Columbus Oak seedling planted at Schoolhouse

Visitors to our annual Open House on May 1st had the pleasure of dedicating a seedling of the Columbus Oak, which was donated and planted on the schoolhouse grounds by member David Benner.

Guests also had the opportunity to view a video focused on the village of Carversville from a 1976 television series. Some also looked up the history of their properties in our research files.

Also available was a booklet with biographies of the 34 individuals who have been named Honored Citizens of Solebury since 2002.

This information and more is available for viewing at the schoolhouse on Wednesday afternoons from 3-5 p.m. or by appointment.

BREAKING NEWS

As many of you know, five years ago Solebury Township Historical Society leased from the New Hope Solebury School District the original seat of public school education in Solebury, our historic one-room schoolhouse. It was in a sadly neglected state and required over $50,000 to make the interior “livable” again, an undertaking to which many of you contributed. If you have been in the schoolhouse recently, you know how much we cherish this icon of our local history.

We now are delighted to be facing the possibility of having the schoolhouse deeded to the Society by the School District. There are benefits to STHS having ownership of the schoolhouse, as well as advantages for the School District and to New Hope and Solebury residents.

Owning the schoolhouse will enable the Society to apply for grants that cover capital improvements, preservation, programs and education. Most grants are dependent upon the applicant having ownership of the facility (denotes stability of the organization.) Ownership also provides us with a sense of security for the Society and for our enormous collection of archival materials.

The benefits to the School District include reduced maintenance expenses, both long and short term, reduced insurance costs and reduced staff workload and expense. Estimates for necessary repairs total nearly $50,000 and include restoring windows/frames, rotting soffits and eaves, repainting, and roof replacement.

The benefits to our residents include using grant funds, donations and our own funds to make necessary improvements/repairs to the schoolhouse rather than tax dollars that could better serve the many student programs.

We expect that our proposed acquisition of the schoolhouse will be on the agenda of the next School Board meeting. As part of the due diligence required, the School Board has asked for public opinion regarding the NH/S School District deeding full ownership to the Solebury Township Historical Society.

Our plea to you, our loyal membership, along with all of the residents of Solebury Township and New Hope Borough, is to help us show the school board that our community is strongly supportive of the Solebury Township Historical Society having deeded title to the one-room schoolhouse. Please take a few minutes of your time and let us have your physical support.

SEE PAGE 6 FOR EASY WAYS TO HELP
**Presidents Message**

Summer has arrived and things are moving along with the Solebury Township Historical Society.

Our Spring Open House was a big success, and we had a wonderful turnout at the Schoolhouse. A special bonus to this year’s open house was that David Benner donated a 4-foot white oak seedling to the STHS. This small tree is a descendant of the enormous, majestic Columbus Oak. The original, which dated back to 1493, succumbed on May 31, 1999, at the ripe old age of 516. Dave saved and planted 50 acorns, and donated one of the “children” to us. He also planted it and protected it from our local ravenous deer! Many heartfelt thanks to him.

In May, the STHS was delighted to again be a part of the local High School Community. We annually give a $500.00 scholarship to a deserving student and are invited to the New Hope Solebury Awards night to make the presentation. This year we were fortunate enough to be able to donate two $500.00 scholarships from our Ned Harrington Scholarship Fund. The recipients were Tom Hische and Caitlin Kerr. It is truly a wonderful way to spend an evening. The program was amazing and the students were delightful.

Our next event will be the picnic. Held in September, this is a great family event and a wonderful way to spend an early fall afternoon. If you haven’t attended previously, everyone brings a covered dish, with the STHS providing the grill meats and drinks. It gives us an opportunity to share our favorite recipes and enjoy an afternoon of catching up with our friends and neighbors in a relaxed atmosphere. We will be sending out more information shortly.

The Annual Meeting will be coming up in November, followed by the New Year’s Day brunch on, yes, New Year’s Day.

The Solebury Township Historical Society prides itself on keeping our history alive and available to everyone. Through our website, www.soleburyhistory.org, people from across the country have contacted us with questions regarding family members, events from the past, and properties that may have once belonged to their ancestors. Our Archivist, Joan Fitting, and her crew of volunteers are able to do research, answer questions, and in most cases send documentation to whomever has contacted us. As president, I feel our dedicated volunteers have such an enormous stake in bringing events of yesterday into today’s fast moving world, and while researching online can give answers, we try to provide so much more. As always, we appreciate any input, recommendations and help from our valued membership. We can’t thank you enough for your support.

Donneta Crane

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**Teachers experience Solebury’s history**

Each year the Community Partners in Education program sponsored by the Solebury Township Historical Society conducts tours of some of Solebury’s historic sites for the social science teachers of New Hope Solebury’s Middle and High schools. “Since most of our teachers do not live in Solebury, we wanted to give them the opportunity to learn about the rich history of the area in which their students live and incorporate this knowledge into their classrooms,” said program leader Sally Jagoe. In addition this program fulfills the teacher’s required enrichment program.

Last fall a group of teachers visited the one-room schoolhouse, learning about the art of teaching several grades in one room. This spring, they visited the site of the Columbus Oak tree, the Van Sant covered bridge, and were led on a tour of the historic Raymond house, an historic Bucks County farmhouse that was redesigned by the Raymond family in the 1930s as a Japanese country home. The Raymonds were renowned architects and were instrumental in bringing George Nakashima to Bucks County.
Carversville Grange No. 451 by Rayna Polsky

In the early 1870s, around the time the Pennsylvania State Grange was founded, there was a small Farmers’ Club in Carversville, though it was short-lived. A January 1871 Bucks County Intelligencer article lamented, “we are sorry for this backward step now that these useful organizations are being established all over the country.” Less than a month later, however, the Solebury Farmers’ Club was established, holding its meetings at the Quaker schoolhouse at Sugan and Meetinghouse roads. The Farmers’ Club, which shared many interests and events with the Grange, will celebrate its 140th anniversary this year.

Apparently Solebury residents didn’t feel the need for a local grange for another 20 years. In 1895, however, there is a mention in the Bucks County Gazette of something new. “Senator Moyer,” it read, “has presented in the state senate petitions from the following Bucks County societies and corporations against the repeal of the act prohibiting the manufacture and sale of imitation butter.” And there it was, winking out of history at us like a tiny jewel. Carversville Grange, #451.

Despite the imitation butter outrage, Carversville’s Grange seems to have been pretty low-key. There’s not much documentation on it, other than the occasional newspaper announcement of a literary program or lecture on the vernal equinox.

The Origin of the Grange

In December 1867 Oliver Hudson Kelley became aware of desperate farming conditions in the post-Civil War South. As a farmer employed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, he was inspired to form an alliance between agricultural communities nationwide. Kelley, along with six other men, formed The National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry — the Grange — named for the late medieval term for a small farm.

Less than a decade later, they had nearly one million members.

An Organization Takes Shape

In addition to being a farmer and a government employee, Oliver Kelley was also a Mason. He and the other founders were inspired by the tenets of Freemasonry and drew heavily on the organization of that fraternal order when establishing the Grange. Masonic rituals borrowed symbols from the tools of the medieval stonemason, and the grangers borrowed this symbology and incorporated small ceremonial farm tools into Grange meetings. There were passwords and special handshakes to be learned. Oaths were taken and honored.

The hierarchy of Grange membership is also similar to the degree system used by Freemasons. There are seven levels of Grange membership, each with their own corresponding emblems and, in some cases, separate masculine or feminine titles. As the group expanded, it became a potent political force. Grangers advocated temperance and the direct election of Senators. They battled against monopolies, including the vast railroad companies which charged farmers inordinate fees to transport their goods, and advocated grassroots programs like farmer cooperatives and pooled savings groups. More than half a century before the Nineteenth Amendment, the Grange allowed women as equal members. It even required at least four of its 16 elected positions to be held by women.

The Grange remained active in politics until new organizations like the Greenback Party and the Farmers’ Alliances emerged to advocate farmers’ political agendas following Panic of 1873. This allowed the Grange to refocus its efforts on community service and social events, although the State and National Granges remain important political forces to this day.

A Disappearing Way of Life

Today, fewer than two percent of Americans are farmers. National membership has declined to 240,000 people — less than a quarter of its membership a century ago. Some Granges have merged with others to stay alive, while others have folded as communities have given up farming as a way of life.

The last mention of the Carversville Grange I was able to find was in 1991, when there were 12 members remaining. In Bucks County just three granges are left, according to the Pennsylvania State Grange — Middletown #0684, Edgewood #0688 and Plumsteadville #1738.

Still, today Pennsylvania has about 200 local Granges and 11,000 members across the state. The Pennsylvania State Grange has a steady bi-monthly newsletter (available online), and continues to provide community activities and events such as youth camps, family festivals, and, of course, the Pennsylvania Farm Show.

DO YOU KNOW?

The photo in the last Chronicle seems to have stumped everyone. Not surprising though. It is a ballot box and gavel used for members of the Carversville Grange to vote. A white ball is yes; black is no.

Many thanks to long-time Grange members David and Sue Benner for donating the ballot box to the Society, along with a gavel, ribbons and the Corporate Seal. These items and more are on display in the Society’s Museum at the Solebury Township Building.

by Rayna Polsky
The following letter, brought to my attention by Joan Fitting, was discovered by Harold B. Hancock circa 1958 on sabbatical in England, and published in October 1960 as “Life in Bucks County in 1722/23” (Pennsylvania History, vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 397-402).

Written by Ambrose Barcroft just forty years after the founding of Pennsylvania Colony, I thought it too good not to share, particularly with its details of everyday concerns: growing and purchasing sufficient food, providing shelter for man and beast, problems with servants, and the timeless need and desire to stay in touch with family and friends.

Ambrose Barcroft, was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1681. His first wife Mary died in 1705 leaving him two sons, Ambrose and William. Sometime between 1711 and 1720 he emigrated to British North America, settling first in Maryland, and marrying his second wife, Elizabeth. A third son, John, was born to the couple. According to Harold Hancock, Barcroft “was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Bucks County [in 1722] … While … crossing a branch of the Delaware River thirty miles north of his home … on December 24, 1724, with his son Ambrose … his horse stumbled … he was thrown off and drowned.”

This writer has no idea where Barcroft’s property was located, though his geographical hints are intriguing; it would be interesting to learn exactly where he built his log home with the “handsome Dry Roof” and spent his final years in his adopted country.

Part of the charm when working with old documents is the creativity in spelling. This letter has been transcribed as he wrote it; some words have been made clearer; others have been left for the reader to decipher.

Solebury Mar. the 1st
1722/23
Hon[ore]d. Father

My buying the whole Tract of 450 acres oblig’d me to pay a greater Sum then I were to do by the first Contract, besides the Charge of maintaining a family where every thing is to be bought, the building a house, and buying all sorts of Household and husbandry goods, which are here very dear. For instance Pewther is 2s. p. lb. and Kettles 3s. If you let work by the great, you will always find victuals because there is no convenient Boarding near. A laboring man has 1s.8d. [s. and d.; shillings and pence] per day in the Winter and 2s. in the Summer; a Carpenter, Joyner or mason has 2s.6d. and 3s.6d. per day and meals. As we have no market nearer then Philadelphia, we are oblig’d to lay in our year’s provision in the fall of the year. I have laid in a good quantity of beef and Pork at 2d. per lb. (which is usually double that price in the Spring and Summer) which together with my stock of live Hogs, of which I have above a score of one sort and other has cost me about £17. I hope hereafter to have no occasion to buy any Pork nor no other provisions, till the next fall, except a little venison of the Indians, of which I can have a Quarter for ¼ of a lb. of Gun Powther, but that is not to be depended upon.

I sow’d two acres of wheat last fall, & I hope to sow 10 or 12 acres of corn in the Spring, that I may reasonably expect to subsist with little buying in a short time. Cattle and horses, I think, are much the same price as with you. I have eleven of both sorts. I could summer what I pleas’d, and they will be very fat at the fall, but if they are not bred in the neighbourhood they are apt to stray the first Summer. I have had a great deal of trouble riding after ‘um, which I hope is now over, but I have lost none.

We have a tract of land about 2 miles off, where few trees grow; we can mow there what hey we please. I got some hey there last Summer, and that, with one acre and a half of Oats and as much Indian Corn, is the fother [i.e., fodder] I have had for my Cattle, I hope I shall not be scares, for I think one beast with you eats as much as three here.

I had 4 servants. The woman [an indentured servant] I sold, she were not worth keeping. One run away, I have heard of him in Maryland, but I am afraid he’ll get to England, that I shall not catch him; two I have still. I have been in an humour to sell one of them next Summer (for there is no danger of his running in the winter). He is a good hand and can be a good Servant, that if I were sure he would stay with me, I would not part with him on any account, but being a convict for 7 years I am afraid he’ll run.

(continued)
I am now about the building of a Barn of 4 Bay. It would cost me near £30 to let out, but the man I Just mention’d is something of a Carpenter, and I think with the assistance of a good workman a few days at the Setting up [of] the frame, he’ll do the work. The Clapboard and Shingle I have bespoke and is already pay’d with goods that I have sold.

‘Tis very well that Lambert is come with Ambrose; his trade will do well here and you may see that I want hands. You may agree with any servant you send to have such wages by the year as they have with you, for I think it will do no more here than buy ‘um Cloths, but they must always be Indentur’d at Leverpool [Liverpool, England]; any able hands will do, but trades are the best.

The House I have built is near 9 yards long and 6 wide within. The walls of oke trees of about 12 inchis Diamiter, laid one upon another and one let into another at the four Corners, and the Seams fill’d with mortar. ‘Tis cover’d with Shingle which with a little repair will last 20 years and is a handsome Dry Roof. Tho’ such a house be not the handsomest ‘tis very warm, and that is enough for the present. Tho’ we rec[k]on the Timber nothing, the Expence is considerable in day wages as above and in Nails at 10d. per lb. and other necessarys, and it is impossible for new hands to do such work.

The goods that I brought from England I laid out in Maryland for Tobacco, which cost me 7s. per 100 lbs. sterling. It will waste in the carriage. When I came hither I laid a great deal of it out there in Servants and what goods I wanted. I order’d my attorney there to consign about 90 hundred (at 100 lbs. to the hundred, for that is the weight in Maryland) to Mr. Seel of Leverpool for the use of those people that sent goods with me, but the Crop falling Short, there could be no more then 35 hundred to be got in, which I hope Mr. Seel had rec’d. I hope to be in Maryland in a short time to order about getting in the rest. If the whole quantity had gone, it would have been the full to those people that sent goods; but to what I made of the Goods which I brought from England I cannot answer, for that is decided by the markets in England, which I believe were low about a year agoe.

The part of the Countery where I am settled I think resembles Craven [County, North Yorkshire], and for what I can perceive is every wit as healthy. The new hands that I brought with me has never ail’d [with] any thing, that for any thing I see one may settle here without any Seasoning. The tract that I have is mostly ascending, but no where so steep but you may Plough with ease, and in some places 20 or 30 acres of a flat. I think there is at least 300 acres of land that will bear wheat and is as good as any in the County, except some small tracts by the river. We have a small run by the house where there is 3 or 4 acres of swamp land, which I am makeing into medow; there are 4 or five more runs in the Ground and a great many Springs that were not dry all the last Summer, tho’ it were the driest that has been for many years, that there scarce can be a tract of this Bigness better water’d. All the Adjacent counterey is Hilly, some Hills as big as Noya [a 980 foot hill in the Pennines, in Northern England], and about the river (which is about 2 miles off) a great many Rocks and Precipie [precipices?]; higher up about 30 miles there are great mountains which I have not yet seen.

A great many people have been digging Last Summer for mines, but few have got any thing but promising signs. Few have gone deeper than 8 or 10 yards, and I believe they generally want both ability and Skill. Here is a mine about 3 miles off, where the light of some Vains of yellow oar or stone. They have run mettle from it which they say is Gold and that it stands the Proof of the touch Stone and aqua fortis [nitric acid] The owner denies that it is of any value, but has been carefull to carry away every scrap of the oare. What it is, time will show. Here is great plenty of Iron Stone and certainly great signs of other mettle. …

I hope you have a particular Account of what you sent Bro. Will before this. I writ to him the 5th of last June which he rec’d. from my sis[tr.] mention’d some Linnen that you had sent him. In a Letter I rec’d from him some weeks agoe he says he rec’d. the Linnen you sent, but mentions no particulars. He writ to you sometime agoe by a Vessel the first opportunity. He is Clerk of the Court at new London in Colliton County [Colleton County, South Carolina?]. He says he hopes the place will do well. I am ac- quainted with some Clerks of Courts in Maryland that have good places, but I question whether his place be so good because the Court was but settled the last year. …

There has [been] no ship arriv’d at Philadelphia from Leverpool since I came hither, but I now expect to hear of Ambrose (if not directly, by way of Maryland) every day. … We have had a very mild winter and no snow that lyen one day, that the River has not been frose this winter. I thank God I am very well. I hope you are all so. My service to all my friends, my Duty to my mother, my Blessing to Will and my love to my Brothers and Sister. I am your most Dutifull and Most Obedient Son.

Amb[rose] Barcroft
Is your History a Mystery?

Being the Archivist for the Solebury Township Historical Society is at times frustrating, but many times it is also very rewarding. We get calls and e-mails plus walk-ins (on Wednesday afternoons between 3 and 5) with some very interesting requests.

For example: One of our first requests came from a lady who lives in Lumberville. She had been told by very reliable sources that the house she was living in was definitely not the house she thought it was! She had spent hours researching the history of the house and together with the material she was able to find at the schoolhouse, she was able to prove conclusively that she was correct.

Then there was the couple who were visiting in the area and stopped by to look at the old school that they had both attended as little children. Fortunately I was working there that Saturday so the door was open. They came in and were thrilled to see how their old school was being used. She even found some of her school records and pictures of people she remembered in our scrapbooks. They live in Florida now. When I asked how long they had known each other, she replied that they met in first grade!

An e-mail request arrived one day from someone trying to trace her ancestors. She had found a reference in some very old (1870) census records that listed two little black boys who were both students at “The Institute” in Solebury. I searched and searched with no luck. Finally I referred her to the Bucks County Historical Society with my apologies. She replied that someone had told her about The Emlen Institute, which was founded by Samuel Emlen of Burlington, NJ for the care of destitute black and Indian children. It was located on Aquetong Road south of Route 263. Her informant turned out to be a young neighbor who is extremely knowledgeable when it comes to Solebury history. I was delighted and immediately recruited him to be a member of the Archives Committee.

Not everyone wants something from us. Some people stop in to give us things for our collection. That happened last week when a very kind lady who was going through her late mother’s things came across some photos and records of The Solebury Farmers Club’s 90th Anniversary in 1961. She brought them to us along with an old recording of Bucks County Ballads. Now I’m hoping to find someone who can convert this old record to a CD. Could you help? Or perhaps you could identify some of the people in the photos.

I also am looking for anyone who could tell me something about that old brick building on River Road near Ely Road with a tiny brick cottage behind it. Was it really a pumping station for Tuscarora? Who lived in the cottage?

Remember, the schoolhouse is always open on Wednesdays between 3 and 5. Stop in and say hello sometime!

Joan Fitting, Archivist

Help us keep the schoolhouse and our history intact

- Send us a letter: STHS, Drawer 525, Solebury, PA 18963.
- Drop us an email: soleburyhistory@verizon.net.
- “Like” us on Facebook.

Please share this with friends, family, co-workers...everyone who lives in New Hope and Solebury. We are hoping to have stacks of support to show the School Board.
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.

Violet and Jack Ahern
Peter Augenblick
Alice and Harold Betts
Paul and Marianne Bogen
Robert Carr
Lois W. Carbone and Charles Garefino
Richard and Elizabeth Carrick
Thomas & Jenny Carroll
Elizabeth Chardon
Frank Chicarelli
Jim and Clara Coan
Georgiana S. Coles
Mr. and Mrs. Frank J. Crane, Jr.
Jesse Crooks
Forrest Crooks
Ruth Curley
Marne Kies Dieterich
Ruth Campbell and Joseph Duffy
John & Susan Eichert
Phyllis & Gary Euler
Ronald and Shirley Felix
Ernest B. and Barbara H. Feldgus
Joan and Don Fitting
Jill and Doug Fonte
Carolyn Fox
Phyllis Gagner
Arthur Gerold
Phil Getty and Barbara Simmons
Wendy and Eugene Gladston
Lewis Baratz and Guy Glass
Joseph Gross
Robert and Sally Huxley
Ronald Dabney and Lawrence Jahns
Mary Johnson
Diane and Ian Johnston
Brian Keyes & Lisa Gladden Keyes
Joseph Kubiak
Lexington House
Paul and Marilyn Lancot
Sydney Lohan

Bromley and Suzanne Lowe
Joseph & Amy Luccaro
Bill and Jane MacDowell
Stanley A. Marcus
David & Carole Martin
Melvyn & Rochelle Mason
Phyllis and Robert Mathieu
Robert and Maria McEwan
Linda Metcalfe
Suzanne Meyers
Doub and Renee Morsbach
Robert Orrill and Dorothy Downie
Bianca Ottone
Peddlers Village Partnership
Jay and Pat Petrie
Michael and Amy Petrosini
Chris and Kristin Potts
Mary Powell and William Winters
Primrose Creek Watershed Assn.
Rhoda Smith & Daryl Renschler
Joyce & David Rivas
Bonnie & Karl Schmidt
Gayle Goodman and Jim Searing
Naudain Sellers
Curt Shreiner
Faith and Gurney P. Sloan
Karen Giller & Dr. William Stanell
Anne Stephano
David and Marilou Stewart
Tim Hartman and Ron Swidor
Joe and Tori Uhler
Janice Waldman
Patricia Whitman
Charles and Pat Worth
Robert Beck and Doreen Wright
Mr. and Mrs. Richard A. Yarnall
George and Judy Yerkes
Robert Zingaro

Many Thanks . . .

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

Marne Dieterich for helping set up for the Open House.
David Benner for donating and planting a Columbus Oak seedling on the schoolhouse grounds. In addition Dave donated Christmas roses for the landscaping around the schoolhouse.
David and Sue Benner for donating a ballot box and other items from the Carversville Grange.
Rayna Polsky for loaning us a fine collection of handcraft implements on display in the Solebury Historical Museum.
Steve Crane for donating and installing walk lighting at the schoolhouse.
Donneta Crane for donating and planting ferns at the schoolhouse.
Dick Carlson for caring for and watering the new plantings at the schoolhouse.

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 215-297-5091 or email soleburyhistory@verizon.net to place your ad in the next Solebury Chronicle.)

Security through Endowment

An Endowment Fund helps to secure the future of an organization. Won’t you consider a donation or a bequest to the Society’s Endowment Fund? We would be happy to provide you with a copy of the Endowment Fund resolution which clearly states its purpose.

Donneta Crane
Real Estate

Addison Wolfe Real Estate
100-A Union Square, New Hope PA 18938
t 215.862.5500    c 215.589.3681
f 215.862.4290
donnetta@AddisonWolfe.com
www.AddisonWolfe.com

Addison Wolfe Real Estate
Help us keep the schoolhouse and our history intact
(see front page)

Do You Know?

Upcoming Events

Annual Picnic: Sunday, September 25, 2011
4:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Location: Home of Charles & Pearl Mintzer
3720 Windy Bush Road, New Hope

Annual Meeting:
Sunday, November 20. Details to follow.

New Year’s Brunch:
Sunday, January 1, 2012
Hollyhedge Estate

STHS members will receive invitations to all events.

What type of building is this AND where is it located?

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