

Remembering Inventor-Machinist Chester Ruth and Celebrating the Cradle of Tolerance and Diversity in Southeastern Pennsylvania

Thursday, June 6, 2019

PRESENTED BY LANDIS VALLEY VILLAGE & FARM MUSEUM

This program has been made possible through a grant from the H.F. Lenfest Fund of The Philadelphia Foundation

Time: 10am--2:30pm

Location: Landis Valley Christian Fellowship (next to Landis Valley Museum)
2420 Kissel Hill Road, Lancaster, PA 17601

Admission: Free event, pre-registration required. To register please call Cindy Reedy at (717)581-0591 or go online at www.landisvalleymuseum/calendar-of-events/

Schedule:

10:00 Morning Session

Welcome by Jim McMahon, Landis Valley Museum Site Administrator

Introduction of Speakers by Bruce Bomberger, Museum Curator

Gwendolyn M. Ruth Dickinson shares a power-point presentation on her recollection of her grandfather, William Chester Ruth, as a creative mechanic and spiritual and family leader. Ruth was born in Ercildoun, Chester County, and moved by the early 20th century to Gap, Lancaster County, where he had a blacksmith and machine shop. The son of a South Carolina slave, he was by the early 1920s a well-known and capable blacksmith to the Amish, Mennonite, and other farm families of Eastern Lancaster and Western Chester Counties. His special genius for solving mechanical problems led him to design and patent a machine feeder used between the thresher and straw baler, a cinder-spreading truck, self-raising elevator, and other machines. He also followed in his father's footsteps as a lay leader of his church. Presentation includes historic images and Gwen's memories as the only surviving grandchild of Chester Ruth.

Gwen Dickinson, PAC, graduated from Hahnemann University and worked as a physician's assistant in both primary care private practice, and later, for the Veterans Administration. Since retirement, she has been an active volunteer for both her church, Mt. Zion A.M.E., Atglen, and as an organizer and presenter of health education workshops for church and community. She is an active volunteer, serving on committees and boards of several civic and non-profit organizations.

12:00 Light lunch served

1:00 Early Afternoon Session

Dr. Leroy Hopkins provides historical context for the Lancaster-Chester County area as a historical place of tolerance and opportunity, a cradle for the settlement and thriving of persons different of background but united in a desire for a place to work, worship, and thrive with their families. He will touch on the Underground Railroad and displaced African Americans, Quaker ethics and abolitionism, Pennsylvania German agricultural and work craft technology, and suggest how the interplay made this region of the state a continuing success of William Penn's experiment.

Leroy Hopkins is a retired Millersville University German professor who lived in Germany for a decade. In addition to influencing and inspiring many students, he has had a key role in establishing the African American Heritage Walking Tour in Lancaster City and is fascinated by the intersection of Pennsylvania German, African American and Quaker English folk in the Lancaster to Chester County area, including the underground railroad and the combined cultural experiences of his own family.

2:30-4:00 Mid to Late Afternoon

Landis Valley Museum Curator Bruce Bomberger will be available in the Agricultural Exhibit, Bitzer Building, on Landis Valley Museum grounds, to interpret and answer questions about three Chester Ruth machines on display: Ruth's patented baler feeder and two working models he built, a bale press and farm elevator.



William Chester Ruth



William Chester Ruth with Gwendolyn Ruth Dickinson