

History of the Elizabethtown Community Park

In 1950, the Elizabethtown Area Chamber of Commerce founded and donated the park to the Borough.¹ The Borough is currently still in control of the park and keeps up readily with its maintenance.² The Borough continues its search of funds to pay for the maintenance and improvement of the property.³ On June 21, 1932, the idea of a community park was introduced.⁴ In 1951, the idea became a reality, and the Borough Council acknowledged the property, created an Ordinance which crafted the park, and selected the first Park Commission members.⁵ The property on which the park now stands was originally owned by Anna Mary Kalbach.⁶

On 21 June 1932, "Chamber members T.H. Ebersole, S.G. Hershey, DH Martin, J.N. Olweiler, and Ira Risser introduce park project to Borough Council on land previously owned by Anna Mary Kalbach."⁷ On 21 November 1950, "Chamber President, Ray Miller, donates the Park to the Borough. On 19 June 1951, "Council adopts ordinance creating the Elizabethtown Community Park and appoints the first Park Commission Members; Mary Chronister, RF Clemens, Paul Herr, J. Edwin Hershey, Wilbur Weaver."⁸ 21 June 1951, "Grantors named in the ordinance creating the park and accepting the donation include JK Garman, Levi C. Hershey, SR Hershey, JN Olweiler, and IH Stauffer."⁹

Park improvements included: implementation of a comfort station, setting out paths and walkways, the making of a softball field, and grading for shelters and pavilions.¹⁰ They also did some underground work with the water and sewer lines.¹¹ In 1952, Ray Miller donated flood lights, and the Girl Scouts donated a flagpole.¹² The Borough has continued to make restorations to the park, of which include: stream bank improvement, pathway restoration, and playset upgrades.¹³

Frey Meyer and Burgess Aymiller were permitted to request to use the vacant lot on South Poplar Street for use of the community park.¹⁴ Kalbach later transferred the property for the Borough to use.¹⁵ The committee had first requested one hundred dollars to upkeep the park, however, the Chamber did not have the sufficient funds to provide them with so much money.¹⁶ A few people appealed to the Committee an idea that seemed reasonable; to lease the park for ten years.¹⁷ They then realized they would have needed a budget of about five-hundred dollars, and decided to appeal to the federal government, however, they had to reach the requirements of the Public Works Division.¹⁸ The Rotary Club petitioned in order for the Borough to receive aid from the Federal Government, and then came to the conclusion that their aid should not exceed five-hundred dollars.¹⁹ This aid was to be put toward the cost for materials, tools, and repairs.²⁰ The WPA ended up agreeing to their new request of two-thousand dollars.²¹ Ray Miller, who was the President of the Chamber of Commerce, and after the park

¹ *Elizabethtown Community Park A Brief History* (Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania): 2.

² *Ibid.* 2.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.* 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.* 5.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.* 10.

was clear of debt, he turned it over to the Borough as a gift.²²

On 17 June 1930, Edgar R. Herr was seconded by J.K. Freymeyer to be permitted to offer the Chamber of Commerce the utilization of the empty lot possessed by the Borough on South Poplar Street for a children's playground.²³ On 21 June two years later, Messrs J.N. Olweiler, Ira Risser, T.H. Ebersole, S.G. Hershey, and D.H. Martin on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce made their appearances before the Council and rendered the developed plan for buying a piece of land within the Borough for use of a future park site.²⁴ They explained to the Council that an opportunity to purchase the 13 acres of land from Anna Mary Kalbach, has come about and with time, could be improved.²⁵ Mrs. S.F. Hershey and Daisy Kline expressed their support on behalf of the Business and Professional Women's Club, along with other organizations.²⁶ On the same day, Frank Breneman, seconded by Herr, ordered that the secretary respond to the local Chamber of Commerce commend their efforts to purchase the land, however inform them that the Borough, at that time, was not able to afford to assist their project.²⁷ On 17 August later that year, Anna Mary Kalbach transferred the property to the Trustees for use of by the Citizens and Borough of Elizabethtown.²⁸ On 19 September 1933, Ira L. Risser (Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Park) read a message in which entailed a request for support in developing the park and the playgrounds.²⁹ The motion was put into place by Allen A. Hertzler, and seconded by Harry Rohrer; the message was understood and the secretary was told to acknowledge it as such.³⁰ About a year later, on 14 May 1934, L.C. Hershey's message requested of the Council to donate to the park and playground a used terra cotta pipe that had belonged to a Market Street contractor Swanger.³¹ Harry Rohrer was seconded by Allen A. Hertzler to donate the twelve inch pipe and was removed from the lot free of expense to the Borough.³²

On 19 February 1935, the Chamber of Commerce communicated that the funds for the park had been spent and requested of the council \$100 for work and improvements that the park was needed for.³³ The Council was not able to offer the money due to previous budget cuts.³⁴ Later that year on 16 April, representatives of the Chamber of Commerce (I.H. Stauffer, J.N. Olweiler, L.C. Hershey, Ira Reisser, Wayne Aungst, and J.H. Buch) made their appearances before the council multiple times requesting of the council to completely consider their proposal to lease to the Elizabethtown Borough the park and playgrounds for a ten year period.³⁵ Reason being to meet the requirements of the Public Works Division to apply for Federal aid in improving this project.³⁶ The primary renovations were grading the athletic fields, tennis courts, excavating the pool and walkways, and dredging the lake, which would've cost the Borough between \$300 and \$500 dollars.³⁷ President Hess of the council had ordered a committee of council to construct and devise a plan for said needed improvements to the park.³⁸ Ten days later, the area's Rotary Club had been convincing Elizabethtown's Borough council to go through the steps to receive financial aid from the Federal Government in order to improve and shape the park.³⁹ As a result of this meeting, the Borough was permitted to apply to the Public Works Administration for financial aid for an athletic complex, sidewalk grading, tennis court grading, and draining for the pond.⁴⁰ However, the costs of these projects were not to exceed five hundred dollars.⁴¹ Later that year, on 17 September, Councilman Rohrer

²² Ibid. 11.

²³ Ibid. 7.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid. 8.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

explained that plans from Harrisburg have been collected and they portray grading plans for an athletic complex and tennis courts.⁴² A few days prior to the 17 September, L.C. Hershey, J.N. Olweiler, and Rohrer interviewed C.A.B. Zook, who was the District Director of the Works Progress Administration and Lancaster, so the application for financial aid could be thoroughly completed.⁴³

By 18 February 1936, not many improvements for the park had been drafted; only about seventy dollars' worth had been completed.⁴⁴ For the third time, the Appropriation Ordinance had been explained.⁴⁵ Everyone agreed in favor of the funds for advancement of the park except for H.E. Ream, who was not in favor of the money being spent on that of the park project.⁴⁶

On 21 April 1936, J.N. Olweiler had been informed the WPA had accepted and agreed to cover the costs of the labor forces for the park project.⁴⁷ President Herr, along with the treasurer of the Borough had signed the proper contracts to carry out the plan.⁴⁸ By next year on 4 January, the Chamber of Commerce had come before Council and requested approval of a new project for improvement of the park which would have cost two thousand dollars.⁴⁹ This suggested project included "labor for excavation of a pond site, grading for walkways, and terracing on the park grounds."⁵⁰ Upon this meeting, it had been agreed that the project was approved, however, the Borough would not reciprocate any funds other than the use of their truck, and Council would sponsor the project and the WPA would cover the labor costs.⁵¹ The next week, some engineers were expected to arrive to work on the park, however, they never arrived.⁵² After this, it was ordered the Borough's truck had been ordered to tow dirt from the park to the fill on North Spruce Street.⁵³ Hess, Fisher, and Hertzler were in favor, and Ream opposed.⁵⁴ On 21 September 1937, the Elizabethtown Water Company had announced they were running a water line to the Comfort Station, which at that point in time, had been under construction.⁵⁵ Hershey requested the charge on the location of the ditch in which they were going to place the water line be cleared, and it had been ordered so.⁵⁶

On 17 November 1942, Messers, Stauffer, and Garman, Trustees of the Park and Playgrounds Association, had requested of the council to increase their appropriation from one hundred and fifty dollars to four hundred and fifty dollars.⁵⁷ After two years, on 20 June, Mr. Olweiler pondered whether or not the park needed a new ground flooring.⁵⁸ On 19 March of 1946, Burgess had requested of the Council to use the lot purchased from Mary Reese to use for playing baseball.⁵⁹ The next year, on 21 January, Burgess explained that as soon as the lot is able to be prepared for a ball field, it would be done and prepared so.⁶⁰ By 20 May of 1947, Olweiler had explained that the ground itself was too wet to be prepared into a softball field, and so, no work had been done at that point in time.⁶¹ Two months later, on 22 July, Burgess also explained that there were many complaints about to weeds and thistles on uncultivated lots, some of which belonged to the Park.⁶² On 15 June 1948 Hartman, who was seconded by Groff, ordered the committee to get permission from the owners of the property to construct a

⁴² Ibid. 9.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid. 10.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid. 11.

⁶² Ibid.

storm sewer line through their properties from East Park Street to the creek.⁶³ The owners of the land had been Isiah Bashore, Frank Spickler, Walter Frey, and Parks and Playgrounds.⁶⁴

On 21 November 1950, Ray Miller, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, and explained that the community park, was at this point, vindicated of their debt, and that it was time to turn it over to the Borough Council.⁶⁵ He also wanted to transfer the authority of the park to an appointed Park Commission, as he believed it would better improve and care for the park.⁶⁶ A few months later, on 20 February, of 1951, Mueller discussed the name of the park, and what it would be referred to as.⁶⁷ He also explained he believed he park would be much better off being cared for by appointing a recreation board of which would consist of five people who would serve terms of five years.⁶⁸ The next month, The Chamber of Commerce admitted they were afraid to complete the transaction so the Borough Council would have enough time to prepare the park for the summer.⁶⁹ They gave a list of citizens who they recommended to serve on the park commission.⁷⁰ The Chamber of Commerce also transferred remaining funds for improvements to the park.⁷¹

About a month later, on 17 April 1951, the deeds had been prepared for the next meeting.⁷² It had been suggested Mueller prepare the contracts for administration of the park, which included the manners through which they would go about selecting a park commission; it was recommended they go through the school board with their recommendations in regard to this commission.⁷³ On 15 May 1951, Ray Miller, before council on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, explained the deeds were, at that point, completed and were ready to be recorded.⁷⁴ He also explained there were over one thousand dollars in the park fund by which the Chamber of Commerce is prepared to put towards the park's improvement.⁷⁵ On this same day, Hartman explained there was a lot of improvements and work that had to be completed at the park, after which Groff recommended council meets at the park to visually see and understand the improvements which had to be made.⁷⁶ Proctor explained he had gotten in touch with several people about serving on the park commission of which two people had agreed and he would recommend them to the council.⁷⁷ The ordinance to accept the park was read and favored.⁷⁸ On 19 June 1951, Proctor explained he had contacted several people about serving on the commission, and of the ones who agreed were none other than Herr, Weaver, Clemens (all for three years,) Hershey (two years,) and Chronister (one year.)⁷⁹ The motion was accepted and they were to be sworn in on June 25 at 8:00.⁸⁰ On 21 June 1951, the ordinance was drafted, "An Ordinance Establishing a recreation place for the citizens of the Borough of Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to be known as "Elizabethtown Community Park." Be it Ordained and Enacted by the Borough Council of the Borough of Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and it is hereby ordained as follows:

Section 1. There is hereby dedicated to the public use as a recreation place which shall hereafter be known by the name "Elizabethtown Community Park", so much of the land now owned by the Borough of Elizabethtown of Elizabethtown, lying in the said Borough of Elizabethtown, as was acquired by a deed between Levi C. Hershey, S. R. Hershey, J. K. Garman, J. N. Olweiler, and I. H. Stauffer, grantors, and Borough of Elizabethtown, Grantee, dated February 20, 1951.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 12.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Section 2. The development and management of “Elizabethtown Community Park” is hereby rested in a Recreation Board, as provided by the Act of Assembly.

Section 3. The said Recreation Board shall consist of five members, of whom at least four shall be citizens of the Borough of Elizabethtown.

Section 4. The said Recreation Board shall have no power to pledge the credit of the Borough of Elizabethtown nor to make any contracts, agreements or commitments whatsoever, which may be binding upon the Borough of Elizabethtown.

Section 5. The use by the citizens of the Borough of Elizabethtown and its vicinity, of “Elizabethtown Community Park” shall be regulated and controlled by the Recreation Board hereinbefore mentioned subject, nevertheless, to the rights of the Borough of Elizabethtown.

Ordained and Enacted this 21st day of June A. D. 1951 John G. Groff, President of Council.”⁸¹

On 10 July of 1951, the park commission held a meeting, and everyone attended except for Chronsiter.⁸² At the meeting, Mueller explained the commission should be given enough authority to improve the park and truly feel as though they are making a change.⁸³ He did not fail to mention the commission was a subgroup under the Borough and can only act through their agent, and the Borough should be consulted when changes to the park are to be made.⁸⁴

On 17 July 1951, Herr, who was the president of the Park Commission, came before the council with multiple desires.⁸⁵ He requested they be given the borough’s appropriation for the park, as well as speed limit signs (fifteen mph) be put into place, repair the sewer line, and to fix the drainage of the water which was running down from the alley above the bathrooms.⁸⁶ The motion was passed, and it was also introduced that a flag pole and flood lights had been donated; this motion was also approved.⁸⁷ On 21 August, 1951, President Herr had explained he commission requesting through the Department of Interior to place a wading pool within in the park’s stream.⁸⁸ He also explained the area would first be carefully examined and prepared for such a project.⁸⁹ He also requested of council to repair the sewer lines which run through the stream because Council wishes to build a bridge over the stream, however, they would need the balance in their appropriation.⁹⁰ Within two months, on 16 October 1951, Herr explained in order to fix the property damage that the park had underwent during Halloween, they would need the balance of their appropriation.⁹¹ This motion was approved and they were granted access to their balance.⁹²

On 15 January 1952, President Herr had explained and requested of the council an allowance for 3,995 dollars in order to repair various areas throughout the park.⁹³ He also requested the sewer lines be fixed immediately, and bring the results to the following meeting.⁹⁴ He referenced code 2703 in order to explain the money they required would have been as a result of only one and a half of the mills assessed, therefore, leaving the Borough with no funds for the next year.⁹⁵ Council referred him to contact Mueller.⁹⁶ About a month later on 19 February 1952, Mueller explained the repairs and alterations to the park should be considered only in the amount available over the three years from the mills.⁹⁷ Herr explained he needed to receive the rent, and was

⁸¹ Ibid. 13.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 14.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 15.

instructed to do so by whatever means needed.⁹⁸

On 15 April 1952, Herr's check, in regard to a zoning fee, was returned to him. On 20 May 1952, Herr explained he had not been able to find nor locate various deeds to the park, and recommended an affidavit be signed by all parties involved to prove the transaction.⁹⁹ Chronister's term had also been changed to five years as opposed to one at this time.¹⁰⁰

On 17 June 1952, Clemens had resigned from the Park commission as he had been changed to a professor and could not handle both positions.¹⁰¹ On 19 August 1952, Barnhart had been appointed a member of the commission to replace Clemens.¹⁰²

The park was established during the years through which the United States was going through the Depression.¹⁰³ Jacob Olweiler, the president of Elizabethtown Chamber of Commerce was in agreement to purchase the Kalbach land for \$4,000 for the purpose of a community park.¹⁰⁴ Prior to the Depression, the Kalbach family had planned to use the land for a residential subsection, however, they did not get a chance to carry out their plans as a result of the Depression.¹⁰⁵ This subsection had included a pond at the intersection of Mount Joy and Washington Streets, which would later be used for the purpose of cutting ice.¹⁰⁶ The plans for the park had been announced in 1932 by Olweiler.¹⁰⁷ The property was finalized when the Chamber of Commerce achieved the title to the land in 1934.¹⁰⁸ Levi and Samuel G. Hershey, Jacob Olweiler, J.K. Garman, and I.H. Stauffer had been considered trustees and were responsible for the park property.¹⁰⁹ In 1935, they bought another piece of land between South Mount Joy and South Chestnut Streets which had been dedicated as the Elizabethtown athletic field.¹¹⁰ The Works Progress Administration had been responsible for construction of the park and athletic fields between the years of 1935- 1936.¹¹¹ In 1936, the Business and Professional Women's Club built a playground for children in the Borough's park.¹¹²

Despite the community's efforts to clear the park's debt, even after various fundraising, about \$2,800 dollars in debt by 1937.¹¹³ The Chamber of Commerce, however, continued with their purchase of more land from Willis Heisey and furthered their construction of a covered pavilion.¹¹⁴ The title of the park was transferred to the Borough of Elizabethtown in 1950; up until then, the Park and Playground Committee of the Chamber of Commerce had been responsible for the park and athletic field.¹¹⁵

In an attempt to protect and secure the area for the potential park during 1931-1932.¹¹⁶ Samuel and Levi Hershey, along with Olweiler, Garman, and Stauffer, had reserved the land on behalf of the people of Elizabethtown as they had trusted them to do so.¹¹⁷ In 1950, there was a motion to turn the park over to the borough, however, there was still a debt of \$5,000 attached to the property.¹¹⁸ As a result, a fundraising drive was

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Richard K., MacMaster. Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries (Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania: Elizabethtown Historical Society, 1999): 226.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid. 226- 228.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 228.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 229.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

organized by the Rotary Club.¹¹⁹ Harry Dorsheimer donated \$1,000 to head start the funds.¹²⁰ Robert Maderia and Ray Miller supervised the fundraiser.¹²¹ Ray Miller, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, later bestowed the deed to the Borough Council in December of 1950.¹²² In 1951, a Borough Council had been created to supervise the park.¹²³

During the year of 1932 is when the park was first purchased by Elizabethtown Chamber of Commerce and Elizabethtown Business and Professional Women's Club from the Kalbach and Heisey families.¹²⁴ "The Chamber of Commerce Park and Playground Committee had administered the park and athletic field" up until 1950, when the Borough had received authority over these areas.¹²⁵ The Works Progress Administration under President Franklin DeLano Roosevelt, and the Elizabethtown Chamber of Commerce had built the park.¹²⁶ During the summer, St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church had "donated" free concerts and films to be shown in the park.¹²⁷ In 1936, St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church presented a Summer Vacation school within the park's playgrounds.¹²⁸ In 1949, the Elizabethtown Borough and its public schools began a summer playground program.¹²⁹ The program ran five days a week and had 1,250 kids signed up.¹³⁰ The park was originally a brickyard through which ice was shipped manufactured.¹³¹ The brickyard was bought by Charles B. Stephan, which was used to cut natural ice during the winter months.¹³² Stephan's Ice Pond, as it was formally known, is what was of the land which is, as of today, the Community Park.¹³³

The World War II Veterans Memorial was held in July of 1945.¹³⁴ The Elizabethtown Lions Club devoted a ceremony which honored 816 local men and women who had participated and served in the war.¹³⁵ The memorial was primarily placed at Mount Tunnel Cemetery, but was later moved to the Community Park in 1988.¹³⁶

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Jean- Paul, Benowitz. Historic Elizabethtown Pennsylvania: A Walking Tour (Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, 2017): 49.

¹²⁵ Jean- Paul, Benowitz. Images of America: Elizabethtown (Charleston, South Carolina, 2015): 31.

¹²⁶ Benowitz, Historic Elizabethtown Pennsylvania: A Walking Tour: 49.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 50.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Benowitz, Images of America: Elizabethtown: 49.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 113.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.