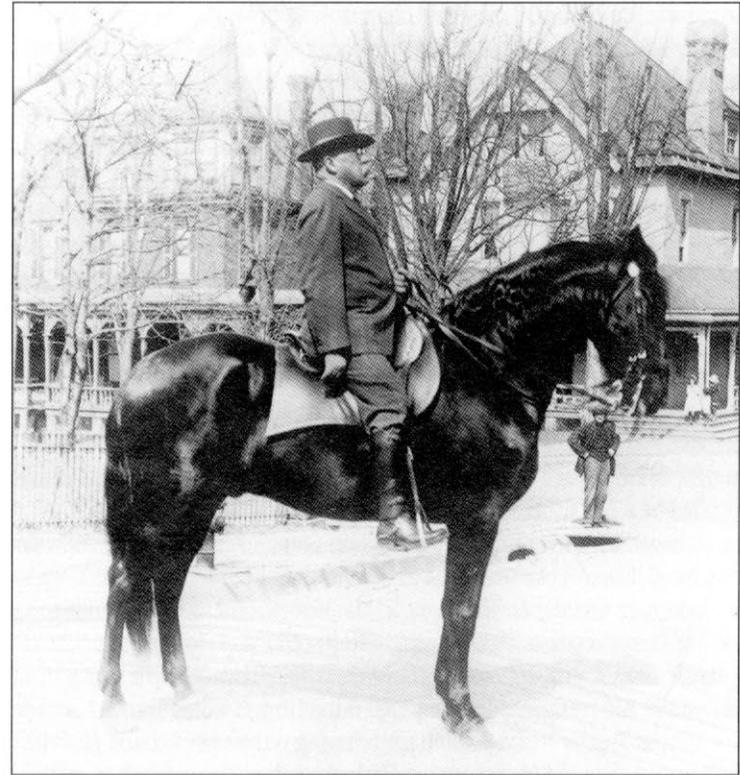


First Lehigh plant at Ormord, PA

roads, steel making, and oil promised efficiencies of scale and a way to create more stable market conditions. Companies like John D. Rockefeller, Sr.'s Standard Oil or U.S. Steel, put together in 1900 by mega-investment banker J.P. Morgan, Sr. and steel-maker Andrew Carnegie, were considered the model of the future of American business.

It is easy to understand why Trexler, with his far-flung lumber and cement interests, might believe that the future would be dominated by bigger and seemingly more efficient companies. But these new businesses, called trusts, made a good number of Americans – and not just rabid muckrakers – nervous. The rebates, price-fixing, kick-backs, labor lockouts, and other abuses that had become part of the system had raised the hackles of industrial workers, small businessmen, and farmers who felt the economic system was being rigged by a few giant companies to keep them out.

Even an essentially conservative figure like Theodore Roosevelt was concerned that big business was creating a concentration of wealth that could be dangerous if left uncontrolled. Eventually, Harry Trexler would come to agree with at least some of Roosevelt's views on this subject. Although there are no records or comments by Trexler to suggest what changed his view, the Lehigh Valley Transit Company strike of 1906 could well have been the turning point.



General Trexler riding his horse, 4th and Chew Streets

Chapter 4: A Lesson Learned: The Challenge of a Changing Community

“A man who has a million dollars in America today is as well off as if he were rich,” said mega-millionaire and Titanic victim John Jacob Astor IV at the dawn of the 20th century. By Astor's standard, Harry Trexler in 1906 was more than well off.

Trexler was Allentown's dominant businessman. And in the Lehigh Valley, only a figure with outside connections, like Bethlehem Steel President Charles M. Schwab, outranked Trexler. Not only was Trexler creating wealth from timber and cement, his real estate investments in Allentown's West End were increasing in value with each passing day.

It was the electric streetcar system, which had come to the Lehigh Valley in the early 1890's that gave value to Trexler's real estate. The electric transit service began with the creation of a trolley line between Allentown and Bethlehem by Boston investors. But they were overwhelmed and driven from the scene in 1893 by the arrival of Cleveland, Ohio, streetcar magnate Albert Johnson. A hustling businessman in his 30's, with ambition to match his ample girth, Johnson had an eye for the future. He saw

Allentown as the future hub of an inter-urban railway network. He called his concern the Lehigh Valley Traction Company, and his aim, never realized, was to join New York to Philadelphia.



Trolley motorman and conductor

To get people to ride his streetcars, Johnson brought Mike “King” Kelly, a slightly over-the-hill baseball great, to play at Manhattan Park, a ball field he built at Rittersville, between Allentown and Bethlehem. He created a big amusement park, Central Park, farther down the line. Johnson also expanded the line out to the Allentown Fairgrounds at 17th and Chew, still open farmland. But as the city developed westward in the early part of the 20th century the fields were becoming valuable pieces of real estate, and Trexler owned no small part of them.

In July 1901 Johnson died suddenly after taking part in his favorite form of exercise, driving a fully loaded beer

wagon, pulled by a fast team of horses. He was 39.

Johnson’s death left the Lehigh Valley Traction Company’s affairs in a mess, so that the court turned it over to the city’s First National Bank. The bank’s leading officer and attorney was Robert E. Wright Jr., the Boss Wright of Harry’s youth.

Wright had many interests, but running a trolley line apparently was not his forte. In 1905 Trexler and Young, following a familiar pattern, headed up a group of investors, bought the company, and renamed it the Lehigh Valley Transit Company. Benner notes that Trexler had a passion for bringing order out of chaos, and the transit company was just the kind of venture he was looking for. Trexler went to work with resolve, reorganizing business operations, standardizing inter-urban service, and upgrading the roadbed and equipment. It was to be one of the most up-to-date and well-run trolley companies in the country.

Unfortunately, Trexler and Young, in their zeal, either ignored or believed they did not need to concern themselves with the trolley motormen and conductors. Many of them had never been happy under Johnson, who represented outside big business in a way few companies did locally at that time. Now their employers were local folks, but things did not seem to be getting better. A great deal of money was being spent to update the line but none was going to them. The transit employees decided to start a union, a local chapter of the Amalgamated Street Railway Employees Association. One hundred fifty-four of the company’s 182 employees joined up.

On June 15, 1906, the union’s officers, President Clarence Leiby, Vice President Joseph Boehmer, Treasurer Orlando C. Miller, and Recording Secretary Herbert Fritz were called to the company office. They were told that reports had come in that the four longtime employees were not doing their jobs properly, and they were fired. “The dismissal of the crews had nothing to do with their connection with the union...it was a mere coincidence,” said a company spokesman in a prepared statement.

Unions were not common among the Pennsylvania Germans of Allentown. They had the reputation of being the most anti-union work force in the region. A strong

work ethic and loyalty to kinship were more in the Pennsylvania German tradition. But this was different. There were no outsiders involved—it was Pennsylvania German workers against Pennsylvania German employers.

Trexler and Young agreed to increase wages, so the top men would get 21 cents an hour, the same wage that unionized workers in Easton received. But they would not recognize the union. Labor tensions in the city were already high and rose higher as a strike hit the Allentown silk mills after wages were slashed.

On Sunday, June 24, 1906, a general strike, the ultimate weapon of early labor unions, was called by the transit company workers union. If a general strike succeeded, everything in Allentown would shut down. Gangs of young men and boys roamed the streets looking for scabs.

In one incident, the Call estimated a mob of more than 1,000 people overran Sixth and Hamilton streets. Some streetcars were ripped from their rails. One, headed for Easton, was put out of service after every window in it was smashed. The city’s 24-man police force was overwhelmed. Officers who tried to protect the streetcars were beaten up.

Lehigh County Sheriff E. A. Krause decided, without asking city officials, to call in the state police. What Trexler knew of Krause’s actions, if anything, is unknown. It was not uncommon though for employers hoping to break a strike to go to a county, rather than a city official. City officeholders had to be concerned that there were potentially many strike sympathizers among the voters. For that reason, Charles Schwab had the county sheriff call in the state police during the 1910 Bethlehem Steel strike after city officials refused to do so.

Used often as strike breakers, the state police were tagged by workers with the nickname, “Cossacks.” So when 34 troopers and their horses arrived in Allentown from the Reading state police barracks, they immediately became targets for the wrath of the citizens.

It was more than just workers and street mobs who disliked the state police. Acting Mayor C.D. Schaeffer and Police Chief William F. Bower told Krause the presence of the state police would cause more violence than they could ever prevent. One unnamed prominent citizen was quoted in the Morning Call as saying, “I never thought I would see the day that armed men would ride through our streets awing crowds that are in a large part children.”

As Schaeffer and Bower predicted, the unrest grew worse. Finally one evening, the state police were struggling to take a prisoner to the Lehigh County jail and had to fire their guns in the air to break up the mob of jeering, hooting citizens that had surrounded them. One trooper’s bullet bounced off the ground, hit the curb, and ended up in the leg of 16-year-old Harry Winkle, a Morning Call carrier standing on a nearby porch. The wound was painful and although not severe, Winkle’s cries only further angered the crowd. The state police got the prisoner to the jail, but just barely.

The state police were sent out again that night to break up a mob of 2,000 that blocked the railroad tracks at 2nd and Hamilton. When the mob spotted the officer whose bullet had hit Winkle, they went wild. They followed the troopers, one of whom

drew his gun and dared them to approach him. The mob backed the state police into a corner, and more violence seemed to be the possible outcome.

At that moment, police chief Bower rode up. Widely respected in the city working class district because of his fairness and his skill as a boxer, he was able to get the crowd to back down. The state police retreated back to the prison.

Throughout this turmoil, union members met an irresistible object. Trexler would talk only with Miller because, like Trexler, he was an officer in the state militia. One day, seeing former mayor Fred Lewis on the street, Miller had an idea. He asked Lewis if he would act as a go-between for the union with Trexler. Lewis agreed.

After four hours of negotiations, Lewis came out with an agreement. Trexler did rather well by it. He got his open shop, and there was no union recognition or a pay raise. On the other hand, he would have to rehire all workers including strikers, and he had to promise at least not to cut pay. Regardless, for a time Trexler refused to sign the agreement.

"My word is my bond," he told Philadelphia attorney and Democratic political figure William Harrity, who had drawn up the contract for the workers.

"No Colonel," said Harrity, using Trexler's state militia title. "If Mr. Lewis is willing to sign it for the men, the right and proper thing for you to do is sign it for the company. That is only fair." After a little more prodding, Trexler agreed and signed the settlement. On June 29, Lewis announced to the press, "It's all over."

Peace was restored to the Lehigh Valley Transit Company and to the streets of Allentown. Everybody prepared for the coming July 4th holiday. However, The Morning Call noted, "only the blind fail to see that organized labor is an assured fact and that it has come to stay."

Harry Trexler was clearly not blind. And he was smart enough to know that a new era had dawned. Although he never became a supporter of organized labor, Trexler gradually came to realize that as Allentown's wealthiest citizen he had a responsibility to the people of his community beyond his business interests.



View of the new West Park in Allentown

Chapter 5: Community Benefactor

Exactly when Trexler mellowed in his views is not known. Perhaps it was a consequence of his nightly reading with Mary. At the time of his death, Trexler owned an extensive library with books ranging from modern novels by Walter Scott, Henry James, George Elliot and many others, much poetry including Wordsworth, Kipling and Browning and histories of Egypt, Canada, India, as well as, the United States. However, there was nothing of an economic nature in his books. It may, therefore, have resulted from conversations with Fred Lewis, the bright young man who seemed to know how to talk to working class folks and businessmen alike – and win the respect of both.

In any event, Trexler's first embrace of community responsibility also came around 1906, when the city was in the process of starting to work on what would become West Park. The space had once been considered a good site for a municipal reservoir, but it was never used for that purpose. By the turn of the century, the vacant block had been adopted as a ballpark by local baseball teams.

As Lewis tells the story, which gives us a rare glimpse of Trexler in action, the park was built after Lewis, as mayor, called Trexler to his office after discovering that a

South Allentown real estate development company, on whose board Trexler sat, had been taking water from city sources without paying for it. Told of this, Trexler claimed ignorance. So did his board. But he returned to Lewis with a commitment to repay the lost revenue from the water theft under one condition: that the money be used to



Trexler with Mayor Gross

develop as a park the land bounded by Turner and Linden and 15th and 17th.

Lewis agreed. Most of the property already belonged to the city water bureau, so land acquisition was not a problem. The water department agreed to pay for whatever additional land might be needed to square off the park space, but Trexler took care of the rest.

It was a real test. And as his first venture into community betterment, it was one of his best. Trexler could have skimped. Instead, he hired Horace Trumbower, one of the best architects in the country, to design the band shell. He got J. Franklin Meehan of Philadelphia, a landscape

expert who had designed the grounds for Theodore Roosevelt's home at Oyster Bay, to provide the shrubs and trees and lay out the walkways. And the cast iron fountain in the park's center was a Victorian masterpiece of water-spouting gargoyles and curved, cast iron leaves. Later in 1917, Trexler would pay for the First Defender statue at the park's east side to honor Civil War veterans. With West Park, as with almost all his community activities, we see Trexler conceiving an idea, promoting it with civic leaders forcefully but quietly, and backing it with his own money.

The value of his extensive holdings in West End real estate was aided handsomely by the presence of the park, a fact not mentioned in the press. But Trexler's West End Improvement Company was a public company, and Trexler's involvement with it was well known. West Park was Allentown's first public park, and its citizens probably thought it best not to look a gift horse in the mouth.

The park opened on September 17, 1908. The entire week after the opening it was mobbed by folks who came to gawk and to listen to the band concerts that were held that week. Trexler was not present opening day. Perhaps he understood it was better to let your good works speak for you than to stand around, expecting the public to praise you for them.

Trexler's success with West Park could also reflect a common theme of the era when parks were thought of as the lungs of a city. As New York and other cities discovered in the mid-19th century, they would soon struggle for green space. A city without a place that offers relief from the stresses of urban life, without a place open to everyone, would see its social problems become more severe and that city would grow dangerous.

In 1920, Trexler again showed his style of leadership. The city was attempting to lease the Fairgrounds for summer recreation. At a contentious June meeting of the Lehigh County Agricultural Society the proposal was debated. Trexler, as was his style, said nothing until he remarked, "The matter is simple. The parties have come to an agreement, and don't realize it." That signal was enough. Within a month, the Fair leased its grounds to the city. The General had spoken.

Peter Hall, in his 1981 study, cites a quote from Trexler that he believes captures a part of the reasoning behind Trexler's acquisition of parkland. The quote comes from the 1920's, when friends asked him why he was buying apparently worthless land in the foothills of the Poconos. "We are fast approaching a time," Trexler said, "when the work week will be shortened to 35 or 40 hours, and we will have to provide recreational areas for our people to enjoy during idle time if we are to curb anarchy and communism. I am hoping someday to turn this tract over to the State for the establishment of a State Park."

Trexler may have been a bit naive, with his notion that parks could somehow save the nation from anarchy, or he may just have said something that would make sense to his wealthy friends. Yet Trexler's faith in the outdoors as the place for the working class to relax was clearly in line with the ethos of his day. Theodore Roosevelt, the nation's first outdoorsman president, was a strong conservationist and believer in parks. In fact, the national park movement was an initiative launched by Roosevelt during his term in the White House.

Hall asserts that Trexler's interest in parks was shaped in part by the reform conservationist influences of the Progressive movement. But politically, to judge from an article published in the Philadelphia Record newspaper in 1917 and cited in Benner's account, Trexler was closer to the more conservative elements in the state Republican Party than he was to the reformers. The article mentions Trexler's ties to the Vares,



West Park Fountain

(probably Edwin and William Vare, influential Philadelphia businessmen and politicians of the day) and Bois Penrose.

Penrose was the Republican political boss of Pennsylvania at that time. "Personally incorruptible, he delighted in corrupting others," writes political historian George Thayer. Penrose was a frequent visitor to Allentown, often spending a night at the Livingston Club, where Trexler was the most prominent member.

At the same time, Trexler had little use for the Republican Governor Gifford Pinchot who was a reformer, conservationist, and political ally of Theodore Roosevelt. Benner notes that when Pinchot of Pike County ran for governor, Trexler and the rest of the cement interests in the Lehigh Valley refused to give him any campaign cash. Pinchot won anyway.

One reason for Trexler's coolness was probably Pinchot's strong support of state regulation of electric power, particularly hydroelectric power. Pinchot "clashed repeatedly with PP&L in the 1920's and '30's," writes utility historian Bill Beck in his "PP&L: 75 Years of Powering the Future," the company's official history. As a founder and one of the first directors of PP&L, Trexler was probably well aware of these clashes and may have been in the middle of a few.

When Pinchot began his famous road building campaign in the early '20's, "Get the farmers out of the mud" was its slogan. Trexler actually believed that Pinchot's roads were built of asphalt not cement just to get at him as the owner of Lehigh Portland Cement. Yet Trexler gladly took the state aid to build the roads on his own properties in North Whitehall and Lowhill townships. At the same time he remarked to Benner, "If Pinchot knew his roads were built through my properties, somebody's head would be cut off."

Trexler also disliked Pinchot's strong support for Prohibition, which he felt had taken the sale of liquor from the Pennsylvania-German saloon keeper, "a solid and respectable and useful citizen," and turned the business over to the gangster and the bootlegger.

Trexler told political writer Richard J. Beamish in the 1920's, "I have seen a lot of (reformers) come and go, and I have never trusted them. For the most part they are opportunists. They are unwilling to mingle with the plain people, to help the poor and unfortunate. They lack the compassion that comes from human understanding," he said.

Trexler's belief in parks as a social safety valve may have come out of an older tradition. As far back as the 1850's and 60's, when Frederick Law Olmstead was designing New York's Central Park, people talked about parks opening up public space to ordinary folks. Up to that time, many city parks belonged to the residents of the buildings around them. They were fenced and locked at night.

Until the 20th century, Allentown was small enough that most people probably could see little need for parks. Areas on the fringe of the community, like the future site of West Park, were used by local people as dumping grounds. There were no building regulations and no planning requirements. People wanted low taxes, and the city fathers felt obliged to accommodate them. Still, it was becoming clear that this urban

anarchy could well lead to social anarchy.

One of Trexler's passions was planning and organizing. The only public office he ever held, other than his apparent term on the Select Council in the 1880's, was Chairman of the Allentown Planning Commission. There, he applied the principle of his business world, i.e., that one big organization seemed to work better than a lot of little organizations. One phone company made more sense than a bunch of small ones (people ended up having two phones, one for each company), Trexler believed. Allentown needed to consolidate and plan its growth, and parks were a part of that plan.

As much as everyone today loves Allentown's parks, it is worth remembering that in Trexler's day this was not always the case. On City Council and in the city itself, there were people who could not understand why the city needed them. "Couldn't the land be put to better use by developing factories or row houses?" they argued. Allentown's mayor in the 1920's and '30's, Democrat Malcolm W. Gross, a close Trexler ally, was often driven to distraction by the failure of elected officials to have any agenda other than lower taxes for the city. Trexler, too, may have been frustrated in 1923 when he announced his "retirement" due to age from the Planning Commission. Whether this announcement was sincere or a ploy to get the city's attention to its planning issues, Trexler continued to serve on the Commission for the rest of the decade. Problems, however, also continued.



Lehigh Parkway

For example, factories in an important part of the city's industrial district had left the Little Lehigh Creek polluted. Although not quite an open sewer, it had become a convenient place for throwing out untreated industrial byproducts. And perhaps because of industry's example, the people living along their banks also gave no second thought to throwing things into the town's creeks and rivers. Randolph "Randy" Kulp, who as a boy in the 1920's, swam in the Little Lehigh, recalled having to avoid everything from broken glass to mattress springs.

When Trexler and Gross attempted to do something about this, by creating the Little Lehigh Parkway to protect the stream, the public response was tepid at best. Plans were drawn up, and Trexler gave a boost to the project by donating land he had acquired along the Little Lehigh's banks. But the parkway was not really developed until the mid to late 1930's, mostly after Trexler's death, and, ironically, thanks in large part to the Depression and the U.S. government's Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), who were dispatched to communities like Allentown, that already had plans on the drawing boards.

Trexler, while still alive, had opposed the federal programs which eventually finished the park system he planned. He said, "Roosevelt is starting a dole which we'll never

get rid of... We can take care of the unfortunate people in our area. We don't have to go to Washington for assistance."

Several big projects were, however, accomplished after the Planning Commission, headed by Trexler, began in 1915. The unsightly and dangerous telephone poles with their strands of wires were removed from Hamilton Street. The wires were placed in conduits underground.

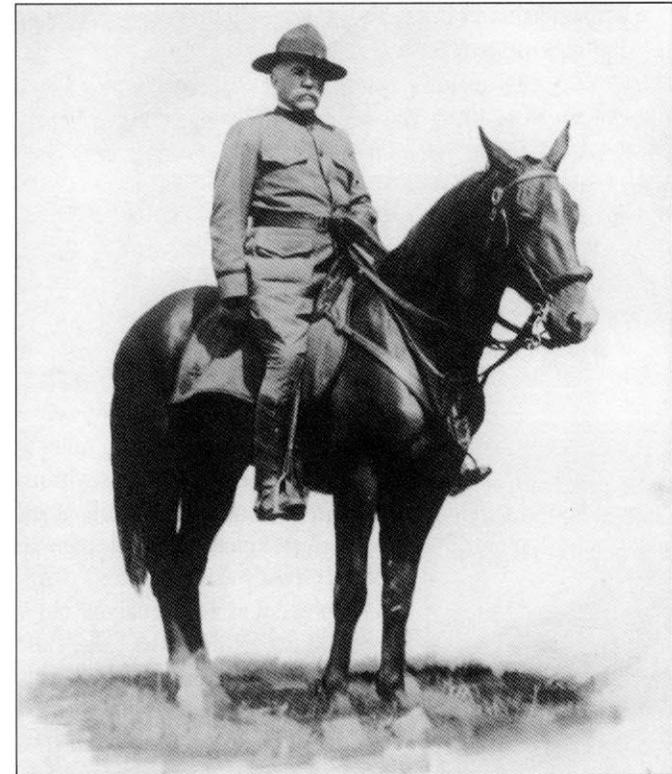
Awnings and canopies erected over Hamilton Street sidewalks were removed. Garish business signs, with their yellow light bulbs and outsized animal figures, were banished. Although Trexler, as far as is known, did not have a direct hand in the selection of the city's famous flower bowl street lights, it is hard to imagine that he did not both approve and encourage their installation. And, using the Planning Commission, Trexler led the movement for the annexation of the South and East sides as well as the West End, which completed the Allentown of today.

In 1922 Trexler contacted outside urban planner B. Antrim Haldeman to begin a comprehensive park plan for the city. Haldeman told Trexler that Allentown's topography made it ideal for the design of a wide variety of parks. "He stated no city in the state had topography that so lends itself to beautification as Allentown possessed," writes Benner.

In 1927 the Planning Commission, still led by Trexler, issued a report on the idea for a park along the Little Lehigh. Benner cites the following quote from it:

"The Little Lehigh Park area, comprising 350 acres of creek valley, extending along both sides of the Little Lehigh for 3 1/2 miles upstream from the confluence of the Little Lehigh and Cedar Creeks, taken by Allentown to protect and preserve a clear water supply, has been mapped, property acquisition maps drawn, views of all properties made in the ground, negotiations entered into and a settlement without cost arranged for about 40 acres, making a total area dedicated to the city of about 75 acres."

The report went on to suggest the hiring of a landscape artist, J. Franklin Meehan, who had laid out West Park. It was Meehan's plan that was activated in the 1930's by the WPA.



1916 - Mexican Border Service

Chapter 6: 1917-1933 Consolidation: In Peace and War

The last 16 years of Trexler's life, 1917 to 1933, were ones of continued business success and growing authority within his community. We have no written description of how the General looked, but his life paralleled the advent of photography and as the town's most important citizen Trexler was a frequent subject. Photos of the time show a stocky, supremely confident figure. Most also show a strong chin tilted up in an almost cocky pose. Trexler seems always to have been in good health (except for major surgery in Baltimore in 1926), and he looked the part of a robust, powerful man in his photos.

It was state military affairs that also drew a good part of Trexler's attention. Back in 1895, Trexler had received his first military rank of Colonel in the State Militia, or National Guard, from Republican Governor Daniel Hartman Hastings. According to a biographical sketch of Trexler's life by Morning Call editor Percy Ruhe, the two men knew each other. But how they came to know each other is not known. We do know that Trexler changed from Democrat to Republican at about that time, and this friendship may have been part of that decision, although Benner attributes Trexler's party

switch to the William Jennings Bryan Democratic anti-business free silver campaign of 1896. Oddly, Hastings was a member of the Republican Party's reform wing, which Trexler later came to oppose.

Trexler never took an active combat role in any military conflict. But to a man of his generation, military titles were important. Because of the Civil War, many Pennsylvania politicians were veterans. And although Trexler was clearly not interested in elective public office, a military title added a certain status. And parades and uniforms gave him the opportunity to promote patriotism which Trexler must have seen as an important civic virtue. That virtue could then be converted into something that rallied the entire community to a common purpose.

Hastings, as adjutant general, attached Trexler to his staff. Trexler got his first chance to show what he could do in 1898 when America went to war with Spain.

Trexler chose duty in the commissary service.

The troops from the Lehigh Valley were sent to Puerto Rico, and another Pennsylvania regiment took part in combat in the Philippines. Trexler's contribution in seeing that the men were fed and housed properly was widely respected. "He accepted the post not as a nominal one but as a deep responsibility," Ruhe writes. After Hastings left office, his successors continued to reappoint Trexler to the adjutant general's staff. In 1911, Governor John K. Tener promoted Trexler to quartermaster general, but he continued to be known as "Colonel" locally.

In 1916, when local units of the Pennsylvania militia were among the troops ordered by President Woodrow Wilson to go south to apprehend Pancho Villa and Mexican "bandits" who



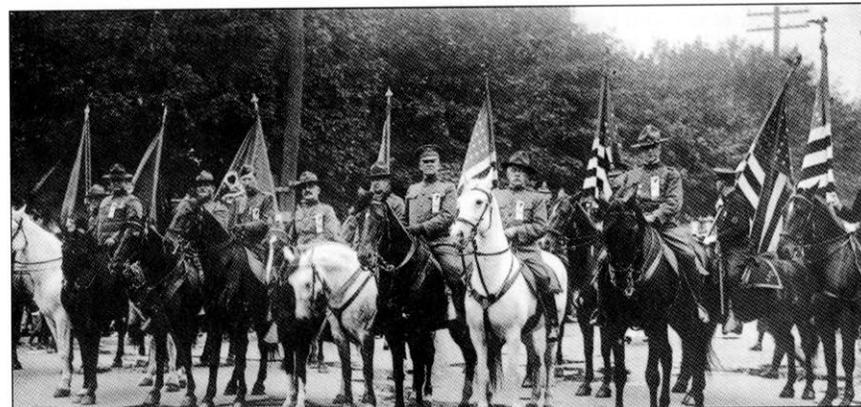
Harry Clay Trexler, Colonel U.S.N.L. Border war in Mexico, 1916

had been sweeping into Texas, Trexler got another chance to serve.

Stories about Trexler's military service give us a picture of his style of leadership in civilian life as well as the army.

Benner records how Trexler had to supply both food and transportation for the men arriving at Mt. Gretna, Pennsylvania, where the militia camp was located. After calculating the amount of meat that would be needed to feed the men, Trexler dashed off a letter to Armour, the Chicago meat packing company. This brief note says much about Trexler's sense of command, organization, and responsibility.

"I am Col. Harry Trexler of Allentown. I am the quartermaster general of Pennsylvania. On account of the mobilization of troops by President Wilson, I must by noon Saturday, begin to feed 12,000 men. Immediately start a carload of your best beef and better add a carload of hams and bacon. Send a man along to check up with my men and you shall have cash on the day of arrival." Trexler did not hesitate to meet a military necessity by using his authority, detailing what needed to be done and



L-R: Gen. C.T. O'Neill, Gen. Trexler, Gen. Frank Biery, Col. E.M. Young, Col. Charles Hendler from Philadelphia, Col. Renniger, Maj. E. H. Dickenschied, Leonard Sefing, Sargeant Leo Luttringer from Harrisburg.

using his own money to accomplish the desired objective.

At one point, as a group of the troops were about to depart for Texas, he asked his aide, Major John Schumberger, if the men had been paid. Told they had not, Trexler replied: "Well I don't want to see the men leave for Texas without money in their pockets. Have the payroll prepared. I'll give my personal check for the amount and take my chances on being repaid by the government."

During World War I, Trexler once more took up his duties as quartermaster general. Benner claims that, "due to the efficient manner he conducted his office, the Pennsylvania National Guard was the first National Guard division to be fully equipped for overseas duty."

But Trexler was under no illusions about the military bureaucracy. When he was ready to leave the quartermaster's post in February 1918, he wanted his records clear so there could be no question about his service. The government owed him \$423.61 but he wanted only a release. Sending Benner and Colonel Frank D. Beary to Washington with his records, Trexler told them not to argue over any minor points. "The War Department is still trying to clear up records of the Civil War, and I don't want to be corresponding with the War Department the rest of my days.... If I am short in my accounts I'll pay the shortage."

Arriving in Washington with a truckload of Trexler's records, Beary and Benner were confronted by the bureaucratic roadblock that Trexler had predicted. A clerk told them that Trexler's request would be put at the bottom of the file and be dealt with accordingly. Pulling a little rank, Beary told him that "perhaps you should know that Col. Trexler is one of the large industrialists in Pennsylvania and gave up his own time to serve as quartermaster."

That seemed to do the trick. Trexler received notice in April that his records were in fine shape and no additional review was necessary. Trexler retired from the military with the rank of Brigadier General on April 22, 1918. From that point forward he became, "the General." His close associates had military titles as well: Colonel Young,

Major Schumberger, and Captain Benner.

With the First World War's end on November 11, 1918, there was much relief and rejoicing. Trexler had been an active supporter of wartime bond rallies. He often took the lead role in Liberty Bond rallies on the back of his favorite horse, Jack O'Diamonds. The photo of him, on horseback, leading the homecoming troops during Allentown's victory parade in 1919, is a classic and must have greatly enhanced his image as Allentown's leading citizen.

But once the conflict was over, an economic and social letdown swept the country. The Russian Revolution of 1917-18 had aroused fears of foreign radicals. Having whipped the Hun, America feared the new Soviet Union.

The Big Red Scare of 1919 was on. Bombs were found and radicals deported. The U.S. Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer, a former Congressman whose district included Northampton County, led the hunt for radicals, and a bomb almost killed him. When an alien in Indiana shouted, "to hell with United States," a man pulled out a gun and killed him. A jury took two minutes to acquit the assailant of murder.

Allentown and the Lehigh Valley were not immune to this unrest. A city councilman attacked people who circulated a newsletter criticizing local government as "Bolshevik." The local papers contained full-page ads warning about the dangers of radicals and the importance of being an American. Paid for by committees – no individuals named – it would not be surprising, with his later-expressed concerns about Communism, to find that Trexler had provided the cash to pay for the ads. But there is nothing on the record to suggest what, if any, his role might have been.

Regardless, the 1920's and Trexler's growing local power and wealth provided him with the ultimate opportunity to mass his business interests for maximum power and efficiency.

When the Morning Call's publisher, David A. Miller, decided to leave the newspaper business in 1920, Trexler purchased an interest in the paper. Major John Schumberger, a former aide, represented him at the Call. As with his other interests, Trexler merged most of the local newspapers into the Call.

"By 1930, Trexler had consolidated all four of the city's newspapers under a single management and reduced their number to two, the Call in the morning and the Chronicle in the evening," Hall writes. "The editorial line of the consolidated newspapers was basically non-partisan and intensely promotional of local interests." Shortly after Trexler's death, Miller, at the urging of his sons, Samuel and Donald, bought back Trexler's share.

Another consolidation in 1920 was Trexler's ultimate: the creation of the Pennsylvania Power & Light Company out of a number of small Lehigh Valley utility companies.

Trexler's interest in electric power went back to his takeover of the Lehigh Valley Transit Company. The company had come far since 1906 when it was the focus of so much unrest. A large power generation facility built by Young and Trexler along the Lehigh River in 1905-07 was humming along, turning out power for its trolleys. The completion in 1913 of the Eighth Street Bridge between downtown Allentown and

South Allentown – "the highest and longest concrete bridge built by a trolley company in the world" – provided a new link for the thriving Liberty Bell line, which provided service between Allentown and Philadelphia, and led to annexation of the south side into Allentown by 1920. In fact, thanks in part to the excess electric power generated by the power plant on the Lehigh River, the transit company produced more than it needed to run its streetcars. By 1919, it had created Lehigh Valley Light and Power Company to sell electricity to the public. It was this company that was among the major components of PP&L. Trolley lines, electric power, real estate along those lines using that power and cement to build the bridges for the trolleys: Trexler owned them all and spurred them forward together.

Although Trexler played an important role in the creation of PP&L, the driving force in the consolidation was Sidney Zollicoffer Mitchell of Electric Bond and Share. Begun in 1905, it was a holding company for many smaller companies. Its primary purpose was to create a larger pool of capital than the small utilities could ever hope to accumulate on their own. And because the construction of power plants and transmission lines was expensive, Electric Bond and Share became a very useful umbrella to shelter utilities.

This was the type of organization that made sense to Trexler's orderly mind. In 1917 he acquired 49,000 shares of Lehigh Power Securities Corp., a company that Mitchell created out of the recently acquired Lehigh Navigation Electric Company. Lehigh Navigation Electric was an electric-producing subsidiary of the old Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, builder of the Lehigh Canal.

In exchange, Trexler gave up some Lehigh Transit Company stock: 6,290 shares of common stock and 2,100 shares of preferred stock. "Sometime later," Benner writes, "the Lehigh Power Securities stock was exchanged for 49,000 shares of National Power and Light Company stock," a sub-holding company of Electric Bond and Share.

On June 4, 1920, a warm, sticky day in that pre-air conditioning era, PP&L was formed in the Buckley Building, which still stands at the southwest corner of 8th and Hamilton streets, a result of the merger of smaller companies. Prior to completion of PP&L's Tower Building in 1928, most of the operations of the company took place at the Buckley Building. Financial and other important economic decisions concerning PP&L were made in New York, however, at Electric Bond and Share's office at No. 2 Rector Street.

Sometime during this period, Trexler met Mitchell. Perhaps realizing from Mitchell's accent that he was from the south, Trexler's first words to Mitchell were, "Mr. Mitchell, I assume your middle initial stands for Zollicoffer, and you no doubt are named after Gen. Zollicoffer, a famous Confederate officer." A somewhat startled



Trexler in Trexler Memorial Park

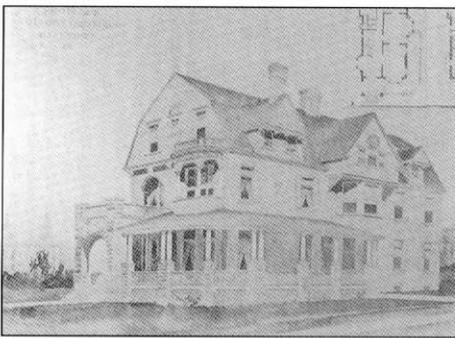
Mitchell replied, “General, you are the first Northerner I ever met that made that observation.”

In fact the Alabama-born Mitchell, according to Beck, was named after two Confederate officers, his first name coming from General Albert Sidney Johnston, a Confederate commander who was killed at the battle of Shiloh.

Trexler’s reference to Brigadier General Felix Kirk Zollicoffer was more obscure but might have been especially significant to Mitchell because Zollicoffer had been a friend of his family. Zollicoffer was killed on January 18, 1862, at the Battle of Logan’s Cross Roads.

Mitchell, who had the reputation of being somewhat distant, became friendly after Trexler’s greeting and remained so.

The 1920’s were boom years for PP&L, Lehigh Portland Cement Company and just about anything else Trexler set his hand to. Businessmen – and Trexler especially – were so esteemed in that decade almost as much as they would be distrusted in the



Trexler’s new home at 12th and Hamilton

Depression scarred 1930’s. Then in his 70’s, Trexler gradually began to turn more and more of his attention to philanthropy and avocations like agriculture.

Not quite the agriculturalist that his father was, Trexler nevertheless always retained a Pennsylvania German’s love for the soil. In the early 1920’s, Trexler had purchased and moved into the Victorian style house at 1227 Hamilton, built in 1897 by coal and iron pioneer George Ormrod. Trexler and Allentown were moving west. But the place where he did the most of his entertaining, Springwood was even further west. Springwood Manor was Trexler’s summer home on property just outside the city. The house is gone, and the property today is Trexler Memorial Park.



Trexler Park

Trexler Park has a slightly British background. According to Benner, it was the home of Lynford Lardner, who had come to the region from England and, for a time, was the colonial official who held the great seal of Pennsylvania and collected the taxes and rents. When Trexler purchased the property in 1900, it was owned by the Balliet family.

In Trexler’s time the Springwood estate, while not quite isolated from town, was still predominantly rural in character. The highways and housing developments of today

would not surround Trexler Park until decades after the General saw its verdant acres for the last time.

Springwood was built around a small cabin. Among its chief features were the wide veranda-like porches that looked out over the meadows. The upper floor, more of an attic, was converted into sleeping quarters for his male guests. Trexler called it the “Bull Pen.” To judge from Benner’s account, Springwood was a place where Trexler let people see how deeply his Pennsylvania German roots ran. He liked nothing better



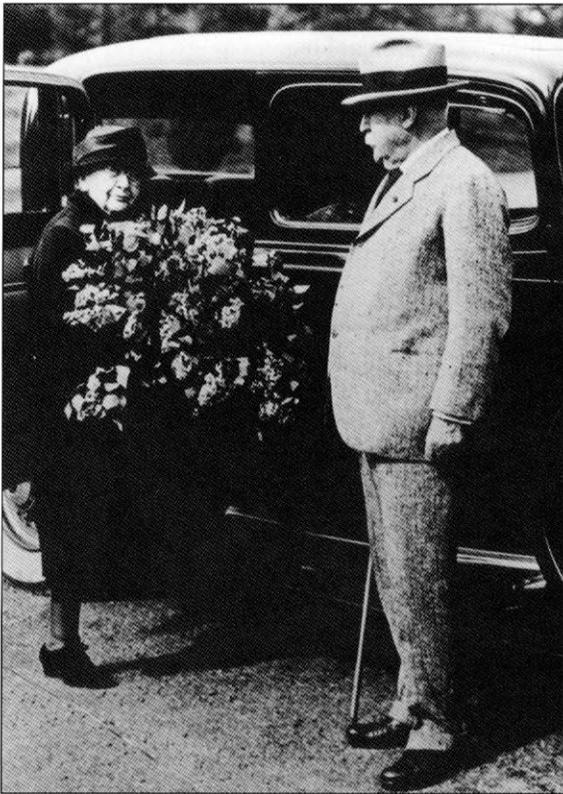
Romper Day

than gathering a few friends around the fire for a night of story-telling, some of the best stories being slightly off-color tales told in Pennsylvania Dutch.

The Trexler Park we see today was shaped by J. Franklin Meehan. In 1916, working with Trexler, Meehan first began to plan the Park. Meehan wanted the look of an English country estate, a rolling greensward with old trees set against sweeping lawns which the English called a park. The absence of flowerbeds was deliberate. In that era before power equipment, maintenance then would require a limited amount of hand labor.

Trexler also oversaw a draft of plans for an English-style manor house at Springwood. It would have commanded the ridge where his statue stands today and serve as his main residence. But Mary Trexler protested. Complaining that she would be isolated from her friends and miss all the local “news” if they moved from Hamilton Street, Mary’s objection led Trexler to file away the plans, where they remained until he died.

Although the grounds were designed to be a gentleman’s estate, Trexler, ever the entrepreneur could not resist the temptation of running a dairy on the property. He oversaw the construction of an up-to-date barn and the quartering of a herd of cows, and brought in staff from his other farms to run it. His idea was to sell milk at a



Mrs. Trexler and the General at Romper Day

nominal price to friends. Unfortunately, although delivered in the morning, the milk was usually not taken in until noon, by which time it had soured. Trexler did not take well the kidding from his friends who said he was selling spoiled milk.

As a result, Trexler cut the size of the herd, and after that, the only people who got to enjoy Springwood milk were his household and his guests. When entertaining, he liked to joke, "You can have your choice of milk from my dairy or champagne. The cost is the same."

The biggest annual local public event that Trexler sponsored was

Romper Day. Created in 1914, Trexler missed it only once in all the years until his death. Mary always attended with him. The idea for Romper Day came shortly after Allentown created the city's playground system. It was conceived by E.L. Manning, supervisor of playgrounds, and Percy B. Ruhe, newspaper editor, who was president of the Allentown Playground Association. Together they approached Trexler with the idea for a yearly event, something to mark the end of the playground season.

Trexler and his wife eagerly took up the idea. Children from nine playgrounds – River Front, Allen, Fountain, Jordan, Herbst, Wolfe, Harrison-Morton, Sheridan, and Saeger -were the central participants in the event. Benner describes how that first Romper Day on August 28, 1914, worked.

All participants reported to their playgrounds by 8 a.m. From there, they were transported by Trexler's Lehigh Valley Transit Company streetcars to the Allentown Fairgrounds, where they performed a daylong series of exercises and athletic drills in a pageant-like display that even included group singing. There were 4,000 participants, and each child received a free meal of hot dogs. Everybody was returned home by 5pm.

Over the years, Romper Day grew more and more popular – and the event more and more elaborate. Benner believes the most spectacular Romper Day was in 1917, during World War I, when the Fairgrounds were taken over by the U.S. Army Ambulance Corps. That year, some 7,500 children took part in a series of sporting events and games. Again, we see Trexler promoting a oneness in the new community that Allentown was becoming, bringing together its youth at his expense.

It was clear that the Trexlers made a commitment to Romper Day not just as an act of philanthropy but as an event and program they enjoyed. Among the last photos showing Trexler and his wife together were those taken at the Romper Day event of 1933. Although the name Romper Day has passed out of existence and has been replaced with Playground Celebration Day, the city still holds the event, albeit in smaller fashion, with the aid and support of the Trexler Trust. Romper Day demonstrates three important facets in Trexler's view of things. First, although childless himself, he loved children and supported children's activities. Second, he loved his community and looked to every opportunity to bring its people together in grand events. Third, he used his money to drive the projects he believed in.

The Trexler-Lehigh County Game Preserve, originally the Trexler Game Preserve, is another Trexler creation. As Benner notes, in the 1900's Trexler owned a ranch in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He and friends used it for hunting, and it was there Trexler first became aware of the plight of the American buffalo or bison. He decided that something needed to be done to save them.

Putting buffalo in cages in zoos was not the answer, Trexler believed. To thrive, these huge creatures needed space to roam, as free as possible. In 1906, after consulting with experts, Trexler began to purchase small family farms in Lowhill Township.



Game Preserve



Buffalo being moved to Trexler Game Preserve

Out of those acquisitions of land, he took 1,107 acres in all, enclosed it with a six-foot woven wire fence, and declared it a “game preserve.”

In 1911 Trexler also began acquiring animals. The Wild West show entertainer Pawnee Bill (Gordon Lillie) was among those from whom Trexler purchased buffalo. One cold February morning, a boxcar-load of the animals purchased from Lillie and shipped from Oklahoma showed up in Allentown. With the big bull animals loose in the boxcar, Benner and Charles Klotz, Trexler’s maintenance foreman, decided the only way the buffalo could be handled was to put them in crates for transport to the preserve.

The buffalo, apparently, were not happy about the arrangements made for them and fought back when the crew tried to encourage them into the wooden boxes. Klotz finally got a windlass, lassoed the animals over the horns, and pulled them bodily into these crates. Benner later wrote to Pawnee Bill describing the ordeal of the buffalo. One can almost hear the Wild West guffaw in Lillie’s response: “I expected the railroad was at your preserve and that the (box) car could be placed at the preserve and the buffalo be driven into the enclosure.”

In spite of their unwilling relocation, the buffalo thrived at the preserve. Over the years, people speculated that Trexler had planned to thin the herd every so often by hunting the buffalo. If that was his goal, apparently he never went through with it, and instead the excess buffalo were sent to zoos.

Trexler also introduced deer to the property. At one time there were over 400, and they were quickly eating all the vegetation they could sink their teeth into. Facing the ruin of his grazing land at the preserve, Trexler finally rounded up 175 deer and gave them to the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

It was not long before the game preserve began attracting visitors. The groups who came were not large by modern standards. However, Trexler’s gamekeeper, Oliver Frey, conducted automobile caravan tours around the park. According to Benner, Frey

although very careful with the animals, was a font of misinformation when questions were asked. Trexler who liked the “stretchers” his gamekeeper told never complained or corrected him. “There are two jobs I covet,” Trexler like to say. “One is to be a mounted policeman in New York’s Central Park and the other is to have my gamekeeper’s job.”

Along with his many other duties, Trexler was in constant demand by community groups for help in raising funds for worthy causes. Among those in the 1920’s that drew Trexler’s attention was Sacred Heart Hospital. In 1928, the year of an ugly anti-Catholic outbreak caused by Roman Catholic Al Smith’s bid for the presidency, Sacred Heart held its fundraising drive. If Trexler shared any of those prejudices, he never let them interfere with his support for a worthwhile cause that was important in the community. Catholic or not, the community needed the new hospital.

However, one thing that Trexler clearly did have strong feelings about was music. And it was at the fund raising dinner for Sacred Heart Hospital’s new administration building where he let his feelings be known. Paul Fink, a brother of Trexler’s friend, Monsignor Fink, the head of the hospital, had enlisted Allentown High School’s orchestra to play for the dinner.

The band arrived with saxophones for playing the popular tunes of the day. But the General was of the “old school.” When he arrived and spotted the instruments, he complained bitterly about the “barbaric” sounds of the sax. “This campaign must have good music or none at all,” he said. A quick huddle between Fink and the orchestra’s leader led to the banishment of the offending instruments and the transformation of the group into a small symphony orchestra. Trexler’s word on music in Allentown was law regardless of popular taste.

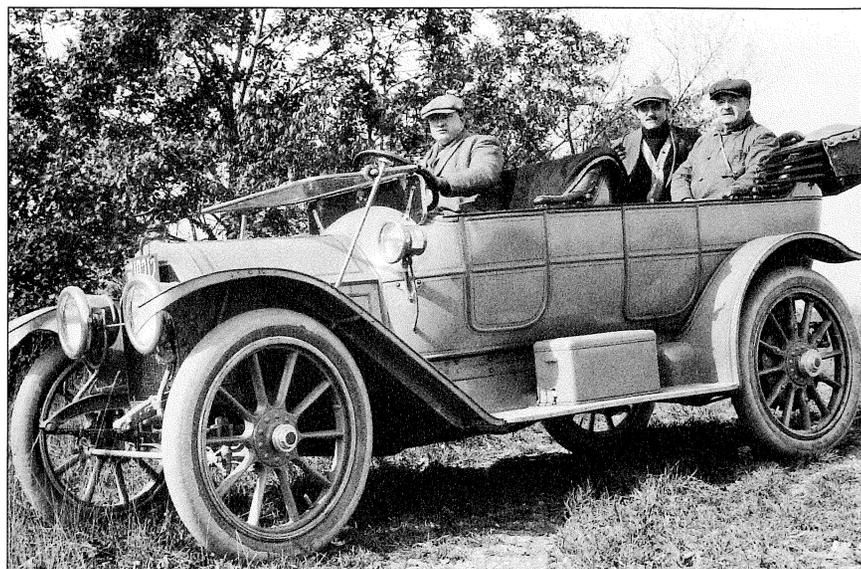
Largely through his wife, Trexler made numerous donations of money to local



Trexler receiving the Silver Beaver Award

churches. As with his support of Roman Catholic causes like Sacred Heart Hospital, his gifts were non-sectarian. Instead, he looked to whether a community as a whole would benefit from the church activity. An African-American religious leader from Harrisburg, Bishop M. L. Blalock, approached Trexler and asked his help in building a church in Allentown for black people. Trexler responded, "Bishop, I think it is a good idea. If we can have our colored folks affiliate themselves with a church, I know they will be good citizens. I'll do it!" Although he gave Blalock the money to purchase a lot at 410 Union Street, Trexler never got to see the results, dying before St. James African-Methodist-Episcopal Church was erected.

Trexler was also always ready to lend assistance to individuals who made personal appeals for aid. Erwin Braker, a long-time Allentown insurance salesman, was a schoolteacher in the 1920's in a one-room schoolhouse in rural Northampton County.



"Squire" Percy Fenstermacher, J. Erik Linde, and General Trexler

Braker liked to tell his family of how he went to Trexler out of concern for one of his students, a gifted young man with a calling for the ministry but a family too short of funds to send him to seminary.

Knowing of Trexler's reputation, Braker approached him one day when he spied the general walking in his orchard. Seeing Braker approach, Trexler raised his hand as if warning him to halt. In the conversation, spoken in the Pennsylvania German dialect (like most people of his generation in the Lehigh Valley, Trexler was conversant in English and 'Dutch') that followed, Trexler heard out Braker's request, then asked to see the young man. After judging the boy's earnestness himself, Trexler agreed to pay the young man's tuition and give the lad a real education. As always, he warned that he did not want any publicity about the gift.

There are many similar stories.

Benner states that Trexler did not mind people approaching him for money. Local panhandlers knew he could be a soft touch for a quarter. Once, a total stranger walked into his office with a promissory note. "I was at the Lehigh Valley Trust Bank and they told me they would loan me \$300 if you would endorse my note," the man said. "Now isn't that nice of the bank!" quipped Trexler. "You go back to the bank and tell them that I will lend you \$300 if they will endorse the note." He was generous, but not foolish.

Trexler also could be tough about money when he thought it necessary. During the Depression, he refused to aid the Ridge Avenue Savings and Loan, a small distressed bank in Allentown's poor Sixth Ward. The bank was forced to close and its depositors lost their money.

Trexler also had a fierce temper, which he admitted got him into trouble. He could be explosive. Benner recalls that while most of the time Trexler was in control of his temper, his anger sometimes reached levels of a breach of the peace. As a result, he was ordered to pay damages after people who said they were victims of his wrath filed lawsuits against him. Those judgments must have been serious embarrassments to a man of his pride and standing.

The only detailed account of an outbreak of Trexler's temper occurred between him and local businessman Samuel Traylor Sr., during World War I.

Trexler, the owner of Traylor Engineering and Manufacturing and later the Hotel Traylor, entered into a business deal with Trexler to sell artillery shells to the British. During a meeting with Bethlehem Steel executives about the deal, Trexler blew up and said, "I wish I had never gone in with that damn Traylor outfit!"

Traylor demanded that Trexler take back that remark. If he refused, Traylor was more than willing to buy him out. Trexler realized quickly that he had let his temper blind him to a good business opportunity. He asked Traylor if they could go across the hall and discuss it in private. "Sam," Traylor quotes Trexler as saying when they were alone, "you're a bigger man than I thought you were. I forgot myself and want to offer an apology. I am really sorry for what happened in there." Traylor accepted Trexler's apology and the two went on to profit on the deal.

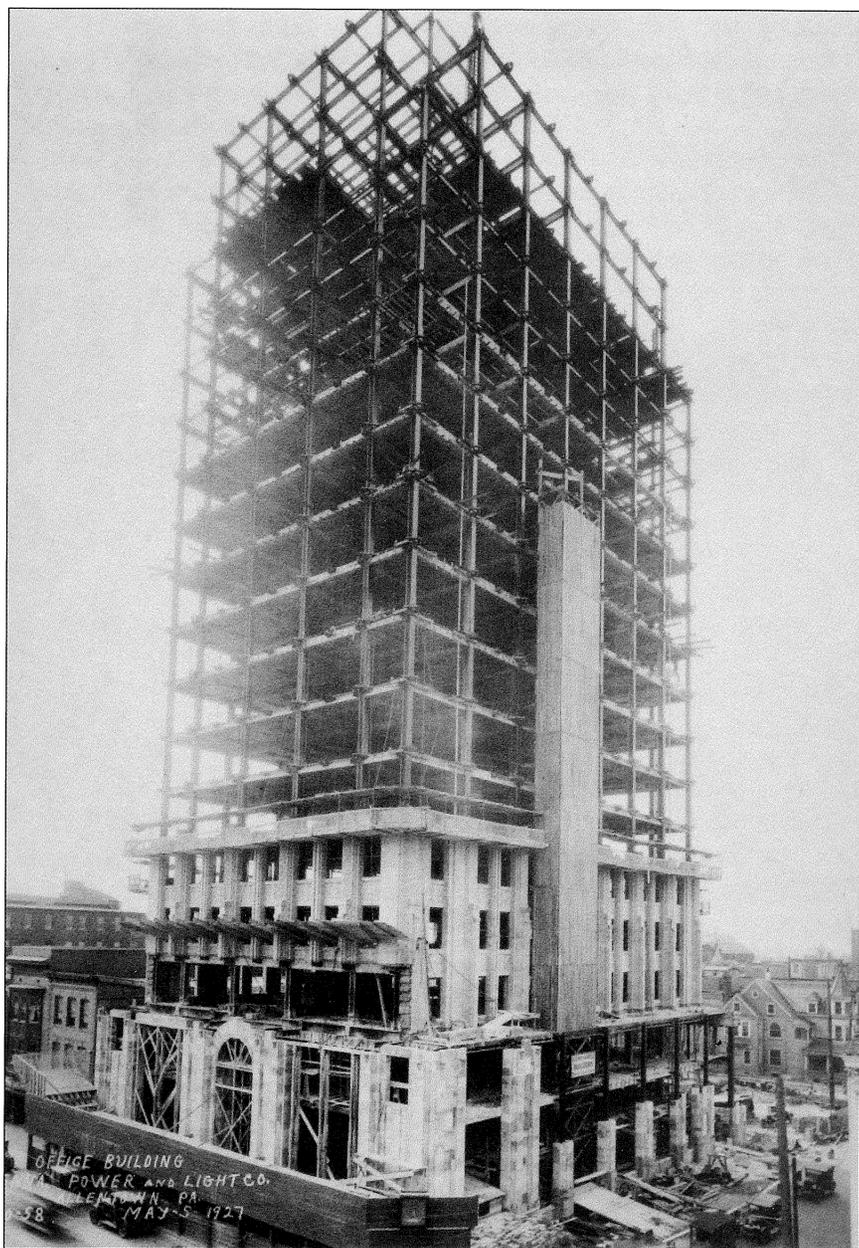
The construction of PP&L's Tower on Hamilton Street in the 1920's was critical in defining Allentown as a city with a skyscraper at its center. It wasn't easy to accomplish that feat. First Trexler had to fight off a strong effort by others on the board to move the corporate headquarters to Hazleton, Pennsylvania.

Once that was settled, Trexler selected the site at the southwest corner of 9th and Hamilton streets, then occupied by the Martins, a family whose roots went back to the founding days of the community. The so-called Martin mansion that stood on the corner was a local landmark.

Mrs. Martin, the matriarch of the family, refused even the most generous offers. She told everyone that her eyesight was not what it once was and that in a new house things would just be so different that relocating would make it difficult for her to get around. So Trexler moved PP&L's headquarters to a site across the street, on the north-west corner.

Nobody knows who selected the architect for the 22-story tower, but it's hard to

imagine Trexler not playing some role, even if it was just as a member of PP&L's board. Regardless, the choice of Harvey Wiley Corbett was brilliant. A father of the "stripped classic" style skyscraper, Corbett rejected the idea that a tall building needed to be topped by an Egyptian pyramid, Greek temple or Roman goddess, but Corbett



Erection of PP&L building, 1927

believed modern times called for modern buildings. At the time the PP&L project was underway, many people viewed the design as radical, but it has stood the test of time for over three quarters of a century as a piece of striking architecture.

The on-site architect was Wallace K. Harrison, who would later become famous for the projects he did for the Rockefeller family, including the United Nations building and Lincoln Center. Perhaps it was Harrison, who knew of the passion of John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s wife Abby for modern art, who got PP&L to agree to place bas-relief sculptures on the building by Ukrainian-born abstract sculptor Alexander Archipenko (1887-1964). A contemporary of Picasso in Paris, he had come to America in the 1920's and was desperate for commissions.

The tower represented the ideal of consolidation, bringing together all of the various parts of the company and putting them in one place. The skyscraper must have pleased Trexler, whatever his Victorian soul thought about it as architecture. Erecting the largest building in Pennsylvania, north of Philadelphia, in his hometown, had to have been a source of pride for Trexler. But his sense of humor kept things in proportion. A stranger on the street one day asked him how many people worked in the PP&L tower. "About half," Trexler quickly quipped.

By 1929 Trexler's holdings were worth over \$50 million, an enormous amount when Allentown's mayor earned \$100 a week. With a fortune like that, it is no wonder that Trexler began to think about how it would be administered after his death, a question all the more important since the Trexlers were childless. Everything would pass to Mary, of course, if he preceded her in death, and he would remember a few family members with bequests. But the great bulk, he decided, would be placed in a charitable trust to be known as the Trexler Trust, administered by a board of the community's most capable and prominent citizens. The gift of his Springwood estate to the city for use as a park and the gift of the Game Preserve to the county were a part of the Last Will and Testament he signed on April 15, 1929, when the Hoover Bull Market had spiked stocks to an all-time high.

Benner, however, notes Trexler began to have second thoughts about the provisions of his will almost as soon as he signed it. He feared that tying up the money in a trust in perpetuity would result in a "static bureaucracy," no longer mindful of its role as a benefactor to the community and existing only for itself and not for the good it was meant to serve. A better idea, Trexler told Benner, would be to organize the terms so all of the trust's capital and assets would be spent down to zero over 25 years. "But he was in such good health," wrote Benner, "that he kept procrastinating, and he never got around to making the contemplated changes-particularly on the idea of changing from an estate to go on in perpetuity to a terminal one."

Although always an astute investor, never known to be a speculator, Trexler was caught as off-balance as the rest of the financial leadership of the country when the stock market crashed on October 28, 1929, and the Great Depression followed. Asked about how he was doing, Trexler liked to tell the story of the frugal Pennsylvania German lady to whom he once asked the same question. "Why, all right," she replied, "You know, General, I have always lived as though there was a depression."

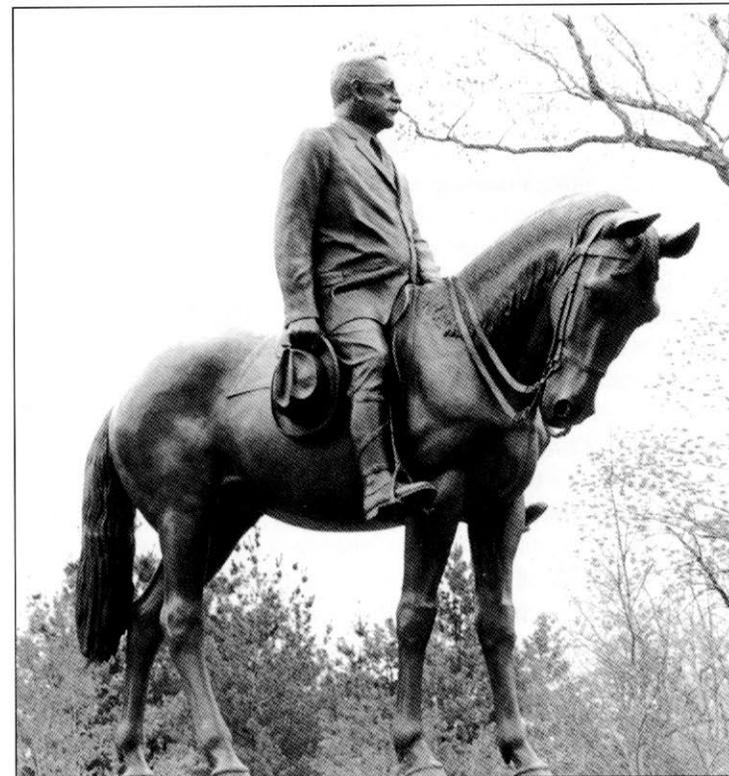


Trexler adopted by Hopi Indian Tribe

Although Trexler could still be considered well off by just about anyone's standards, he had lost much in the stock market crash. Benner notes that, by midsummer 1932, the value of all stocks on The New York Stock Exchange was less than a fifth of its 1929 listed values. The Dow-Jones average had fallen from 386 to 41. "Many bonds including municipals were in default," Benner writes, "The railroads were particularly hard hit." Trexler's investments had tumbled to all time lows. In fact, although still a major landowner, at his death Trexler's cash and bonds were worth only about \$10,000,000.

Trexler did not let the financial loss bother him. On April 17, 1933, his 79th and last birthday, Trexler gave one of his rare interviews to Allentown's Chronicle and News newspaper.

"I have been very happy in life," Trexler said. "I guess I was born of a happy disposition. But the greatest source of happiness I believe was to help the development of things – whether they were flowers, fruits or industries." This brief quote summed up the man and his philosophy – be an optimist and work to organize matters in a positive way, with your own money first and your name and prestige second, regardless of the project.



Chapter 7: The Lehigh Valley's Farewell

On November 21, 1933, the Pennsylvania Legislature voted to create the state store system, 75 convicts staged a riot in Philadelphia's Eastern Penitentiary, and tobacco heiress Doris Duke turned 21 and was in receipt of custody of a fortune that made her "the richest girl in the world." That same day, the people of Allentown and the Lehigh Valley came to say a goodbye to General Harry C. Trexler.

Under partly cloudy skies, with temperatures pushing close to 60 degrees, the lines of mourners came to pay their last respects. Photos of the day show a queue from the front door of Trexler's home at 1227 Hamilton Street almost to the corner of 12th Street. Among the best known of the long list of honorary pall-bearers was Philip C. Staples, president of the Bell Telephone Company, Alfred H. Swayne, vice president of General Motors, and Dr. Henry S. Drinker, president emeritus of Lehigh University.

Although Trexler had not belonged to any church, it was the Lutheran Church, into which he was baptized in 1856, that officiated Trexler's funeral.

At exactly 2 p.m., the hour when the services were scheduled to begin, a hush fell over Allentown. All city and county offices had closed for the day. Stores all over the

city also closed for the day, and the retail district grew still. At many city knitting mills, the machines fell silent as the shops closed. All streetcars in the city came to a halt for five minutes. At the Morning Call, the typewriters stopped clacking, and the newsroom was silent.

Trexler's casket, laid out in the parlor of his home, was placed on a catafalque under the escort of a military honor guard. Directing the service was Dr. George A. Greiss, chaplain of the Jordan Masonic Lodge No. 673 and the pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. The chief speaker was Dr. Samuel Trexler, a relative and President of the United Lutheran Synod of New York.

A microphone had been set up in the Trexler home so that events could be broadcast into Christ Lutheran Church next door, where a large crowd had gathered in the sanctuary to listen to the service. After a tenor sang "My Faith Looks Up to Thee," Dr. Greiss began his address. He said, in part:

"Here at the bier of General Trexler there is a special fitness in the tribute of Marc Antony to Caesar – his life was gentle and the elements so mixed in him that nature might rise up to say to all the world, this was a man!

"God had richly endowed him. Coming from one of the Lehigh Valley's oldest and most honorable families, God had given him superlative gifts. He was a five-talent man. These talents he did not permit to lie dormant but he cultivated to the end of his days. He rendered a fine account of his stewardship.

"His personality expressed itself through a superb physical frame. . . Toward this he kept himself fit by simple recreations – walking and riding – and by constant interest in everything human. He could say with Terence, "I am a man, nothing of what is human do I count as foreign to myself."

". . . God gave him the gift of a warm heart. The universal testimony today among the countless throngs that mourn General Trexler's passing is that they have lost a friend. This was his finest quality in his life, and here he also cultivated the gift which God had given him."

"The number of those who knew and loved him was ever increasing. His accumulation of years did not limit in any way his outward reach. He was democratic in his tastes and loved nothing more than mingling with crowds of common people who called him friend."

"The finest touch in his life was his love of children. That he loved them showed the clear simple life that was at the core of his soul. As Charles Dickens said, "We should love children and it is no small gift that they who are so close to God should love us." This community will never forget the interest and affection which General and Mrs. Trexler showed to children. His public benefactions to colleges and hospitals and to cities showed how General Trexler's heart went out in the desire to help all mankind. Yes, God gave him love and he magnified it by its use."

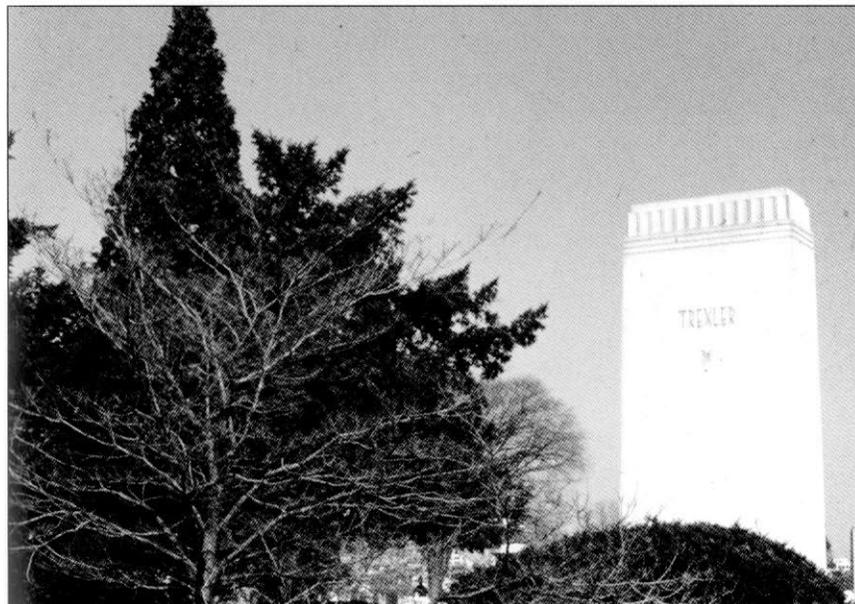
Dr. Trexler was followed by the Rev. Dr. George W. Richards, President of the Reformed Church Theological Seminary at Lancaster. He noted that Trexler was man of action, a fighter.

"General Trexler stood in the front rank of the fray. He had deep social and political convictions. He had the courage to fight for a cause in which he believed. He was keenly concerned for the future welfare of the land of his fathers. He bore calmly the scars of battle. When he was defeated he did not despair; when he was the victor he was not vengeful."

Rev. Dr. Charles Trexler, a relative and President of the New York Federation of Churches, noted that Trexler could not have done all that he did without the help of his wife, Mary. Then he added: "For generations to come, the name of Harry C. Trexler will be written high in the hearts of the community."

The final address of the day came from General Frank D. Beary, Allentown's Commissioner of Public Affairs and a long-time associate of Trexler in the National Guard. "The greatest trait of his splendid character was his friendships and the manner in which he endeared himself to all who were privileged to enjoy his trust and friendship," Beary said. "His was the happy faculty of entering into the thoughts, trials, and plans of those who came into contact with him. Always ready to help, yet, by his suggestions and guidance lead those who sought his aid to help themselves and never by his assistance dulling their sense of independence or lessening their initiative."

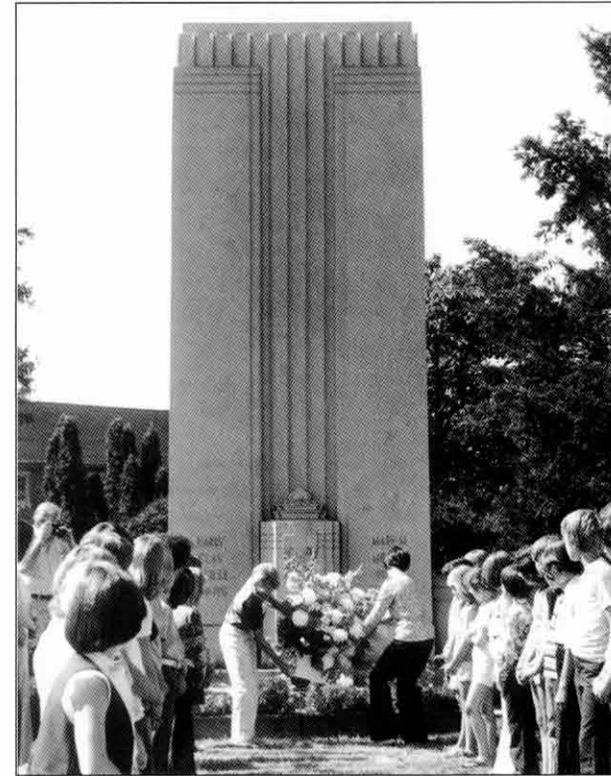
At the request of Mrs. Trexler, Dr. J.A.W. Haas, the president of Muhlenberg College, on whose board Trexler sat for many years, gave the closing prayer. With that, the service was at an end. Trexler's casket, draped with a large American flag, was carried by eight pall-bearers, officers of the 218th Regiment of the Pennsylvania National Guard, to the hearse. Hatless male heads lined the sidewalk as it passed.



Trexler Monument

State and local police escorted the hearse to the Trexler family plot at Fairview Cemetery in Allentown. After the final prayers were spoken, an anti-aircraft gun near the entrance to the cemetery barked out a salute of 16 guns, the number of reports reserved for generals.

Then, under what the Morning Call called "the bright warm sun of a November afternoon," bugler Alfred Marsh of Battery B played taps. As the last notes drifted over the city, the twilight of a setting sun spread long shadows. General Harry C. Trexler had been laid to rest.



Epilog: The Trexler Legacy

Seventy years have passed since the Lehigh Valley said its farewell to General Trexler; another World War and a Cold War have come and gone. Many of the manufacturing industries that made the Valley hum in Trexler's lifetime have either closed or moved elsewhere, replaced by "knowledge industries" that were the stuff of science fiction in 1933. And the farm fields and orchards where he hoped to preserve the ideals of the Pennsylvania German agrarian society of his youth have sprouted housing developments and shopping malls.

A tall, granite monument marks his resting place at Fairview Cemetery. His home at 1227 Hamilton Street remains, now a women's clothing store.

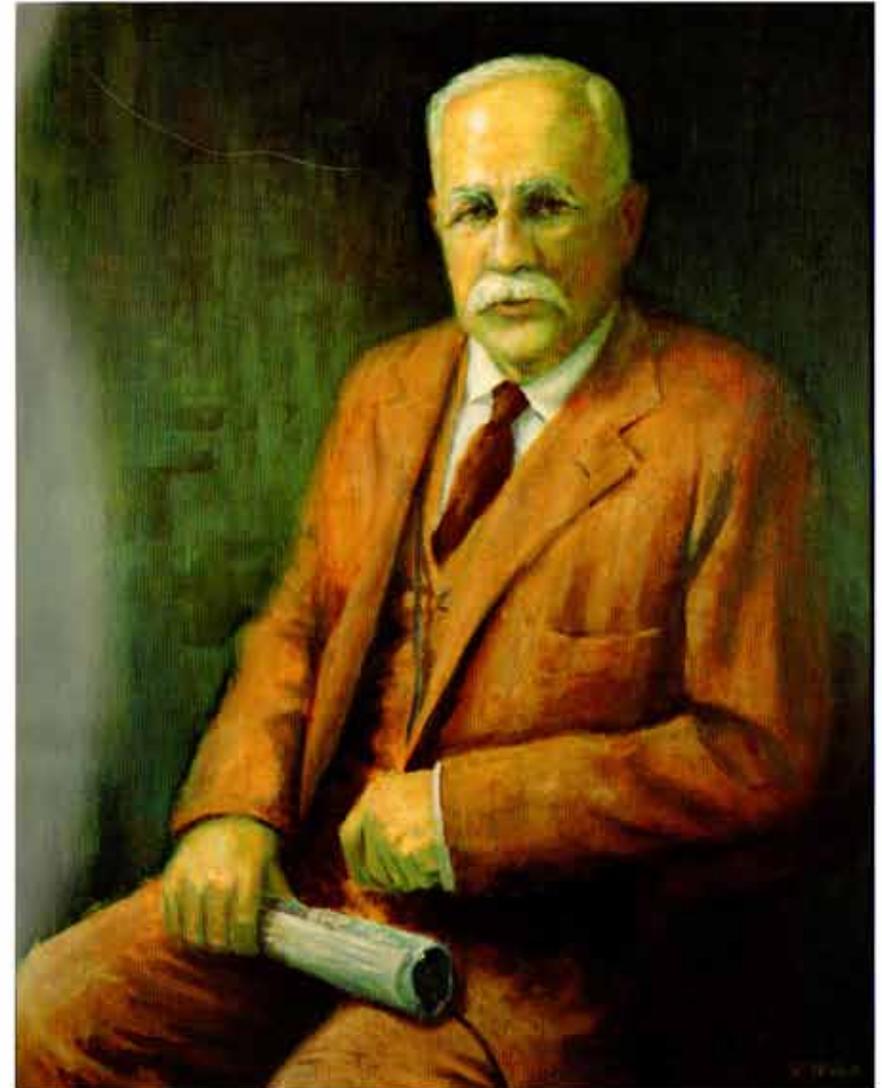
But those seeking Trexler's legacy must look elsewhere. As Benner, Fink, and others who knew him tell us, Trexler was more a doer than a philosopher, happiest when he was in action. And today it is his fortune, still overseen by community notables, where we still see Trexler in action. Certainly credit must be given, too, to the Judges of Lehigh County Orphans Court, who have carefully selected and appointed trustees, then faithfully overseen and adjudicated the accounts of those trustees. Judge Ethan Allen

Gerhart, Judge Martin J. Coyne, Judge James Knoll Gardner and now Judge Lawrence J. Brenner have exercised that responsibility.

Although Trexler was fearful that his trust would become a hidebound bureaucracy, more interested in perpetuating itself than in fulfilling his ideals, this has not happened. In part, the credit can be given to Nolan Benner. A relatively young man at the time of Trexler's death, Benner would work as a Trexler trustee until 1980, presiding for almost a half century as a living link to the essential values and community concerns of his benefactor. Setting a high standard of public service and devotion to Trexler's ideals, he kept the trust's goals in focus, ensuring that the General's legacy serve not itself but the community at large. But if the trust owes much to Benner, it has inevitably transcended the concerns of the General's day.

Trexler's fortune today is so widespread that it is helping people who might never have known of him otherwise. The requests flow in at a flood tide to the trust's offices, from a multitude of Lehigh County charitable organizations, each hoping they will be among the projects the trustees will think worthy of aid; as many as feasible are granted.

So who, then, was General Harry C. Trexler? A man once, of course, life-sized, possessing both extraordinary talents and a few human frailties. Now, 150 years after his birth, he is a legend, much larger than life, whose blanket of perpetual charity is spread over all of Allentown and Lehigh County. But he is also an ideal, a model, and an inspiration for all those who struggle to achieve. His entire life was powered by his vision, steered and focused by his civic and personal pride, wisely and effectively harnessed by his sense of responsibility. His legacy, then, is the enduring proof that one man can indeed cast a sustaining shadow of comfort and challenge over an entire community, that one man's dream and entrepreneurial drive can shape a reality for generations.



Painted by Nolan P. Benner, Jr.

Harry C. Trexler • 1854-1933