

Gish-Miller Residence: 120 North Market Street; Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania



Abstract:

The Gish-Miller Residence, designed by Amanda H. Gish and built in 1902, is a gorgeous, yellow brick Queen-Anne Victorian with transitional elements of the Colonial-Revival style. Amanda was the wealthy widow of Henry B. Gish who was the former operator of the Conoy Creek Mill in Elizabethtown from 1865-1899. In 1928, Amanda passed away. Since then, Harrison B. Keller, co-owner of the former Keller and Heisey stockyards – a vital organ of Elizabethtown’s cattle industry, occupied the home, along with several generations of Millers. Co-director of services, David Sekely purchased the residence in 1996 until granting the property rights to Travis Finkenbinder, the fellow co-director of services at Miller/Finkenbinder Funeral Home and Crematory today.

Property Details:

The Gish-Miller Residence, a multi-family dwelling built in 1902 by Amanda Gish, lies on 120 North Market Street in Elizabethtown. Lancaster County Recorder of Deeds cites the measurements for the perimeter at 52.95 ft. x 197.57 ft. Then, the lot contains 10,461 square feet.¹

Deed Search:

Deeds to the property date all the way back to Thomas Harris, who possessed the lot from 17 April 1747 until 15 July 1751.² The chain of command since then includes Lazarus Lowry (15 July 1751 – 13 June 1753),³ Barnabas Hughes (13 June 1753 – 10 June 1786),⁴ Samuel Hughes (10 June 1786 – 28 October 1790),⁵ Alexander Boggs (28 October 1790 – 21 February 1809),⁶ George Wealand (21 February 1809 – 10 April 1809),⁷ John George (10 April 1809 – 31 March 1830),⁸ John Bender (31 March 1830 – 19 March 1834),⁹

¹ Lancaster Property Tax Inquiry, Parcel: 2502951600000, <http://lancasterpa.devnetwedge.com/reval/view/2503951600000/2017>.

² Lancaster County Recorder of Deeds, Search Online Records, Infodex, Document, Book: LL, Page Number: 545, accessed April 25, 2017, <https://www.searchiqs.com/palan/InfodexMainMP.aspx>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Book:1, Page Number: 120.

⁸ Book: Q, Volume 5, Page Number: 53.

Thomas Winnemore (19 March 1834 – 1 April 1844),¹⁰ Henry W. Gingrich (1 April 1844 – 11 April 1855),¹¹ Andrew Wade (11 April 1855 – 14 November 1857),¹² Henry A. Wade (14 November 1857 – 2 April 1884),¹³ Martin G. Keller (2 April 1884 – 4 August 1902),¹⁴ Amanda Gish (4 August 1902 – 28 March 1929),¹⁵ Harrison B. Keller (28 March 1929 – 27 August 1957),¹⁶ father and son Frank S. and Russell Miller (27 August 1957 – 27 October 1967),¹⁷ mother and son Erma G. and Harry C. Miller (27 October 1967 – 5 October 1984),¹⁸ Frank S. Miller (5 October 1984 – 8 November 1990),¹⁹ friends Erma G. and Elizabeth A. Miller (8 November 1990 – 2 February 1996),²⁰ David T. Sekely (2 February 1996 – 17 May 2012),²¹ and most recently Finkenbinder Properties, LLC.²²

Architectural Style:

Amanda Gish, wealthy widow of Henry Gish, well known enough to merit her own entry into the Biographical Annals of Lancaster County, constructed this two and one-half story yellow-brick building in 1902. The August 1902 specifications for 120 N. Market Street were as follows:

The house requires Indiana limestone sills on the east, front, and north sides. Brick walls are to be laid up between 2 lines, having a bond course every 24" in height. The mortar is to be made of clean, sharp sand and fresh burned lime. Flooring is to be pine, less than three or three and a half inches wide – the narrower boards to go in the more important rooms. Inside shutters for front and bay windows should have solid panels sawn in two parts in height, with four small panels in middle shutters and the others solid. Wood finish on shutters must match the finish of their rooms.²³

In June 1987, the Elizabethtown Historical Society presented four site award plaques during the community's Arts on the Square summer festival. The criteria the buildings/houses fit were 75+ years old, in good repair, architectural integrity, and local significance of the architect or owners. Discontinued newspaper, *NorthWest Extra*, described the Gish-Miller Residence in an article titled "Etown Awards Historic Honors to 4 Buildings."²⁴

Although of Queen Anne Victorian styling, the structure has a suggestion of classical balance and some classical details which make it transitional to early examples of the Colonial Revival period. Of note, are the twin towers having hexagonally-shaped cone roofs with fish scale shingles and decorative finials. Even the entry way door is decorated with an upper oval glass panel, having a garland and wreath design and a lower panel with a sunburst.

In addition, this review forgot to mention the side colonial elements of single-paned windows, with flat-arch lintels heightened by keystones. Placed in the center is a dormer, projecting outward from the house's roof. An aspect of Palladianism, influential in colonial America, allows for light to break through a central arched

⁹ Book: Q, Volume 5, Page Number: 55.

¹⁰ Book: D, Volume 6, Page Number: 45.

¹¹ Book: Y, Volume 6, Page Number: 386.

¹² Book: I, Volume 8, Page Number: 262.

¹³ Book: A, Volume 9, Page Number: 34.

¹⁴ Book: D, Volume 12, Page Number: 108.

¹⁵ Book: N, Volume 17, Page Number: 511.

¹⁶ Book: N, Volume 29, Page Number: 250.

¹⁷ Book: T, Volume 45, Page Number: 181.

¹⁸ Lancaster County Recorder of Deeds, Search Public Records, Instrument Number: 1192517, accessed April 25, 2017, <https://searchdocs.lancasterdeeds.com/countyweb/disclaimer.do>.

¹⁹ Instrument Number: 3117539.

²⁰ Instrument Number: 3572817.

²¹ Instrument Number: 486600346.

²² Instrument Number: 5999419.

²³ "Gish-Miller House, 120 North Market Sreety," Historic Plaque Award, Elizabethtown Historical Society.

²⁴ "Etown Awards Historic Honors to 4 Buildings," *Northwest EXTRA*, July 1, 1987, accessed April 25, 2017, Elizabethtown Historical Society.

window with its own small roof.²⁵ Another unique characteristic of the house is the wrap-around porch, with neoclassical Tuscan Order columns raised on pedestals to the level of the porch railing;²⁶ the porch roof with a finely-toothed cornice.

The house, structure by itself, makes up a total of 5, 663 sq. ft. The living area is 3,310 sq. ft., basement 1392 sq. ft., and all porches, decks, and breezeways totaling 961 sq. ft.²⁷ On the inside, there are four bedrooms, two bathrooms, antique-finished oak reception hall, white-enameled poplar parlor, small-grained chestnut dining room, and an original oak stairway. The original brick-lined fireplace, faced with red pressed-brick laid in brown mortar, allowed for heating by coal-fired hot water or steam. However, it is no longer functional today. All other features today remain true to Gish' floor plan; the carefully designed doors, woodwork, molding, interior shutter with louvers; decorative arches in the tower windows. Originally, for the exterior portion, three coats of Sherman-Williams white or Buck lead and linseed oil were applied.²⁸

Historical Context and Purpose:

Thomas Harris sailed for America in 1726 from County Donegal, Ireland, marrying fellow shipmate Mary McKinney shortly after both families settled in Lancaster County.²⁹ Harris, one of the first white settlers to stake claims in the area, traded with the Conoy and Paxton Indians, among other tribes. In 1730, he assembled a log cabin close to the Conoy Creekside, to serve as a trading post.³⁰ Later, in 1745, he built a stone foundation for the existing Sign of the Bear Tavern; the former structure serving as a smith shop.³¹ Harris sent a petition to the County Court in August 1736, applying for a license to sell beer and hard cider. Two years later, the County Court authorized him to keep the public house.³² Thinking of his fellow tradesmen, he also called for a public road to be built over their well-worn path, which would dramatically increase the efficiency of their practice. In 1738, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania built a road from Lancaster to Harrisburg, going through Elizabethtown on Market Street.³³ Also, referred to as the Harrisburg Pike or PA Route 230, all travelers on their way passed the oldest-structure in the present Borough of Elizabethtown, situated on the corner of North Market and West Hummelstown St. In 1747, anticipating the French and Indian War, Harris became the captain of the Associated Regiment of the West End of Lancaster County on the Susquehanna River.³⁴

Lazarus Lowry, arriving from Ireland in 1729, was recommended by the Governor of Pennsylvania, John Penn, to the County Court as a licensed Indian trader.³⁵ Lowry had close business associations with Joseph Simmons of Lancaster and through him contact with important Philadelphia firms.³⁶ In Ohio, Lowry worked to counteract French influence among Indian tribes on the frontier. A French commanding officer at Detroit went as far as to request a reward for his scalp.³⁷ Upon purchasing the Sign of the Bear Tavern in 1751, Lowry leased the tavern to Barnabas and Elizabeth Waters Hughes until selling it to the couple in 1753.³⁸

Barnabas Hughes emigrated from County Donegal Ireland in 1748, taking title to a house and lot on West Lime Street at Lancaster in 1749.³⁹ Hughes became business partners with Quaker merchant and Brewer Isaac Whitelock of Philadelphia. Whitelock was a representative of the Philadelphia firm, Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan.⁴⁰ The Sign of the Bear Tavern marked the starting point for packhorse trains and trade goods

²⁵ Will Jones, How to Read Houses: A crash course in domestic architecture (Brighton, U.K.: The Ivy Press Limited, 2013), 39.

²⁶ Jones, 175.

²⁷ Lancaster Property Tax Inquiry, Parcel: 2503951600000.

²⁸ "Gish-Miller House, 120 North Market Street," Historic Plaque Award, Elizabethtown Historical Society.

²⁹ Richard K. Macmaster, Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries (Elizabethtown, PA: Elizabethtown Historical Society, 1999), 5.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Westafer (February 10, 1977), 84.

³² MacMaster, 5.

³³ Jean-Paul Benowitz, Historic Elizabethtown Pennsylvania: A Walking Tour (Elizabethtown, PA: Elizabethtown College, 2015), 5.

³⁴ Ibid., 4.

³⁵ MacMaster, 5.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 17.

³⁸ Benowitz, 5.

³⁹ MacMaster, 19.

⁴⁰ Benowitz, 5.

brought from Philadelphia.⁴¹ In addition, as Commissary Captain, Hughes assembled soldiers and supplies to furnish Forts Hunter and Swatara in the French and Indian's war onset. Although he moved back to Baltimore in 1761, Hughes divided 300 acres surrounding the Sign of the Bear Tavern, on the Conoy Creek, into lots measuring 60 feet wide by 165 feet deep. The lots were laid out in a central diamond; Hughes named the village 'Elizabeth Towne', presumably after his wife, Elizabeth. Hughes inserted the names Market and High for the two streets which converged at Diamond Square, and called the side alleys Cherry, Peach, and Rose.⁴²

Samuel Hughes, the second son of Barnabas Hughes, began his successful business career at the early age of 20. Acquiring half of his late father's iron furnace in Washington County, Maryland, he traveled to London to try to raise capital for the enterprise. Politically, Hughes served as delegate to the Maryland state convention in 1776 and as state senator from 1781-1790. Hughes put his iron works at service for Congress, yielding heavy artillery for the nation's young army. Profits from cannon casting enabled Hughes to pay off British investors with interest and buy out his brothers' share of their father's Pennsylvania real estate. In July 1786, Daniel, John, and Barnabas Hughes sold two tracts of land in Donegal and Mt. Joy Township to Samuel for 1500 pounds; 252-acre tract with the Bear Tavern and 145 adjacent acres.⁴³

Alexander Boggs of Donegal Township bought the Sign of the Bear Tavern, renaming it the Black Bear Tavern, and all of the tract bordering Elizabethtown on the northwest as far as High Street, from Samuel Hughes on 28 October 1790.⁴⁴ Although he owned the Bear and adjacent farmland, Boggs lived in a two-story log building nearby, measuring 30 ft. x 25 ft. with a log kitchen; Caleb Thornberry was his tenant who remained in the Bear, according to documents in 1798.⁴⁵ In 1801, the Bear had a "large two-story stone house, log barn, stone shed, stone stable, and smith's shop."⁴⁶ An interesting fact; Pennsylvania Governor Thomas McKean nominated Boggs as Justice of Peace for the County of Lancaster in 1801, to which the latter accepted. Boggs leased both the tavern and farm to John Wolfley, during his time of ownership.

George Wealand purchased the Bear and 238 acres of land from Alexander Boggs. He kept the Black Bear Tavern for himself until 1816, selling the tavern and 132 additional acres to John Redsecker in 1817.⁴⁷ Upon buying land, Wealand had building lots surveyed along the east side of Market St.; lots valued at only \$30 an acre in 1815.⁴⁸ Involved in civic affairs, Redsecker served on the Borough Council from 1866-68 and 1871-73.⁴⁹ Wealand died in 1816, leaving his widow and ten children behind. Today, he is buried in a cemetery at Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Elizabethtown.⁵⁰ The Miller/Finkenbinder Funeral Home & Services on 130 N. Market St., is a monument to his legacy. Wealand built the home in 1815. In 1809, Wealand leased the land, presently 120 North Market Street, to his son-in-law John George, an elected deacon of the German reformed church and active member of the congregation.⁵¹ He was among three individuals, to which a lot was dedicated in Elizabethtown "for the building of an English school house."⁵² George went on to serve on the first public school board.

Andrew Wade became the next prominent gentleman of Elizabethtown to acquire the deed. Following in the footsteps of his father, Wade performed the tasks of a shoemaker. In 1831, Wade served as Burgess of the Borough.⁵³ The movement to carve Monroe County out of Lancaster, Dauphin, and Lebanon County(s), and establish Elizabethtown as the county seat, led to a meeting on the evening of 13 February 1832, in John McLaughlin's farm. Wade performed the duties of secretary. He then acted as principal contractor, one of many, responsible for the construction of a single railroad line from Lancaster to Harrisburg, beginning in 1834. Uneven terrain between Elizabethtown and Rheems, however, demanded a tunnel be built which was another

⁴¹ MacMaster, 19.

⁴² Benowitz, 5.

⁴³ MacMaster, 47-48.

⁴⁴ Benowitz, 5.

⁴⁵ MacMaster, 54.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁴⁷ MacMaster, 60.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 68.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 303-304.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 80.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 303.

process entirely.⁵⁴ During this time, he remained active in St. Peter's Church, serving as treasurer during its expansion in 1834, which doubled the seating capacity of the original stone building. With the rise of the Whig Party and presence of anti-Masonic sentiment in Lancaster County, Wade was elected as a Whig member of the state legislature in 1847.⁵⁵ Locally, he served as president of the Union Fire Company, resigning in 1858 to facilitate reorganization of the Friendship Fire Company.⁵⁶ One unique note about Wade – In his will, he granted all his clothes to the poor of Elizabethtown. For his service to the church and community, the stain-glass window in St. Peter's parish is in memory of Wade.⁵⁷

Henry Wade, born in 1827 to Andrew and Christina Wade, attended two prestigious academic institutions of the time in Georgetown College and Harvard University. Upon graduating, he passed his bar exams in Lancaster and became Elizabethtown's only practicing attorney in 1859. Like his father, he became Burgess of Elizabethtown in 1859, going on to serve on the council from 1872-76 and 1878-80.⁵⁸ Henry took an active role in Lancaster County politics. In fact, he was one of the few guests invited to a small farewell dinner for President-Elect James Buchanan. The dinner, in February 1857, took place at St. Mary's Catholic Church of Lancaster.⁵⁹ Following the election of Buchanan's successor, Abraham Lincoln, the southern states declared secession from the Union – leading to the American Civil War. As enforcer of the quota put in place during the Civil War, the Borough Council authorized Wade to obtain recruits to reach the necessary number. The Council promised a \$300 bonus for enlisting and had an obligation to find 17 men. Wade borrowed \$5,100 from the neighbor Mt. Joy Bank to provide for the costs. When Robert E. Lee's Army of North Virginia crossed the Potomac River, federal forces feared an invasion of Pennsylvania. Governor Curtin called for Captain Henry A. Wade's company to join the 16th state militia.⁶⁰ Outside of the military, Wade adopted the constitution for the Friendship Fire Company, served as Director for the Elizabethtown School Board, and presided over the Elizabethtown Centennial Celebration.⁶¹ Wade and his father before him, lived in the Wealand residence – using the Bear Tavern for Tenant housing.

Martin G. Keller operated a stockyard, buying, and selling cattle, horses, and mules.⁶² As recollected in the Westafer's reflections, the yards' drovers at Keller & Heisey Stockyard on North Market St., would drive a small herd of 12, 15, or 20 cattle from the stockyard to Lancaster and or/points between. The herd was driven down Market Street, through Center Square, and down the Harrisburg Pike, as far as Lancaster. The drovers walked with the herd carrying a cane or small pole to poke any animal back into the herd if they decided to wander away. He bought the dilapidated Bear Tavern from Henry Wade, in addition to the acreage along the west side of N. Market St. Once, an area farmer purchased four hogs from Keller and Heisey for slaughter. Rather than simply shoot them, he jumped into the pen at the stockyard, chasing down the hogs until he got one after the other with a lethal double-edged sticking knife, severing their jugular veins.⁶³ It is now understood, why this old industry no longer exists within borough limits. Keller served on the Board of Directors for the Elizabethtown National Bank and was an active member of the Elizabethtown Business Men's Association.⁶⁴

Henry B. Gish and Miss Amanda Herr were married in Lancaster in December 1863; to them were born 9 children. Henry B. was born in West Donegal township on 12 October 1834 and died on 24 September 1897, laid to rest in Mt. Tunnel cemetery. John S. Gish, Henry's father, operated a grist mill from 1845-1860. Jacob Gish, the paternal grandfather of Henry, was a prominent man in his day, and had much to do with the early industries of Elizabethtown. In 1826, as state legislator Jacob Gish authored a bill detaching Donegal, Mount Joy, and Rapho Townships from Lancaster County. Gish proposed the creation of Conewago County with Elizabethtown as county seat.⁶⁵ Henry spent his boyhood and youth on the farm, and when he was 27 years old

⁵⁴ MacMaster, 83-86.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 99.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 88.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 107.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 303.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 110.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 115-116.

⁶¹ Ibid., 117, 125.

⁶² Ibid., 136.

⁶³ Westafer (August 12, 1976), 28.

⁶⁴ MacMaster, 139;177.

⁶⁵ Benowitz, Images of America: Elizabethtown, 10.

entered the coal and grain business. In 1862, Henry took his father's mill in West Donegal township, operating it for 34 years, and then retiring to his late home, a handsome two-story brick, known today as the Amanda Gish Bed and Breakfast on 556 W. Bainbridge St. in Elizabethtown. One of the directors of the Exchange Bank at its organization, he was acting in the position at the time of his death. During his active years, he served as school director and auditor – a key participant in public affairs.⁶⁶ After Henry's death, Amanda built the Queen-Anne Victorian on 120 N. Market St. At the time, her daughter Addie Gish was courting Martin G. Keller. This arrangement certainly played a role in Amanda receiving the indenture. In 1908, Addie moved one door north from her mother, to live with her husband. Amanda lived in the Queen-Anne Victorian until her death in 1928.⁶⁷

Harrison Keller, like Martin, was co-owner of Keller and Heisey Stockyards on N. Market St. along the Conoy Creek, currently the vacant lot behind Rita's Italian Ice. His wife, Bertha Coble Keller, called him 'Huddy' and she called him 'Beep.' Bertha devoted her life to ensuring Harrison always returned to a clean house when he walked up the street from the stockyard for his lunch and dinner. Bertha's life was routine, filled with home-centered tasks. She went to the Reformed Church on Sundays, and her generosity made itself felt to townspeople who remember her. Her neighbor, Margaret Garber, in a 2007 summer interview with the Winter's Heritage House Museum, talked about living next door. Garber describes Bertha wearing a plain housedress with an apron over it. She grew a gigantic garden with every kind of vegetable imaginable, and had additional deliveries of eggs, milk, and flour brought to her house so she could cook from scratch. At the back of the lot was a barn, where Bertha dispatched of chickens by chopping off their heads and dipping them in scalding water and pulled out their big feathers. In her backyard, she had a table and chair to seat beggars who would come by and ask for something to eat.⁶⁸

William Miller, born in 1829, married in 1855, operated an undertaking establishment, cabinet shop, and furniture store in Elizabethtown. He was the first of his profession to operate in the area. In this day, it was required to make all the casket used by his establishment. Miller, then, was first a cabinet maker-carpenter, then an undertaker. He created a furniture shop in conjunction with the funeral parlor. The Miller sons, Harry, Frank, and George, apprenticed to the father. Frank continued the furniture store and cabinet shop on W. High Street. Beyond his trade, he served as deputy coroner, justice of peace, and telegraph operator. The Bell exchange, Independent exchange, and Western Union and Postal Telegraph systems all ran through his business. Frank's brother, Harry, built mainly on the funeral and undertaking aspect, moving the parlor to S. Market St. Harry had a son, the second Frank in the family, who continued the funeral home at the S. Market St. location for some years until he acquired the Gish and Wealand residences on N. Market St., which he converted into a combination dwelling and funeral home. Like the Frank before him, Frank also served as deputy coroner. Frank Miller and his son, Russell, operated the funeral home following the move. Then ownership changed hands to Frank S. Miller, son of Russell, representing the fifth generation of Millers to conduct the funeral and undertaking services in Elizabethtown.⁶⁹

David Sekely, carrying on the legacy of the Millers as the funeral home's sixth director, purchased the Gish-Miller Residence in 1996. In 2012, the property rights were granted from David Sekely to Travis Finkenbinder, co-director of services at Miller/Finkenbinder Funeral Home & Crematory.⁷⁰ After further investigation, the Finkenbinder family operates a total of four funeral homes; Elizabethtown, Marietta, Middletown, and Palmyra. The Finkenbinder family also run a Limited Liability Company (LLC), Finkenbinder Properties, LLC. Since its inception in 2012, the LLC has purchased five properties in Elizabethtown alone. The main reason people set up LLCs is to protect themselves from litigation. An LLC shields the person and their property; only their assets could come under consideration in the case of a lawsuit. Finkenbinder Properties, LLC. does not have a website set up, and there is no further information regarding the company's mission. This is a large-scale real estate investment; one of the most safe and secure methods for renting a household.

⁶⁶ J.H. Beers, *Biographical Annals of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania* (Lancaster: J.H. Beers & Co., 1903), 459.

⁶⁷ "Gish-Miller House, 120 North Market Street," Elizabethtown Historical Society.

⁶⁸ Margaret Garber Steever, interview by author, Elizabethtown, Summer 2007, accessed April 25, 2017, <http://www.elizabethtownhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/6-2016-Newsletter.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Westafer (January 20, 1977), 74-76.

⁷⁰ "About Us," Miller/Finkenbinder Funeral Homes & Crematory, accessed April 25, 2017, <http://www.millerfuneralhome.com/about-us>.

With the Section 106 review complete, it is astonishing how the gradual development of the town can be unfolded through deed research, public records, and constant inquiry with local historians. Through centuries of changing demographics, evolving industry, and technological advancement, the most remarkable takeaway can be found in how little the character of the town has changed. Therefore, it is the duty of people – to the best of their ability – to preserve the town’s uniqueness.

Appendix Current Photos:



