

PP Bliss Gospel Songwriters Museum

Newsletter

Spring 2025

*Check out our website!
www.ppbmuseum.org

Sixty Years!

Sixty years ago, a group of like-minded people gathered to purchase and preserve the house that had been owned by the hymn writer Philip Paul Bliss. The Rice family, who owned the small white house on Main Street in Rome, Pennsylvania, agreed to sell it to the group to create a house museum. Electrical updates were needed, and the early minutes recorded meetings in the building using a lamp powered by an extension cord running from the house next door.

The museum highlights the talents of PP Bliss and his wife Lucy, James McGranahan, and Daniel B Towner.

The Bliss Birthday Celebration in July will highlight current local singing talent from our area.

Walking Stick Fundraiser

Walking stick carver Don Warner donated a custom walking stick to the museum. He used an old piece of wood found when cleaning his parents' estate. The stick is an oak octagon, each flat carved with specific events in PP Bliss's life and musical works, including Jesus Loves Even Me, Hold the Fort, Hallelujah What a Savior, and numerous others.



The donation is \$3.00 per ticket or \$5.00 for two, and they can be found at our events or by contacting board members. The new owner will be announced at the July Birthday Celebration.

Museum Events

Museum Yard Sale

June 7
8 AM to 2 PM

Hymn Sing in the Park

June 22
4 PM
Singing and Dish-to-Pass

Bliss Birthday Celebration

Sunday, July 20th,
3 PM

Open House Santa's Sleigh Ride

Friday & Saturday
Nov 28th and 29th
9 am to 4 pm

Tours

Available Upon Request
570.247.2228

PHILIP PAUL BLISS : "Semper Sursum" - Part II

Researched and submitted by Ruth Crain

Based on V.C. Detty's booklet A Centennial Sketch of His Life and Work 1838-1938

We'll begin with a reminder that this phrase was a part of the Bliss Family motto meaning "always upward". Last year we followed PP's life to his marriage to Lucy Young on June 1, 1859.

"Always upward" seemed fairly simple at. Immediately after the Blisses marriage ceremony in Wysox, PA they returned to Lucy's parent's (Mr. & Mrs. Oscar Young) home in Rome, PA. They wasted no time in being useful : PP in the ordinary farm work of picking up stones and building fences while Lucy joined her mother in the kitchen. Within 2 or 3

days they became members of the Rome Presbyterian Church. I believe that the RPC family must certainly have appreciated the Blisses love of music as they sang very well together.

During the fall and winter of 1859-60 PP began teaching singing schools for which he earned \$2 per night. He also received information about a normal academy for music in Geneseo, NY* to take place in July/Aug. of 1860. The cost for this instruction being \$30 which PP and Lucy did not have. Betsy Allen, Lucy's grandmother, came to the rescue and generously gave PP the amount he needed from her "old sock savings". He was elated. Remember Matthew 6:33 "Seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." The Blisses found this to be true.

After PP's intensive 6 weeks of music study, he was better prepared to teach music which he did in the Rome, PA area for the next 3 years. He was able to save up enough funds from the teaching to buy a house for his parents in the village of Rome. (The museum is in this building now.) His father only had a short time to enjoy this home as he died in January 1864. PP's mother, Lydia, lived another 14 years.

Lucy and PP had been married about 5 years and PP teaching music for 4 years. He had begun composing songs and the first one he had published in 1864 was "Lora Vale", a secular song. James McGranahan helped PP with the corrections of the proof as he lived and worked in the Rome, PA area at the time.

V.C. Detty had the opportunity to read PP's journal for 1865 and PP tells of giving concerts with another local musician (I think it was J.G. Towner). They were able to earn \$100 in 2 weeks. He also mentions in the journal that he was drafted into the U.S. Army. PP was only at the Carlisle, PA army barracks for 2 weeks as the war was ending. I can imagine Lucy was rejoicing for PP to return that quickly.

"Always upward" definitely means learning and change. There had been much of both for PP and Lucy but more would be revealed soon. PP became a member of a men's quartet called "The Yankee Boys" who sang at patriotic meetings.

A Mr. George Root engaged the quartet to sing in the west. Sometime in 1865 the Blisses went to Chicago, IL and PP was hired by Root & Cady music publishers. For the next 4 years PP worked for Root & Cady by giving concerts, teaching, holding music conventions and composing.

This brings us to 1869, PP and Lucy's 10th Wedding Anniversary. They traveled back to Rome, PA celebrating on June 1, 1869 at Lucy's parents home. It sounds like a lovely wedding reception with close to 100 guests attending by invitation. They enjoyed supper, ice cream, presents and singing. PP wrote a special song for the occasion entitled, "The Tin Wedding Jubilee". The Blisses were thrilled with the joyous celebration and the local newspaper indicated that all those attending enjoyed the festivities.

After this anniversary party the Blisses returned to Chicago and their music work. PP wrote sacred, secular, temperance and fun songs. More of all types were being published now.

By 1870 PP and Lucy had brought their church letters from Rome Presbyterian to the First Congregational Church of Chicago. In July of 1870 PP became the choir leader and soon after the Sunday School superintendent. From 1870 through 1873 several collections of Sunday School songs were published. God had given PP (and most likely Lucy too) a great burden for good Sunday School songs. In 1871 PP had stopped working for Mr. Root when The Great Chicago Fire burned a large part of the city in Oct.

V.C. Detty doesn't write much about PP and Lucy's sons. Philip Paul was born 11-25-1872 and George Goodwin was born 8-27-1874. Now we all know that God just interjected a large amount of change and

learning into PP and Lucy's lives with the births of these two boys! "Always upward"! "Commit your way unto the LORD, trust also in Him and He will bring it to pass." Psalm 37:5.

D.L. Moody, the evangelist, had met Bliss in 1869. Moody had been encouraging PP to give up his other work and pursue evangelistic work with D.W. Whittle. There was no guarantee of salary in this new work but PP and Lucy had lived by faith in the LORD from the beginning of their married life. So in 1874 Bliss and Whittle began evangelistic meetings in Waukegan, IL with a good response. They continued on through 1875 and 1876 at 25 different cities in 10 states. PP sang the gospel and Whittle preached the gospel.

"Always upward" had proved to be a very fulfilling life for PP and Lucy as they were "about their Master's business". God will continue to lead them.

Where will God lead you?

"Semper Sursum" until next year.

The State of Our Building

By John Adam Trunk

As you may know, or can appreciate at least, old buildings are super cool to walk through and imagine what life may have been like "back in the day". I have always found old buildings and homes fascinating. I find myself wondering, "How do we preserve what the original builders created while incorporating some of the modern conveniences we find necessary today?". Maintaining and preserving these structures can, at times, pose a challenge. It is often described as a labor of love. One of the building and repair projects that is on our docket this year for the museum is for a new heating and cooling system. This will help with energy cost and preserving the integrity of our collection. Along with all the normal maintenance required to keep up old pieces of history, we will also be restructuring the floor and replacing the front steps. As you have an opportunity to walk through or drive by our museum or an old house, pause and reflect for a moment on its builders. Think of the inhabitants and life that the "old place" has seen.



Items for Sale

Music Men of Rome, book...\$22.00

Bliss and Tragedy, book.....\$20.00

2010 Concert CD: A Tribute to the Music Men of Rome.....\$8.00

2011 P.P. Bliss Birthday Celebration Concert: Carrie Hooper, Soprano and Dr. Bill John Newberg, Pianist...\$8.00

Shipping and handling: \$7 for 1 to 2 items; \$10 for 3 to 5 items. Make checks payable to PP Bliss Museum. We are unable to process credit card payments at this time.

Museum Membership Friends of the Museum

Please join us at one of the suggested levels.

Single Membership-----\$20.00

Family-----\$25.00

Church-----\$30.00

Business-----\$50.00

Firm Foundation Special Project—any amount

Please send your name, address, and level of support to

PP Bliss Museum

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Rome, PA 18837

Contact us at 570.247.2228 or ppbmuseum@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

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