

# Solebury Chronicle



*A newsletter of the Solebury Township Historical Society*

## Honored Citizens of Solebury awards presented at New Year's Brunch

Each year the Solebury Township Historical Society recognizes residents, past and present, who have significantly contributed to the township. Chosen to receive the 2008 Honored Citizens of Solebury awards were George Nakashima and William MacDowell.

George Nakashima (1905-1990) was honored for his unique craftsmanship and his oneness with nature. Solebury Township was his home for 50 years. His exceptional wooden furniture is respected and coveted worldwide. Nakashima had a deep respect for trees and said that "A tree is perhaps our most intimate contact with nature." In the 1980s he conceived the idea of building and gifting Altars for Peace for each continent of the world, and, as centers for meditation, prayer and activities for peace, the world would be a better place. Today altars of his design are in the U.S, Russia, India and soon South Africa. His family continues his creativity and his philosophy of peace.

Bill MacDowell is a long time resident of the township and has devoted much of his time to environmental issues. A retired CEO of Burpee Seeds, Bill has given freely of his time and talents to a number of local non-profit organizations. He is a Trustee of Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve, founding member of the Pidcock Creek Watershed Association, and a Board member for the Bucks Beautiful Garden Fair. He served on the board of the Bucks County Audubon Society, and of the Neighbors for Bucks County Preservation, which successfully stopped construction of a 4-lane expressway through the Central Bucks area. In addition he has found creative ways to help preserve land in Solebury Township. In the words of Miles



*Mira Nakashima Yarnell accepted the award on behalf of her father George Nakashima.*



*Bill MacDowell – a champion raffle ticket seller – was honored for his community involvement.*

Arnott who nominated Bill for this award, "Bill is the embodiment of thinking globally and acting locally."

The Society solicits nominations for the awards from the community throughout the year. Call 215-297-8447 or email [soleburyhistory@comcast.net](mailto:soleburyhistory@comcast.net) for a nomination form.

## We're in!

On a balmy day in late November the Society moved its office and archives to the one-room schoolhouse in Solebury Village.

This follows months of construction and renovation work on the interior of the building. The foyer was reconfigured to its known condition in the 1930s, with a small dividing wall with wooden coat hooks. The fluorescent lights were replaced with period globe lights. New fixtures were installed in one bathroom; the other was converted to a small kitchenette. Insulation was installed in both the basement and attic. Interior painting became the largest project, as the lead paint throughout had to be remediated. The air conditioner (donated by the school district) will be installed shortly.

The Society had the exterior stone steps rebuilt and is awaiting installation of a wrought-iron railing.

But most of that is behind us and through the great direction of Joan Fitting, archivist and organizer, the space has been tastefully divided into two offices, a meeting area and a research library nook. There are still lots of boxes to go through, but we've come a long way. Joan's garage sale and negotiating skills have resulted in donations of a large school bell, which has been installed outside the building, and an amazing coal stove with nickle-plated adornments, which sits on its rightful spot in the center of the room. She also negotiated great deals on wooden book shelves and a coffee table.

Plans are underway for an open house weekend on April 5-6 (see back page). We look forward to welcoming you to the new home of your Historical Society.

*(continued with photos on page 5)*


## Presidents Message

"Hurricane" Schwartz was right. On November 28<sup>th</sup> the rain had stopped by dawn. This was going to be a big day for the Historical Society for it was MOVING DAY. Luckys' Moving truck pulled into the parking lot at Fox Run Preserve at exactly 10 AM as promised. At first glance we thought the 26 ft yellow box truck was far too big. However, as the morning wore on the truck's load had to be shifted a few times to accommodate all our things. Our collection of donated rugs were the last to be deposited ... the tailgate doors were closed and we were off to the Solebury School House.

Joan Fitting met us at the door with her "map" in hand. Joan had spent many hours measuring each piece of furniture, filing cabinet and rug. A scaled template was made of each item and arranged to accommodate the interior foot print. The rugs were the first to be put in place. The "map" was so accurate that it took less than two hours to move in and become roughly settled.

Many years ago Don Fitting's mother, Helen Fitting, made a beautiful braided wool rug. This rug served the senior Fitting household and then Joan and Don's house for many years. It has now been placed in the "reading room" section of the school house. And, this of course, is the way it should be because Mrs. Fitting taught all 4 grades in that building .

We are planning an OPEN HOUSE weekend on April 5-6. Watch for your invitation.



## Meet our New Board Members

**Beth Carrick** has lived in Solebury Township for 30 years. She was an editor and learning facilitator at ETS in Princeton until her retirement 3 years ago. Beth and her husband Dick have two sons.

**Donneta Crane** and her husband Steve moved to Solebury about three years ago. Their purchase of a 1763 house sparked her interest in Solebury history. Donneta is a realtor with Addison Wolfe Real Estate in New Hope. They have one daughter Mara.

**Pat Petrie** is a long-time Solebury resident and has been helping Ned Harrington with historic house research for many years.



Solebury Township Historical Society  
Drawer 525  
Solebury, Pennsylvania 18963  
215-862-5033

### Board of Directors

Sally Grant-Jago, *President*  
Joan Fitting, *Vice-President*  
Elaine Crooks, *Treasurer*  
Donneta Crane, *Secretary*  
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David Benner  
Beth Carrick  
Gwen Davis  
Barbara Donnelly  
Don Harris  
Martha Harris  
Patricia Petrie  
Rhoda Renschler  
Franca Warden



## This could be your last newsletter

Members who did not pay their dues in 2007 will be removed from our mail list following this newsletter unless you respond to the final notice which you will receive shortly. We don't want to lose you!

## Beautiful Notecards of Solebury

Boxed set of notecards featuring the Solebury Post Office. High quality cards and envelopes. Box of 6 cards; \$13.

Boxed set of ten notecards featuring five of Solebury's cherished historic sites drawn by Solebury artist Jim Underberg. Box of 10 cards; \$11.

To purchase, call 215-862-5033, or email [soleburyhistory@comcast.net](mailto:soleburyhistory@comcast.net)

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# Our Historic Districts

## Upper Aquetong Valley Historic District

The Upper Aquetong Valley Historic District runs along Meetinghouse Road between Aquetong and Suga roads along the upper branch of the Aquetong Creek. The valley was recognized as a National Historic District through the efforts of members of the Aquetong Valley Association, with Jane Hess as the president.

Like the Cuttalossa District, the Upper Aquetong Valley Historic District is not a village, but rather a valley settled in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by Quakers from England. When settlement began in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century there were approximately 12 tracts owned by now familiar family names such as Eastburn and Paxson. Agriculture was the predominant industry with the growing of grains and keeping of small animal herds. Little has changed along this road over the centuries. Most of the land is still open farm fields and virtually all of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century homes are still standing, as are many of the barns, corncribs and springhouses.

The majority of the residences are 2-1/2 story rectangular fieldstone buildings of moderate size. The buildings are excellent examples of early fieldstone residences, loosely based on Georgian and Federal styles. They reflect the conservation Quaker style in their lack of ornamentation and stylistic pretensions.

Another important industry once thrived along this valley. A limestone belt stretches from Lahaska to Centre Bridge, and hence the limestone industry became an important adjunct to the agricultural activities of the valley. Quarries and kilns dotted the entire area. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Meetinghouse Road was called Limekiln Road due to the large number limekilns scattered along its length. Lime was first used for soil conditioning. The presence of limestone and the Aquetong Creek spurred another industry in the valley: tanning. The tanning industry required water and lime with which to soak hides in order to remove hair. Hides were soaked in vats called "limes". The tannery was located near the western boundary of the district (near Aquetong Road). The tanning vats are slight round depressions along the stream bed approximately five feet in diameter. The vats have been filled in over time. In an



*The viewscape of the Upper Aquetong Valley is virtually unchanged in 250 years.*

advertisement of this property in 1817 the tanyard was described as having "32 vats and a pool, the vats are supplied with water by a pump, the pool by a stream of running water."

It is interesting to observe that two of Solebury's most pristine areas — Meetinghouse Road and Cuttalossa Road — developed in Colonial days as industrial valleys.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the number of Quaker settlers had grown sufficiently to warrant the construction of their own Meetinghouse. The Solebury Meetinghouse was built in 1806, patterned after the nearby Buckingham Meetinghouse, from which most of its members were drawn.

Today the Upper Aquetong Valley Historic District is little changed from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Through the initiative of the Aquetong Valley Association and the landowners, virtually all the land in the valley is protected from further development. Most of the original fieldstone homes and outbuildings still stand proudly, though modified for more modern living conditions. Remnants of the limestone industry are barely visible, covered long ago with dense foliage. The rich agricultural soil continues to bear crops.

A walk or leisurely drive along this bucolic road transforms one back some 250 years, to the very beginning of the settlement of Solebury Township.



*An eccentric businessman who swindled millions from his clients was Lowell Birrel who lived in this 18<sup>th</sup> century home on Meetinghouse Road in the first half of the 1900s. The answer to "Do You Know" was guessed correctly by several members; the winner chosen at random was the "team" of Patsy Tinsman and Dick Wallace.*

### Did You Know?

Meetinghouse Road was called Limekiln Road due to the large number of limekilns along its length.

**NOTE:** This completes the articles about Solebury's six National Historic Districts. The Society submitted documentation on Solebury Village to the state. Unfortunately we have been informed that they do not consider Solebury Village eligible for designation.



## Fall Walk - Solebury Village

On a sunny fall Saturday, walkers had an opportunity to learn more about the Village of Solebury. Beginning at the Township Building, Supervisor Ruth Ann Wilson told the group about some of the local treasures, like the two Nakashima tables that adorn their meeting room.

The group went on to take a peak at the one-room schoolhouse which was under construction at the time. Then a stroll through the yards of 4 historic homes



Group pauses in front of the schoolhouse

along Rt. 263 (with permission!) brought us to the Solebury Hall. Built in the mid-eighteen hundreds, this building served for a time as the Grammar School (grades 5 to 8). The historic Trinity Chapel and Solebury Post Office were also included. The walk concluded in Linda Kenyon's converted barn for a lavish refreshment break.



Solebury Hall, former Grammar School



Trinity Chapel



Solebury Post Office



Yummy treats in a bucolic setting.

## Society Board members honored

Three of our distinguished board members received special honors in 2007.

**Sally Jagoe** was inducted into the Hew Hope-Solebury High School Hall of Fame. She was honored for her service as a former school board member, and her close ties with the school's Social Studies program as president of the Solebury Township Historical Society.

**David Benner** was the keynote speaker at a Conference in Little Rock Arkansas in June hosted by the Rockefeller Foundation. The focus of the conference was *Alternatives to Grass*; Dave's presentation was on "Gardening with Moss".

**Franca Warden** received the Business and Arts Award from the Central Bucks Chamber of Commerce for her passionate commitment to the arts and culture of Bucks County. Among her many achievements is the promotion of the work of the Academy of Vocal Arts and the Bucks County Opera Association.

## Members' emails

When Society members provide their email addresses, we send reminders about Society events and a few related community events. In addition Action Requests are occasionally sent when a local historic resource is threatened and your help is needed. About half of our members have provided email addresses on their membership forms. If you would like to be included on these email reminders, and have not been receiving our messages, please send your email address to [soleburyhistory@comcast.net](mailto:soleburyhistory@comcast.net).

We pledge not to burden you with unnecessary emails.

# Schoolhouse



*The Society's new home is a one-room schoolhouses at the intersection of Route 263 and Sagan Road. Note the bell on the right.*



*An inviting space for research and reading. Our framed 1859 map of the township adorns the wall.*



*This stunning coal-burning stove was donated by Society member Rick Burr, and the schoolhouse clock is on permanent loan from Sally Jagoe.*



*The entrance foyer contains refurbished original cabinets, a divider wall with coat hooks, and a few of the chairs donated by St. Philip's Chapel.*

## Wonderful support from the community

In December we sent a letter to every household in Solebury Township asking for donations to help offset the cost of the Schoolhouse renovations. The response was overwhelming and heart-warming.

Over 100 families responded with donations ranging from \$10 to \$5000 for a total to date \$24,000. Each and every one of these donations is deeply appreciated.

Perhaps even more important than the money is the knowledge that this community supports the Historical Society and cherishes this township's historic resources.

Donors in the 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grade levels will be recognized on a permanent display in the building. All supporters will be invited to an open house reception this spring.

For an opportunity to contribute to the Schoolhouse renovation fund, please call 215-862-5033 or email [soleburyhistory@comcast.net](mailto:soleburyhistory@comcast.net).



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**Sally Grant-Jagoe**

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# Happy New Year!



Nearly 200 Solebury residents attended the Society's seventh annual New Year's Brunch to bring in 2008 with their friends and neighbors.



Jean Fowler (left) is acknowledged for her service on the Board by president Sally Jagoe



The Heath family: Jeanne represented brunch sponsor First National Bank & Trust of Newtown.



Patricia & Charles Worth



(l-r) Dick and Beth Carrick, Doug and Wendy Kale.



Maureen & Brian Luce were "in the spirit"! Board member Marti Harris in back



Six wonderful raffle prizes were won at the brunch



Sally presents Dickie Ann Beal with her raffle prize of Margie Perry's painting.



Bill and Sue Tinsman



(l-r) Jeff and Sally Nicholas, Candace and Stephen Phillips; standing, committee members Jean Fowler and Rhoda Renschler



Board member France Warden presents the Honored Citizens award to George Nakashima accepted by his daughter Miri Nakashima Yarnell



Board member Elaine Crooks gets a hug from Bill MacDowell.



Bob Egan entertained us throughout the afternoon.



Brunch Committee members Marti Harris, Jean Fowler, Franca Warden, Rhoda Renschler & Elaine Crooks with artist Margie Perry and Michael Conti, of Earl's Prime.

## With our Thanks . . .

Members are the backbone of our organization. We are deeply appreciative of the support of the residents listed below who have renewed their membership or joined the society since the last newsletter.

Tamsen Granger & Dan Abuhoff  
Marcia Angerman  
Penny & John Armagost, Jr.  
Monique Gaumont and John Atkin  
Rick & Julie Bagshaw  
Steven Cohen and Pamela Blake  
Roger & Linda Blanchard  
Jim and Melinda Bloomer  
David Levison & G.E. Brandsness  
Dale & Ruth Broderick  
Franta Broulik  
James & Rhea Brown  
David Cramer and Anna Burbank  
Gregory Burch  
Robert and Joyce Burian  
John Cannon  
Richard Carlson  
Frank & Barbara Carolan  
John & Carol Carpenter  
Judith Clarke  
Jim & Clara Coan  
Richard & Gerry Cooper  
Stephen & Donneta Crane  
Elaine & Malcolm Crooks  
Deanna & Bob Cross  
Barbara M. Donnelly  
Jack & Claire Donohue  
Jonathan & Diane Downs  
Marjorie Elliott  
Ernest & Barbara Feldgus  
Ronald & Shirley Felix  
Geoffrey & Kathleen Fisher  
Michael & Jean Fowler  
Bruce and Sheryl Fredendall  
David and Connie Gillis  
Jacqui & David Griffith  
Star & Peter Grover  
Don & Martha Harris  
Burt & Nancy Holland  
Richard Gold and John Hollyday  
Robert & Sally Huxley  
Margaret Jamison

Douglas & Wendy Kale  
Michael & Kathleen Kennerley  
Gregory D. Kirk  
Richard & Margaret Knoster  
Dorothy Kolva  
Juergen & Elizabeth Kruse  
Michael & Donna Lacey  
Ann & Yanek Liebgold  
Audrey & Bob Long  
Diane Glassman and Richard Magruder  
Rich & Sandy Mangano  
Thomas & James Markey  
Mary B. Martin  
David McShane  
Bob & Bobbie Melby  
Sarah Melson  
John & Gerry Merriam  
Eleanor Miller  
Brian & Wanda Mohr  
Pamela Morrison  
Lillian & Edward O'Connor  
Ruth J. Palmer  
Ann R. Rainey  
Brenda Redfield  
Jeanne Ann Robinson  
Paul & Lisa Ruo  
Sandy & Mortimer Ryon  
Paul Schwehm  
Jurgen Schweickhardt  
Michael & Lavinia Smerconish  
John W. Hansen & Vincent E. Spiritosanto  
Janice Spurr  
Janet & Buz Teacher  
Daniel Telep  
Sue & Bill Tinsman  
Michael Prediger and John Touhey  
Paul & Donna Trenchard  
Patsy Tinsman and Dick Wallace  
Franca C. Warden  
Curt Wary  
Patricia Witlicki

Every effort has been made to publish a complete and accurate list of memberships received since the last newsletter (September 2007). We regret if there are any omissions.

## HELP WANTED

Now that we have moved into the School House, help is needed to **organize the archives and the library**. If you are interested in helping once a week from 3 to 5 in the afternoon, please call me at 215 297-5885. Thanks! *Joan Fitting*

The **Oral History Committee** needs your help. We will be conducting an Oral History of the New Hope-Solebury Library and need to talk with people who knew and worked with Alma Herman and/or Bob Shaw. Please call Sally Jagoe, 215-862-5033.

## Many thanks . . .

The generosity of so many folks have helped the Society throughout the year. We deeply appreciate the support of our friends and neighbors:

**David Keller** for donating framed Solebury Hall stock cert. C.1876

**Rick Burr** for donating the exquisite coal stove for the schoolhouse

**St. Philip's Chapel** for donating wooden chairs for the schoolhouse.

**Lynne Benson** for creating and donating the floral arrangements that decorated the tables at the New Year's brunch.

Sponsors of the New Year's brunch:

**First National Bank & Trust of Newtown**  
**Addison Wolfe Real Estate**

Raffle prize donors: **George Brahmall, Margie Perry, Chee Jamison of Peddler's Village, Carversville Inn, France Warden & Ann Warren**

**Chee Jamison** for donating Earl Jamison's book collection.

**Super Fresh** for donating apple cider for the New Year's brunch

**Brian Keyes** for his legal counsel

**Families and individuals** who generously donated to our Schoolhouse renovation appeal.

**Peter Augenblick** for preparing our tax returns.

The **advertisers** in the *Solebury Chronicle* who offset the cost of producing the newsletter. These are local businesses, and we urge your patronage.

(Call 215-297-0885 or email soleburyhistory@comcast.net to place your ad in the next *Solebury Chronicle*.)

## Sharing History



*During flood remediation at Burgess Lea on River Road, owner Buzz Teacher uncovered a wooden water pipe likely dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The square cut log was bored out in the center for water flow.*



**Solebury Township Historical Society**  
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### Calling all artists ...

Now that the Solebury Schoolhouse is our permanent home, the Society would like incorporate a pen and ink drawing into a new logo.

Could you do this for us? Call Elaine Crooks, 215-297-0885 for more information.

### Upcoming Events

**Saturday, April 5, 5 p.m.**

Special reception for schoolhouse donors (by invitation)

**Sunday, April 6, 1 to 4 p.m.**

Open house at schoolhouse for the community.

**Sunday, April 27, 2 p.m.**

Dedication of Columbus Oak memorial plaque and planting of a seedling; followed by a walk visiting the Thompson-Neeley house and mill, the old graveyard near the river and refreshments in Bowman's Hill pavillion.

**Saturday, May 31** (time to be announced)

"Big trees of Solebury" tour led by Dave Benner. Fee.

*Details to follow.*

## Do You Know ?

The current logo of the Solebury Township Historical Society contains a drawing of a mill in Solebury. Do you know the location of this mill?



Call 215-862-5032 or email [soleburyhistory@comcast.net](mailto:soleburyhistory@comcast.net) with your answer. You may win a prize!