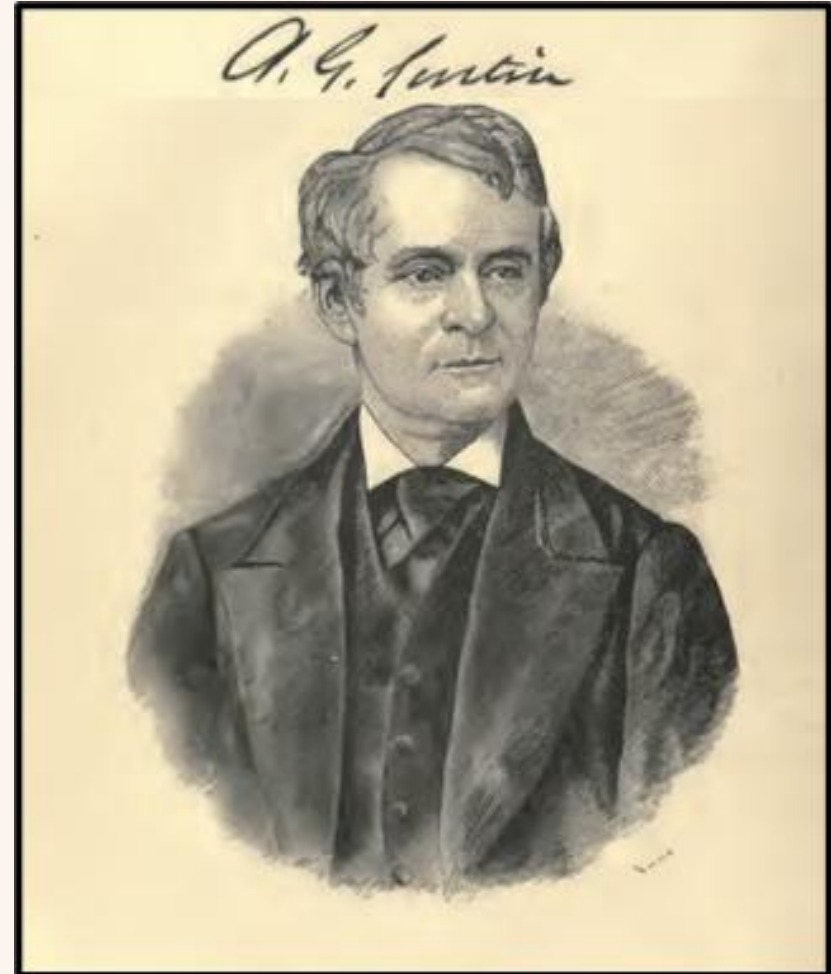


The Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools 1864-2009

**Governor Andrew Gregg Curtin
1861 - 1867**

By William Peck, Jr.

**Centre County Historical Society
November 2, 2025**

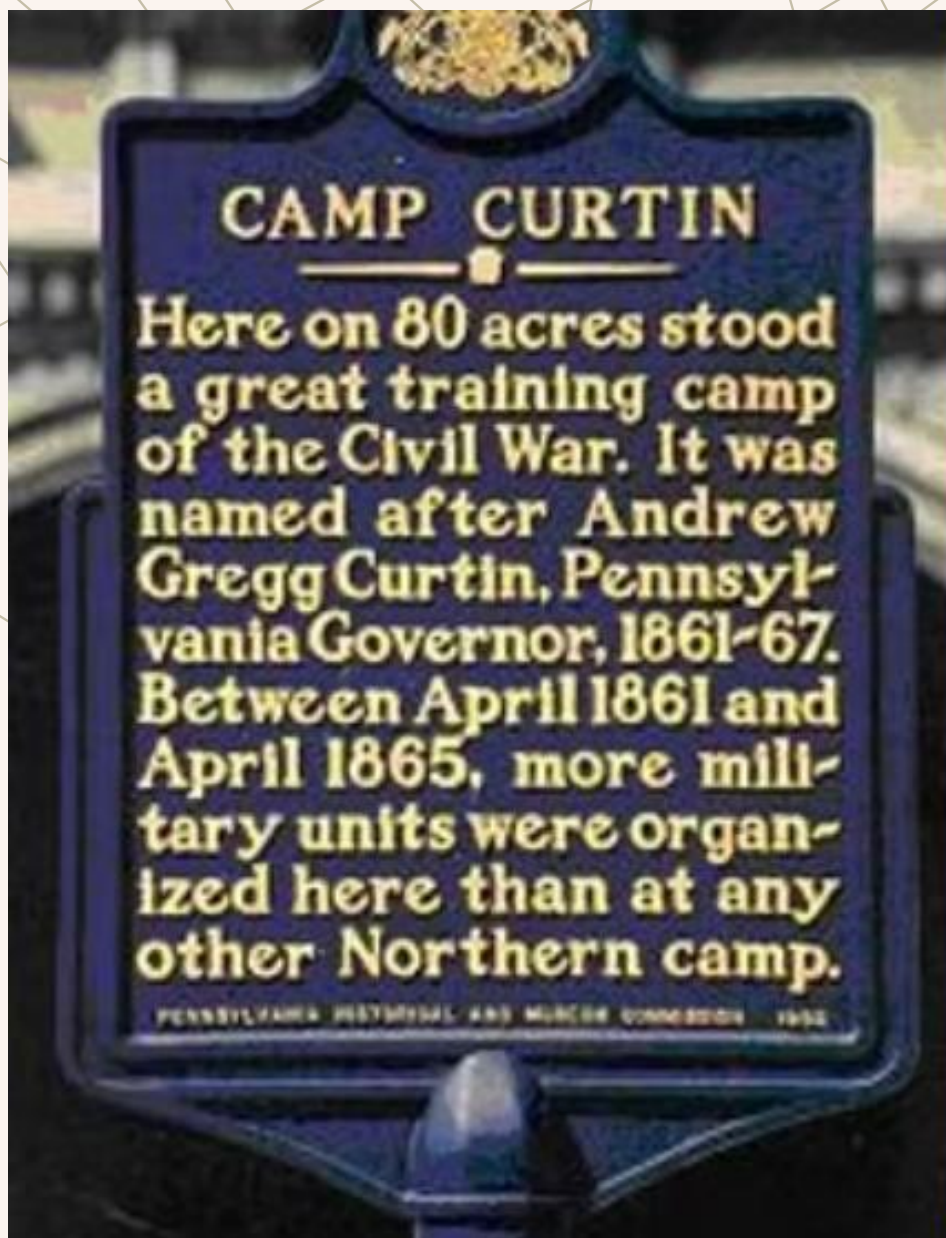


The Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools 1864-2009

So as the slide says, I'm going to talk about the Pennsylvania Soldiers Orphan schools which began in 1864 and **lasted for 145 years** when the remaining school closed in 2009.

While this is obviously a statewide program, there are several important ties to Centre County, which I will touch on throughout my talk ... and of course which brought me here today ...

I'll begin with a very brief but important fact from the start of the Civil War, regarding the call for volunteers for the Union, which was centered in large part in Pennsylvania



President Lincoln calls for 75,000 volunteers



Camp Curtin opens in Harrisburg 1861
300,000 troops in four years there
the largest Federal camp during the Civil War

President Lincoln calls for 75,000 Volunteers

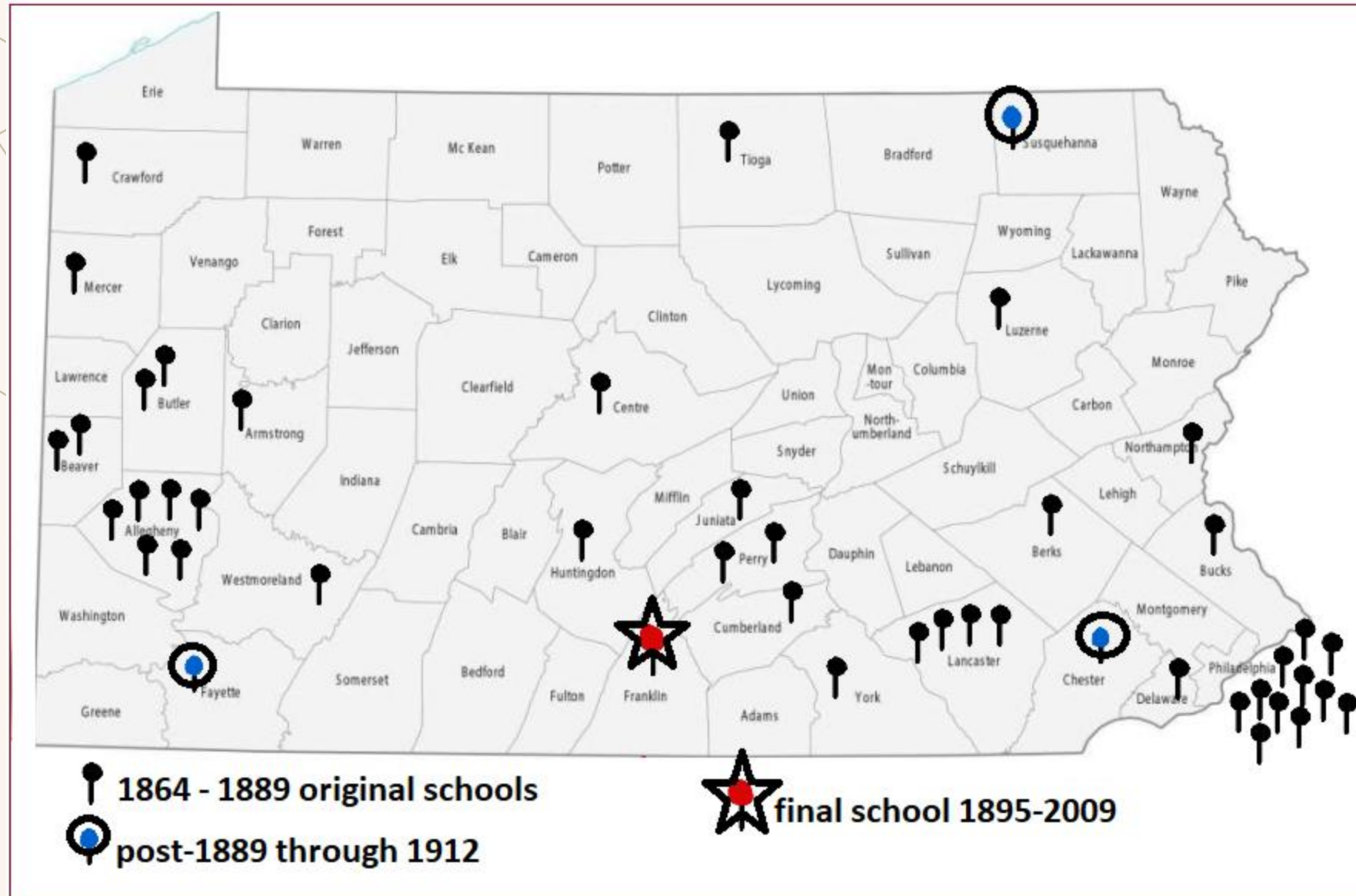
At the bombardment and surrender of Ft. Sumter, President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers, and in turn, Governor Curtin made a plea to the citizens of Pennsylvania to volunteer to help preserve the Union.

Men from throughout the state converged on Harrisburg and a military training camp was established, with the camp being named Camp Curtin.

Eventually over 300,000 men passed through Camp Curtin in its 4 years of existence, making it the largest Federal camp during the Civil War.

The Camp Curtin Historical Society in Harrisburg keeps alive the history of this great endeavor.

The Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools 1864-2009



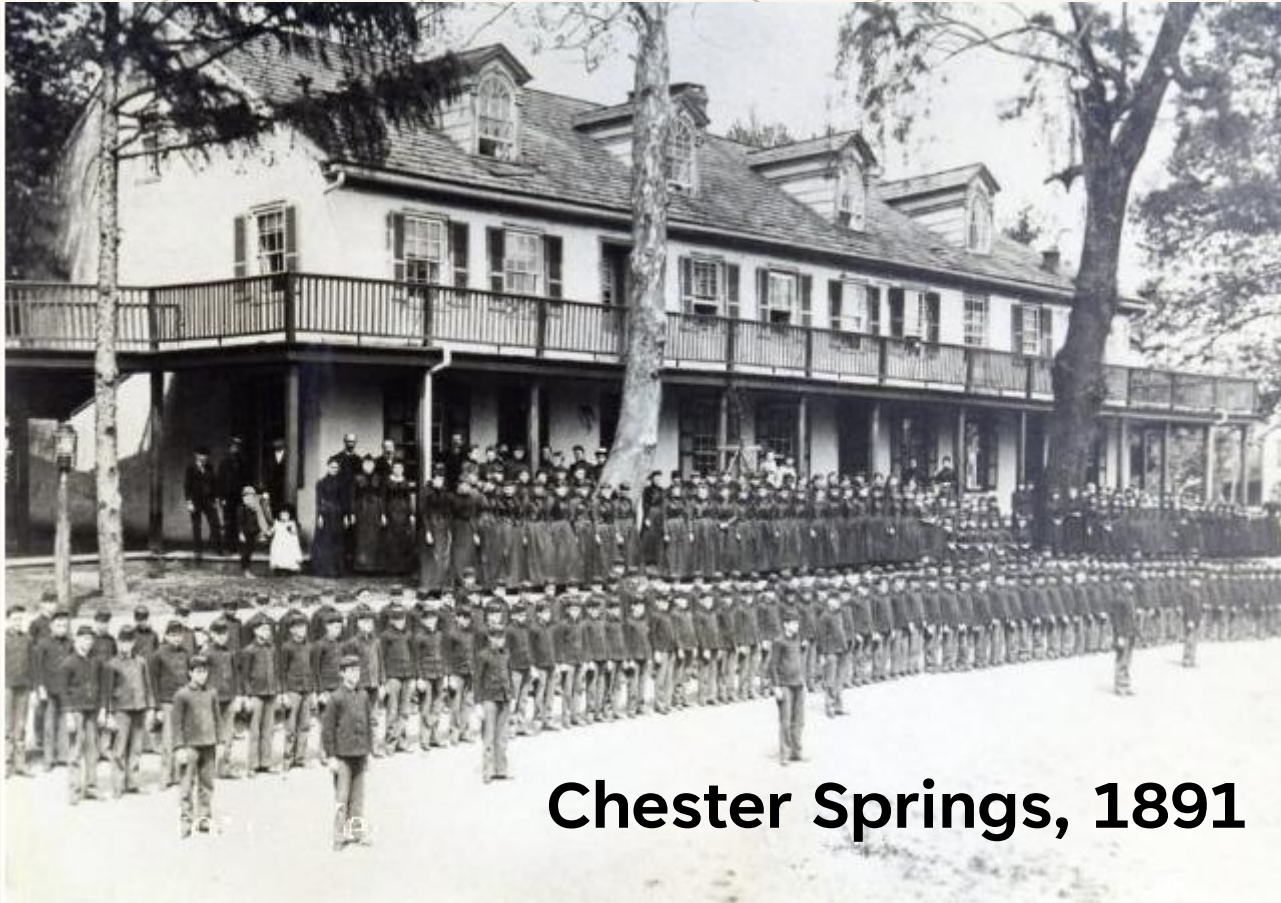
The Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools 1864-2009

So now, “What exactly is the Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools program?”

In 1864, Pennsylvania started a series of **privately-owned schools** that were funded by the state, with the state providing per capita financing, on the order of \$150 per annum.

Objectives for the Schools:

PRODUCE PATRIOTIC, PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS



Chester Springs, 1891

Education

Skills

Morals

Military Tradition

Objectives for the Schools:

PRODUCE PATRIOTIC, PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS

All of the schools were residential with regular summer vacations in dormitory-style housing.

The original schools, and through to the end of the program in 2009, had three primary objectives -

- an education
- employable skills
- character and moral training

All of the schooling was done in a military tradition, with uniforms and drill/

And the ultimate objective was to produce ***patriotic and productive citizens.***

Governor Curtin – Visionary for the Orphan Schools

Centre
County
Courthouse



Governor Andrew Gregg Curtin
1861 - 1867

The
Soldiers'
Friend

Governor Curtin – Visionary for the Orphan Schools

Governor Curtin, Bellefonte's son and part of the well-known Roland Curtin family in Centre County, was the visionary behind these schools, the purpose being to take care the children of the fallen soldiers.

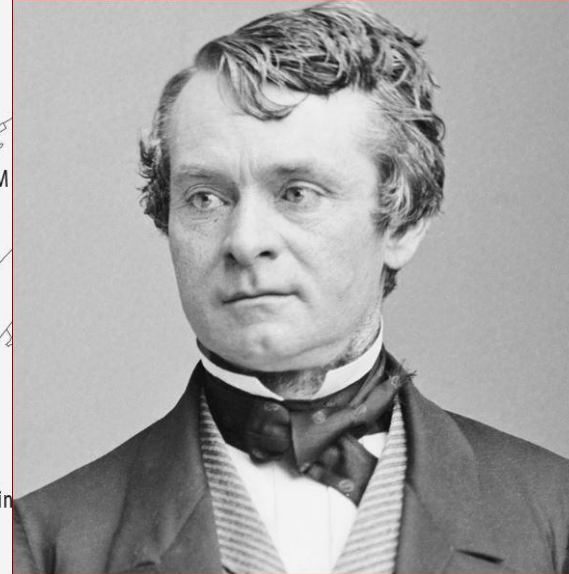
Supervision of the state-wide program was entrusted to a state Superintendent who had oversight but he didn't have the authority to direct the activities of the private schools.

The Centre County School was located in and known as Jacksonville, which I'll talk more about shortly.

Governor Curtin has long been known as the "Soldiers' Friend", because of his concern for the welfare of the troops, and in his recruiting efforts he pledged to take care of the soldiers' children.

Thanksgiving 1863

Two orphans show up at
Governor Curtin's house,
and he is compelled to act



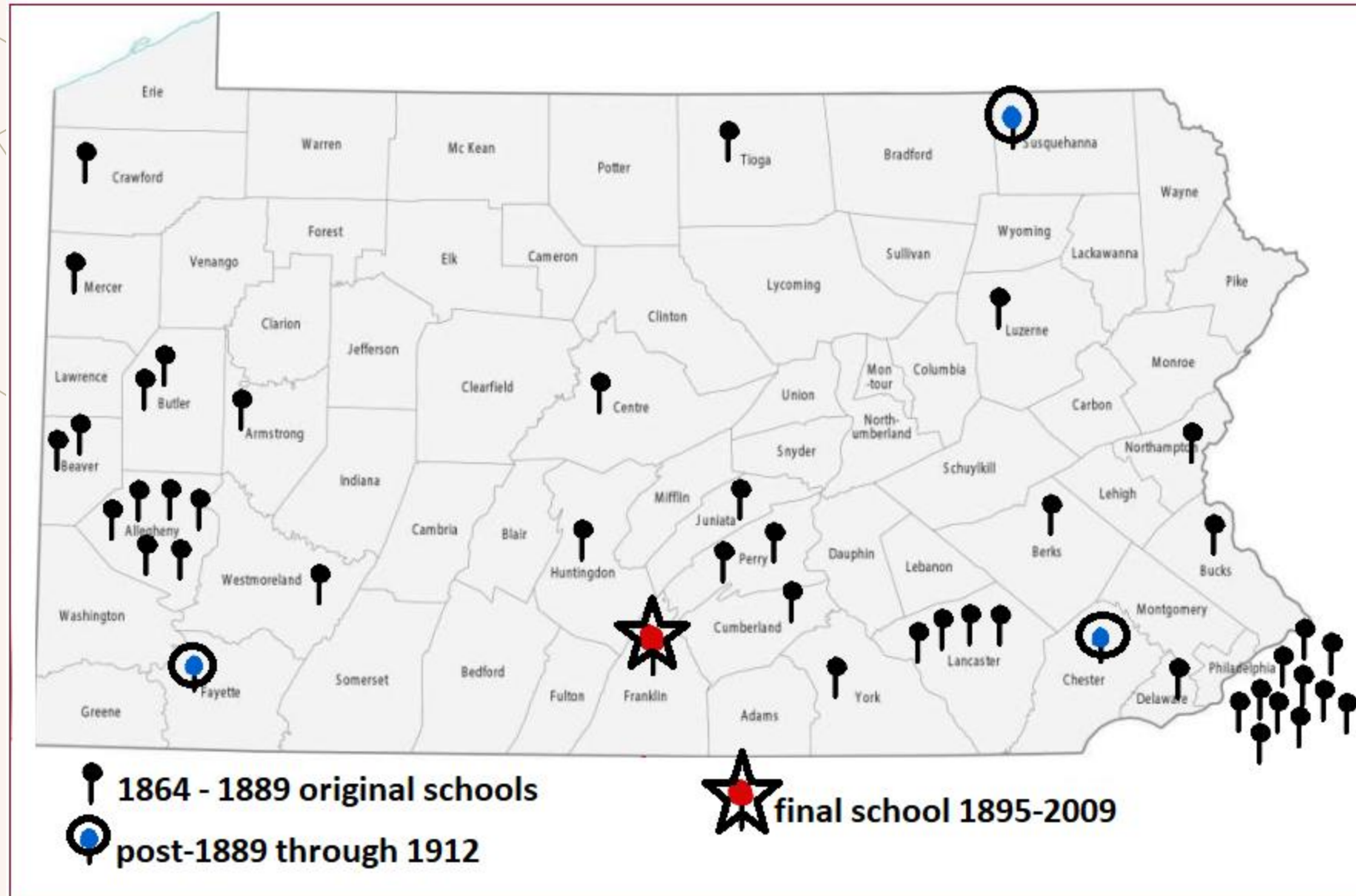
Thanksgiving 1863

Two orphans show up at
Governor Curtin's house,
and he is compelled to act

Then on Thanksgiving Day 1863, just months after the Battle of Gettysburg, two orphans show up at the Governor's house, cold and begging for food, and he was compelled to act.

Initial funding of \$50,000 came from the President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, J. Edgar Thomson. The money had originally been donated a year earlier, but it was later allocated to start the system of schools for the education of orphans.

The Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools 1864-2009



The Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools 1864-2009

The result was a series of 46 privately owned schools across the state. Local communities would come together to create a school. Typically, pastors led the effort and often became the headmaster.

Centre County Orphan School - Jacksonville



**Soldiers' Orphan School
1865 – 1869**

**Formerly Fairview
Female Seminary
1845 – 1857
(pictured)**

Photo courtesy of the Centre County Historical Society

Centre County Orphan School - Jacksonville

Centre County's school operated from 1865 to 1869.

Prior to that it was known as the Fairview Female Seminary from 1845 – 1857.

The proprietor of the Orphan school was Reverend D.G. Klein, who was 36 years old when the school opened.

Thanks to Katy Stager who recently sleuthed the Internet recently and found this picture.

Jacksonville Students – sample (1876 book)

PUPILS' NAMES.	DATE OF BIRTH.	DATE OF ADMISSION ON ORDER OR BY TRANSFER.	TRANSFERS.		DATE OF TRANSFERS.	DATE OF DISCHARGES.		POST OFFICE ADDRESS WHEN AT HOME.	REMARKS.
			WHERE FROM.	WHERE TO.		ON ORDER.	ON AGE, AT 16 YEARS.		
Arrowsmith, Wm. D.	Dec. —, 1858	Jan. 16, 1867	.....	Mansfield	Feb. 15, 1871	.....	.....	English Centre.	
Arrowsmith, Joseph T.	Feb. —, 1860	Jan. 16, 1867	.....	Mansfield	Feb. 15, 1871	.....	.....	English Centre.	
Beightol, James	Aug. 25, 1861	Oct. 12, 1866	.....	.....	.....	.....	May 29, 1869	Moshannon.	
Beyer, Thomas M.	Oct. 7, 1861	June 18, 1866	.....	Cassville	Jan. 31, 1871	.....	.....	Hegarty X R'ds.	
Barclay, George W.	Aug. 16, 1858	June 28, 1866	.....	Cassville	Sept. 1, 1868	.....	.....	Shaver's Creek.	
Boyd, Charles	Oct. 19, 1861	Sept. 30, 1868	.....	M'Allisterville	Jan. 3, 1871	.....	.....	Montoursville.	
Brossier, Joseph	Mar. 25, 1860	Dec. 1, 1868	.....	Cassville	Jan. 3, 1871	.....	.....	Osceola.	
Callahan, Harry A.	Oct. 22, 1856	June 4, 1866	.....	M'Allisterville	Sept. 1, 1867	.....	.....	Flemington.	
Callahan, Wm. C.	Jan. 19, 1858	June 4, 1866	.....	M'Allisterville	Sept. 1, 1867	.....	.....	Flemington.	
Clark, William	Sept. 30, 1858	Aug. 30, 1868	Louisville	Cassville	Jan. 3, 1871	.....	.....	Huntingdon.	
Cowler, Jesse N.	Apr. 27, 1859	Sept. 24, 1866	.....	.....	.....	.....	May 31, 1870	Port Matilda.	
Confer, William	Sept. 19, 1858	Feb. 21, 1867	.....	Cassville	Feb. 13, 1871	.....	.....	Beech Creek.	
Confer, Cline Q.	Aug. 19, 1860	Feb. 21, 1867	.....	Cassville	Feb. 13, 1871	.....	.....	Beech Creek.	
Campbell, John B.	July 10, 1861	Sept. 20, 1869	.....	Cassville	Jan. 3, 1871	.....	.....	Lumber City.	
Cramer, Andrew S.	Oct. 18, 1863	Aug. 19, 1869	.....	M'Allisterville	Jan. 17, 1871	.....	.....	Phillipsburg.	
Cain, Howard C.	Nov. 18, 1859	Nov. 16, 1870	.....	Cassville	Jan. 3, 1871	.....	.....	Smith's Mills.	
Colbert, Samuel	July 11, 1860	Sept. 7, 1870	.....	Cassville	Jan. 3, 1871	.....	.....	Frankstown.	
Colbert, James	Mar. 21, 1856	Sept. 7, 1870	.....	Cassville	Jan. 3, 1871	.....	.....	Frankstown.	
De Bass, William H.	Aug. 23, 1860	June 5, 1866		Cassville	Feb. 21, 1871			Liberty Township.	

<u>Pupil</u>	<u>Dt. Birth</u>	<u>Dt. Admitted</u>	<u>Town</u>
--------------	------------------	---------------------	-------------

Henry Gross	Sept 7, 1859		
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Nov 9, 1868			
-------------	--	--	--

Pleasant Gap			
--------------	--	--	--

George Gross	July 11, 1862		
--------------	---------------	--	--

Nov 9, 1868			
-------------	--	--	--

Pleasant Gap -			
----------------	--	--	--

deceased Feb 19, 1869			
-----------------------	--	--	--

Henderson, Sam. M.	Oct. 9, 1859	Jan. 8, 1867	.....	Cassville	Feb. 21, 1871	.....	.....	Medara.	
Hunt, John S.	May 11, 1859	Jan. 29, 1867	.....	M'Allisterville	Sept. 1, 1869	.....	.....	Montoursville.	
Hull, Daniel R. K.	Mar. 12, 1859	Dec. 30, 1869	.....	M'Allisterville	Feb. 28, 1871	.....	.....	Aaronaburg.	
Hughes, William H.	June 13, 1860	Sept. 2, 1870	.....	Cassville	Feb. 21, 1871	.....	.....	Altoona.	
Hoover, Daniel S.	May 25, 1861	Sept. 7, 1870	.....	Cassville	Feb. 21, 1871	.....	.....	Birmingham.	
Hoover, John S.	Nov. 15, 1862	Sept. 7, 1870	.....	Cassville	Feb. 21, 1871	.....	.....	Birmingham.	
Keys, Charles N. A.	Mar. 26, 1858	June 12, 1866	.....	Cassville	Sept. 1, 1868	.....	.....	Pine Grove Mills.	
Keys, William S.	Feb. 5, 1860	Sept. 5, 1866	.....	M'Allisterville	Jan. 23, 1871	.....	.....	Bellefonte.	
Keys, John R.	Jan. 5, 1858	Sept. 5, 1866	.....	M'Allisterville	Jan. 23, 1871	.....	.....	Bellefonte.	
Koch, Edward	Mar. 25, 1858	Dec. 5, 1866	.....	M'Allisterville	Sept. 1, 1868	.....	.....	Williamsport.	
Kline, Lewis	May 1, 1859	Jan. 22, 1867	.....	M'Allisterville	Sept. 1, 1869	.....	.....	Fount Hill.	

Jacksonville Students – sample (1876 book)

These pages are from a well-known 1876 book that describes the Orphan School program, which I have a copy of, and it has a chapter for each school.

It lists 175 students that attended the Jacksonville School, including 24 sets of siblings. The book lists the student's date of birth, date of admittance, and their home town - from Bellefonte to Half Moon to Phillipsburg to Howard and many other locations, including from surrounding counties.

You can find a copy of the 2-page history of Jacksonville at <https://www.pa-soldiers-orphan-schools.org/schools/Jacksonville.html> which lists all the students and staff members

Daily Activities

**Harford –
Susquehanna
County**



**Classes
Chores
Skills**

**Jumonville –
Fayette County**



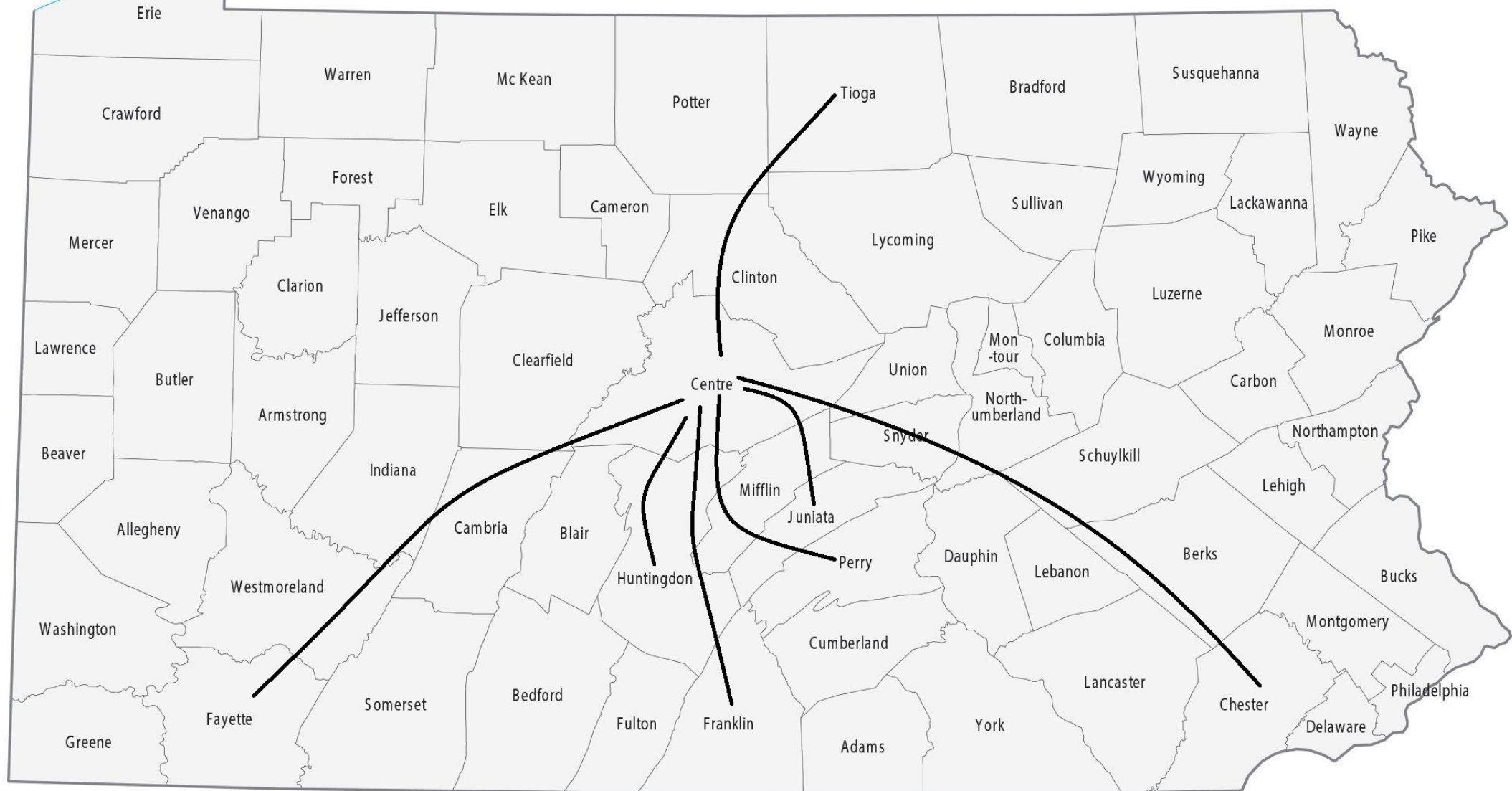
Daily Activities

Student's days across all schools were filled with chores, classes, and skills training, along with military drill for the boys, and calisthenics for the girls.

Many of the schools closed due to financial pressures, and this was the case with Jacksonville. Per annum reimbursements had been reduced from \$150 to \$125 and again to \$115 over the period of the 4 years that Jacksonville operated and the school was unable to sustain operations.

The Jacksonville students were then transferred to other schools, primarily in Juniata County, Huntingdon, and Tioga.

Centre County residents attending other schools



Centre County residents attending other schools

Although Jacksonville closed in 1869, students from Centre County continued to attend other Orphan Schools for many years.

Annual Register: 1895

Centre County Students

<i>Centre</i>					
Name of Pupil.	Date of Birth.	Date of Order for Admission.	School.	Father.	Mother.
Barry. John J.	Jan. 15, 1884,	Sept. 21, 1893.	Uniontown, . . .	Dead,	Living,
Beck. Franklin D.,	Feb. 7, 1881.	Mar. 24, 1887,	do.	do.	do.
Kinthead. Fred.,	July 19, 1879,	Sept. 1, 1885,	Industrial.	do.	do.
Lair. Oram Edgar,	Oct. 26, 1885.	Feb. 17, 1894,	Uniontown, . . .	Living,	Dead,
Lair. Carrie M.,	June 15, 1887.	Feb. 17, 1894.	do.	do.	do.
Lucas. Edward A.,	June 19, 1880,	Dec. 14, 1885.	Industrial.	do.	do.
Martin. Howard R.,	May 7, 1881,	May 15, 1885.	Uniontown, . . .	Dead,	do.
Tippery, George M.,	Jan. 6, 1881.	Dec. 12, 1885.	Industrial,	do.	do.
Tippery. Bertha,	Nov. 5, 1878,	Dec. 12, 1885,	do.	do.	do.

Annual Register: 1895

Centre County Students

This page of Centre County students is from the 1895 Annual Register.

This is a great historical reference, especially for Ancestry purposes, as it includes the student's name, date of birth, date of application, the school they were attending, and the parents' status (living or dead).

Each one lists 10-20 students from Centre County attending schools in Perry County, Scotland School in Franklin County, Fayette County, Chester Springs, and again - in Juniata County.

Annual Register: 1895

Centre County Students

Name of Father.	Record of Service.				Application By	P. O. Address of Applicant.
	Rank.	Co.	Regt.	State.		
Edward H. Barry,	Pvt.,	A,	102d,	Pa.	Matilda C. Barry,	Bellefonte.
David M. Beck,	"	"	45th,	"	Catharine Beck,	Walker.
Wm. H. Kinkead,	"	D,	53d,	"	Rebecca Kinkead,	Phillipsburg.
Henry Lair,	"	F,	106th,	"	Henry Lair,	Zion.
do.	"	"	"	"	do.	do.
Job M. Lucas,	"	B,	11th,	"	Conrad Singer,	Romola.
Hugh Martin,	"	E,	1st,	Pa. Cav.	Ann Martin,	Milesburg.
Sanford F. Tippery,	"	C,	53d,	Pa.	F. D. Gowland,	Sandy Ridge.
do.	"	"	"	"	do.	do.

Annual Register: 1895

Centre County Students

The list of students also shows their father's name, his rank and unit, who made the application, and the town they were from.

Centre County residents at Scotland School

1951

FAYNE HERBERT AURANT



Hometown: State College, Penna.
Entered: August 9, 1942
Nickname: Fay



1959

Richard W. Steele
State College

1961

LORRAINE H. STEELE
State College



Centre County residents at Scotland School

As late as the 50's and 60's, there were graduates of Scotland School from Centre County.

Here are three from State College:

- Fayne Aurand Class of 1951. Back in June, Bob Struble did some excellent research on the Aurand's
- siblings Richard & Lorraine Steele, 1959, 1961
Richard passed in 2017, but Lorraine is still living in Tennessee

Centre County residents at Scotland School



WILLIAM E. BROBECK
Bellefonte



KENNETH B. BROBECK
Bellefonte
Sheetmetal Shop.



RICHARD A. BROBECK
Bellefonte
Sheetmetal Shop, Barbering, Football,
Baseball, Swimming.

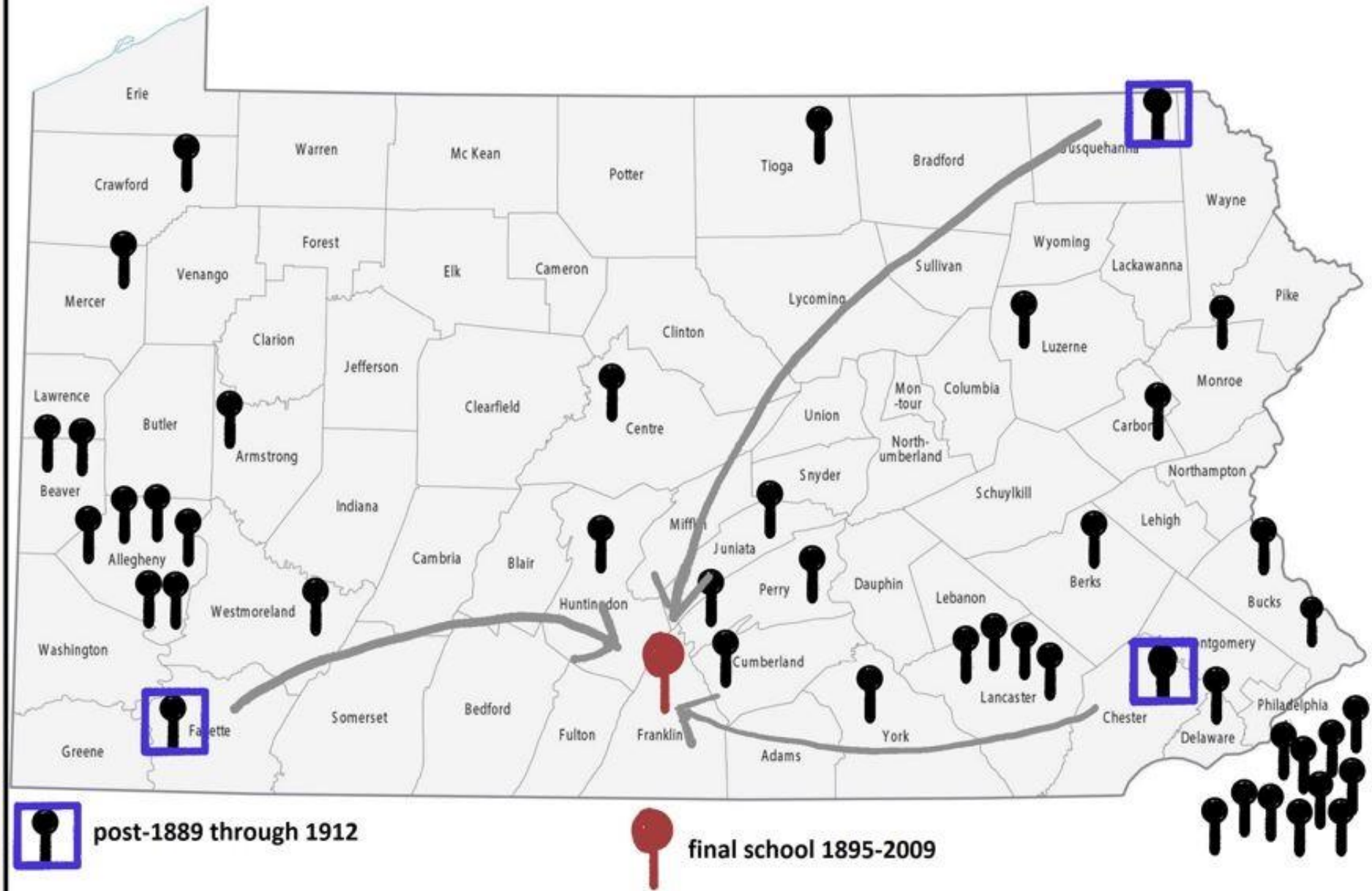
Centre County residents at Scotland School

The Brobeck brothers of Bellefonte

Here are the Brobeck brothers from the early 60's - William, Kenneth, and Richard, Classes of 1961, 1963, and 1964.

Plus there were many students from Altoona, Clearfield and other surrounding counties.

The New Model: A Single, State-run School



**Soldiers'
Orphan
Industrial
School**

**- opened at
Scotland in 1895,
Franklin County**

The New Model: A Single, State-run School – Soldiers' Orphan Industrial School

By 1893 all but three of the original schools had closed and plans were made to create a single, state-run school in Scotland, just north of Chambersburg.

The school opened in 1895 as the “Soldiers Orphan Industrial School” and operated through 2009. “Industrial” was originally included in the name to emphasize the importance of providing skills to the graduates.

Two main components they wanted to address

- a stronger foundation of industrial skills,
- cottage like housing as opposed to the dormitory style, for a more home-like environment

Objectives for Scotland School – the same

Education

Skills

Morals

Military Tradition



Shoemaking Shop in 1895.



Objectives for Scotland School – the same

Scotland School operated for 114 years before closing in 2009.

It too embodied the original model of the private schools, that is, to provide

- an education
- employable skills
- character and moral training,

This was all done in a military tradition, and all done to produce **patriotic, productive citizens**

The inscription – “Dedicated to the Dignity of Labor”, is on the Trades building at Scotland. The building is still standing, but the entire campus is abandoned to the elements and vandals.

And so Governor Curtin’s vision played out for 145 years, through 30 different Governors across 32 state administrations.

Generational Legacy

The theme I want to discuss next is the generational legacy of the Soldiers' Orphan Schools, and to paint the picture that **Governor Curtin's vision was fulfilled in these schools**, from the beginning in 1864 **for 145 years** when the program ended.

So let's go back to the Brobeck brothers of Bellefonte.

Richard Brobeck - Bellefonte



1964

RICHARD A. BROBECK
Bellefonte

Sheetmetal Shop, Barbering, Football,
Baseball, Swimming.



Richard Brobeck
1946 - 2024

US Army 1966-1970, Combat Medal
Green Beret, Sergeant E-5 (Special Forces)
Prison Guard, Rockview State Penitentiary

Avid Steelers and Penn St. fan
Volunteer at Skytop Mtn Golf Club

Richard Brobeck - Bellefonte

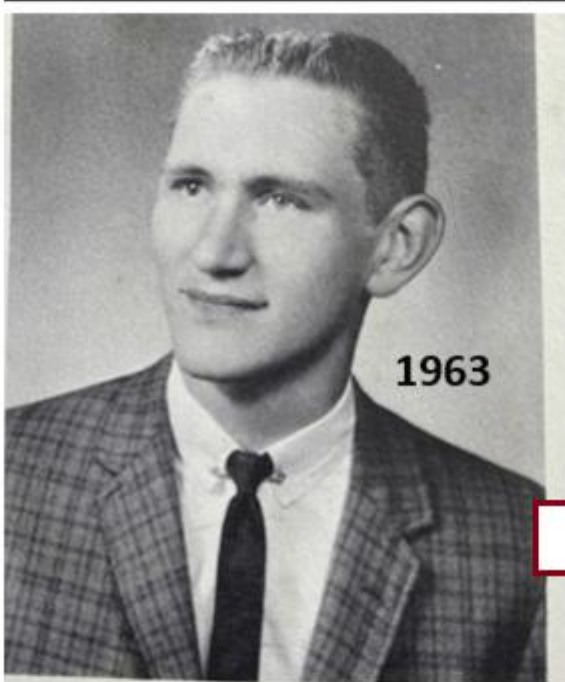
We see Richard's military service, then he came home and raised a family, passing away just last year.

By all accounts he was a patriotic, productive citizen.

He came from Bellefonte, went to Scotland School, and then worked and lived in Bellefonte after his military service.

I spoke to his wife last week, but she was unable to make it today.

Kenneth Brobeck - Bellefonte



1963

1944 - 2002

Kenneth Brobeck, Scotland 1963
US Army, Vietnam
Purple Heart



Ken Brobeck Jr
USMC 1986

Kenneth Brobeck - Bellefonte

It was natural for Scotland graduates to join the military, from the Spanish American War through two World Wars to Korea and Vietnam and to the recent Middle East Wars.

Kenneth was in the US Army in Vietnam, winning the Purple Heart.

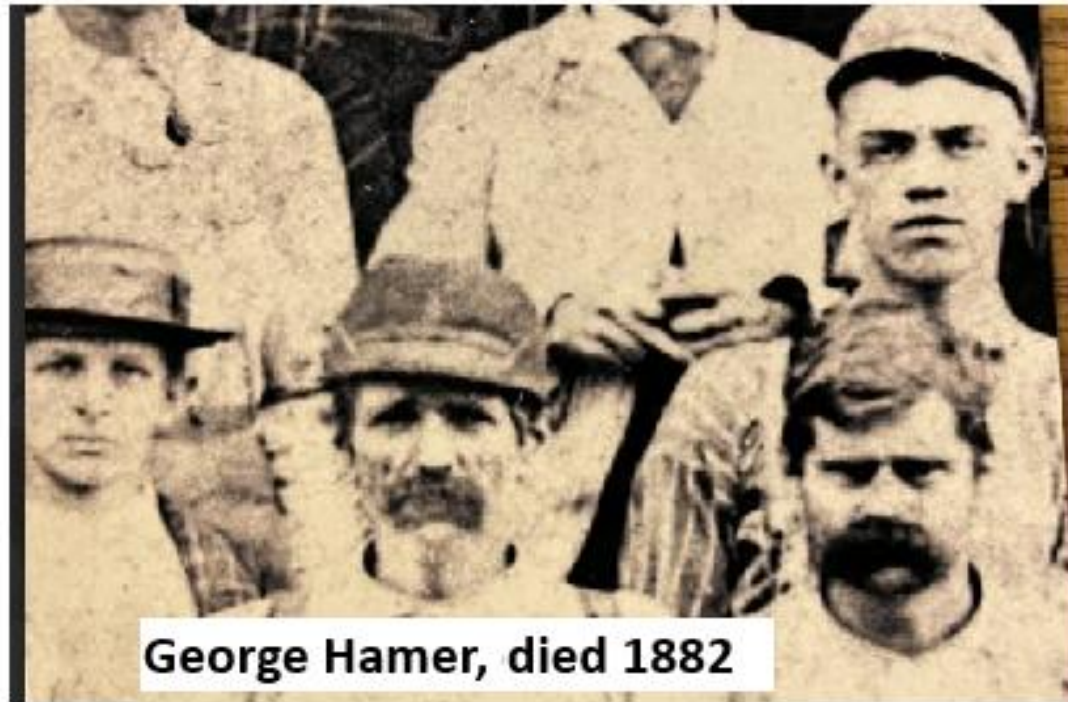
And we see the generational legacy with his son, proudly holding his father's Gravestone. And Ken Jr did even better than his dad – *he became a Marine!*

Annie Hamer (Gette) – Centre County McAlisterville Orphan School 1883 – 1890 (16'er)



BORN JULY 5 1874

Annie Hamer (Gette) b. 1874



George Hamer, died 1882

Annie Hamer (Gette) – Centre County McAlisterville Orphan School 1883 – 1890 (16'er)

So the generational legacy extends to grandchildren as well.

Just the other day I got a call from Luther Gette of Philipsburg who said he has some neat pictures of his grandmother, Annie Hamer Gette, who attended McAlisterville in Juniata County, from 1883 to 1890, graduating as a 16'er (16 years old).

Annie Hamer's Autograph book – 1888, 1889

McAlisterville Orphan School

To Annie McAlisterville Pa

In the golden chain of
friendship

Consider me a link
Your friend & School Mate

Clinton Fisher

Written at

S. C. S.
Mar
1888

Don't forget

"S. C. S."

Don't forget the
"S. C. S." bead
S. C. S. Riv

**"In the golden chain
of friendship
consider me a link**

**Your friend and
School Mate -
Clinton Fisher"**

Nov 1888

Annie Hamer's Autograph book – 1888, 1889

McAlisterville Orphan School

Another item that Luther had from his grandmother was her autograph book from 1888, 1889. It provides a great window into the world of 1888 at an orphan school.

The comments are very touching, with beautiful handwriting, it's practically calligraphy.

***“In the golden chain
of friendship
consider me a link***

***Your friend and
School Mate –
Clinton Fisher”***

Nov 1888

“Don’t forget the moldy bread and Suet Pie”

Clinton Fisher
Don't forget
the
moldy bread
& Suet Pie

“Don’t forget the moldy bread and Suet Pie”

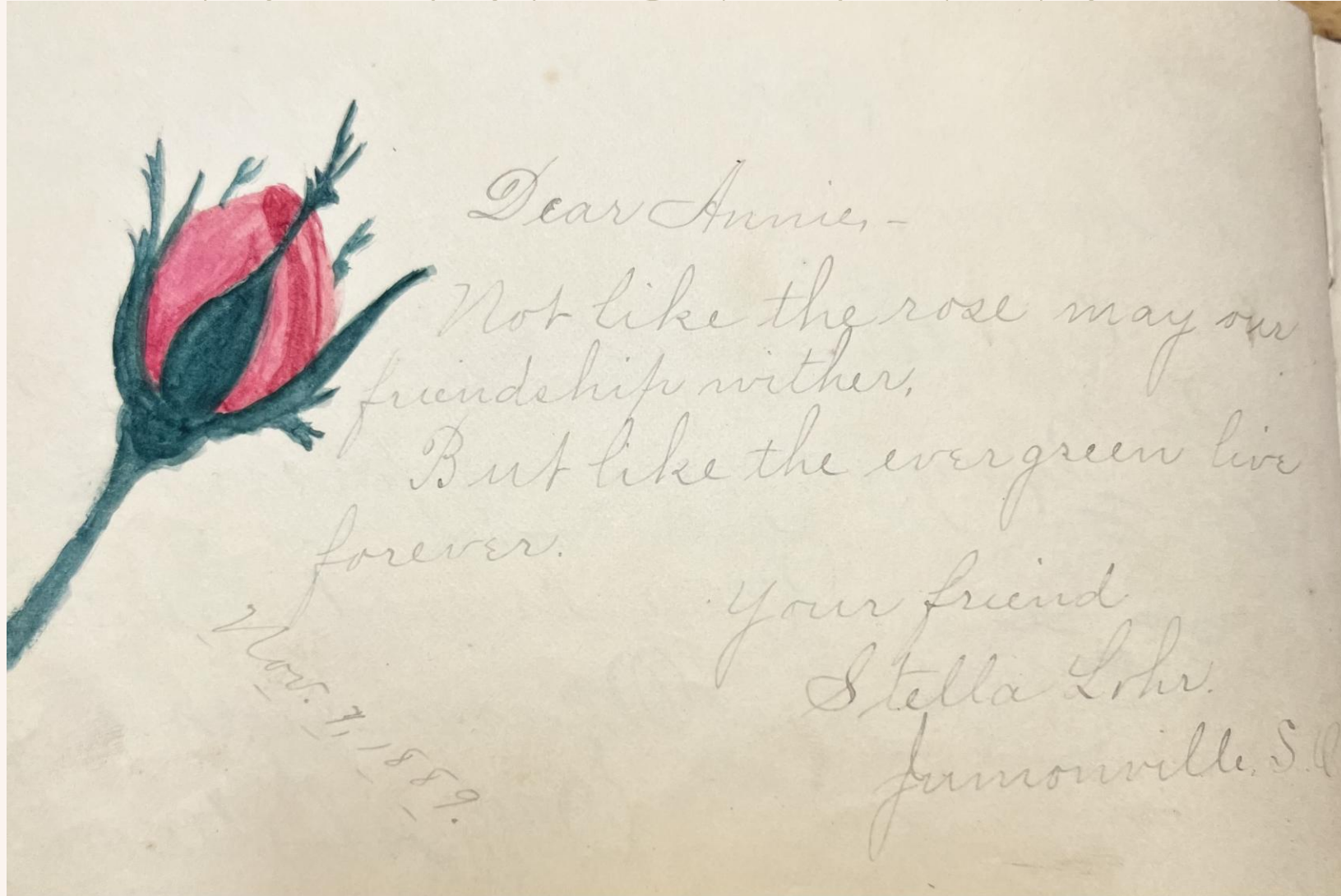
Here is an enlargement of the previous slide.

You can again see the beautiful handwriting with the SOS bracketed by soft quotes at each corner, as well as the connection to the school – “Don’t forget the SOS” (Soldiers’ Orphan School).

The handwriting is just wonderful. Although Clinton forgot to “cross the T” in “don’t”.

Annie Hamer Autograph book – 1889

note from a friend at Jumonville Orphan School



**“Not like the rose
may our friendship
wither, But like the
evergreen live
forever**

Stella Lohr”

Nov 7, 1889

Annie Hamer Autograph book – 1889

note from a friend at Jumonville Orphan School

This autograph has a beautiful rose along with another very touching and heartfelt memory.

Somehow Annie became friends with Stella from Jumonville Orphan School, 3 hours to the southwest of McAlisterville in Fayette County.

***“Not like the rose
may our friendship
wither, But like the
evergreen live
forever***

Stella Lohr”

Nov 7, 1889

Generational Legacy

Dad: Scotland 1942, WW II

Mom: Scotland 1950

Me: US Army 1981 - 1986

My son: US Army 2013 - 2023



Generational Legacy of William Peck, Jr.

I too claim generational legacy to the Orphan Schools program.

Both my Mom and Dad graduated from Scotland, 1942 and 1950, and they instilled in me the values they learned at Scotland. one of which was their classmates were their lifelong friends, typically referred to as their brothers and sisters.

My dad was there in the 1st grade, then he worked there his entire career, retiring as Assistant Superintendent. He started as a teacher and football coach, and I tagged along with him in the 60's and 70's, and he would have been the football coach of the Brobeck brothers, so I would have been at their practices and games, and I think that's a neat connection.

The 16'er pin is from my grandfather who graduated Scotland 1902. In the early years they graduated at 16 years old.

Generational Legacy of William Peck, Jr.

My dad served in WW II as a Field Artillery forward observer, making the rank of Sergeant. I followed in his footsteps into the Army, this time as a Field Artillery Officer, which he was extremely proud of – as am I.

And the generational legacy certainly doesn't have to include military service - raising productive citizens is always the goal, and my two daughters have done very well for themselves

Now, all of this is good, and it's the normal cycle of life – parents, teachers, and coaches, passing on their own lessons to their children and students ... and hopefully they are raised right to forge a life for themselves and then continue the legacy ...

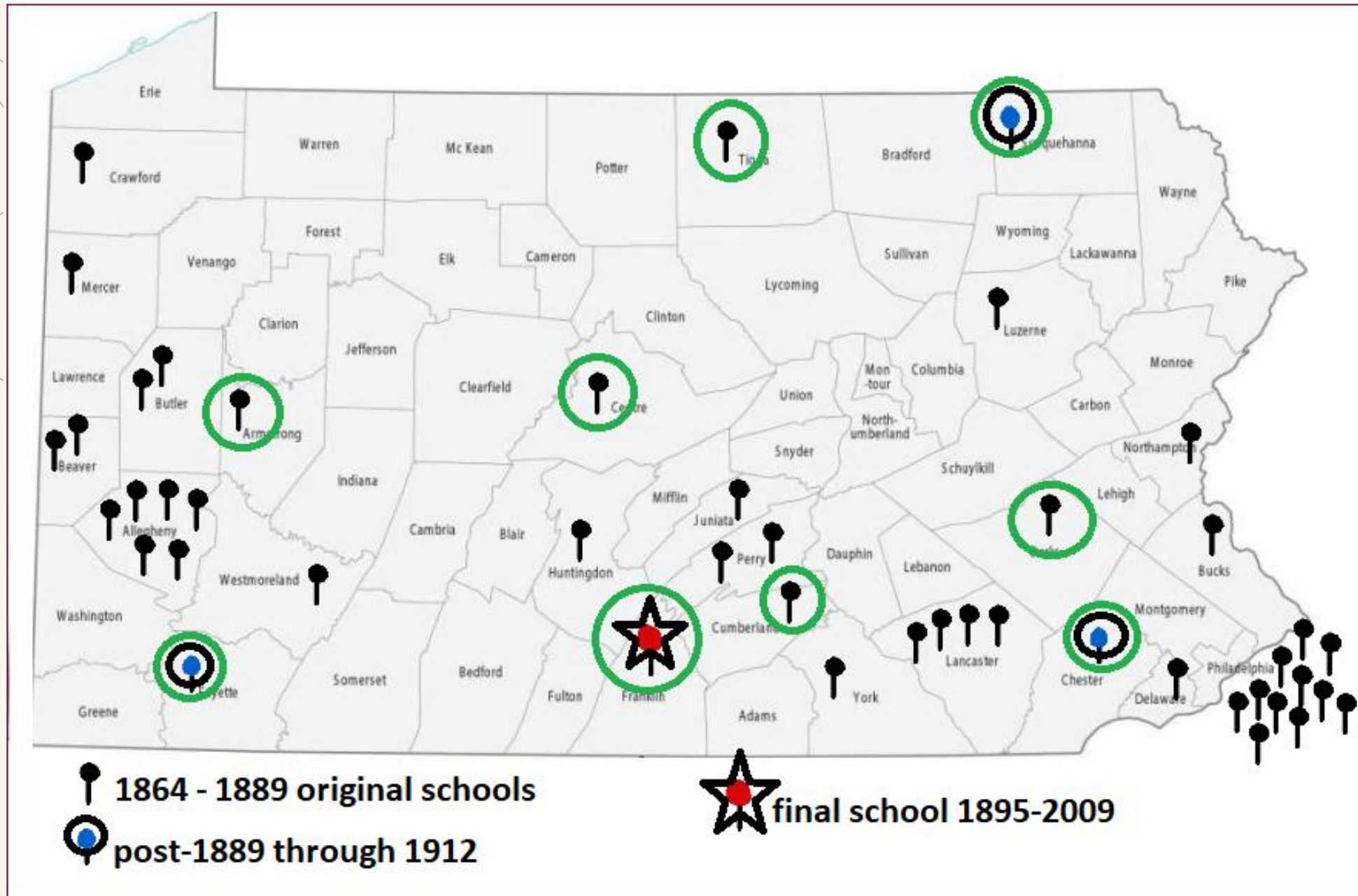
Generational Legacy of William Peck, Jr.

But in the case of the Soldiers' Orphan Schools, started by Governor Curtin, it's the state of Pennsylvania that provided for the children of its veterans, breathing life into them and giving them a chance at life, something their parents couldn't do but were grateful for this opportunity.

In my estimation, Pennsylvania can – and should – pin a medal upon its own chest [tap heart]. In military terms, this is called a “Unit Citation” [tap right breast].

But the program is a little-known piece of Pennsylvania history.

Locations/Schools that I've visited



Locations/Schools that I've visited

I've been traveling the state to visit remnants of the Orphan Schools program.

The green circles are the locations I've been to and have spoken to the historical societies. Several have original buildings and Museums which are very nice and some just have a memorial marking the location plus some artifacts.

Scotland School has a very nice Museum, but sadly, it's all in storage.

All of these locations have good-hearted people trying to keep the story alive, as am I.

The Origin is still remembered, and honored



Posted on the Scotland Alumni Facebook page
Oct 13, 2025

The Origin is still remembered, and honored

Now let me bring it full circle, from the “younger” grads of the 90’s, back to the Civil War.

This picture was recently posted on the Scotland Alumni Facebook site by one of the 1996 grads, originally from Philadelphia.

The post encapsulates the vision of the Soldiers’ Orphan Schools program and the appreciation for this program by the graduates who are intimately connected to the origins of this program - - -

Now I’m going to read a portion of it, but the entire post is good -

The Origin is still remembered, and honored

“Scotland School for Veterans Children stood as a living monument to freedom built on the courage and sacrifice of Union soldiers who fought the Confederates and gave their lives to end slavery and the evil of racism.”

“Scotland was never just a school – it was a promise that the next generation would rise educated, strong and united against the very injustices their ancestors died to defeat”.

“We remember why Scotland was opened - to honor those who fought for freedom and to ensure that their children carried that light forward”.

And it's not just Scotland School – it's all the schools, many of whom had reunions for many years - Chester Springs, Harford, White Hall in Camp Hill, Jumonville, and I'm sure others.



Robb Aviry

October 13 at 6:26 AM · 🌐

🇺🇸 Scotland School: Born From the Courage of Union Soldiers Who Fought the Confederates, Slavery, and Racism

Scotland School for Veterans' Children stood as a living monument to freedom — built on the courage and sacrifice of Union soldiers who fought the Confederates and gave their lives to end slavery and confront the evil of racism.

When the Civil War ended, many of these heroes never returned home. They left behind sons and daughters who carried both the pain of loss and the pride of liberty hard-won. To honor their sacrifice, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania established Scotland School for Veterans' Children in 1895 — originally created for the orphans of Union soldiers who fought to preserve the Union and abolish slavery.

Every lesson taught, every uniform worn, and every graduate who walked across that stage carried forward the same spirit of justice and equality their fathers fought for.

Scotland was never just a school — it was a promise that the next generation would rise educated, strong, and united against the very injustices their ancestors died to defeat.

☞ We remember why Scotland was opened — to honor those who fought for freedom and to ensure their children carried that light forward.

**Posted on the Scotland Alumni Facebook page
Oct 13, 2025**

📖 Historical Note

Scotland School was part of the Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphans Industrial School System, founded after the Civil War to educate and care for the children of Union veterans who gave their lives in the fight against the Confederacy. The Scotland campus officially opened in 1895 in Franklin County, Pennsylvania. Over time, it evolved to serve the children of all U.S. military veterans — but its roots remain forever tied to the nation's struggle to end slavery and uphold equality!

@everyone🔒 Scotland School for Veterans' Children

ROBB AVERY, 1992 (PHILADELPHIA) US AIR FORCE MASTER SERGEANT (E-8, 24 YEARS)

"Scotland played a transformative role in my life, helping me defy the odds, overcome socioeconomic challenges, and reshape my future. As one of eight children raised in the East Falls Housing Projects in Philadelphia by a mother with limited education, I faced significant hurdles."



The Origin is still remembered, and honored

Here's the author of the post and his testimony, Robb Avery, Class of 1996.

He came from a very challenging environment of a single mom with 8 children.

He was very successful at Scotland School, and he recently retired from the Air Force. He's now raising 3 boys and training them in the way they should go.

I've met him and his boys in the past two years, and he is forever grateful for Scotland, and he never misses an opportunity to talk about how it shaped his life.

Centre County Courthouse



Soldiers and Sailors Memorial– Dedicated 1906

Soldiers and Sailors Memorial- Dedicated 1906

Now let me bring things full circle back to Centre County, right at the Courthouse.

When I started documenting the history of the Soldiers' Orphan Schools program, I noticed one thing when I would read or see something about this program and Governor Curtin - The author would talk about the beginning, the two orphans, and the \$50,000 from the Pa RR. They would talk about the many schools scattered across the state, but the story would typically end with "Oh, by the way, Scotland School opened in 1895"
- yet ***the program lasted for 145 years***, ending a mere 16 years ago.

So I created my tagline – ***From the beginning to the end, 1864 – 2009***, because that's the complete story, which you can see in the maps that I've shown.

Soldiers and Sailors Memorial- Dedicated 1906

My first visit to Centre County was just this past May.

I mainly came to see Governor Curtin's statue at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial. However, the first place I visited in the area was the Memorial Day statue at the Boalsburg Cemetery. It's a very touching memorial to the fallen soldiers, commemorating the first Memorial Day in 1864, depicting three grieving women.

One of my first thoughts was - 1864, hmmm. That's the year the Orphan Schools started, and the grieving women represent those who would have benefited from the schools.

Soldiers and Sailors Memorial- Dedicated 1906

I continued to look around for something that recognized the Orphan Schools program, but I didn't see anything ... at first.

Then when I came to the Civil War weekend in June, Steven Dershem, one of the Centre County Commissioners, pointed out one of the plaques at the base of Governor Curtin's statue ... which pretty much blew me away.

The Soldiers' Orphan Schools Memorial Plaque



The plaque depicts
from the beginning to
the end

- Two orphans
- Statehouse funding
- Scotland School

At the base of Governor Curtin's statue

The Soldiers' Orphan Schools Memorial Plaque

It depicts the Soldiers' Orphan Schoos Program from the beginning (the two orphans) to the end (Scotland School).

The monument was dedicated in 1906, and the designer definitely did his homework. It's a little hard to make out, but you have

- Gov Curtin with the two orphans
- He's looking to the clouds as his vision for this program and to the statehouse for funding.
- In the upper left is the iconic Administration building at Scotland, complete with the majestic center stairs, that for some reason they removed in the 40's.

The Soldiers' Orphan Schools Memorial Plaque



**Scotland School
Administration
building, complete
with center,
majestic stairs**

At the base of Governor Curtin's statue

The Soldiers' Orphan Schools Memorial Plaque

Here's a closeup of the Scotland School Administration building, complete with the center stairs.

While I like the tagline "From the Beginning to the End" with the Pa map of the schools, this plaque captures the essence of the program, from the beginning to the end, in a powerful way.

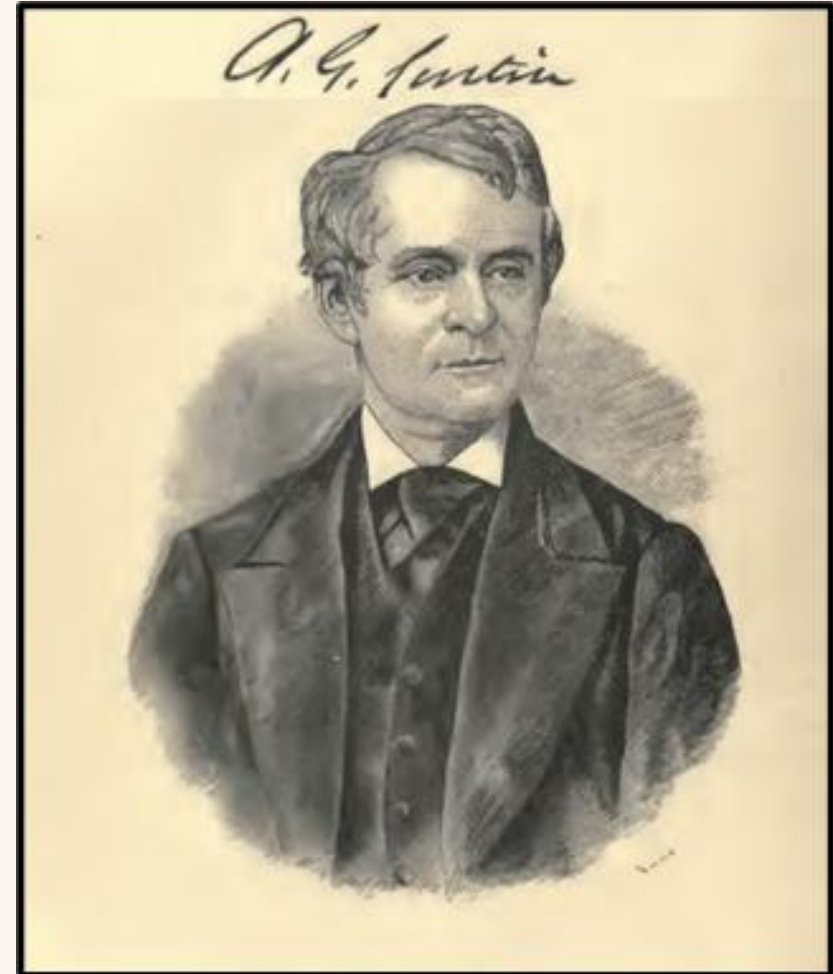
**Scotland School
Administration
building, complete
with center,
majestic stairs**

The Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools 1864-2009

**Governor Andrew Gregg Curtin
1861 - 1867**

By William Peck, Jr.

**Centre County Historical Society
November 2, 2025**



The Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools 1864-2009

I have one final story and then one final note.

My journey from Scotland School, which I knew well, back to the original program started by Governor Curtin, which I knew little about, began when I miraculously found a living relative on my paternal grandmother's side. When recently met in Queens, NY, it was like we were old friends. We had many common connections that were brought to life, and it was just great. It was very fascinating and intriguing to me.

I learned a great deal about one branch of my ancestry that I had known nothing about. Then, after recently becoming reacquainted with the Scotland Alumni, many of whom I had known as a kid, it struck me - - -

The Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools 1864-2009

I think it's fair to say that ***the Scotland Alumni are the living legacy of Gov Curtin's program.***

There are graduates and former students who are on Active Duty today! And many have retired from military service in the past 10-20 years.

If you heard their stories, you would be inspired!

And they invariably point to Scotland as the foundation – and the springboard for their success. Plus they stay connected, and supportive of each other, their entire lives, ***thanks to this Pennsylvania program.***

The Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools 1864-2009



The Soldiers' Orphan Schools existed for 60% of the time that Pennsylvania was a state, at the time that the SOS program ended in 2009.

Three timeless men contemplate the fate of the children entrusted to them

The Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools 1864-2009

So that's the story of the "**PENNSYLVANIA** Soldiers' Orphan Schools" **spanning THREE centuries 1864 – 2009.**

The previous slide is my logo – "Three Timeless Men contemplate the fate of the children entrusted to their care."

I've really enjoyed my time visiting Centre County, including Eagle Iron Works in Howard. Bellefonte has similar historical vibes as does Chambersburg, where I'm from.

Chambersburg has a great program annually in July, where they commemorate the 1864 burning of the town.

The Soldiers' Orphan Schools existed for 60% of the time that Pennsylvania was a state, at the time that the SOS program ended in 2009.

The Pennsylvania Soldiers' Orphan Schools 1864-2009

Thank you for listening, I'm very appreciative of the invite.

I hope you've learned something, and now we'll take questions.



Additional Slides

Abraham Lincoln Weighs in – 2nd inaugural



“Let us care for him
who shall have
borne the battle;
and for his widow,
and his orphan.”

Other state-sponsored Orphan Schools

- **Ohio – 1870 – 1995 (125 years)**
- **Indiana, 1865 – 2009 (144 years)**
- **Illinois 1865 – 1979 (114 years)**
- **Kansas 1866 – 1909 (43 years)**

- **Others less than 10 years, all started 1866**
 - **Wisconsin, Connecticut, New Jersey**