

Keystone Town Markers

There are people that say that history is what others have told us it is. In fact, this may be true to some extent. Historians will often make assumptions based on circumstantial evidence, which become "fact" either because the historian didn't specify that it was not proven, or because others retold the story as fact, leaving out the important detail that it was someone's idea of what *might* have happened. Such appears to be the case with our historical marker located at King Street and Sugartown Road.

For a number of years now, the Malvern Historical Commission (through the Borough) has received emails from various residents noting the inaccuracies in the sign. Such suggestions as the Borough was not named for Malvern Hills and Malvern Hills is actually located in England, not Wales came to light. The Borough Administration has been asking us for years to find out how we could possibly change this sign to make it correct. However, up until this year, we were unaware of who made the sign, or was in charge of it. Thanks to a letter from State Representative Duane Milne which arrived in December of 2010, we were able to start on a path to find out more about this sign.

The letter from Representative Milne was actually a request for us to nominate someone of importance in the Borough for the Pennsylvania Historical Marker program. Those are the larger signs marking people and places of importance, such as the one noting Duffy's Cut on King Street just outside the Borough. Unfortunately, the deadline for that nomination was too close for the MHC to consider nominating anyone. But, luckily, there was a link from Representative Milne's website to the PA Historical Marker program. A few more short clicks located an email address for questions, and a few minutes more, an email was sent to the state. The coordinator of the Historical Marker Program, Karen Galle, responded within the hour. She noted that Malvern has no Historical Markers, and felt that the signs being described - because by now we had noticed that the sign at the corner of Warren Avenue and Paoli Pike was also the same shape and design - belonged to the old Department of Highways (PennDOT's predecessor) Keystone Town Marker Program. She suggested we contact the Keystone Marker Trust (www.keystonemarkertrust.org) for more information. Upon viewing this website, we knew we were on the right track! Another few clicks and another email was sent regarding the sign.

The following day, two emails were received from members of the Keystone Marker Trust's Board of Directors. The first, from Christian Busch, who lives in Ardmore, included an attachment of a photo of the sign located at South Warren Avenue and Paoli Pike, regarding the Battle of Paoli. Their photo was not good quality, and they requested that if additional photographs were taken if we could pass them along. The second email, from Jack Graham, gave us a lot more information. He stated that the signs were put up in the 1920's, and it is

unknown as to whether they were one person's doings or if there was a "research committee." He noted that we are not alone in having a marker with information that is either incorrect or at least suspect. However, short of having a new marker cast with correct information, at this time there is no way to "fix" the information that is on it now. The Keystone Marker Trust is working to have castings made of the markers and to make arrangements with foundries to produce "new" markers which would be authentic in appearance to the originals. But, right now, that is not an option. He also attached a photo of a marker recently made for the town of Heidlersburg (in Adams County). It is not authentic as it uses a different mounting system and a round aluminum post rather than the ornate cast posts the original markers are on. He suggested that if we so desired, the Borough could look into making a new sign like this as well. But, quoting from his final paragraph, "Although your present marker is not correct, it's very antiquity makes it nonetheless a part of the fabric of Malvern history. We urge you not to simply discard it. Should you at some point decide to remove it, we as KMT would be most interested in obtaining the marker to use in our own educational purposes and to use to have castings made. Again - we urge that it be kept and maintained in Malvern." All of this information was discussed at the February MHC meeting, and it was decided that for now, we would keep and maintain the sign as it is.

But, these emails actually gave us another mystery to solve regarding the sign at South Warren Avenue and Paoli Pike. While taking pictures of the signs, it was noted that this one is mounted on a round post, rather than the more ornate one of the authentic sign. Upon closer inspection, the sign has actually been painted over. Underneath the paint, cast into the metal of the sign, there are directional arrows, town names, and numbers listed. It appears this sign might have been some kind of a mileage sign when Paoli Pike was known as Route 202. One arrow points to the west and says "3 ← West Chester" and the other arrow points to the east and says "Norristown → 10." Who painted over the original sign and when? This mystery is still in process of being solved.

So, now you may be wondering what was Malvern named for? Our sign says Malvern Hills in Wales, and George Highly's book, *History of Malvern*, states that it was named by founder David Evans, and it may also have been named for Malvern Hills, Virginia, where a battle was fought during the Civil War. The MHC can't say for sure WHAT Malvern was named for, nor can we say for sure who named it. In the many and detailed journals of David Evans (which are now located at the Chester County Historical Society), there is nothing that suggests he had a part in naming the Borough, where the name came from. What we do know is that circumstantial evidence suggests that it was the railroad that changed the name of the town from West Chester Intersection to Malvern before the Borough was incorporated. We can't prove this, but neither can we prove any of the other options. So, for the time being, the sign

with incorrect information will remain as a testament to those who came before us and as a reminder to all to check your facts before passing them on!