



HISTORIA

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1

NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MARCH, 1996

“COVERED BRIDGES” TALK TO BE FEATURED AT OUR MARCH MEETING



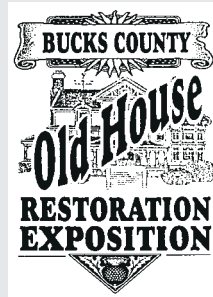
Our March meeting will feature a talk on covered bridges in the United States with special emphasis on those in Bucks County. Mr. Edward Mix, a local expert on this unique and antiquated architecture has researched many of the bridges in the U.S.. His talk titled “What is Happening to Our Covered Bridges” will detail bridges like the Van Sant, shown above, at Washington Crossing State Park and the Schofield Ford Bridge, destroyed by fire, at Tyler State Park. Please try to attend our meeting on Wednesday, March 20 at 7:30 PM



TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

If you have not already done so, it is time to renew your membership in the Historical Society. The back page (or outer cover if you receive it in the mail) has the renewal information and form. Please take a moment to fill it out and send it in OR bring it to the next meeting. Your continuing support is important to us.

SECOND ANNUAL BUCKS COUNTY OLD HOUSE RESTORATION EXPOSITION



SATURDAY
APRIL 20
10AM-5PM
BCCC

Everything you ever wanted to
know about your old house



Rosanna Slack received the William Blumhardt Service Award at our November 1995 dinner meeting. Rosanna's family, shown here surprised her by attending the meeting and helping to make her day special. As a result of the fine article by Roe Blumenthal in our November HISTORIA, detailing Rosanna's early experiences in Northampton Township, articles appeared in both the Courier Times and the Newtown Advance. Rosanna received many calls from past students who saw the articles.

Congratulations Rosanna!

NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the 23rd year of the Northampton Township Historical Society. Also welcome to SPRING! As I write this we are having yet another snow storm. I have lost count this winter. It is hard to believe that in four months we will all be complaining about how hot it is!

I am sorry to announce the resignation of our Vice President, Eileen Zolotoroffe. Eileen did a great job last year helping us with the many things that need to be done. She is very involved in the Historic Preservation Program at the Bucks County Community College and she felt that that needed more of her time.

Northampton is changing and that is apparent in the Historical Society over the last few years. Although we are getting a few new members our overall membership has declined steadily over the last five years. When the Society was founded it had over one hundred members. The population of the Township has increased significantly since then. Theoretically our membership could or should have increased also. Actually we do much better than some of the other surrounding Townships but I think we could do better! If every member introduced just one friend to our Society it would help to keep us going.

I need to fill two board positions! Vice President and Treasurer. These are not demanding or time consuming jobs. We only have four general meetings a year, and four board meetings. If you think you can help out or know someone who you could nominate let me or someone on the board know.

This is the 13th issue of the HISTORIA and it is becoming increasingly difficult to assemble it without your input. I am not looking for professional articles. I am looking for interesting articles, tidbits, pictures about life in Northampton of years past.

The Spread Eagle petitions, with 2000 signatures, were presented to the Township Commissioners at their meeting in January. Thank you for your help in obtaining the signatures. I hope that you all remember the businesses in Richboro that are **NOT** friendly to historic preservation, like Giuseppe's and Amoco. In the case of Amoco they will destroy three historic sites in Bucks County with the proposed additions of gas stations at the site of Conti's in Doylestown, the airplane restaurant in Penndel and the Spread Eagle here in Richboro.

Please try to attend our March meeting on the 20th. We have an interesting speaker who will talk on "Covered Bridges." See you there!



WYNKOOP PHOTOGRAPHS TO BE DISTRIBUTED TO SCHOOLS



After many years of planning the Historical Society is finally making arrangements to have photographs of the Wynkoop painting, owned by the Society, framed and distributed to all elementary schools in Northampton Township. The photographer, Randy Bye, nephew of Randolph Bye, will photograph the painting and produce the 16x20 inch framed photographs. We expect to present them to the schools in the Fall.

The Truth About
SOCIAL SECURITY

YOUR MONEY MORE THAN DOUBLED

The Social Security Act sets aside a few cents of your wages every week to take care of your old age (1 percent for 3 years and 3 percent after 12 years).

But your employer must match your contribution penny for penny.

WHY REPUBLICAN EMPLOYERS HOWL*

Because they have to share the cost of your old age. Because they can no longer throw you on the scrapheap when you are old and slow. Because they are trying to scare you from voting for your friend and protector, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

WHAT YOU GET

An income at 65 years, running up to \$85. a month depending on your wage and years of work, guaranteed by the United States Government *as long as you live. You always get at least three times what you put in if you live until old age and usually you get five times what you put in.*

Every cent back, with interest, to your family, if you die, or to you, if you stop work.

Lighter family burdens—the law relieves young people of supporting aged relatives.

Independence and comfort instead of Fear and Want when you are old.

**OLD AGE INSURANCE IS THE RIGHT OF EVERY WORKER
DEMOCRATS GAVE IT TO YOU—DON'T LET REPUBLICANS TAKE IT AWAY**

Vote for

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Friend of Labor

Issued by Democratic National Campaign Committee, Hotel Biltmore, New York City.

—SPREAD THIS INFORMATION—

PAGE PASS, INC., N.Y.C. 124

HOW'S YOUR WOOD IQ?

By Dave Gauntt

What do we know about trees? What do we know about wood? I mean specific wood, as in oak, birch, pine, ash, etc. Today, we only seem to know little more than - oak burns best in a fireplace or stove, walnut and cherry make fine furniture, and pine is used for basic construction. Our ancestors knew volumes more. They had to. This country was built of, and ran on, wood. In fact, the economy of colonial America was totally dependent on trees and their products. Yes I know, we've all heard that this country ran on a tobacco economy for the first 100 years. That's true to some degree but even those involved with tobacco were dependent on trees and tree products from cradle to casket.

All buildings were made mainly with lumber, wood was the basic fuel, tools were made wholly or partly of wood, vehicles from sleds to ships were wooden. Fences, crates and casks were made of wood, even eating utensils, plates, scoops, and bowls of the common folk (and most folk were common) were wood products. Sugar, soap, tar, and turpentine were obtained from nearby trees, or their wood, and even gunpowder was made with charcoal derived from local forests.

This country prospered because it was covered from sea to Mississippi with billions of mature forest trees, referred to for two centuries as "old forest" trees. These were trees, the like of which Europeans had never dreamed of - majestic trees with extremely tall, straight, knot free, tight-grained trunks in numbers and size beyond comprehension. A mind boggling bonanza.

An example of the magnitude of these behemoths is a lone old forest survivor, a walnut tree, that blew down in an 1822 storm in Forestville, NY. It was a black walnut, 36 feet in circumference, almost 200 feet tall, and tapering up 80 feet to the first limb. It had bark a foot thick. This kind of tree was not an exception in the "old forest."

The first export businesses in the colonies involved the shipping of tall tree trunks to England to provide masts for the Royal Navy. The Pilgrims, by 1640, were shipping American timber all over the world in ships made of American wood. His majesty's scouts were everywhere and as late as the 1830s, trees could still be found in New England with the King's "Broad Arrow" mark branding them as mast trees for the Crown of England.

The colonists's lives were totally dependent on trees and their products for their incomes as well as their daily function. So, they knew trees - they knew wood. They knew much more than we do. They knew how to cut, care for, and "season" wood to prevent warping. They knew what trees were best for each purpose.

"Seasoned wood" referred as much to the time it was felled as to the treatment thereafter. Even the best kiln-dried wood of today cannot equal the warp resistance of wood prepared by the early craftsmen. An example of this can be found in old houses where pine doors made of planks only a half-inch thick and twenty four inches wide are as straight today as the day they were cut.

How was it done? First, the "season" was important. The cutting was done from February to April. "If you'd have your flatboards laye, hewe them out in March or Maye," was the saying. And not in the waxing phase of the moon. Axes would ring during the "old moon of February." When the tree was felled, the northern half of the trunk was used for flooring, due to its superior resistance to warping, and the southern side was quarter-sawn for other uses.

Quarter-sawing, cutting boards on a line as close to the radius of the log as possible, was another practice (not done today) that prevented warping. The resulting lumber was soaked in water (preferably salt water or running water) for a fortnight before being dried. Elm, incidentally, required only five days in salt water. This process had the additional benefit of destroying any insect infestation. The boards were then spread on edge on a drying rack, and turned by hand every day to facilitate even drying. When fully dried, floorboards were "tacked loosely the first year and nailed for good the year after that," according to "The Builder's Handbook, 1732."

Bowls were made from burl, a bulbous diseased growth on a trunk or branch, because the irregular grain of burl didn't split.

Split resistance and toughness dictated that hickory and ash be used for tool handles

Maples were used by the dry, (or slack) cooper for barrel staves and by the white cooper for boxes. Other uses of maple included charcoal, oven fire fuel, and making sugar. Furniture manufacture utilized maple, walnut, cherry, and oak to their best advantage.

Cedar, because of its rot resistance, was used for fence posts, coffins, tubs, pails and shingles. Red cedar's aromatic "moth-proofing" qualities also resulted in cedar being used to line chests and closets.

Pine afforded light weight with strength, and its pitch content added a degree of rot resistance. These qualities lent themselves to ship construction, and extended to all construction and box manufacture. Pitch pine knots made

Please turn to page 5

HISTORICAL QUIZ

1. The Neshaminy Creek saw its share of covered bridges during their heyday. When and where was the first covered bridge built in this country?
2. Speaking of covered bridges, what state has the most of them and approximately how many?
3. What about suspension bridges? Where and when was the first wire cable suspension bridge erected in this country?
4. Who originated the U.S. Postal Service?
5. Who was responsible for the establishment of stone mile markers on Colonial post roads across the country?
6. What year did the first postage stamps appear?
7. What is the Pennsylvania State animal, bird, tree, and flower?
8. What was William Penn's father's name?
9. Who was the first president of the United States? (Not as easy as you think!)
10. When was the last amendment to the Constitution enacted?

For answers to the quiz please turn to page 6

WARWICK TOWNSHIP FORMS OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

At their 1996 reorganization meeting, the Warwick Township Supervisors formed a new committee, the *Open Space Preservation Committee* and named A. W. Brasko Chairman. Its mandate is to help Supervisors devise open space policy for Warwick Township and to meet with like committees in neighboring townships to this end.

On February 2, 1996, Bill Brasko and Planning Commission member, Edward C. (Ted) Atkinson, met in Buckingham Township with representatives from Buckingham, Doylestown, Warrington, Plumstead, and Solebury Townships, and members of the newly created County level Open Space Committee for an informational session. Meetings with groups from neighboring Northampton, Warminster, and Wrightstown Townships are planned.

Reasons for preserving open space in Warwick are:

1. Preservation of farmland. As a source of food supply, land is an endangered public asset as the world's population grows at an alarming rate. Warwick currently has 1500 acres of prime farmland enrolled in a totally voluntary Agricultural Security Area.
2. Preservation of Warwick's semi-rural environment and natural beauty - qualities which lead people to want to visit Bucks County as a tourist destination.
3. Preservation of open space for passive recreation for our children and their children, and for water table recharge and species preservation.
4. Slowing mindless sprawl and the higher school and local taxes and services that an increased population requires.

USING THE SPRUANCE LIBRARY

By Diane Amadio

Many of you have heard of the Spruance Library, most probably during one of NTHS's lectures, but if you are like me, know very little about this wonderful resource. Here is some information you will find useful:

The library is located on the third level of the Mercer Museum. Go to the museum admission desk and either pay the fee of \$5.00 (Seniors \$4.50) or, if you are a member of the Bucks County Historical Society, enter for free. The library is open to the public and has hours Wednesday - Saturday 10:00 to 5:00, Tuesday 1:00 to 9:00, closed Sunday and Monday. This is a reference only library, no circulation is permitted.

As to what is available - what a list! 20,000 volumes of books, periodicals, newspapers, pamphlets, maps, prints, photographs, trade and greeting cards, post cards, and social invitations; Orphans Court records, tax records, largest single manuscript collection is the papers of Henry Chapman Mercer, genealogy and family history books, census records, vital records (birth, marriage, death), naturalizations, passenger and ship lists, immigration and emigration, probate records for Bucks and other counties, church records, ... I ran out of breath! You'll have to go discover the rest for yourselves.

Catalogs and guides are available at the reference desk and the staff, including librarian Betsy Smith, are very knowledgeable and helpful. What a fun way to spend the day, digging through County history for something or someone that has touched your own life - happy hunting!

WOOD from page 3

fine torches in days before electricity, and pine tar was an important early business. The standard covering of barns and bridges was pine.

Chestnut, a hardwood with good warp resistance, made fine wide flooring, and chestnut bark was used as shingling on early barns

Hickory, tough as it is, was used for some taller masts of early sailing ships. Sumpter beams, the main horizontal support beams of early barns and houses, were usually hewed from a single hickory tree. Young hickory limbs were used as barrel hoops. Hickory shoots and strips were cut in the spring and immersed in a pond until ready for use. They were used for baskets, chair bottoms, and sieves. Hickory was also the choice fuel for the smoke house.

Birch was a highly regarded hardwood and a mainstay for the white cooper, the manufacturer of boxes, pails and baskets. Birch was further used for charcoal, tanning oil, and birch beer, and also made good lye ash for making soap.

Oak, the heaviest native wood, was the choice for framing barns and houses. Odorless and pliable, it was used by the wet cooper for barrel staves, and is also used in basket making. Tree nails, or "trunnels," were made of oak, the pin oak being the most prominent. It was an excellent fireplace log because it didn't throw sparks and burned well for a long period.

Ash has many of the qualities of oak and was used for barn framing, tool handles, and barrel hoops as well as being a clean, efficient fuel, that incidentally leaves a lot of fluffy white ash after burning - hence the name

Spruce combined lightness and strength and was used in long spans and bridge arches

Sumac was used to make spouts and osage orange made good fencing material. The list goes on and on.

We'd be hard pressed to find anyone who knows all these skills today. We're not as close to wood, and we're not as close to trees as our forbearers were and as a result we've lost our appreciation for the earth's arboreal coat and all it has to offer.

William Penn decreed in 1681 that (in Pennsylvania) one acre in five be left in trees. Look around. Have we lived up to that?



Doris Ladd, Harold Weir's granddaughter, points out a childhood memory as her daughter, Martha, and Virginia Geyer of the Historic Commission look on.



Doris Ladd picks some mums that her mother had planted adjacent to the still standing Weir barn on Almshouse road.



Doris Ladd at one of the wells behind the now demolished Weir farmhouse

Martha Ladd, Harold Weir's granddaughter visited Richboro in November, 1995 to do research for an Historic Preservation course she is taking at the University of Delaware. Her paper describes what went wrong in the preservation of Richboro. I hope to print excerpts from the paper in a future HISTORIA.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Timothy Palmer built the first covered bridge in this country across the Delaware River at Easton, PA in 1805
2. Pennsylvania, of course, with about 220 left from the 390 counted in 1954
3. The first wire cable suspension bridge was erected in 1816 over the Schuylkill River at Fairmount in Philadelphia. The toll was one cent which nearly paid for the bridge in one year.
- 4.. Benjamin Franklin
5. Ben Franklin
6. In 1847, two denominations of postal stamps were issued; the 5 cent, bearing the portrait of, none other than Ben Franklin, and the 10 cent stamp, bearing the image of George Washington.
7. White Tail Deer - Ruffed Grouse - Hemlock - Mountain Laurel
8. Admiral William Penn.
9. Elias Boudinot, of Burlington, N.J. was the first president of the Continental Congress of the free and independent United States. George Washington was the first Constitutional president, a decade and a half later.
10. 1992 - Congressional pay raises are not to take effect until the next election takes place.

COMING EVENTS**Northampton Township Historical Society Meeting**

March 20, 7:30 PM - "Covered Bridges"

Craft Fair - St John's Richboro, across from Solly's

March 23

Early American Craft Demonstration: Timberframing

March 30 Mercer, 2-4 PM

Open Hearth Cooking Class

April 13 Mercer, 10-4 PM

Candlelight Dinner and tour at Fonthill

April 13, Fonthill 5:30 and 7:30 PM

Early American Craft Demonstration: Tea Culture

April 27 Mercer, 2-4 PM

Folk Fest - Crafts, Demonstrations, Entertainment

May 11,12 Mercer 10-6 PM - Mother's day

**Early American Craft Demonstration: Blacksmithing
May 25 Mercer, 2-4 PM**

Starting in March tour guides will be available at the Mercer museum on Sundays at 1, 2 and 3 PM

**Wrightstown Tollhouse
to be Demolished?**

The tollhouse located next to the Octagonal Schoolhouse is slated for demolition by the Wrightstown Township Supervisors. This simple, frame structure was built prior to 1850 to house the tollgate keeper and his family. They collected the tolls for the turnpike known as the Richborough and Pineville Turnpike Road Company.

This particular turnpike was incorporated on March 3, 1848 by a group of local citizens who wished to improve the road conditions from Richboro, through Penns Park, the Anchor,- and on to Pineville. During most of the 1800's local government did not have the necessary funds to maintain these roads. Throughout Pennsylvania it was common for individuals to form turnpike companies.

The tollhouse and tollgate were operated until 1902 when the Rich-borough and Pineville Turnpike Road Company ceased to exist and sold off its assets. They sold the house and 27 perches of land to William C. Davis, the adjoining farmer on Swamp Road. It has been in private hands until recently when the Wrightstown Township Supervisors came to an agreement with executors of the last owner to secure the property.

The supervisors are well aware of-the historic significance of the only remaining Octagonal Schoolhouse in Bucks County and plans are under way to preserve the building. Due to the location of the tollhouse at the corner of Swamp Road and Second Street Pike (Route 232) the supervisors voted to demolish the building. Since very few tollhouses remain in Bucks County, the Wrightstown Township Historical Commission and some local residents would like to see the tollhouse preserved. It could be moved back on the same property or an interested party may wish to move it to their own property.

This building will be torn down unless concerned citizens react immediately. Every time an old building is torn down we lose another piece of Bucks County history. Can this piece be saved? Please contact the Wrightstown Township Historical Commission at 598-7534 or 598-3296. W.T.H.C.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

The Northampton Township Historical Society has two vacant board positions. The resignation of Eileen Zolotoroffe who had served as Vice President during 1995 has left that position vacant. Eileen did a great job in her positions as Secretary and then Vice President on the board. Her expanding commitments with her school work made it impossible for her to continue her position on the board. The position of Treasurer is also vacant as of the end of 1995. Florence Leedom had graciously extended her tenure in that position through all of 1995. If you would like to serve or you know someone you would like to nominate for a position please contact a current member of the board.



NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO BOX 732, RICHBORO, PENNSYLVANIA 18954-0732

1996 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President	Doug Crompton	355-5307
Vice President	Vacant	
Secretary	Rosemarie Blumenthal	396-0485
Treasurer	Vacant	
Membership	Fred Holzwarth	357-4899
Ways and Means	Diane Amadio	355-6399
Social Committee	Doris D'Ardene	968-5507
Director - Past Pres.	Jean Gallagher	357-7833
Director	John Leedom	357-3121
HISTORIA Editor	Doug Crompton	355-5307
Send articles to:	1269 2nd St Pike Richboro, PA 18954	

HISTORIA is published quarterly by the Northampton Township Historical Society. The Society meets four times each year at the Northampton Township Cultural Center, Upper Holland Road, Richboro. Everyone is welcome at our meetings. Meetings start at **7:30 PM** with refreshments, general meeting, and a featured speaker.

Meeting Dates for 1996

March 20	General Meeting	-	7:30 PM
May 22	“ ”		“
September 25	“ ”		“
November 20	Dinner Meeting		6:00 PM

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL CLASSIFICATIONS

PATRON:	Extra support for the society	\$35.00
FAMILY:	All members of one family	\$15.00
SINGLE:	Adult individual membership	\$10.00
SENIOR CITIZEN:	Age 65 years or older	\$5.00

This will be your membership for the calendar year of 1996 (January 1996 to December 1996)

Note - Applications received after October 31 will be credited for the following year.

This application is sent with all editions of the HISTORIA. Please check your records to make sure that you have not already paid for the current year. Normal renewal time is in the first quarter of the year or when the March HISTORIA is received. If your membership is current, please pass this application on to others who may be interested in our society.

Please consider a contribution of more than the minimum membership to help defray increasing society costs.

Send to : **Northampton Township Historical Society**
PO BOX 732
Richboro, PA 18954-0732

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ DUES ENCLOSED: \$ _____

May we count on you to serve on one of our committees ? : Y _____ N _____ MAYBE _____

Please give us your ideas for speakers at future meetings : _____

Would you be willing to write an article for the HISTORIA _____

Your comments and suggestions are welcomed : _____