

Solebury Chronicle



A newsletter of the Solebury Township Historical Society

A Very Special Place

Solebury Township is very special – but those of us who live here already know that. In the midst of the great shift in population from the cities to the suburbs, Solebury Township and its residents have worked hard over the years to retain our rich natural and historic resources.

Today, Solebury has the distinction of having the most National Historic Districts of any non-city municipality in the Commonwealth. In addition, the township has three National Historic Landmarks within its borders, out of a total of six in the entire county.

Furthermore, our researcher Ned Harrington has identified more than 500 existing homes in Solebury that were built before 1900.

Your Historical Society is doing everything in its power to protect these valuable historic resources – the very essence of Solebury Township. That protection begins with every township resident understanding and appreciating our historic gems.

Schoolhouse Open House a Grand Success

During our Open House weekend, April 26-27, some 150 people visited the new home of the Solebury Township Historical Society. The stone one-room schoolhouse at Sugas and Upper York roads in Solebury Village now contains offices, a research library and meeting space for the Society. “It’s the perfect place to call our home,” said Society president Sally Jagoe.

The Open House was an opportunity to show off the extensive interior renovations funded by the Society. Helping to offset the cost were generous donations to the schoolhouse fund-raising campaign. Donors to the campaign are recognized on a beautiful placard on the wall of the schoolhouse which was unveiled at the Open House.

Many visitors took the opportunity to look through grade and attendance records dating back to the early 1900s.

(More photos on page 4)



Celebrating the opening are board members (l-r) Mary Powell, Pat Petrie, Sally Jagoe, Marty Harris, Franca Warden, Donneta Crane, Elaine Crooks and Joan Fitting.



Richard Burr of Solebury donated the beautiful coal stove



The schoolhouse bell was a gift from Steve Dylinski and Jeannine Mitchell.



Don Fitting (center) told stories of his experiences when attending the one-room schoolhouse in the 1930s.



Even our youngest visitors found interesting things to see!

Presidents Message

Who said... "Newcomers don't make a difference"

In 2001, Patty and Bill Roberts moved to their pre-retirement home in Solebury. They had visited this area for many years and decided that this was the place they wanted to settle.

Once Patty settled in, she noticed that many cars had a special license plate on the front that said Solebury Township with a picture of a large tree. When she purchased one she asked where that tree was located and was told that it died of old age in 1999 at the age of 500 + years. "Where was it located," she asked and was told that the stump was across the street from Thompson Memorial Church on Aquetong Rd. and could be clearly seen from Squires Lane.

She thought, who (in 100 years after the stump has disappeared) will know where that tree ... the very symbol of Solebury Township... once stood.

Now, Patty describes herself as a "nudge" — and a gentle "nudge" she is. She first contacted the Society in the beginning of 2007 and said that she had written a poem "The Solebury Tree" (the Columbus Oak as it was known locally). She contacted **Arlene and Al Lachman** and asked Al to paint a picture of the tree that would be sold and proceeds given to STHS which he did. All Township residences were invited to the Lachman Gallery for the event.

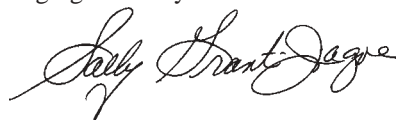
Patty and Arlene spent the better part of a day in the stoneyard at Delaware Valley Quarry and found a beautiful 2 1/2 ton Solebury sandstone, which **Kevin Busik** donated and **Hugh Marshall** delivered it to the site.

The Franklin Bronze Co. in Franklin, PA was contracted to cast the plaque. The **Solebury Road Department** placed the stone in just the right position so that it could be seen from Squires Lane. **Don Harris** smoothed the surface of the stone and **Joe Fluehr** mounted the 80 lb. plaque. **David Benner** donated a seedling grown from an acorn of the mother oak, and **Jeff Grant** dug and planted the seedling in the arms of the stump. **Robinson Landscaping** cut an oval bed around the stone and planted azaleas. Patty "nudged" us along. Throughout the owner of the property, **Robert Doone**, graciously allowed us to stump all over his land.

Sunday, April 27 arrived with gray skies and cool temperatures. The weatherman said rain would hold off until Monday.

Folks began to gather about 1:50 p.m. and by 2 o'clock about 80 people were assembled. Elder Native American **Ed Fell** "smudged" the group. **Danawah Buchanon** sang and drummed. **Patty Roberts** read her poem and **Elaine Crooks** read her essay. The seedling was blessed by the *Great Spirit*. **Barbara Bluejay**, granddaughter of Lenni Lenape Chief Thompson, had us join hands and participate in a circle dance. A leather pouch was presented by the Native Americans to the Society and will be on display at the Schoolhouse. Refreshments were served.

As people returned to their cars it was agreed that the day had been magical. We have the "nudging" of Patty Roberts to thank.



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

Board of Directors

Sally Grant-Jagoe, *President*
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Franca Warden

Solebury ... the Mysterious Domicile

It is of small wonder that there is mass confusion on exactly where folks in this Township live. The fault can be laid on the doorstep of the US Post Office. And this is why!

Carversville has its own post office and zip code (18913). Lumberville, (until recently) had its own post office in the general store (18933). Solebury Village has its own post office ... no home delivery... with 500 + boxes (18963). Now enter the New Hope post office which adds fuel to the confusion. If your mail is delivered to your house you no doubt have a New Hope address (18938) unless of course, you live in or around Hidden Valley Rd. which has a Doylestown zip codes (18901-02-03). I rest my case!!

To help sort this out let's look at where you cast your vote on Election Day. If you vote at the Carversville Church, the Solebury Township Building or the Methodist Church on Aquetong Rd. (this church is now being used while Thompson Memorial Church is under construction) then you live in Solebury Township. If your tax parcel number begins with "41" then it is proof you live in Solebury Township.

So ... Carversville, Lumberville, Solebury, New Hope and Doylestown ... if you have received this newsletter, you live in lovely Solebury Township (3,500+ residences) and are encouraged to support your Historical Society.

Sally Grant Jagoe

Remembering the Great Tree

On Sunday April 27, the Solebury Township Historical Society placed a commemorative plaque at the site of the Columbus Oak tree, which was more than 500 years old when it succumbed to old age in 1999 in a field on Aquetong Road in Solebury Township. More than 80 people attended the celebration, which included the planting of a seedling grown from an acorn from the original tree. The seedling oak was named the Piestewa Tree in honor of the first female American Indian soldier to be killed in combat. Lori Piestewa (pronounced Pee es tu wa) of the US Army Quartermaster Corps was seriously injured in Iraq in 2003 during the same attack in which her friend Jessica Lynch was injured and captured. Piestewa died several days later of her injuries. Lynch has said that Piestewa was a true hero.



Columbus Oak

White Oak (*Quercus Alba*)
circa 1482 – 1999

The Solebury Tree

*Once a tree in this place stood,
Its branches wide, its gnarled wood.
A friend to birds, beauty to man,
For many years it graced this land.
Through winter snow and summer shower,
A sentinel to Bowman's Tower,
Magestically it touched the sky,
Remembered now for days gone by.
A testament to nature's good,
For once a tree in this place stood.*

Patricia A. Roberts ©



Horticulturalist and Society Board member David Benner grew several seedlings from the Columbus Oak. This one is planted "in the arms" of the Mother Oak.



Barbara Bluejay, granddaughter of Lenni Lenape Chief Thompson (center), gives Sally Jagoe a decorative leather pouch.



Lenape elder Ed Fell participated in the festivities



Danawah Buchanon performs a Native American blessing over the Piestewa Tree as a crowd of visitors looks on.



Ed Leavenson

The group joined hands to form a large circle around the Piestewa Oak and participate in an Indian dance.

Open House *(continued from front page)*



A group of folks who attended the schoolhouse in the 1950s held their own reunion



Crowds swarm the schoolhouse



Franca Warden speaks with Ned Harrington about the history of her house.



Joining the celebration are (l-r) Doug Kale, Michael and Ruth Ann Wilson, Wendy Kale



Richard Burr (left) speaks with Wendy and Douglas Kale in front of our restored copy of the 1856 map of Solebury Township.



Michael Prediger tries out the old school desk - he still fits!

Historic House Research

The Elves of the Solebury Township Historical Society are slowly but persistently digging up the background of every old structure (before 1900) in the township, and the same for New Hope before 1837: when it became a borough.

About 400 have been researched and written up in manuals, stored at the Society's headquarters, the one-room schoolhouse in Solebury Village. About 250 more are in process. Included is background data from the Pennsylvania Archives, a recital of deeds wills and orphans court proceedings gleaned laboriously from court house microfilms and from published data, a series of maps, and much information from Eastburn Reeder's Early Settlers of Solebury Township and from Ned Harrington's First Homesteaders. Copies of each related document or abstract are part of the entirety, along with any related materials from Bucks County histories or news items.

Sometimes, such a record is brought up to the present, especially when a property owner wishes to purchase a copy — \$100 is the standard fee, which usually does not cover all costs, since researching backwards through the twentieth century is costly and laborious. All master copies, whether up to 1900 or to the present, are available at the School House, for studying or copying. The library is extensive for looking up further data, which may be copied.

Schools, places of worship, mills, stores and other commercial structures have been detailed from their beginnings up to the present, including those in New Hope after 1837. In most cases, these can be described in unusual detail, thanks to local writings, histories and news items.

In addition, a series of articles called YESTER-DAYS is being written: a less technical story-account about old houses and other buildings, with the human element predominating — who was there, how and why. Some of those are being published in local newspapers. When completed, a volume will be available at the usual \$12.00 each for miscellaneous writings relating to township history. Ask for a listing of those.

Ned Harrington, Director of Research



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Highlighting Solebury's National Historic Landmarks

In previous issues of the Solebury Chronicle we have highlighted Solebury Township's six National Historic Districts: Cuttallossa, Aquetong Valley, Phillips Mill, Carversville, Lumberville and Centre Bridge.

In this newsletter we begin a 3-part series on the National Historic Landmarks.

Washington Crossing Park

Washington Crossing Park became a National Historic Landmark in 1961. It is comprised of land and buildings in both Upper Makefield and Solebury townships. The Solebury section is along River Road between Aquetong Road and Bowman's Tower (the tower is actually in Upper Makefield Township).

Thompson-Neely House

This nationally recognized structure located on River Road across from Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve is a fine example of 18th century architecture. During the winter of 1776-77 this home was used to care for Washington's troops who were healing from wounds or suffering from diseases and camp illnesses. In addition, Brigade Commander William Alexander (known to contemporaries as Lord Stirling) lived in the house in December 1776. On Stirling's staff were William Augustus Washington and James Monroe (later to become the fifth president of the United States), both of whom were wounded in the Battle of Trenton and said to have convalesced at the Thompson-Neely House.

The house was built in three sections, the center being the earliest. Under the heading of "history evolves," the continuing architectural research of this important building is uncovering new scenarios. During a recent Society-sponsored walk and tour of the house, we learned that the earliest structure may have been a one-story log dwelling built by settlers in the early 1700s. This differs from an prior assumption that the early section was built of stone. John Pidcock was an early settler on a 400-acre tract of land which included the parcel upon which the Thompson-Neely house stands, and some believe it was he who built the early cabin.

The central portion of the house was built by John Simpson, a Quaker mill owner in c.1740. Upon his death, his Scotch-Irish Presbyterian miller, Robert Thompson, married Simpson's widow and claimed ownership of the property. Thompson added the west side of the house in 1757 as well as a second floor extension over the central portion. Thompson founded the Presbyterian Church on Aquetong Road, now known as the Thompson Memorial Presbyterian Church.

The east side of the house was completed in 1788 for Thompson's daughter and her husband, William Neely, as a separate dwelling. Hence the name "Thompson-Neely House".

In close proximity to the house stands a barn and various outbuildings, restored examples of structures that would have completed an 18th century farm complex.

Across the road from the house is a restored, water-powered mill built along the Pidcock Creek in the 1830's by the Neely family. The original mill, constructed nearly a century earlier by Robert



The Thompson-Neely House in Washington Crossing Park, Solebury Township.

Thompson, was located approximately 100 yards downstream from the present mill. Thompson's milling business was quite successful, reflecting the important role of the miller in the agricultural society of colonial Pennsylvania when the grinding of grain was a basic function to sustain life. He supplied a thriving market in Philadelphia, and was listed as one of the township's wealthiest men in the late 1700s. During the Revolution, it is likely that the mill provided grain for troops camped on the Thompson land and surrounding properties in December 1776.

Washington Crossing Park also includes a group of historic buildings in Washington Crossing, Upper Makefield Township, along River Road near Route 532.

Washington Crossing Park is open Tuesday-Saturday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm & Sunday 12:00 to 5:00 pm. (Hours and tour availability are subject to change without notice.)

Guided tours of the McKonkey Ferry Inn and the Thompson-Neely House occur everyday but Monday and select holidays/special events. Tours begin on the hour at 9:00, 10:00, 11:00, 1:00, 2:00, 3:00, and 4:00.

The Soldier's Graves area is accessible via the PA Delaware Canal State Park towpath in Solebury Township. For more details, visit www.ushistory.org/washingtoncrossing



Do You Know?

In the last issue of the Chronicle we asked if anyone knew the structure that for years was the center of the Society's logo. We had no correct answers (the first time this has happened since we began the "Do You Know" section!). It is the Thompson Mill (see description above). Our new logo now proudly features our schoolhouse.

What is an Archivist?

As you know, we now have moved into our wonderful One-room Schoolhouse. Our offices are there and our archives and I am the Archivist! We had many many boxes of all sorts of books, papers, pictures and various documents piled high on the window sills, book-cases and floor so my first job was to try to unpack and organize the contents. Fortunately, my plea for help was answered by five wonderful STHS members.

Donna Trenchard who lives on Corrigan Road is a tremendous help! Chee Jamison had graciously donated many books from Earl's library so they all had to be unpacked and arranged on the bookshelves. Donna helped me unpack, and being much younger than I, she could put some of them on the bottom shelves! Plastic bins filled with material from the Solebury Farmers Club and others with things from the Solebury School District went into the bottom drawers of the big file cabinets.. She is as interested in the archives as I am, so she really enjoys working with them.

Richard Carlson is a very recent Solebury resident. He bought Rolling Green, a lovely old stone house once owned by the Paxsons. He truly appreciates the history of the area and willingly helps with anything I need done. He was particularly interested in the old school record books and asked if he could please take on the job of organizing them. I'm so glad he did because those record books were the big hit at the Open House. So many old alumni came and were delighted to be able to find the records their old teachers kept – including their grades!!!!!!

Diane Johnston is a Realtor with Kurfiss and a very busy lady indeed, but she agreed to help me by keeping me informed about any old houses that come on the market in Solebury and getting brochures on them for my records. Then she follows up by letting me know when they are sold and the selling price, which I record on the brochure itself. These will be invaluable someday as they always include many full color pictures of the inside and outside of the house as well as the usual factual information.



(l-r) Joan Fitting, Donna Trenchard & Richard Carlson hard at work sorting through the archives.

Pat Petrie has been helping Ned Harrington doing his research in the courthouse on literally hundreds of old properties in the township. Pat's job is to organize these files in the big file cabinets. They are filed by tax parcel number, so if you know that number

you will be able to find the file on your house.

Jim Brown is an admitted computer geek who has offered to set up a program on the computer in the schoolhouse so that we will be able to search for whatever subject we wish and learn instantly if we have any information on that subject and if so where it is located – in which book or file and where that particular book or file is located in the room!! Amazing, isn't it!!!!!!


In addition to supervising all the above, I keep quite busy adding constantly to the many existing files, setting up new files, keeping all the Board minutes as well as the Newsletters in three ring binders and my very favorite job – keeping our STHS Scrapbook up to date with newspaper clippings and photos of all our many activities!!!!!! Someday I hope we will be able to have regular office hours when the schoolhouse will be open to the public. We will need more volunteers then, so keep it in mind if you would like to help. Meanwhile, we will keep plugging away at organizing all the wonderful archives that we have accumulated over the years.

Joan S. Fitting

Donneta Crane
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With Gratitude . . .

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**.

Penny and John Armagost, Jr.	Linda Kenyon
Alice R. Bentley	David and Carole Martin
Marguerite Berlinger	J.M. Metzger
Paul and Marianne Bogen	Michael and Amy Petrosini
Lenore and Marty Bowne	Brenda Redfield
Betty & George Bramhall	Curt Shreiner
Peter & Susan Brussock	Patrick J. (Joe) Slattery
J. Kevin Busik	John & Irene Szykowski
Mrs. M. Curtis Chianese	Melinda and Ted Tally
Arthur Gerold	Col. Joseph and Betsy Thomas
Pamela Halstrick	Genevieve Wahlgren
Kathy Hausman & Jim Hill	Ann Warren
Diane, Ian & Eric Johnston	

Every effort has been made to publish a complete and accurate list of memberships received since the last newsletter (January 2008). We regret if there are any omissions.

HELP WANTED

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.

Think Endowment Fund

The Solebury Township Historical Society is pleased to announce the establishment of an Endowment Fund to secure the future of the Society and its programs. Create a lasting memorial; include the Society in your estate planning.



Deborah Brady
6220 Lower York Road
New Hope, PA 18938
215 862 8075

Hours: M, T, Th, F, S 10-5
W 10-7 • Sun 12-4
twistknitting@gmail.com

Many Thanks . . .

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

Patty Roberts conceived the event to memorialize the Columbus Oak and wrote a poem "The Solebury Tree".

Robert Doone allowed us unobstructed access to his property.

Joe Busik donated the sandstone for the Columbus Oak plaque.

David Benner, donated a seedling grown from an acorn of the mother oak.

Jeff Grant dug and planted the seedling oak.

Hugh Marshall delivered the sandstone to the site.

Solebury Road Department placed the stone in the right spot.

Robinson Landscaping landscaped the area around the stone.

Danawah Buchanon arranged for the Native American participation

Mike & Susan Smith to letting our walkers stroll through their property to get to the Thompson-Neely house.

Donna Trenchard, Richard Carlson, Diane Johnston, Jim Brown and Pat Petrie for helping **Joan Fitting** with the archives/library.

Just Foods and **Jamie Hollander** donated food for the open house.

Phyllis Gagner and **Elaine Crooks** donated wine for the open house.

Peter Augenblick prepared our tax returns.

The **advertisers** in the *Solebury Chronicle* who help 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*.)

In Memoriam Wallace O. Sellers

We join the community in mourning the death of Wallace Sellers on May 5, 2008. Wally, along with his wife Naudain, has been a long time generous supporter of the Solebury Township Historical Society and many other community organizations. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to his family.



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Our Members

In this newsletter, you have read about Society members who are active in many different ways. Some like the fun we have while learning about history (walks, picnics, etc.), others like to learn more about the historic resources in Solebury through our education programs and this newsletters; still others simply want to support the organization and its programs. We recognize that some people have more free time than others and want you to know that we sincerely appreciate ALL of our members. Thank you!

Upcoming Events

Saturday, July 12, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Barns of Distinction Tour sponsored by the Bucks County Audubon Society. Call 215-297-5880 or www.bcas.org.

Sunday, September 14, 5 - 8 p.m.

Annual Members' Picnic
Merriam Farm, Laurel Road

NOTE: "Big trees of Solebury" tour has been postponed until the Fall.

Do You Know?

This 18th century home sits on a very special National Historic Landmark. Do you know which Landmark?



Call 215-862-5033 or email soleburyhistory@comcast.net with your answer. You may win a prize!