



Cast Iron Signs of Pennsylvania Towns and Other Landmarks

N Clair Clawser

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Author and field researcher N. Clair Clawser has spent over 50 years traveling the highways and thoroughfares of Pennsylvania to capture images of the cast iron road signs placed there in the early days of automobiles. Many of these signs are long gone, but quite a few remain and have been restored. Pennsylvania is unique with this type of town sign, which could become a thing of the past. (New York State has many cast iron signs, too, but they are on many subjects and not necessarily on town names.) Almost from the start Clair noticed some of these signs were being removed, even as he discovered that many still remained. Originally cast from about 1929 until 1942, these signs were made largely in either the Carlisle Foundry in Carlisle or Geiser Manufacturing Company in Waynesboro. Both companies are long out of business. There are a small number that were produced elsewhere, but not many. (Allegheny Foundry.) Jack Graham of the Keystone Markers Trust stated that the Department of Highways report for 1928-1930 said, "During the biennium 1,359 information signs were placed including historical, stream, state institution, speed limit and parking restriction signs." Many of these signs endure to this day, but are in constant danger of removal. A few new ones have been posted, but many more should be. The aforementioned report does not say how many were town signs. If the total was all towns and divided by four that would only be 339 towns. There are numerous stream signs still in existence today. These are 2-sided with just the name. Town signs are one-sided. We can only imagine that each town that had a cast iron sign may have had 4, one for each direction. Very few towns, that still have a sign, have more than two today. Hanover, a rarity, has six. Gettysburg has four, as does Jonestown. York New Salem has three, as does Lemoyne. Rothsville had four, but one was removed. Schoeneck has four new ones installed by the Keystone Markers Trust, and Mountville has three. Signs from 67 Pennsylvania counties are listed, including the known contents each sign. Pictures are shown where available.

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