

Solebury Chronicle



A newsletter of the Solebury Township Historical Society

A Step Back in Time

On Thursday evening, April 15, 2014, approximately 150 people were sitting in the Solebury Friends Meetinghouse when I walked Harriet Tubman singing a Negro spiritual. For the next hour it was no longer 2014 but rather the mid 19th century. Harriet told the assembled group of her birth to her

slave parents in 1815, or 1822, or 1820, or maybe 1825, when she was given the name Araminta Ross by her parents. She spent her early years as a slave in Maryland, working on the plantation where she was born, watching her younger siblings, or being hired out to other plantation owners who often beat her for imagined of-

fenses. One day while running an errand for her owner she was hit in the head with a two-pound weight by an angry overseer. She suffered a severe head injury that affected her for the rest of her life. She had been taught Bible stories by her mother and she became a strong believer in God. She had visions and dreams and believed they were sent from God. Although uneducated and illiterate, she firmly believed that she needed to store thoughts and ideas "in her head" so that she and others could live in a better world.

About 1844 Araminta "jumped the broom" with John Tubman, who was a free black man, and changed her name to Harriet Tubman (Harriet was her mother's name). Married life for a freeman and a slave was difficult, and the marriage was not a happy one.

In 1849 Harriet escaped from her slave master and made her way to Pennsylvania via the Under-

ground Railroad, a network of routes and houses set up by abolitionists to help the slaves. After her escape she soon returned to Maryland to help lead other members of her family to freedom. In the years that followed Harriet made at least 13 expeditions to bring others north, finding her way

from house to house and place to place in the Underground Railroad. The travelers usually hid by day and traveled by night. They had help from "conductors" who provided them with food and

directions to the next safe house. Harriet found her way by using the North Star as her guide.

During the Civil War Harriet served as a nurse, a guide, a scout, and a spy,

and she continued to assist fugitives in their escapes. She worked in camps near Port Royal, South Carolina, and used her knowledge of folk remedies to aid the soldiers. She was present when Robert Gould Shaw led the all-Black 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment in an assault on Ft. Wagner in South Carolina.

Following the presentation Harriet answered questions regarding her belief in God, her work on the Underground Railroad, and her life in general.

Harriet Tubman was portrayed by Millicent Sparks, a petite dynamo who had everyone in the room believing she was Harriet. Millicent is an accomplished actor, writer, and producer. Her Living History performance was sponsored by the Pennsylvania Humanities Council supported in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Harriet Tubman, played by Millicent Sparks, mesmerized the audience gathered in the Solebury Friends Meetinghouse.



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History Quiz

Name the person who lived on Pidcock Creek Road, fought in the Revolution, served as a U.S. Congressman and was made a General in the War of 1812?

Answer on page 5

President's Message

Dear Society Members:

Well, the snow is finally gone. What a winter! But, for us, the winter resulted in many improvements in our little one-room schoolhouse. We have a new roof, completely renovated windows, lots of exterior and some interior wood-work, and fresh coats of paint. The most exciting thing that earned a round of applause from the board was when Brad Livezey fixed our old fashioned water fountain. Come take a drink. Happily, the schoolhouse is open to the public again every Wednesday afternoon from 3 to 5 p.m. thanks to our archivists, Judy Clarke, Rita Flack, Marilyn Lanctot, Gwen Davis and Dick Carlson.

We had a great turnout for the spring open house. Lots of members stopped by to see what had been done to the schoolhouse, do some research, eat a cookie or two and visit with neighbors.

Our big spring educational program, the Underground Railroad Tour, was co-hosted by New Hope Historical Society and organized by our talented and energetic Events Chair Linda Kenyon. It was a two-part program. Part one consisted of a living history performance by Millicent Sparks portraying Harriet Tubman. We had about 150 guests who attended this performance free of charge thanks to a grant from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council. It was an amazing event to watch. Thank you so much to the Solebury Friends for letting us borrow their meetinghouse for the evening – a perfect spot for this presentation.

Part two involved approximately 75 people taking the trolley tour of some of the Underground Railroad locations in Solebury and New Hope. Our tour guides were fabulous as they explained what happened at each different location. The trolley tour took about 3 hours and was followed by an ice cream and cookies reception managed by Pat Witlicki and Penny Armagost. Please see more descriptions and photos of these events throughout this newsletter.

As always, if you would like to volunteer to help please give us a call at 215 297-5091 or email us at info@soleburyhistory.org

Donneta K Crane



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2014 Board of Directors

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Joan Fitting
 Sally Jagoe
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Almost time for our Summer Picnic

Save the date:

Sunday, August 24, 2014, 4-7 p.m.

Plan now to join us for our festive annual summer picnic. Why not bring a friend or neighbor? We always have a great time!

Members will receive an email or postcard announcement in July with all the details.

Revolutionary War soldier's bowl protected

Thanks to a grant from the Lincohooken Questers Chapter #495 of Doylestown, the historic wooden bowl found at Rolling Green Farm is now safely encased in an archival case and secured at the schoolhouse.



Board news

It is with deep regret that we announce that **Joan Fitting** has resigned from the STHS board. Joan has been a valuable board member since 1998, when John Touhey and a few others decided to restart the Society that had been dormant for some 10 years. Upon moving to the school-house, Joan took the lead in organizing our files, books, and archives. And she has been there almost every Wednesday afternoon to help visitors with their research. Joan, you will really be missed!

Last year **Judy Clarke** expressed an interest in helping to organize the Society's archives and files. And to our great delight she has agreed to serve as our archivist.

Judy and her husband have lived in Solebury Township for 50 years. They bought what had been the garage and chauffeur's quarters on the grounds of an extensive estate which had been broken up at auction and, little by little, turned it into a comfortable home. After raising her son she went back to work as a librarian: first at Solebury School, then Buckingham Friends, and last and perhaps the most interesting, Bucks County Prison.

While now officially retired, she is involved in a number of things but, because of her long-standing interest in local history, she chose to say yes when Donnetta asked her to become the archivist of the Solebury Township Historical Society.

We are also delighted to welcome **Penny Armagost** to the Board. Penny has agreed to take on the all-important job of membership. Penny and her husband John have lived in Solebury for over 20 years. She served on the 300th Anniversary committee in 2001 and 2002 arranging projects and events for the community to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the incorporation of Solebury Township.

Penny was a teacher in the Pennsbury School District for 35 years. Now retired from teaching, she currently works part time at the Byrne Sewing Connection in Doylestown.

"I love living in Bucks County, particularly Solebury," comments Penny. "It's a beautiful place to live. I can't imagine living anywhere else."

High School Teachers tour local Revolutionary War sites



*Joseph Pickett's
1914 painting of
Coryell's Ferry in
1776*

On the afternoon of April 29, 2014, five intrepid teachers from the New Hope-Solebury School District braved the cold and wind to learn about George Washington's time in Solebury Township during the Revolutionary War. Washington was here twice during the war: in December 1776 before the Battle of Trenton and again in June 1778 before the Battle of Monmouth. Known then as Coryell's Ferry, this area of Solebury Township that would become New Hope played an important strategic role during the Revolutionary War. The ferry crossing was traversed countless times by messengers, suppliers and military detachments. Following the capture of Philadelphia in September 1777, Coryell's Ferry was one of the few river crossing points between Pennsylvania and New Jersey free from enemy interference. Redoubts built into the hills provided protection for the guns and soldiers that defended the small village and ferry crossing.

Led by board member Robert McEwan, 8th grade teacher Colleen O'Donnell along with Valerie Brison, Alicia Anderson, Fred Achenbach, Jon Gonsiewski, and Kevin Elvey of the high school enjoyed a 2-hour tour that began in New Hope, went to Washington Crossing and meandered back through Solebury Township. Highlights included stops at New Hope Borough Hall with the descriptions of the small industrial village of Coryell's Ferry with its complex system of redoubts, a glimpse of the Maple Grove where George and Martha Washington were entertained in 1778, and the Thompson-Neely House which served as a hospital during the War.

Underground Railroad Tour

On May 18th, the Solebury Township Historical Society and the New Hope Historical Society collaborated on a trolley tour featuring locations in New Hope, Solebury, and Buckingham that were involved with the Underground Railroad. The fugitives that passed through our area came east along the Old York Road or north through the Newtown area, and though most fugitives continued North, many took refuge with local farmers and settled in the area. We travelled to the most active Underground Railroad stations, including the homes of William H. Johnson on Holicong Road and Jonathan P. Magill on Aquetong Road. In addition to their covert activities, both men were very politically active, as were their wives (both named Mary). All four were delegates to an anti-slavery convention held in Philadelphia in 1838 before the hall they were meeting in was burnt to the ground by anti-black rioters. Edward Magill also ran an integrated school out of the family's barn in the 1840s.

We also visited a number of locations where fugitives resided. While the stories of individual fugitives who escaped on the Underground Railroad are difficult to ascertain, there are two well-documented cases in our area. Rachel Moore escaped from Maryland with her six children, and she and her younger children were taken in by the Magills. Her older children found work of local farms, including that of John Blackfan on Meetinghouse Road. The Moore family remained in the area, eventually moving to New Hope. Another famous case is the story of a group of six men who escaped from Queen Anne County, Maryland, and made their way to Bucks County. Three of them found refuge in Solebury.

William Wright was taken in by John Ruckman on Upper York Road, Perry Helmsley lived with the family of Mahlon Gibbs on Aquetong Road, and Helmsley's cousin Samuel Scott was taken in by John Blackfan, where he lived for a number of years before purchasing a house on Upper York Road. Scott lived in Solebury for the rest of his life, dying in 1911. In New Hope, we visited sites associated with another well-known fugitive named Henry Lee, who also escaped from Maryland. He moved to New Hope in the



Trolley stop at Cuttalossa



Inside Mount Gilead church



Buckingham Friends Meeting

1830s and lived there for the rest of his life. He worked at Cintra, served as the town crier, and as an old man he boarded at the Delaware House, now the New Hope Starbucks.

One of the highlights of the tour was our stop at Mount Gilead Church on Buckingham Mountain. The church was originally founded as an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in the 1830s, and a large African-American population resided on the mountain before the Civil War. The land was given to the church by the Yeomans family, one of the first free black families in Buckingham. Thomas Yeomans was born in Africa, and was living in Buckingham as a free man with his family by 1790. His son Daniel donated the land for the church. Both men served as preachers at Mount Gilead, and Daniel remained a preacher into his 80s. Many thanks to John and Mary Reinhardt and Reverend David Jackson for giving us access to the church during our visit. We also visited the site of Mount Moriah AME Church at the far end of West Mechanic Street in New Hope. Mount Moriah was formed before Mount Gilead, and church records show that there was an AME congregation in New Hope by 1818. A black community formed around the church, and many the adjacent properties were owned by black residents for generations. The church was torn down many years ago, and now all that remains is the cemetery.

We also stopped at Buckingham Friends Meeting. The meeting gave us access to the meetinghouse, where we discussed the rise of abolitionism within the Society of Friends and the tension between abolitionists and slave

owners within Buckingham Meeting. The meeting was home to some of the earliest Quaker abolitionists, including John Scarborough and Samuel Eastburn, who became active abolitionists in the 1750s and collaborated with the famous abolitionist John Woolman. However, there were still some members who owned slaves until Philadelphia Yearly Meeting completely banned the practice in 1776. We also visited the graveyard, where the meeting laid out a section for African Americans in 1807.

MORE PHOTOS ON BACK PAGE

Jesse Crooks

We are so grateful . . .

Many volunteers and many hours went into the planning and execution of the recent Underground Railroad presentation and tour.

Linda Kenyon, the Society's Event Chair, conceived of the tour, layed out the route, recruited a committee, and did all things needed to pull off a successful, fun and educational tour. Jesse Crooks, the Society's historian, did all the research and wrote the narratives used by the tour guides.



Special thanks

Living History Presentation:

Solebury Friends Meeting provided the perfect space and helped with parking; Pennsylvania Humanities Council sponsored the event. Millicent Sparks portrayed Harriet Tubman and was spellbinding; Linda Kenyon made home-made lemonade; Solebury Police managed traffic; Brian Keyes and Ed Leydon helped with parking on Thursday night.

Tour:

Stephanie Garomon took the reservations. Georgie Coles provided history relating to Valley Farm, William, Johnson's home. Rev. Joseph Di Paolo provided a large amount of research. Tour guides: Jesse Crooks, Doreen Stratton, Dee Dee Bowman and Linda Kenyon. helped by committee members Pat Witlicki, Pamela Burrell, Peter Gatto, Bruce Harris and Terry McNealy. Beth Carrick designed and produced the tour map. Bob Egan lent us a microphone and speaker. John Reinhardt opened Mount Gilead Church arranged for Rev. David Jackson of Second Baptist Church in Doylestown to greet us, and for someone to direct traffic. Peter Ray opened Buckingham Meeting.

Reception:

Pat Witlicki organized the reception; helpers Donneta Crane and Penny Armagost. OwowCow donated super delicious ice cream and Pamela Burrell solicited the ice cream. Ernie Bowman, Pam Burrell, Elaine Crooks and Penny Armagost baked cookies; Pat Witlicki made iced tea and Linda Kenyon made lemonade.

(We deeply apologize if we forgot anyone.)

Schoolhouse Renovations

Spring finally brought warmer days and we were able to finish the exterior paint trim in time for the open house.

We thank carpenter Paul Memminger for donating his skills on constructing several much needed storage cabinets. Paul has also recently renovated our existing book shelves so that they more easily accommodate some of our larger books.

We would like to thank Brad Livezey for a labor of love; he brought the old water fountain back to working order! It's nice to know the *fountains of water and knowledge* still flow at the Schoolhouse.

Augmenting our Library

The Society has recently acquired the extensive collection of books, journals and maps from historian and author Willis Rivinus. Will has written many books and made oral presentations on the history of our area and we now have his research material. These materials are being reviewed and cataloged and will become part of our permanent collection.

History Quiz

(answer) Isaac Van Horn

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Oral History on the Web

“Oral history refers both to a method of recording and preserving oral testimony and to the product of that process. It begins with an audio or video recording of a first person account made by an interviewer with an interviewee, both of whom have the conscious intention of creating a permanent record to contribute to an understanding of the past.”

This is the definition of oral history given by the Oral History Association. It all sounds rather dry and stilted until one actually becomes involved with the interviews, at which time it becomes rich and vibrant and very interesting.

- Have you visited the Phillips Mill area in Solebury Township? Have you heard of the New Hope School and its artists? Would you like to hear Edward Redfield talk about his life and his art?
- Have you toured the Parry Mansion in New Hope? Have you heard of the Parry sisters, two members of the family who lived in the house?
- Do you know about the Quakers who settled our area?
- Have you ever heard first-hand stories of life on the Delaware Canal?
- Remember “Dump the Pump”?
- Do you know Don Fitting and Malcolm Crooks, husbands of current and former STHS board members?
- Did you know Ned Harrington, the Carversville historian? Do you live in Carversville and know its history?

If you visit the STHS web site you can learn about all of this and much more first hand by listening to oral history accounts given by people who lived in these places or were part of the community. The Solebury Township Historical Society and the New Hope Historical Society have joined forces to create an oral history collection for the benefit of the residents of the area. Together the two societies have collected and posted on the web 50 local oral histories, and we hope to collect more in the future. You can listen to the remembrances of artists and their families, canal workers, Carversville residents, farmers, New Hope and Solebury Township residents, and local teachers. We have even posted a music album of songs about Bucks County composed and sung by Lynn Sims. (You can see we stretched the accepted definition of “oral history.”) Go to <http://soleburyhistory.org/program-list/oral-history/> to see the complete list of interviews.

When you open the page you will see a list of the available interviews and a short introduction. Click on the name of the person you wish to hear to see the bar for the recording. If you are interested in a particular topic, there are tags on the right-hand side of the page to help you find that topic in a particular interview. Click on the topic and see who spoke on the subject. Each interview has time markers, so if you are doing research on a particular subject you can go directly to the part of the tape dealing with it.

Robert McEwan, vice president, is in charge of oral histories. Robert and the Society need volunteers to learn how to take oral histories and record many of the interesting people in our community. We are especially anxious to get copies of any oral interview tapes you or other Solebury Township organizations may have in their possession, which we would set up on our web site to share with the township (and world!). If you know of interview tapes or would like to be a part of this on-going project, please call 215 297 5091 and leave a message with your name and phone number, or email info@soleburyhistory.org.

Many Thanks . . .

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

Sally Jagoe: Conference Table

Dave & Marilou Stewart: Full set, W.W.Davis books “History of Bucks County”

The Tinsman family: Wooden schoolhouse desk

Margaret & Richard Knostler: Wooden schoolhouse desk (Richard and his son both attended the one-room schoolhouse)

David & Jennifer Mason: Photos of the Greenhill schoolhouse.

Elaine Crooks: Copier

Dick Carlson: Painting the reconditioned book shelves

Vic Lance: Attending to the Veterans’ memorial garden on the schoolhouse grounds.



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Michael Scavullo, CSA • 215-794-3393
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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.

Maureen Ammirati
 Monique Gaumont and Jon Atkin
 Patricia Bacon
 Steven Cohen and Pamela Blake
 Paul and Marianne Bogen
 James D. and Rhea Brown
 Margo and Harold Busund
 Hellen Cannon
 Richard Carlson
 Bob and Dotty Carr
 Richard and Elizabeth Carrick
 Paul and May Cosdon
 Ruth Campbell and Joseph Duffy
 John and Susan Eichert
 Ernest B. and Barbara H. Feldgus
 Geoffrey and Kathleen Fisher
 Joan and Don Fitting
 Eugene Fluehr
 Carolyn Fox
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 Todd Genty
 Phil Getty
 David and Connie Gillis
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 Joseph Gross
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 Nancy and Burt Holland
 Robert and Sally Huxley
 Margaret Jamison
 Susan Kane
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 David Linehan
 Richard and Jeannette Lynch
 Stanley A. Marcus
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 David Morey
 Douglas and Renee Morsbach
 Marnie Newman Leasure
 Dr. and Mrs. Robert Ozols
 Dr. and Mrs. Jay R. Petrie
 Chris Potts and Kristin Orlieb- Potts
 Dr. Gerhard and Barbara Raabe
 Nancy and Jerry Ruddle
 Michael J. and Elizabeth Schmidt
 Jurgen Schweickhardt & John Bayma
 Douglas and Charlynn Shapiro
 Faith and Gurney P. Sloan
 David and Marilou Stewart
 Barbara Straton
 Doreen Stratton
 Scott and Marjorie Sullivan
 Tim Hartman and Ron Swidor
 Susan D. Tinsman
 Robert and Lorraine Topolin
 Ernest Torres
 Patricia Whitman
 Bonnie and Warren Wilbur
 Robert Beck and Doreen Wright
 Edward Zekus
 Roy Ziegler and Charles F. Tarr

Every effort has been made to publish a complete and accurate list of memberships received since the last newsletter (January) and up to about June 10, 2014. We regret if there are any omissions.

Donneta Crane

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Support our Business Members

We are most grateful for the support of the local business community and encourage you to patronize these fine businesses:

Steward

Bountiful Acres
 Holly Hedge Estates/1740 House
 Rockwood Wealth Management

Protector

Black Bass Hotel, Lumberville
 Tinsman Brothers Inc., Lumberville

Guardian

Augenblick & Co. PC
 Delray Plus True Value
 Eagle Diner
 Finkels Hardware
 First Federal of Bucks County
 First National Bank & Trust Company of
 Newtown
 Mancuso Show Management
 Nakashima Woodworkers
 New Hope Crushed Stone

Highlighting a Business Member

(In each issue of the Chronicle we will highlight one of our business members.)

John Augenblick of Rockwood Wealth Management

was recently selected as one of the "Bucks County Forty Under 40" honorees. Created by the Bucks County Courier Times & The Intelligencer, the Forty Under 40 celebrates executives who have consistently demonstrated leadership and who have made a significant contribution to the community through public service. The honorees were selected from a pool of 100 candidates nominated by members of the Bucks County business community.

In addition to his dedication to his clients at Rockwood Wealth Management and likewise to his family, John is active in community stewardship. He serves as a trustee of the Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle, a trustee of the New Hope Historical Society, and a Regional Director of Team Capital Bank. He recently served on the long-term finance committee of the New Hope-Solebury School district and is a strong advocate of land preservation in Bucks County.

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

(Call 215-297-5091 or email info@soleburyhistory to place your ad in the next *Solebury Chronicle*.)



Solebury Township Historical Society
Drawer 525
Solebury, PA 18963

Upcoming Events

- August 24** **Summer Picnic, 4-7 p.m.**
Solebury Schoolhouse grounds.
- October 4** **History Walk - Cuttalossa Valley**
10 a.m. **Lead by Willis Rivinus**
- November 16** **Society Annual Meeting**
- January 1,**
2015 **New Year's Brunch**

*Visit soleburyhistory.org for details closer to the dates.
STHS members will receive invitations to all events.*

Underground Railroad

The tour visited some 19 sites including the homes of early Quaker families who were involved in the abolitionist movement:



*Home of Moses
Eastburn*



*Eighteenth
century home of
John
Scarborough*