



HISTORIA

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 2

NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAY 2000

MAY MEETING TO FEATURE TALK ON WILLIAMSBURG GARDENS AND HERBS

The May 24th meeting of the Northampton Township Historical Society will feature a talk on Williamsburg Gardens and Herbs by Lois Wismer. Lois is an entrepreneur and operator of The Herb Shed in Telford. She is a respected and involved member of the Telford Community. Granddaughter of a well-known painter of carriages and antique collector in his day, she continues her family's tradition of contributing creative talents to society through her business. Wismer's interest in herbs began 20 years ago with the purchase of a lavender plant. Since then it has grown and blossomed into the successful business it is today. Lois and her partner, Lowell Bishop, have combined their simple love of growing, cultivating, and drying herbs with their extensive knowledge and expertise in the many uses of herbs. The result is a very unique business where those in the market for herbs can buy just about anything they want, or better yet, even learn how to make it themselves.

Wismer offers garden lectures and tours, and teaches a variety of classes on subjects including How to Grow and Use Herbs, Williamsburg Flower Arrangement, Cooking with Herbs, Making Herbal Wreaths, and Spinning Wool. Lois is also a recognized lecturer on the Shaker Experience. She has researched this society by visiting the few remaining Shaker Communities still in existence. In Canterbury, New

Hampshire, she spent many hours talking with her three personal Shaker friends, Eldress Gertrude, Sister Bertha, and Sister Ethel. These Shaker women have since deceased, but their memories remain close to Lois' heart. Lois has also had the privilege of developing a friendship with Shaker Sister Frances, who resides in Sabbathday Lake, Maine. Sister Frances is well known for her excellent Shaker cooking. Wismer's research is rich in content, allowing her students to gain insight into the real Shaker culture, examining their values, beliefs and life style, which has intrigued people for generations. The Herb Shed offers additional services including floral arrangements for weddings, bus tours of herb gardens and historic sites, and herbal tea tastings. What makes this business so special is that its owners' expertise does not come strictly from books and classroom learning, but from years and years of word-of-mouth and hands-on experience. Lois and Lowell offer a wealth of herbal knowledge and possess a true appreciation of the value of herbs.

The meeting will start with at 7:30 PM on Wednesday, May 24th at the Northampton Cultural and Senior Center, adjacent to the library, Upper Holland and Township Road, Richboro. Visitors are always welcome. Please plan to join us for a great program.



SPREAD EAGLE CLEANUP CONTINUES

The Spread Eagle was recently given another sprucing up with some professional landscaping from Northampton Nursery. We had an anonymous donation of \$2000 to the Historical Society specifically for landscaping the corner. The North side of the Inn, adjacent to Almshouse road is an area that is seen most as people sit at the light. Pictured at left is the landscaped area with decorative stones and new shrubbery.

NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Dear Members,

Our meeting this month is sandwiched between Mother's Day and Father's Day.

I look back on the positive people I was fortunate to have in my life. Besides my parents and grand parents, I had the loveliest maiden aunt and an utterly terrific great uncle. He thought my brothers and sisters and I were the most terrific children. My aunt and uncle laughed at our jokes and antics, cheered us on, and opened windows to our families past. All of my older relatives have passed on, but I treasure what they gave to me.

All of you folks in this Historical Society are a treasure too! I revere all you members – the ones that started this organization for your dedication and the giving of your time and talent.

We need to form a small committee (2 or 3 members) to request and accept nominations for the Living Tree Award. We want to have an award ceremony next fall. This is an easy job! Please contact me if you could help out.

Also in this HISTORIA is the poem that Historical Society member, Dottie Glessner read at our March meeting about the Spread Eagle. Dottie recently published a book of her poems titled "Seasonings" and she received a nice letter from Roy Reinard complimenting her work.

This copy of the HISTORIA is shorter than usual due to the postponed March meeting. We also need YOUR input of stories and pictures! The deadline for the next issue will be September 5, 2000.

Membership Renewal has been great so far his year but please check the mailing label and make sure you are up to date. It will show "2000" if you are.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer!

Mary B. Seader

Northampton Township Historical Society
May 24, 2000 - 7:30 PM
General Meeting -Colonial Gardens and Herbs

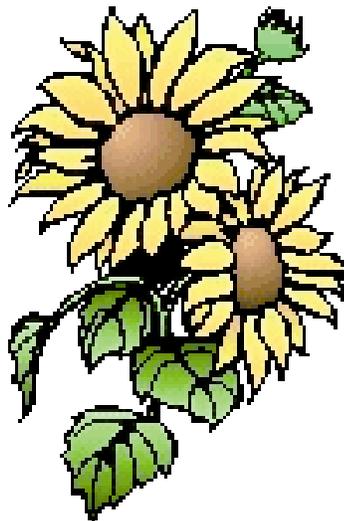
Buck County Designer House Tours
Thru May 28th
215-345-2191

Edith Berry Watercolors Exhibit
Thru May 27th
Canal Frame Crafts Gallery, Washington Crossing
215-493-3660

Renney's Perennial Garden Tour
June 4 - 3-6 PM Wrightstown

Henry's Birthday Celebration
Saturday June 24 - 10AM - 5PM
Mercer Museum

Historical Society of Southampton
No meetings until Fall - Next Meeting
September 18, 2000 - 7:30 PM
Lower Southampton Library
215-357-2086



**HAVE A
GREAT
SUMMER!**

**SEE YOU IN
SEPTEMBER!**

History of Northampton Rail Lines

By Fred Holzwarth

When the Society, mainly due to the efforts of Diane Amadio, received a grant to restore the Churchville Station, I searched for a picture of the station. Among the books I consulted was Holton, James L., *The Reading Railroad: History of a Coal Age Empire*, 2 Vols., Garrigues House, 1992 I did not find a picture, but I did discover much of the history of the Reading. I thought that readers might be interested in the history of the railroad lines in or near Northampton. For the full history of the Reading, please consult the book. Did you know that the Reading was once “the wealthiest corporation in the world”? The book is not clearly organized for research. It jumps back and forth chronologically, with many references to earlier and later chapters. It is profusely illustrated. Read as a series of anecdotes it is quite interesting. After much digging and consultation with modern maps, I have extracted or deduced the following.

The Reading Railroad was built to carry coal from the southwestern anthracite fields near Pottsville to the Schuylkill Canal near Schuylkill Haven. The Canal at that time carried the coal to Philadelphia on a route roughly paralleling the Schuylkill River. The Reading was built to supplement (and later supplant) the Canal. The line terminated on Belmont Plateau across the Schuylkill from Philadelphia. There it connected with an existing railroad that owned and used a bridge across the river and into Philadelphia. This was the only new right of way constructed by the Reading. All other rights of way (including that all-important bridge) were acquired by leasing or buying controlling stock shares in existing railroads. They remained (on paper) independent roads, but operationally they were absorbed into the Reading Railroad. The Reading System as we knew it, was not built by the Reading Railroad, although of course they improved it, added spurs, etc. Indeed by 1896 the Reading had bought, leased, or contracted for control of lines that gave it access to most of New England, the Canadian border, large areas of New York state, west of Harrisburg, and south into Maryland. J. P. Morgan ended this. See histories of the Reading for details. In 1929 the remaining railroads were consolidated into the Reading Co (a holding company that controlled the Reading Railroad). Twelve railroads were involved, including the railroad to Newtown.

The original railroad was the Philadelphia & Newtown Railroad Co. Chartered in 1860 and built in 1873. The original section was Philadelphia (somewhere in central Philadelphia, probably 9th and Greene Sts.) to Fox Chase (11.5 Miles). The name was changed to Philadelphia, Newtown & New York and the line extended to Newtown in 1878 (15.8 miles). It was leased by Philadelphia and Reading Co. (the name of the Reading RR at that time) in 1879. Consolidated with Philadelphia & Newtown Connecting Railroad in 1892. I could not find any details on this line. Nor could I find any details of the route of the PN & NY south of Wayne Junction. Possibly the original section began at Wayne Junction, but this does not agree with the mileage quoted above. PN & NY was merged into Reading Co. in 1929. Essentially a commuter line in later years, a few miles of the original Newtown Branch served as an integral part of the New York Short Line’s route to Wayne Junction. The finest express trains of the B & O could be seen daily rolling over this stretch of the branch. The Reading used the route via Jenkintown. Probably the two lines met in the vicinity of Bethayres and then used the same or adjacent tracks to New York.

New York Short line, opened 1906, ran from Cheltenham to Neshaminy Falls Bridge over the Delaware. Probably it followed the line of today’s Reading (SEPTA) from Wayne Junction via Olney Station to Bethayres and then to the Neshaminy Falls bridge (just south of today’s US 1 bridge). Since there is today a (SEPTA) Cheltenham station on the former route of the PN & NY it seems probable that the section of the PN & NY used by the B & O was the section from Cheltenham to Bethayres. The “New York Short Line’s route to Wayne Junction” mentioned above makes sense if we interpret it to mean south to Wayne Junction, not north to the Junction.

From the above history we can conclude that the Churchville Station was built after 1878. It was never a part of a route to New York. That route departed from the P N & NY before reaching Churchville. The P N & NY should not be confused with the North East Pennsylvania Railroad which originally ran from Abington to Hartsville (Warminster). This was “controlled” by the North Pennsylvania Railroad until it (and the N E Penna) were leased to the Phila & Reading.

Please turn to page 4

NORTHAMPTON RAILROADS

From page 3

In 1891 the line was extended to New Hope. Of course today it is the New Hope & Ivyland.

The P N & NY was operated as the Newtown Branch of the Reading RR. In 1945 all the independent roads (including the Reading Railroad) were consolidated into the Reading Company. Notable events after 1879 include the wreck in 1921, the “worst accident that ever occurred on Reading rails”. This was covered in a previous issue of the HISTORIA. It happened in a “deep cut between Woodmont and Paper Mills Station”. A 1934 map shows the Woodmont station still in operation between Bryn Athen and County Line Station.

Probably the Paper Mills Station was renamed and possibly relocated as the Bryn Athen. (Today’s Paper Mill Road is nearby.) This section of the Newtown Branch no longer exists. The Reading replaced its steam engines with diesel and electric locomotives. “On the unexpectedly chilly morning of May 6, 1952, the engine house at Greene Street was unable to provide a diesel with steam heat for a Newtown Branch commuter local. [A steam locomotive] was put to work on the 28-mile trip into the Terminal. This was the final steam-powered run of a regularly scheduled passenger train on the Reading.” In 1966 the electrification of the Reading commuter lines was finished when the Newtown Branch was electrified from “Newtown Junction” to Fox Chase. This foretold the doom of the section from there to Newtown. Where is “Newtown Junction”?

It may be Wayne Junction, but I think it is the point where the Newtown Branch and the Bethlehem Branch diverge and did not have a passenger station. The nearest is today’s Tabor Station. When the Reading commuter lines were absorbed by SEPTA around 1974, diesel locomotives powered the section to Newtown, including the Churchville Station. At some point after 1974, SEPTA (not the Reading) replaced the rail line to Fox Chase with a bus line, still in operation. The Churchville Station ceased operations.

The subsequent history of the Churchville Station would be an interesting investigation, but would not be easy to trace. Unfortunately books on the Reading would not be of any value. Oral histories and local newspapers would have to be consulted. Perhaps readers would care to share their memories.

SPREAD EAGLE INN REMEMBERING

Once a crossroad – an inn. . .
A place for dismount
from sweat-drenched horse,
A dust covered coach, weary
travelers, . . . stepping and
stretching on hard ground.

These, the folk who
wanted a cup of ale,
hot grub, a creaky chair
by the deep warm fire –
A smoke-filled room of many puffed pipes.

Much talk, loud laughter,
an argument or two . . .
All part of the welcome at White Bear Inn.

Long memories which recall
another time –
another slower, way of life.

Today — 2000 A. D.
Fast moving, impatient cars,
Anonymous faces at red light.
Spread Eagle stands – stark,
boarded windows, blank faced,
No welcome door ajar. . .
just there – waiting. . .

Road must be widened –
Traffic must be eased
Turning right – in a rush,
No recognition of a
landmark – threatened
by what is called –
P R O G R E S S.

May our voices of preservation
stop the loss
of a last landmark
in Bucks County,
A remnant of Penn’s
once beautiful Woods.

Remembering is part of
each one’s life.
Remembering gives us
a sense of continuity,
a sense of where we’ve been,
and where we may be going.

Restore the Bear,
Let it recall a lively past.
Open its doors — renew the
hearth with yellow warmth.
Remind all of us – This Inn,
Our living heritage.

Dorothy H. Glessner
©April 2, 2000



NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO BOX 732, RICHBORO, PENNSYLVANIA

WEBSITE: <http://www.crompton.com/bucks> EMAIL: nths@crompton.com

2000 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President	Mary Seader	355-4467
Vice President	Vacant	
Secretary	Janet O'Neill	355-2107
Treasurer	William Smith	357-8831
Membership	Fred Holzwarth	357-4899
Ways and Means	Diane Amadio	355-6399
Social Committee	Doris D'Ardenne	968-5507
Director (Past Pres.)	Doug Crompton	355-5307
Director	Jean Gallagher	357-7833
Director	Sydell Gross	322-5547
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. Past issues of the HISTORIA are available at our web page.

Meeting Dates for 2000

May 24, 2000 General Meeting	7:30 PM
Sept 22, 2000 General Meeting	7:30 PM
Nov 15, 2000 Dinner Meeting	6:30 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 2000 (January 2000 to December 2000)

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 mailing label for the expiration 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: _____ SINGLE: FAMILY:

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 : _____