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 2010 Honored Citizens of Solebury awards were Nelson Shanks and Marne Dieterrich.

Nelson Shanks is a world-renowned painter, art historian, art teacher, connoisseur and collector. He and his wife Leona founded Studio Incamminati, translated from Italian as “those who are progressing” located in Philadelphia. The Studio provides a place where artists devoted to realism can study painting and acquire skills necessary for successful artistic careers.

Mr. Shanks has taught at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Art Students League, National Academy of Design, George Washington University, and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. He also established an apprentice program at his Bucks County home and studio, where artists received room, board and instruction at no cost.

He is best known for his portraits, and among his notable commissions are President William Jefferson Clinton; Princess Diana, Pope John Paul II and Luciano Pavarotti. In 2006, Governor Rendell presented Nelson with the Governor’s Distinguished Arts Award which recognizes a Pennsylvania artist of international fame whose creations and contributions enrich the Commonwealth.

Mr. Shanks lived in Solebury Township for over 30 years, and presently resides in Andalusia, Pa.

Marne Dieterrich has been giving unselfishly of her time and energies to this community for more than 40 years. Fifteen years ago she founded Wrapping Presence in memory of her parents who became unable to get out to Christmas shop. Today 400 volunteers buy, wrap and distribute Christmas gifts for the residents of 16 nursing homes to give to their loved ones. The organization is expanding into Illinois, Northern New Jersey and Maine. Wrapping Presence has won numerous awards including one given by The National Association of Nursing Homes.

Wherever there is a volunteer opportunity, you can count on finding Marne. Among the places she gives her time to are Bowman’s Hill Wildflower Preserve, the County Theater in Doylestown, and the Riverside Symphonia. You will even see her when you go to vote at the Solebury Township Building.

The Society accepts nominations for the awards from the community throughout the year. Call 215-297-5091 or email soleburyhistory@verizon.net for a nomination form.
Presidents Message

2010 — The Year of Photographs
(the importance of labels)

When people are asked … “what would be the first thing you would save if your house caught fire” … more often than not they answer family pictures. Indeed, the magic of photography has been the very food for the roots of a family tree. People, places and events can be recorded for generations to come.

Now these pictures can be shared and stored safely on a disk with a scanner. Hence I declare 2010 the year of photography.

What brought all this to our attention is a gift from folks who live in a little stone house on what was the Fell farm on Aquetong Rd. Under the eaves in the attic they found a family album. There were pictures of people, horses, chickens, cows and dogs. Snow falls were recorded. We were delighted that the album had not been damaged. However, the photos were not labeled so we didn’t know who these people were. A cousin of Ruth Fell was found, who was a treasure of information. She studied the album and with post-it-notes, identified most of the people.

Laure Duval, daughter of our founder Georges Duval, gave us a box of pictures from Georges’ collection. They had been painstakingly copied and not one picture was labeled. What to do? We’re hoping someone will come to us who can identify these people or properties. This is a dilemma of the first order!

So, remember when sorting through family pictures, ask yourself, “in 25 or 50 years, would anyone remember who these people are?” Then write on the back of the picture and include a date too.

If you have pictures of historic significance, i.e. people, buildings, farm life, related to Solebury Township, please contact us and we will scan them for our records and return them to you.

I also want to express our sincere thanks to Rhoda Renschler for the many years she served on the STHS board. She co-chaired several New Year’s Day Brunches, chaired the ‘08 Fall Walk, and played an integral part in the development of the Solebury Township Historical Museum. Some people do nice things. I believe that Rhoda does all things nicely. We are going to miss her enthusiasm.

Board Update

The Society is pleased to welcome two very qualified members to our Board:

John Rees

John and Linda Rees have lived in Solebury Township since 1984, with their sons Evan and Christian. With a strong background in historical research and writing, John has written over 150 articles since 1986 on various aspects of the common soldiers’ experience, focusing primarily on the War for Independence. Among other projects, he is currently working on a book about American soldiers’ food, 1755 to the present day.

John expressed his feelings about STHS: “The Solebury Township Historical Society’s role for the past 30 years in preserving the story of our community and its citizens, and in disseminating information to the public, is one that I truly believe in and tallies with my love of “small things forgotten.” I am really happy to be able to promote and advance that mission by serving on the Society’s board.”

In addition to his journal articles, John was a regular columnist for the quarterly newsletter Food History News writing for 19 years on soldiers’ food, wrote four entries for the Oxford Encyclopedia of American Food and Drink, thirteen entries for the revised Thomson Gale edition of Boatner’s Encyclopedia of the American Revolution, contributed a chapter to Carol Karels’ The Revolutionary War in Bergen County (2007), and two chapters to Barbara Z. Marchant’s Revolutionary Bergen County, The Road to Independence (2009). He was elected Fellow of the Company of Military Historians in April 2009. A partial article list plus many complete works are available online at www.revwar75.com/library/rees. Selected Civil War monographs are posted online at http://www.libertyrifles.org/research. A complete list of his writing may be obtained upon request.

Joe Thomas

Joe has been a member of Solebury Township Historical Society for approximately two and a half years since moving here in 2007. In this short period of time he and his wife Betsy have been active members and have assisted with several of our events. Joe and Betsy married shortly after graduating from college. He served as an officer in the U.S. Air Force and later as an executive in the Aerospace industry. During this period he became interested in American History and Genealogy and has been active in and served at the national, state, and local levels with the Society of Colonial Wars, The Sons of the American Revolution, and Sons and daughters of the Pilgrims. Betsy and Joe live in a two hundred year old stone farm house and have been very active in tracing the history of the past owners.

Joe has a BS degree from the University of Colorado, an MA degree from the University of Oklahoma and attended Oxford University, England and the University of New Mexico doing post-graduate work there. He is also a graduate of the Armed Forces Staff College and the Air War College. Joe and Betsy chose this area of the country for their retirement because of the beauty, history, tolerance, and interesting well-rounded people that live here.
Highlighting Solebury’s Historic Inns

Holly Hedge Estates

The land on which Holly Hedge Estate is sited was part of a 500+ acre parcel deeded by William Penn in 1682 to Brizillion Foster of Cambridge County, England. The land extended on both sides of Upper York Road all the way to the river. During the late 1700s John Coryell, who operated the ferry in New Hope, owned the land. In 1794 Watson Fell of Buckingham Township and his bride, the former Elizabeth Blackfan of Solebury, purchased 230 acres from Coryell on the north side of Upper York Road, which included what is now known as the Holly Hedge Estate. Fell is believed to have constructed the first building on the property — a small 2-story stone and log house. This building still stands today and has been renovated as a lovely bridal suite. Fell likely also built the stone barn, which today hosts intimate weddings and other ceremonies.

In 1846 Watson’s sons, John and Elias, subdivided the parcel into two lots. Elias retained the parcel with the original Fell homestead and it is believed he constructed the larger two-story stone house across from the original Fell home. This main house today has a gathering room, breakfast room and nine guest rooms.

John Fell is said to have constructed his own home on his share of the property. That property is today known as Glen Oaks Farm.

Elias and John were carpenters, as was their father Watson. But records indicate that Elias farmed about 65 acres of his land, and kept horses, pigs and cows. In 1870 he planted an orchard. Elias died in 1881 and in 1887 the Fell family sold the property to Wilson Pearson, thus ending more than a century of ownership by the Fells.

Wilson Pearson gave the property to his daughter Ruth and son-in-law Daniel Ely, and it remained in the Ely family until 1925. After several more owners the farm became the property of Sarah Kerney in 1941. During the next 15 years Sarah transformed the farmstead into an elegant estate with the addition of ornate gardens and landscaping. She is believed to have named the estate Ramblerny, the name likely a play on the picturesque rambling hills.

From 1964 to 1967 Charles and Ruth Woodford operated a school for the performing arts at Ramblerny, where young people could further their interests in music and dance during a 7-week summer camp. Charles’s mother was Doris Humphrey, a noted modern dancer. They sought talented teachers, including Phil Woods, a Juilliard graduate and noted jazz musician who performed with groups such as Benny Goodman orchestra and the McGuire Sisters. The school provided professional level teaching in ballet, modern dance, jazz music and theater, with public performances held in the barn. There were about 100 students each summer, ages 13 to 18. Many of the students went on to become well known professionals in the music, theater and dance fields. The school provided a place for the fine professional teachers to spend quality time with others like themselves, as well as the opportunity for the students to interact with teachers of premier quality.

In 1969 Diana King, along with her friend Kurt Goldman, founded the Kildonan School offering an educational program for dyslexic students. The first year, twelve students enrolled, but the school eventually flourished and outgrew the facility. In 1980 the school moved to its present quarters in Amenia, New York, in the foothills of the Berkshires, where it continues to prosper.

In 1984 George Hizny and Douglas Williams purchased a 20-acre portion of the estate which included the main buildings and renovated the estate into a bed and breakfast. According to the current owner, Joe Luccaro, the renovations were cosmetic at best. Hizny and Williams experienced financial difficulties and sold it to Jerry and Uni Ciasuili who attempted to establish a Holistic Healing Center. Apparently that venture was unsuccessful and Hizny/Williams got the property back. They then sold it to Joe and Amy Luccaro in 1996.

The Luccaros renamed the property Holly Hedge Estate and transformed it into an elegant bed and breakfast and sought-after venue for weddings and events. The banquet hall was constructed in 2002 to accommodate larger events. Luccaro’s son Benjamin joined them in the business in 2007 and has introduced various “green” aspects. A large garden now provides fruits, vegetables and flowers used at the Inn and for catering functions. Last year Ben tapped their maple trees and made syrup. Kitchen waste is being composted and used to fertilize the garden. Add that to their chickens and goats, and the Luccaros have restored the estate to a working farm and a successful enterprise.

Many thanks to Joe Luccaro for providing a history summary and other details from which this information has been excerpted. Also thanks to Ruth Fitting (formerly Ruth Woodford) for her recollections of the Ramblerny performing arts camp.

NOTE: Holly Hedge Estate is the lovely venue for the Society’s annual New Year’s Brunch.
“Our wants of the common conveniences were sometimes curiously supplied …”

A Revolutionary Soldier’s Wooden Bowl  

Dedicated to the late Sally Paxson Davis for her kindness and generosity in sharing a family treasure.

Artifacts connected to an individual Revolutionary War common soldier are rare, especially personal items like the mess bowl recently donated to Solebury Township Historical Society. That receptacle, belonging to an anonymous soldier, was left in the hands of a Solebury Township family, and passed from generation to generation down to the present-day. Having learned of its existence several years ago, in 2007 I was fortunate enough to learn the bowl’s whereabouts and arrange to examine it in person.

At the time of the War for American Independence the village of Aquetong, also known as Paxson’s Corner, was on the York Road, nearly midway between Lahaska and the Great (Ingham’s) Spring (Solebury Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, present-day Route 202/York Road and Aquetong Road, about 4 miles west of New Hope/Coryell’s Ferry). “Rolling Green” the “fine Colonial mansion,” still to be seen on the north side of York Road, was owned by Benjamin Paxson at the time of the War for Independence. Paxson family history notes that, “a soldier, who was taken ill and died there after the army had moved on, was buried on the Paxson property.” In 1926 Henry D. Paxson told of “a relic preserved by the Paxson family … a wooden bowl left by a Continental soldier from a southern State, who had been taken ill with a fever and was nursed by the family [until his death].” The incident may have occurred during the Monmouth campaign, Henry Paxson claiming that Maj. Gen. Charles Lee’s Division of New England (not southern) troops camped near the Paxson residence in 1778. In actuality Lee’s advance force, consisting of his own troops plus three Pennsylvania brigades, marched from New Britain, Pa., on 20 June 1778 and, after a halt at present-day Holicong, about 3 miles southwest of Rolling Green, continued past the Paxson residence to Coryell’s Ferry. They possibly left behind a sick comrade, but the anonymous soldier, too, may have belonged to one of Gen. George Washington’s other three divisions following Lee. While the date of the soldier’s stay and his home state cannot be corroborated, the incident could have occurred during the march to Monmouth, though large elements of the Continental Army passed numerous times along York Road from late 1776 through mid–June 1778.

Until January 1st 2009 the bowl was owned by the family of the late Sally Paxson Davis. I met with Mrs. Davis in November 2007 at the home of her cousin Franca C. Warden, to study and measure the artifact. While most Continental soldiers’ mess bowls were likely carved or turned from a single piece of wood, the Paxson bowl is of stave construction, with three crude wooden bands surrounding the outside (one at the base), and a solid wood bottom. The wood bottom is slightly oval and dish-shaped, with the base curved and the top (inside of the bowl) flat. The edge of the wooden bottom (trapped between the outer staves, but loose enough to remove and examine) comes almost to a point. At first, given its construction and style, it seemed likely the bowl had been formed from a cut-down canteen. Subsequent information shows that the Paxson bowl was instead a purposely made food receptacle, not an ad hoc field conversion.

Bowl dimensions are as follows: The base is oval, 4 3/8 X 3 7/8 inches; top of bowl (outside measurements), 5 1/8 inches; bottom of bowl (outside measurements), 4 3/4 inches at the widest; side staves are 3/16 inch thick at top and 1/8 inch at bottom; staves are 2 3/4 inches high; side bands are crude, reminiscent of the bands on twig furniture. The top band is from 1/4 inch to 3/8 inch, the lower bands seem more uniform being about 1/2 inch wide. Sally Davis had noted in an initial phone interview that the bowl was somewhat fragile, but during my examination I learned that the side staves and bands binding them are still tight and rather sturdy.

Although we now know the bowl was not a converted canteen, it is interesting to note that not every Continental soldier had his own mess bowl, many having to share or else provide a substitute. Two men told of makeshift utensils used during the war. Park Holland, first ensign, then lieutenant in the 5th Massachusetts Regiment, wrote in his memoirs,

To show our need for the common necessaries of life, I mention that orders came with invitations for each [officer] bidden [to dine], to bring his plate, knife and fork, all of which
articles were very scarce. I have known our foreign friends who were accustomed to dine from silver, for months together eat from a clean chip [of wood?], instead of a plate … Our wants of the common conveniences were sometimes curiously supplied by our soldiers, in the manufacture of wooden spoons, bowls, plates, etc.

John Howland (Col. Henry Babcock’s Rhode Island State Regiment in 1776 and 1777) noted of the march to reinforce Washington’s forces in December 1776.

Our condition … was bad enough. Our day’s ration which we drew in the morning, was a pint of flour per man. Some of us had canteens with only one head. This was fortunate for the possessor, as he could receive his flour in it, and with water mix it into dough to be baked on the embers. Some received their flour on a flat stone, if they could find one …

Even British soldiers experienced shortages. “Jonas,” a soldier in the British 68th Regiment, told of a meal while camped on the Isle of Wight in 1758:

I found my comrades all placed on the grass … in a circle, and I had orders to fix the kettle in the center. Some had knives, while others had none; as to spoons and forks, we were all in one case, destitute, and no porringer or bowls, but to supply the want of the last, we took the kettle lid …

Military artist Don Troiani notes that soldiers’ eating receptacles during the period “must have been mostly wood as I have never dug any parts of pewter or tin ones after decades of digging on Rev[olutionary War] sites.” Given that wood was likely the rule, just how widespread staved mess bowls were among Continental troops cannot be known. Bowls made from a single piece of wood, such as the Royal Navy one pictured below, were likely more common, as turned and carved bowls were familiar household items in 18th century America. Several examples, discovered in the wreck of the HMS Invincible sunk off the Isle of Wight 20 February 1758, also place them in a British military context.

In any event, the Paxson family soldier’s bowl, probably, along with its original owner, a veteran of Valley Forge and perhaps the 1777 Philadelphia Campaign, left the army in 1778 and found a new home in Solebury. It has now found its way back.

(Acknowledgements)

I first heard of the soldier’s bowl about 15 years ago from a booklet written by Henry Paxson in the 1920’s. I thought at the time that some Paxson family descendant possibly still had the bowl, but soon forgot about it. In 2006 Les Isbrandt asked me to write an article for the New Hope Historical Society newsletter. Writing about the Continental Army crossing at Coryell’s Ferry during the 1778 Monmouth Campaign, recalling Henry Paxson’s story I included a small note asking if anyone had information on the whereabouts of the Paxson family soldier’s bowl. Receiving no leads, I eventually sent a letter to Edwin “Ned” Harrington, who called one day and told me, “I’ve seen that bowl. My cousin Sally has it.” That set the ball rolling, so that in November 2007 after several phone conversations with Sally, we met at Franca Warden’s house, where, in addition to a really pleasant visit, I was able to examine and photograph the bowl. And that, with Ned’s determination to see the bowl back in Solebury, the kindness of Franca Warden, and the generosity of Sally and Robert Davis and Caroline Davis Claytor, brings us to today, 231 years after the soldier was left behind in Solebury.

In addition to Sally Davis, Franca Warden, and Edwin Harrington, thanks also to John Broomhead, Don N. Hagist, Bernard Kazwick, Steve Rayner, Robert Selig, Don Troiani, Thaddeus Weaver, and Mathew White for providing invaluable information and advice for this work.

For additional information on Revolutionary soldiers’ food, see:


Rees, “‘To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.’: Soldiers’ Food and Cooking in the War for Independence” (To be published in Military Collector & Historian, 2010)

Subheadings:
“The manner of messing and living together”: Continental Army Mess Groups

“Who shall have this?”: Food Distribution
“A hard game ...”: Continental Army Cooks
“On with Kittle, to make some hasty Pudding …”: How a “Continental Devil” Broke His Fast
1. The Army Ration and Cooking Methods.
2. Eating Utensils.
3. The Morning Meal.
4. Other Likely Breakfast Fare.

Anyone wishing a copy of the sources for this article, contact John Rees at ju_rees@msn.com

The Soldier’s bowl is now on display at the Solebury Township Historical Museum.
Bringing in the New Year!

The Society’s tenth annual New Year’s Brunch was another great success, bringing friends and neighbors together to celebrate the New Year!

2009 Annual Meeting draws crowd

The beautiful Audubon Visitor Center was “filled to the rafters” when more than 100 members gathered for the Society’s 2009 Annual Meeting in November. The big draw was the one woman show “Julia Child” masterfully presented by Solebury resident Linda Kenyon. The pot luck dinner featured some of Julia’s recipes - yum!

Special thanks to our Brunch sponsors:
Addison Wolfe Real Estate
George Nakashima Woodworker S.A.
The First National Bank & Trust Company of Newtown
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.

News Members
Alan & Gail Keim
Cindy Smarsh
Robert Beck & Doreen Wright

Members who renewed
Carola Braun-Struyk
Franta Broulik
David Cramer and Anna Burbank
Stephen and Donneta Crane
Patrick & Mary Fowles
David and Connie Gillis
Jane & Simon Hallett
Kathy Hausman & Jim Hill
Linda Kenyon
David and Kimberly Kline
James and Nancy Lockhart
Ann R. Rainey
Karl and Bonnie Schmidt
Jurgen Schweichkhardt
Paul and Donna Trenchard
Patricia Witlicki

Every effort has been made to publish a complete and accurate list of memberships received since the last newsletter (October 2009) and up to January 31, 2010. We regret if there are any omissions.

Many Thanks . . .

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

Linda Kenyon for her memorable performance of Julia Child at our annual meeting.

New Year Brunch:
Sponsors
Addison Wolfe Real Estate
George Nakashima Woodworker S.A.
The First National Bank & Trust of Newtown

Donors of Raffle prizes:
Jan Lipes
Black Bass Hotel
Richard Carlson
Giggleberry Fair (Chee Jamison)
Phillips Mill Inn
Hotel duVillage
Sweet Lorraine’s (Chee Jamison)
Robert Hartzell
Shady Lady’s Lotting Shed
1740 House
rocerus Med Spa
Boutique Nail Salon
Donna & Paul Trenchard

Giant Food Stores for Brunch centerpieces
Martina Harris and Rhoda Renschler for tying ribbons on to the Brunch programs

Elaine Crooks for designing the Brunch invitations and the Solebury Chronicle

The First National Bank & Trust of Newtown for displaying the Lipes painting and selling raffle tickets

Solebury Township Historical Museum:
Sally Jagoe for her vision; Jim Hill, Kathy Hausman and Noel Barret for providing items on display; Committee members Lisa Gladden-Keys, Richard Carlson, Rhoda Renschler and Crisstain Blackwood. Bruce Katsiff and Holly Brown of the James A. Michener Museum for expertise.

Jeff Marshall for donating his book “Farm Houses of Bucks County” to our research library.

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@verizon.net to reach the Solebury community with your ad in the next Solebury Chronicle.)

Can you help?

We have a brand new computer and scanner. Would you like to help scan photographs for our archives? Call us to talk about it: 215-297-5091.

Are you interested in helping us plan one of our wonderful events? Call Elaine at 215-297-8447.
INSIDE THIS ISSUE
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– Historic Inns - Holly Hedge Estate
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Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars for a fun-filled, fascinating year with the Solebury Township Historical Society

**March**
- The Solebury Township Historical Museum will feature the watershed associations of Solebury. Watch for your announcement.

**Sunday, April 25, 1-4 p.m.**
- Annual Schoolhouse Open House, featuring collections of old postcards and delicious refreshments.

**Saturday, May 22, 9-11 a.m.**
- Spring Walk: Ingham Spring and Deer Park

**September** (date and location to be announced)
- Annual Summer Picnic

**Saturday, October 2, 9-11 a.m.**
- History Walk: Mills of New Hope (postponed from fall)
  Meet at the American Legion’s parking lot on New Street.

**Sunday, November 14, 4:30-7:30**
- Annual Meeting
- Old Fashion **Shindig** featuring square dancing, chili and dogs, and a “romping” good time!

*Members will receive personal invitations to all events. Visit www.soleburyhistory.org for updates.*

Do You Know?

Double chimneys were not very common in Solebury. Do you know what historic public building has these?

Call 215-297-5091 or email soleburyhistory@verizon.net with your answer. You may win a prize!