

OBITUARY

CHARLES H. GLATFELTER (1924–2013)

Charles H. Glatfelter, former president of the Pennsylvania Historical Association (1986–1988), died on February 6, 2013. He was eighty-eight years old. A lifelong Pennsylvanian, born and raised in the village of Glen Rock in York County, Glatfelter was as rooted in York and Adams county history as it is humanly possible to be. He began haunting the York County archives while still a high school student and wrote his senior thesis on a York County topic at Gettysburg College. After graduating as valedictorian of the class of 1946, Glatfelter entered the Johns Hopkins University, where he studied with such notables as Sidney Painter and C. Vann Woodward. He completed his doctoral dissertation, on German Lutheran and Reformed clergy in the Pennsylvania field, under Charles Barker. At Johns Hopkins Glatfelter roomed with Henry J. Young, with whom he had become acquainted at the York County Historical Society where Young was the first director. With Henry Young he forged a lifelong friendship that

carried through Young's various roles as a public historian and ultimately as a professor of history at Dickinson College.

While still a doctoral candidate Glatfelter accepted an appointment in the Department of Economics at his alma mater. At Gettysburg Charlie pioneered instruction in economic history before accepting appointment in the History Department in 1954.

Charlie had joined the Pennsylvania Historical Association while still a teenager, barely a decade after the Association's founding. He remained a member in good standing for the next seven decades. Charlie's mentor at Gettysburg College, Robert Fortenbaugh, was one of the founders of the Association and later served as its president (1945–48). It meant much to Charlie that Gettysburg College sustained meaningful connections with the PHA through Professor Fortenbaugh and also through his colleague Robert L. Bloom (who served as PHA president from 1969 to 1972), and on into this writer's editorship of *Pennsylvania History* from 1987 to 1994. For his part Charlie was deeply invested in the affairs of the PHA, serving on its executive council for many years in various capacities. In a reflection piece for the seventy-fifth anniversary issue of this journal, John Frantz of the Pennsylvania State University called Charlie one of the "Alexander Hamiltons" of the PHA for his work putting the Association's finances on a more stable basis during his tenure as the Association's treasurer.



Charles H. Glatfelter, 1924–2013.

Despite a heavy teaching load and subsequent service as dean of Gettysburg College (1960–66) at a critical point in his career, Charlie pursued an active scholarly agenda. Although keenly interested in public affairs, with an extraordinary grasp of facts about American presidents and presidencies, Charlie's focus on York and Adams county histories was the gravamen of his scholarly enterprise.

During the 1960s and beyond Charlie produced a steady stream of publications, most of them focused on York and Adams county history. He knew this particular postage stamp of soil better than anyone ever has or likely ever will, his expertise and recall of facts running the gamut from land and estate records to social history, religious history, education, politics, and governance. Several of Glatfelter's articles appeared in this journal. One of his significant publications, on the Pennsylvania Germans, was published as part of the Pennsylvania Historical Association's History Studies series. It is still in print.

Beyond this corpus one must take account of two robust two-volume histories published in the 1980s, one the history Gettysburg College. The second was a substantially revised and expanded version of his doctoral dissertation at Hopkins. *Pastors and People: German Lutheran and Reformed Churches in the Pennsylvania Field* appeared in 1980 and 1981, respectively, through the auspices of the Pennsylvania German Society. In these volumes Glatfelter presented biographies of 250 Lutheran and Reformed pastors, histories of more than 500 congregations, and a narrative history from the origins of the two churches to their establishment as independent organizations.

Reviewers found *Pastors and People* remarkable for the deep research it represented and the sound arguments it made. Writing in *Pennsylvania History*, James Tanis of Bryn Mawr College called the work "monumental," adding that for students of Pennsylvania history it deserved place on a shelf "with a small group of essential studies." Tanis went further, noting that Glatfelter's books "will long remain a central reference volume for anyone interested in colonial life in the Middle Colonies and in eighteenth-century Protestantism, both in America and abroad." Based on the influence that *Pastors and People* has enjoyed in this field of study, Tanis's prediction proved prescient.

Charles Glatfelter made an impact at Gettysburg College on various fronts. He was a rigorous teacher, whose high standards and willingness to go the extra mile to help students reach their potential was legendary. Aside from his labors as dean, he served as chair of his department and chaired virtually

every important committee at the college. He was called on by a series of presidents for counsel and remained willing to meet classes or individual students to discuss local history well into his eighties. In 1987 he received the Lindback Foundation Award for Distinguished Teaching. He retired from his post as Franklin Professor in 1989.

Although he was a much-admired member of the Gettysburg College community, and deeply loyal to his alma mater, Charlie's passion for local history found its greatest and most satisfying outlet in his work at the Adams County Historical Society, which he served as an unpaid executive director from 1959 to 2001. At the Society Charlie organized and grew the collections, wrote memos guiding future researchers, jointly authored studies on everything from church history to land warrants, and answered innumerable reference questions. Given the key to Schmucker Hall on his retirement as executive officer, Charlie made good use of it in the final twelve years of his life, researching and writing pieces that expanded knowledge on a variety of fronts. In one instance, having learned that a state Historical and Museum Commission marker was placed at a location in Seven Valleys, near where he grew up, stating that the first ice cream factory in the world was established there in 1851, Charlie researched the topic and came to the conclusion that it was not so. He published his findings in a well-crafted op-ed piece for the *York Sunday News* in August 2012.

Teacher, scholar, archivist, public historian, lay churchman, and mentor to many, Charles Glatfelter lived an exemplary life. It is pleasing to note that only a month or two before the onset of his final illness he was wheeled through the construction site of the new Seminary Ridge Civil War Museum in the very building where he had served as director of the Adams County Historical Society. Thanks to a million-dollar gift by local physician and historian Dr. Bradley Hoch, the first floor of that museum will be called the "Charles H. Glatfelter Welcome Center." Charlie could have asked for no more apt or satisfying memorialization.

He was predeceased in 2009 by his wife, Miriam Krebs Glatfelter, and is survived by his children, Christina and Philip.

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