MONTHLY MUTUAL

A CALL FOR A DECLARATION OF INTERDEPENDNCE

BY KARL MILLER



I've been thinking about 1976 lately. It was the year I turned 18, moved to Philadelphia, and was all rosy-eyed about a bright future for myself and for our country. Vietnam and Richard Nixon were in the rear window. Technology promised a brighter future: Apple had just rolled out its first consumer product, Apple 1. Barbara Walters had broken a barrier for women by becoming the first prime-time female anchor, and Harvey Milk had become the first openly gay official of a major city as City Commissioner in San Francisco. America also celebrated its 200th anniversary, with large events that fostered a true sense of unity for a nation. It was the year I turned 18, moved to Philadelphia, and was all rosy-eyed about a bright future for myself and for our country. Vietnam and Richard Nixon were in the rear window. Technology promised a brighter future: Apple had just rolled out its first consumer product, Apple 1. Barbara Walters had broken a barrier for women by becoming the first prime-time female anchor, and Harvey Milk had become the first openly gay official of a major city as City Commissioner in San Francisco. America also celebrated its 200th anniversary, with large events that fostered a true sense of unity for a nation. So... what happened? How did a nation that once boasted "all men are created equal" (even if they were often not, as Angelica Schuyler quipped in "Hamilton") become hostile to deviations from a far-too-often minority-dictated norm. If we look back over the last 50 years, we can see clear "us v. them" moments, in each we saw one more crack - all of which play a large part in the fracture that is the United States of today. Let's start with the 1980s, and the onslaught of the AIDS epidemic. A little more than a decade post-Stonewall, in a time when the gay community could gather without threat of arrest merely because of their sexuality, the community was decimated by the spread of HIV. Instead of rallying to help the afflicted, government and religious groups spent years victim-blaming – Ronald Reagan refused to even utter the word AIDS until 1985, more than 4 years after the disease was on the WHO's radar, and religious conservatives such as Westboro Baptist Church and Repent America claimed the disease was killing "all the right people." The 1990s were the kick off of the "culture wars" - with the first shots fired by Pat Buchanan at the 1992 GOP Convention when he declared "there is a religious war going on in this country. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself, for this war is for the soul of America." Buchanan framed issues such as abortion, feminism, and secularism as a full out assault on America, and urged conservatives to go to battle for the country's soul. As we entered Y2K, an era remembered for hanging chads and the September 11 tragedy, the rapid-fire growth of the internet drove the largest schism in America's culture. Who would have thought all those free AOL CDs (which now lie in landfills) would lead to a digital Wild West, where keyboard warriors would command the attention of the world. While there is much good to be ascribed to social media, it also, as "Iron" Mike Tyson famously said, "made y'all way too comfortable

with disrespecting people and not getting punched in the face for it." In the 2010s, much of the nation's attention was captured by the murder of Trayvon Martin and the birth of "Black Lives Matter." When George Zimmerman was acquitted of the murder of Martin, a post (Alicia Garza's "A Love Note to Black People") and then a hashtag (#BlackLivesMatter), began a movement. But instead of inspiring unity in the wake of a tragic and uncalled for murder, the aftermath of the creation of BLM stirred up racial enmity across the nation. That brings us to the 2020s: what feels like a weekly assault on any remaining sense of cohesion. Whether it's the reversal of Roe v. Wade, upturning a half-century old legal decision which injected the government back into decisions made by a woman and her doctor, the demonizing of the trans community, or a cruel full assault on immigrants, our news is filled with the latest "Us vs. Them" battle. This is how we got here – now, how do we get out? Ask a majority of Americans, agree we share the same core values. A recent NBC poll showed that a majority of Americans feel there is more that unites us than divides us. How do we bridge the divide? I believe it is time for a new Declaration – of Interdependence. Interdependence – the idea that we are mutually reliant on each other. It's at the very heart of community (and note those last 5 letters in community). In being interdependent, we do not surrender our sense of individuality, nor do we simply go along to get along. A community that is built on interdependence is one where differences are respected, while at the same time we engage in and support mutual reliance. There was a time when the United States thrived, in large part because of this sense of interdependence. We had national, state, and local community goals – to facilitate safety, economic opportunity and education so that all members of the community could advance. Somewhere amongst all our division in this last half-century, we seem to have surrendered this mutual dependence in order to create echo chambers that promote the ideas of "the some," often at the expense of "the all." Martin Luther King Jr said that "life doesn't make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, the better for us all."' So how do we, as the greater Phoenixville community, promote interdependence on this 250th birthday of our nation? Here's a few suggestions: Join or support a community group – there are people already working to help those in need – groups like Phoenixville Mutual Aid, Better Days Ahead, Citizen Advocacy, and Diversity in Action are just some of the many that are doing the heavy lifting in support of all of our townspeople. These groups and dozens like them are always in need of manpower and contributions. Volunteering with these groups will open your eyes to what is going on in the area. Vote and get involved in the electoral process – Learn about those running for office, ask questions, and dive deeper into whether a candidate simply has a D or an R next to their name. Even better, consider getting directly involved – Phoenixville will elect 4 council people and 4 school board members in 2027! Good candidates who are committed to the needs of all residents are always needed. Support community events – when residents come together for our many festivals (Dogwood, Pride, Blobfest, Firebird…) we show up as a community and celebrate our mutual love for our town and its people. Help make these events successes, and (even better) make these welcoming and enjoyable for all. Buy local – from coffee to clothing, pottery to plants, we have local residents investing their hearts and capital in Phoenixville – and they in turn are a constant source of support to our local non-profits. Whenever possible, buy from a town merchant and help build a thriving small-town economy. Listen actively – we are a vibrant, diverse town, with many different opinions on where we are and what we can become. Too often, we disregard the opinion of someone because they don't look like us, don't worship with us, or present a view different from our own. We don't need to agree with everyone, but we do need to give everyone the right to their opinion. In "On Liberty", John Stuart Mill spoke of the "marketplace of ideas", where unrestricted debate is the best means to tell the difference between truth and falsehood. But there is no marketplace without open-mindedness, and a willingness to hear all sides. A Declaration of Interdependence would represent a major step away from the loud, vocal individualism that seems to be the norm in these divided, troubled times. That's perhaps the best argument of all for us to commit to mutual support on a local level to once again become the "rising sun" Benjamin Franklin spoke of in Philadelphia's Independence Hall.



JUNE PHOENIXVILLE Borough Hall COUNCIL MINUTES

PUBLIC COMMENTS

A resident expressed concerns regarding due diligence when hiring arborists. They also expressed concerns about tree removals during nesting season.

The president of the Phoenixville Green Team sees tree maintenance as a pocketbook issue, and that maintaining a healthy canopy can help cut down on energy costs.

The president also suggested hat The Tree Advisory Committee should have more authority including, but not limited to, decision making powers (The Tree Advisory Committee at this point can only make suggestions to Borough Council who wield absolute authority).

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve a Temporary Community Event Application for the Phoenixville Car Show at Reeves Park on Sunday, August 23, 2026 from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. Second and Third Avenue between Main Street and Starr Street to be closed from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

APPOINTMENTS

Borough Council held open interviews for the Tree Advisory Committee. There were three applicants: a former Borough Council member with experience working alongside TAC; a current resident and local activist with experience in the Penn State Watershed program; and a project manager in the aerospace sector with experience working for the California Forest Service who also has extensive experience working with satellite imagery and government coordination. No appointments were made at this time.

The Human Relations Committee held an open interview with one applicant. She is an 8 year resident who is passionate about bettering the community, with experience in international humanitarian work and who holds a collaborative mindset. No appointment made at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Motion to authorize and adopt the Phoenixville Borough Firefighter Pension Plan Investment Advisory Agreement, and Amendments to the Non-Uniform and Uniform Pension Plan Investment Advisory Agreements. Unanimous approval. Motion to accept Staff's recommendation to award a 2026 Tree Assessment Services contract to ArborPro Inc. for a total contract value of $29,960. Unanimous approval. Motion to accept Staff's recommendation to appoint Gilmore & Associates as the Borough Arborist. Unanimous approval.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Motion to adopt an Ordinance amendment to Chapter 6: "Conduct", for the purpose of adding Part 13: "Immigration Enforcement" new Sections 6-1302 and 6-1303 of the Code of Phoenixville Borough. Passed with unanimous consent. This ordinance bans ICE from staging and operating on borough property, except when required by federal law. Motion to adopt an ordinance amendment to Chapter 16 "Parks and Recreation." Chapter 16 provides a new definition for recreational property and "no trespassing" in certain areas. There are different punishments for Parks and Rec violations as opposed to trespassing.

PLANNING COMMISSION

101 High Street land development. Building a 14 unit building with 17 bedrooms and 14 parking spaces on the empty lot on the corner of High Street and Dayton Street. Requested an amendment for a smaller sidewalk in front of the building, as it is creating a hardship for development. Unanimous approval. Odessa Development at Fillmore and Township Line Road requested approval for a major amendment in development plans. The plans were originally approved in 2021. Requested approval for 8 less homes to build a green space for residents. Unanimous approval.

PERSONNEL AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Motion to authorize Staff to submit an application for five firefighters under the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant. The SAFER Grant is a federal grant, which is a three year investment plan for hiring new firefighters. It provides 75% of funding for the first two years and 30% of funding for the third year. After the third year, the Borough would cover the salaries of the firefighters and emergency responders. The Fire Department is transitioning to a more fulltime model for employees, as opposed to volunteers and part time employees. The Fire Department stated that they want four responders on a truck at all times, and this would assist them in achieving that goal. Councilperson. Dugan expressed concern about a tax hike. Passed unanimously.

NEWS ALERT: Two days after this hearing, on the morning of Thursday, June 11, 2026, ICE conducted six arrests in Phoenixville borough at the intersection of Starr and Washington Street, at the Wawa on Rt 23 and Rt 113, and at the Acme.

A CONVO WITH SHAWN CEPHAS FROM FOREVER CHANGES

BY DANIEL CALLAHAN

Forever Changes is a record shop located on 10 S Main Street, owned and operated by Shawn Cephas. Shawn is a remarkable person, with an encyclopedic knowledge of pretty much any style of music you can think of. As a self admitted music nerd myself; I love to yap with the dude. I can talk to him about the compositional complexity of Charles Mingus, the raw power of punk rock, and the undisputed genius of Weird Al Yankovic all in the span of 10 minutes and there will be some kind of new anecdote, hidden gem of a live album, or piece of music history that will be revealed. There's a certain feeling I get whenever I walk into that shop, like there's a secret hiding out in there that is just waiting to be discovered. It reminds me of my youth when record stores like Tower, Sam Goody, and the Wall were my primary destinations whenever I went to the mall. I'd make a bee line for the music store, and feel a little overwhelmed. All the lists I made in my head would just fly out of my brain almost immediately after I crossed the threshold, and it was just a wide open space for discovery. Sometimes I would just pick out a tape or CD based solely on the album art. That's something that's missing in the musical landscape today, where everything is tailor made algorithmically, and reduced to single serving pieces of commodity. There's no mystery left, and that was half the fun in discovering a new band or artist when I first fell in love with music. Forever Changes brings that experience back, and there is so much great art located within those four walls- it's just waiting for you to reach out and grab it. You can find anything from Charles Mingus, to MF Doom, to Bad Brains, to the new Olivia Rodrigo. Albums you just streamed in the early 2000's you can feel in your hands. It's a more human experience, one that helps you connect with these artists on a more emotional level. You feel like they're right there with you in your house when you put that record on, sitting down and eating with you, feeling what you're feeling, putting their hand on your shoulder and telling you it's going to be okay, celebrating life's wins with you.

Shawn originally started this journey when he was a little kid, helping his father in his record store in West Philly. He learned the trade, absorbed everything he could about music, independently researched the history of the artists he loved, made music, and while this wasn't his first career path; he found his way back to his true love. Shawn's story is one that proves through dedication, following your heart, and trying to do the next right thing; life will bring you something more than you could really ever imagine. So go into his shop the next time you're downtown. Pick a random album based solely on the art, and discover something new. You never know where it may take you.

WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO ON REPEAT RIGHT NOW?

That is actually a tough question. What I listen to at home is different than here. It's so funny because I listen to such cool music here, then go home and listen to boomer shit. A lot of the music scene from Laurel Canyon in the mid 1960's, and specifically my favorite rock group is Buffalo Springfield. And the store is named after an album by this group called Love, who were part of that scene as well. If you imagine this utopia of Laurel Canyon in 1966, it was cheaper to live there than L.A. so all these bands were neighbors, like walking distance. You have the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, The Doors, Love, Joni Mitchell, Mommas and the Poppas, Frank Zappa…the Monkees, Alice Cooper was there… Crosby Stills and Nash happened because Cass Elliott used to have parties at her place a lot. Graham Nash was visiting from England, and he had just left the Hollies and Stills had just left Buffalo Springfield, and Crosby had just gotten kicked out of the Byrds… and they literally formed CSN around her pool. It's crazy. I just get to pretend I'm some place else when I listen to Buffalo Springfield, I get to pretend I'm living in Laurel Canyon with these great musicians. When I was a teenager in the 80's and was just exploring the Beatles and the music of the 60's, I was learning this thing about this period of time. I needed to understand what this music is about. I can't just listen to this stuff and be like, "that's cool". So I started going to the library and taking out books and finding PBS documentaries, just obsessively. I got into the politics and the culture, not just bell bottoms and LSD, but just understanding why was it that in these hippie songs they're talking about Lyndon Johnson? Then you listen to Malcolm X talking about Dixiecrats, and how white liberal Democrats are actually racist. I always tell all my customers that are getting into 60's music, they have to understand the culture that created this music. So with that in mind, there were two hippie cultures on the West Coast. There was L.A. and San Francisco. And I just align with L.A. more because they were the

ones like us that were in the streets. They were saying we need to change things. In San Fran it was, let's sit in the field naked and drop acid and meditate, and it will all go away. One of my favorite quotes, CSNY is doing a show in Northern California, and some dude is starting problems.. Crosby and Stills are L.A. guys, and everyone else is "whatever man" and Crosby is like "peace and love, peace and love, but I'm going to kick his ass" *laughs*

On the other side of it, jazz is my air and water, my ancestral connection. So on any given day I'm listening to Ornette Coleman.

MUSIC AND ART ARE INHERENTLY POLITICAL, IT'S JUST A FACT, THEY REFLECT THE TIMES. GIL SCOTT-HERON MADE THE POINT THAT WE ARE ALL PART OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS, WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, SO WE MAY AS WELL BE ENGAGED. WHO ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE ARTISTS THAT MAKE BOLD POLITICAL STATEMENTS THAT YOU THINK OTHER PEOPLE SHOULD CHECK OUT?

Nina Simone, Gil Scott Heron, Anna Spackman… I am in awe of her, I can praise her because we met when I heard her music. Jesse Wells… I don't want to dismiss what's going on now but probably my favorite political band is Midnight Oil. They have a song called My Country, it came out in 1992 and it is so relevant. They have another song called Forgotten Years, it's about looking back on the freedoms you have and the faceless names that got you there. It's so specific. Stevie Wonder, Bob Marley.. And as far as jazz, even though it's not lyrical, jazz is inherently political and social for me because it's music created by African Americans, and it's so complex. The sort of free jazz in the 60's was just an expression of "don't put me in a box I have something to say". It's basically Nirvana with different instrumentation. Eric Dolphy, Miles second quintet, Coltrane's Impulse stuff. Coltrane hits me hard.

SINCE JANUARY OF 2025 I HAVE FOUND MYSELF LISTENING TO A LOT MORE OLD SCHOOL PUNK, POST PUNK, POST HARDCORE, ETC MORE AND MORE. EARLY BAD RELIGION, FUGAZI, DEAD KENNEDYS, BAD BRAINS… I LOOK AT THE LYRICAL CONTENT OF SOME OF THOSE BAD RELIGION TRACKS ON ALBUMS LIKE SUFFER, AND NO CONTROL, AND SOMETIMES I WONDER IF GREG GRAFFIN IS A TIME TRAVELLER, IT'S SO ON POINT. WHAT ARE SOME PUNK BANDS THE KIDS SHOULD CHECK OUT THAT KIND OF SPEAK ABOUT THE WORLD WE LIVE IN?

It's too relevant, I remember when I was younger I was like "calm down guys" you're too radical, but they were onto something *laughs* I think the kids should check out Husker Du, someone said they were the first emo band. Everyone else was very political, and they had that sort of general rage, and Husker Du was writing about relationships. Then you realize Bob was queer, and then you realize that they had a more elevated, emotional sense of self than like a Black Flag and those guys did. They still had some political stuff. I love Husker Du. I've played it for young people and so much other music makes sense to them because of it. Death, which is technically the first punk band, out of Detroit- know your history. Even though it's not really punk, I'm really into Seattle bands, so, Mother Love Bone, Screaming Trees, Green River, and the Melvins. Huge Fugazi fan, saw them 17 times *laughs* I lived at the Troc in Philly. Jawbox was another incredible DC punk band, and I have to say Bad Brains because they were so incredible. How they effortlessly go from thrashy punk rock to reggae. It's seamless!

I HAVE A VERY COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP WITH STREAMING. I AM VERY ANTI-SPOTIFY, BUT I FEEL LIKE I'M FORCED INTO USING AT LEAST ONE SERVICE, BECAUSE IT'S JUST THE WORLD WE LIVE IN. THE WAY MUSIC IS PRESENTED HAS BEEN CHEAPENED TO A CERTAIN DEGREE, AND THE PEOPLE PAYING THE PRICE ARE THE ARTIST AND THE CONSUMER. THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT YOUR STORE, YOU'RE HOLDING IT DOWN AND OFFERING SOMETHING TANGIBLE. DO YOU SEE THE ALBUM MAKING AN EVEN STRONGER COMEBACK? OR DO YOU THINK IT'S FUNDAMENTALLY BEEN CHANGED FOREVER (SEE WHAT I DID THERE?) Daniel Ek is literally the devil *laughs* I love talking to a lot of my customers between them being in the store, and social media. A lot of them have dropped Spotify, there were a few customers when the new Olivia Rodrigo album dropped, they waited to grab the album! It was really cool. They could have streamed it at home, but they wanted to wait to grab it from here. It will never switch back, unfortunately. A lot of artists are making shorter albums now because it's meant for vinyl. If you look at the 90's albums, they're extremely long. All these new albums are 35, 40 minutes long. Steely Dan's Asia had what, 7 songs on it? You don't need that much to make a statement. Artists are really embracing the vinyl format. I'm lucky that I have a very educated, and cool customer base. For me, if I stream something, I want to know who's playing drums on it, especially with jazz. Tidal is pretty good about it, but generally nobody is doing the research. You sit there listening to a Jackie McLean album and you want to know who's playing horn with him there. Back in '83 my dad was invited to a meeting about this new technology called CDs. He came home and they gave him a sample CD, and I was super excited about it. I thought it was so cool, and he was like "this is the end". His whole thing was vinyl was a special format for music. It was specific to music, you couldn't put a financial report on it. He realized when music just became data, that could be extracted or whatever, you've lost the plot. Then in the '90s and 2000s you could rip things off the cds, then

you have the ipod, and then all of the sudden you have this technology where music is fully available. But you don't have a cover, you don't have the credits. You don't have a relationship with this thing anymore. It's just data on a piece of technology, and you have lost the relationship. So the return to vinyl is creating a new relationship for people in their 30's and now they're looking at Coldplay and Arctic Monkeys, and they're like "wow I played this on limewire over and over again, and HERE'S THE ALBUM".

Here's the way I'll sum it up: when I saw Sears close up I was like "My God, there's nothing too big to end". Sears was the Amazon of our generation. And we live in a world without Sears. If you hit me up in the 70's and 80's and told me there wouldn't be a Sears Catalogue, I would have told you that was insane. Amazon can fall, Spotify can fall. And I'm happy to be a part of it. I think if it becomes widely aware that you've handed over way too much of your personal information to these streaming services, I think there could be a shift. Once the Gulf of America thing happened, and all the services fell in line; it kind of hit me, so we went on a spree of buying DVDs. Because if they're going to try and erase Black History, and Queer history, and all of the sudden you go to Netflix and Hulu and you can't find Paris Is Burning, or Malcolm X, you can't find Roots…they can do it, and they have already to a certain degree. You can wake up one morning and it's like why isn't Kendrick Lamar on my Spotify anymore? It's just how they roll these days. I saw an article online where someone bought a movie on Amazon, and Amazon doesn't have it anymore, so they just got their money back. Even if you buy something digitally, it can just go away. Things are just too easy, and everyone is just married to convenience. Now, music is always political, and makes political statements which can be viewed as dangerous. This place exists as a representation of my values, and there's a few artists that you won't find here. Like Ted Nugent, Ryan Adams, Kanye West. It's more about wanting people to come here and feel safe. I don't want a jewish person to come in here and see Kanye West, and feel uncomfortable. I want to feel safe when I go somewhere.

OK WE'RE GOING TO DO SOME WORD ASSOCIATION. I'M GOING TO NAME A MUSICAL ARTIST OR GROUP, AND YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE A ONE WORD RESPONSE:

PRINCE-Revolutionary

BOB DYLAN- God.

FELA KUTI- Conqueror. The reason I'm being so specific is when he came into my sonic life when I thought I knew it all. I knew all this stuff, and knew all this jazz, and then I heard him and it just took over. It's like when I first heard Miles at 16, when I heard Bitches Brew, and nothing else existed. It completely reset everything for me. So when I first heard Fela, he conquered what I thought I knew about music, and I was like oh wait no I don't *laughs*

MANNEQUIN PUSSY- Important

MF DOOM- New Horizon, I know that's two words but he really opened my eyes when I first heard him in 2000. He reawakened my love for hip hop in a lot of ways.

WEIRD AL YANKOVIC- ESSENTIAL.

OUT AND ABOUT

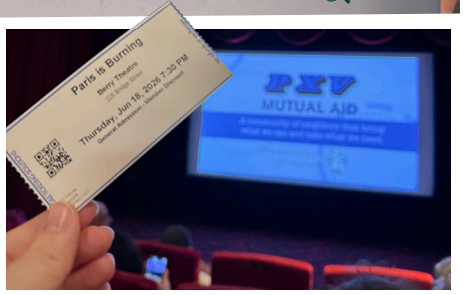
PXV Mutual Aid joined in Phoneixville's Juneteenth Celebrations! We took to the streets to ask what you ***Want From***, ***Need From***, and ***Have To Give To*** your community.

A part of the Colonial Theater Pride Film Series, PXV Mutual Aid partnered with Forever Changes Vinyl Lounge to sponsor a showing of *Paris is Burning* (1990). A documentary providing a vibrant snapshot of the 1980s though the eyes of New York City's African American and Latinx Harlmen drag all scene.

STAY CONNECTED! FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM: *@PXV_MUTUAL_AID*







BEES, A MISSING HORSE, AND NOT BEING A RAT: PHOENIXVILLE IN THE REVOLUTION.

BY DANIEL CALLAHAN

Samuel Pennypacker, Phoenixville native and 23rd governor of Pennsylvania, authored possibly the most comprehensive book on the history of our borough to date. The book is titled "The Annals of Phoenixville and Its Vicinity" and is referred to by the Phoenixville Historical Society as its "bible". Governor Pennypacker's primary source was his father, a physician who collected and annotated "considerable information concerning the early interests and incidents of this vicinity." Pennypacker Sr. documented many tales of the first settlers, and the part the people of this land played in the war for freedom during our revolution against the United Kingdom.

On the 12th of September, after the Battle of Brandywine, General George Washington retreated with the Revolutionary Army to Philadelphia, and British General William Howe made his way toward the Schuykill River, right through Manavon, now known as Phoenixville. On Sunday afternoon, September 21st, 1777, General Howe and his army of 14,000 men arrived in Schuykill Township, and they set up camp at what is now Our Deli (formerly the Fountain Inn). Howe, with his headquarters in a residence next to the old Bull Tavern, which is now Valley Veterinary Hospital on Rt 23. As soon as they set up camp, they went into every house and settlement, raiding the people of their food, clothes, belongings, and drove their animals away. One local residence, owned by a man named Benjamin Boyer, was raided by Lord Cornwallis. The Boyers kept honeybees, and when they heard the British were coming their way, they took their hive and put it in a back room and covered it in some sheets. After having raided their entire property, Cornwallis came across this backroom and demanded to know what was under the sheet. So they told him it was a sheet full of bees. Cornwallis thought the Boyers were full of something else that is less noisy, and a lot more foul smelling, so he ripped the sheet off the beehive. The bees were not too happy, and Lord Cornwallis learned the valuable lesson that bees don't fear and respect British lords too much, as they mercilessly lit his crumpet loving face up.

Phoenixville, in these early days, was known as the "Manavon Tract". It was largely still very wild. Packs of wolves roamed freely on the north side. A few settlers lived in caves in what is now Mont Clare. It's hard to imagine the borough, especially now, as completely untouched and undeveloped wilderness. A majority of the inhabitants in Manavon at this time were either Quakers, or German immigrants. Both groups of people were targeted for being "loyalists" to the British crown during the revolution due to their neutrality stance, and some were coerced into making written statements to show their loyalty to the revolutionary cause. Whether this was a fair assessment or not of their loyalty is debatable, but the thing to remember is that these were uncertain times. Regular people were caught in the middle of this ever growing conflict, and just trying to do what they could to survive. Some people more than likely didn't have an opinion one way or another, they just wanted to not get roped into any trouble and go about their lives. Such is the way of war, and its gravitational forces will pull in everyone that is within its orbit, whether they are for one side, against another, or entirely indifferent.

Amidst the chaos of British occupation, one local young man, a son of Moses Coates, was extremely upset that his horses was stolen by the British forces. He marched right into the British camp by himself, went to the headquarters and demanded to speak to the commanding officer. As the British soldiers hurled insults, young Mr. Coates wouldn't budge, and insisted on speaking with their superior officer till they relented and brought him in front of Howe himself. With Howe, there was a significant shift in the vibes. He was treated with respect, and politeness. Howe started to try and squeeze information from young master Coates on the position of the American forces, offering to give him his horse back if he would do a little espionage for the crown. The kid flatly refused this offer. Howe then resorted to bribery, offering him an insulting pittance and his horse back if the kid would just rat out his countrymen. The young man firmly held his ground, and refused yet again. Eventuall, Howe relented and let him search the British camp for his horse and take it home. Here's a kid, who has his beloved animal stolen from him, marching into

the camp of the most powerful army in the world, and is not taking no for an answer.

This kind of spirit lives on in this area. I've seen it many times before, and will see it again. 250 years later, we are living under a different kind of occupation. The tyrannical government isn't in some far away land, it's one of our own creation. When ICE came into town in February, and the people showed up to Borough Hall demanding action, the spirit of young Mr. Coates was alive in all of us who were there. This kind of spirit is what gave our founders the courage to stand up against a much better equipped and strategically superior force, and against all odds drive that force out. This is why I don't fall victim to cynicism. This is why I have hope that there is a better tomorrow. This story of a young man who refused to fear a tyrant, or sell out his friends and countrymen for a few bucks, still resonates deeply in 2026.

Laying out criticism of authority, and demanding what is rightfully ours as citizens, is imperative to retaining our freedom. Even if that authority may have a blue check mark next to their name, and they say all the "right" things, and tell you they are on your side. Believe their deeds, not their words. Self censorship when being critical of the government, or inaction in the name of not casting waves, will not hold the line in the times in which we are living. When you see injustice anywhere, it is an injustice everywhere- and it needs to be exposed for what it is. Inaction is complicity. Inaction is the behavior that is desired by despots, and failed leaders.

In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, "Get Action". And never, ever, sell out your friends, or mess with bees.

Happy Birthday, America. I still believe in what you can be.



People line up to take turns reading the Decloration of Independence outisde on side of the Phoenixville Hisotrial Society, apart of " Dare to Declare"

Work Cited:Pennypacker, Samuel Whitaker. Annals of Phœnixville and Its Vicinity: From the Settlement to the Year 1871, Giving the Origin and Growth of the Borough, with Information Concerning the Adjacent Townships of Chester and Montgomery Counties and the Valley of the Schuylkill, by Samuel W. Pennypacker, Esq. Published by Bavis & Pennypacker, 1872.

Special Thanks to the Historical Society of Phoenixville for access to their wonderful exhibits, and the tour of the facility. The Historical Society is located at 204 Church St. Phoenixville, PA 19460 They are open Wednesday & Friday 9 am to 3 pm and First Fridays of the month from 6 pm to 9 pm. They are also open on the 3rd Sunday of the month, starting in January, from 1 pm to 4 pm. You can also check out their website www.hspa-pa.org for more information.

PASS THE PLATE

JULIET PAWELSKI

Perfect Chickpeas

vegetarian and gluten-free
feeds about 4-8
(stretches if served over rice)
easily frozen to keep indefinitely

2 cans chickpeas
1 cup chopped onions
1-2 tbsp minced garlic
1 can coconut milk
(substitute heavy cream)
2/3 cup chopped sundried tomatoes
frozen chopped spinach
(fresh is fine too)
1-2 cups vegetable broth based on how brothy you want it to be
black pepper
chopped fresh basil
pepper flakes
grated parmesan
salt, pepper

STEP 1: chop onions, garlic, spinach if fresh
STEP 2: saute garlic, onion in oil (medium high heat) until browned.
STEP 3: add chickpeas, sundried tomatoes, frozen spinach and stir - cook until chickpeas are softened.
STEP 4: add vegetable broth and coconut milk, turn down to a simmer
STEP 5: simmer for around 20 minutes, add seasoning to taste.
STEP 6: pull off the heat, grate parmesan and stir in.

Garnish with basil and serve with bread or over rice -enjoy!

