



HISTORIA

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 2

NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAY 2001

May Meeting Will Feature Doylestown Author Kathryn McKenna

Kathryn McKenna, Doylestown resident and retired reading specialist from the Centennial School District, will be our speaker at the May 23rd meeting, **starting at 7 PM.** Mrs. McKenna is the author of the book *The Mercer Museum A to Z* which is an account of the amazing objects inside Doylestown's concrete castle. It is an alphabet book with one story for each letter. "B" is for Big Ben, and "C" is for Cigar Store Figures. The stories are all factual, based on McKenna's research. The purpose of the book is to make the Mercer Museum come alive for children. The book originated as a result of Mrs. McKenna's studies in historic preservation. She embarked on the project for her internship to connect historic preservation with public school education. In 1999, she received her certificate in historic preservation from the Bucks County Community College. Currently she is working as an educational consultant and also on a book for Pennsbury Manor. Come and join us for what promises to be an interesting program.

TALES OF AN OLD HOUSE

by Betty Luff

In 1935, my parents, John and Margaret Cornell, purchased, what to us was a nice big, beautiful home, two doors from Henry Benner's country store. My mother was thrilled. After living on a farm and never having driven a car, she was now able to walk across Casper and Bertie Doan's back yard to do most of her shopping. Mr. Benner had anything a housewife needed, including sewing needs, kitchen utensils, hardware, seeds, paints, meats and groceries.

As a child, I was not interested in the history of the old house. I was married in the living room in 1943 and then moved out. We have many photos of mother and dad's beautiful garden, flowers, and rose arbors in the rear yard. After both my parents passed away, the old house was sold in 1960.

After being rented for a short time, it was purchased by another "John and Margaret" whose last name was Gallagher. Maybe a few residents will still remember when the property was first made a commercial one. Mr. Gallagher made candles and opened a candle shop in a back room, later expanding into the living room. They eventually enclosed part of the front porch and added candy and gourmet foods.

Please turn to page 4

SPREAD EAGLE GETS A SPRING CLEANING!

In conjunction with *Earth Week* and the annual Northampton Township clean-up, members of the community and Historical Society joined together to give the Spread Eagle a springtime face lift on Saturday, April 28. Approximately 25 men, women, and children weeded, mulched, and planted flowers around the historic inn. Horns tooted, people waved and yelled compliments and words of positive support.



Please turn to page 3

NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members:

Spring – glorious spring – I love it, and I so look forward to summer. Years ago I used to spend time kneeling in the soil planting flowers and getting energized pulling weeds. Can't kneel anymore, but I do stoop over and perform the seasonal rite. Sometimes I sit on a box and move it along. Takes more time, but the results are fine.

We have had so many family functions – children and grandchildren's birthdays, first communions, weddings. A very festive time of year – a time for new beginnings. All these celebrations will be enjoyable, but there are two holidays that we will soon be celebrating that have a deeper meaning for our country.

Exciting things have been happening in Northampton Township. The committee that formed to save the Spread Eagle has become involved in preservation of all historic buildings at risk in the township. At our last meeting, the members voted unanimously to form as a Committee for Historic Preservation to operate under the by-laws of the historical society. Visit our new web page at www.savethespreadeagle.com

Memorial Day will be celebrated on May 28th. Please remember the men and women who have served. Commemorate those who have died. Celebrate the Fourth of July, the birth of our nation. Fly your flags, and remember those who are no longer with us.



WE NEED YOUR HELP!

The Northampton Township Historical Society has two vacant board positions. William (Bill) Smith has served as an outstanding treasurer for the past five years. He is leaving the position due to illness.

We need to fill the positions of vice president, treasurer, and directors.

A nominating committee will be formed and will be contacting members to ask if they would like to serve. If you know someone you would like to nominate for a position, please contact a current member of the board.

Our treasurer Bill Smith is gravely ill from complications due to cancer. He is currently in Richboro Care Center. We suggest that visits be pre-arranged by a phone call. Cards and notes would be greatly appreciated and can be mailed to Bill at:

**Richboro Care Center
253 Twining Ford Rd.
Richboro, PA. 18954**

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 19, 20

Spring Craft Celebration
Tyler State Park
800-684-7440

May 20

Bucks County Covered Bridge
And Garden Tour - 215-766-2211

May 20

Neshaminy Warwick Presbyterian Church
Historic House and Building Tour, including
The Moland house. 215-343-6060

May 21

Southampton Township Historical Society
7:30 PM - Southampton Township Building

May 23

Northampton Township Historical Society
General Meeting - 7:00 PM
Author Kathryn McKenna

May 24, June 7, June 28

Historic Preservation Committee
Meeting dates - 7:30 PM - Township Building

June 1

Craven Hall Historical Society
Antique Appraisal night

June 2

Pearl S. Buck International Day
11 AM - 4 PM 800-220-2825 ext. 144
www.pearlsbuck.org

June 2, 3

Peddlers Village Fine Arts and
Contemporary Crafts Show
215-794-4000

SPREAD EAGLE CLEAN-UP

From page 1

Donations of plants and mulch were gratefully received from Bright Leaf, Fireside Flowers, Gasper Landscaping, Northampton Nursery, Russell Gardens, and the Richboro Super Fresh. Ongoing support will be needed to keep the grounds looking nice throughout the summer as well as volunteers to help water the plants during periods of no rain. If

you are able to help, please notify Mary Seader (215-355-4467) or Doug Crompton (215-431-6307). Photographs of the clean-up are posted on the new Save The Spread Eagle web page:

www.savethespreadeagle.com



Kathy Wills dispenses the drink and food to worker Joan Palestina. Tee-shirts were also on sale.



Pat Komelasky and Debbie Glessner display some of the plants that were donated.

SAVING THE SPREAD EAGLE INN

Renewal – April 28, 2001

by Dorothy Glessner

**Yellow t-shirts scattered –
A field of random daffodils
Each with arms of bloom and brooms;
Knees bending – as if in prayer,
Planting pansies in sturdy mounds
So straight – so neat.
Bright colors bowing in warm appeal.
Trash bags held aloft –
Filling with winter’s dross
Discarded remnants, bits and pieces
Of thoughtless toss.
This corner of history,
Calling men, women, and eager children;
Sowing rebirth, renewal
To a tired façade –
Spread Eagle Inn.
As bright yellow figures
Swept, planted, and freshened
The face of our waiting Inn.
Some wondered why its doors
Were not opened in “welcome?”
There must be a keg of ale
Waiting at the long bar of oak,
Stained by many tankards
Left standing empty – waiting for refill.
Working together in lively hope
Fully committed to restoring
A lonely landmark,
These t-shirted planters
Persistent – persevering in
Saving a standing ghost –
A memory of a vibrant
Bucks County past.
This – a moving spirit of grace.
This – a legacy pointing beyond speed and
commerce.
Dedication — celebration –
Determination –**

Save the Spread Eagle Inn!

TALES OF AN OLD HOUSE

From page 1

It was John Gallagher who uncovered a beautiful fireplace, which our family never knew existed. My mother had a large dining room buffet, which had covered most of that wall. The fireplace had a ten-foot hand-hewn beam and was fieldstone from floor to ceiling. The fireplace was an architectural beauty, having a double chimney serving two more fireplaces, one in the second floor bedroom and one in the attic.

Mr. Gallagher also did extensive research and found that the original part of the house, all stone, was built about 1702 on land that had been granted by William Penn to Thomas Groom in 1681. The property has been reduced in size many times from its original 550 acres to its present half acre. Throughout the years, it has housed many old familiar families. According to the deed records, in 1836, Enoch Addis lived in the house at which time it stood on 86 acres. Later, the stagecoach driver for a Philadelphia run owned the property.

In the beginning, the small original stone house consisted of a cellar-kitchen, main living room, kitchen on the first floor, a bedroom on the second floor, and an attic. The frame additions to the house are over 100 years old.

It was also during the Gallagher's days in the house that they claimed they often heard children crying and ghostly footsteps. They were so haunted by these ghostly children, their story was included in Adi Kent-Jeffrey's book titled *The Ghost Tales of Bucks*. Why had the Cornell family not heard anything suspicious during their twenty-five year ownership? I always found this a mystery.

In 1972, the property was purchased by the Bash family and has been used ever since as a barbershop. The carriage house, woodshed, outhouse, and beautiful landscaping have all been replaced by a macadam parking lot. Even the beautiful fireplace has been covered over. The entire first floor is for barbering, and the owners live on the second floor. Even the keystones above the three-second floor windows have been covered over with siding.

This old house has been subjected to many changes in its three hundred years, and I imagine it will see many more in the years to come.



**The John B. Cornell home,
987 Second Street Pike, in 1940.**



**Fireplace
uncovered in
front room of
stone section.**

**Picture taken
1965**



**The
Barber
Shop in
1974
(above)
and in
present
day (left)**

FROM *GHOST TALES OF BUCKS*

by *Adi-Kent Thomas Jeffrey*

“WHAT DO THE CHILDREN WANT? WHY WILL THEY NOT BE STILL?”

Near the intersection of Route 232 and Almshouse Road in Richboro stands the home of John and Margaret Gallagher.

It is a house that commands attention. It belongs to a large and busy family in which the husband and wife and five children work together to shape a future which destiny forced upon them when an automobile accident injured the breadwinner. The home harbors a shop of candles and gifts. So the house is more than a home; it is a business and a family enterprise.

The house has the importance of age. It was owned by one of the early settlers of Richboro.

The old Richboro home draws attention for more cause than these earthly ones, however. It houses the noisy, running, restless ghosts of children. Ask any of the older Gallaghers who live there and almost each has had his own disquieting experience. They all agree on each disturbance; it is some manifestation of the presence of a child or several children.

It all began two years ago when the Gallaghers were just getting a foothold on the work to be done in settling down in an old house. The eldest daughter, Kathy, and her young husband were preparing for bed when a strange thing happened for that late hour of the night. Kathy stopped winding her hair on rollers and looked at her husband. He put down a shoe and listened. Underneath their window children were crying.

What were children doing outside at midnight? It was obviously the fretful crying of young children. Were they lost? Were they alone?

The crying got more persistent, more alarming. Both Kathy and her husband leaned out the bedroom window and looked down below. The crying stopped instantly. There was nothing there but an empty street, cold and disinterested in the light of a pale moon.

Surprised, the two went to bed. By the next morning, the weird incident seemed like a dream. Yet each knew it was not. It remained a curious event that neither could explain. To be sure that it was not without solution, Kathy questioned the neighbors next door. Did they have children or know of any near by? They did not.

Several months later, Margaret and John Gallagher put the little ones to bed, did a few chores in the house and, finally, a little before the clock struck twelve, made their weary way up to bed. Margaret was just starting to brush her hair when her hand froze. A child was running through the house below; the Gallaghers stared at each other.

Margaret sat with her breath caught for a surprised instant. In the stillness of the dead-of-night house, the quick thumping footsteps were startling. They were heavy. A boy's, quite positively. The heel came down hard with each rapid step. How could it possibly be Tommy or Eugene?

She arose. John followed her into the hall. If it were one of the boys, he'd have to discipline him. But the question was already there, before they checked the boys' room. They both knew in the back of their bewilderment that it was not one of their sons. They just knew it was not their running steps.

They were right. It was not. Tommy and Eugene were fast asleep. Margaret and John edged slowly down the stairs. The steps creaked under the weight of each footfall. The running pattern pounded into the living room beneath and ceased. John turned on the lights in the old parlor . . . and the dining room. They were empty. There wasn't a sound but the ticking of the clock.

It was not many months after the running-steps incident that the ghost children came again. This time to John Gallagher alone. He was reading late one night in the old parlor. Margaret had gone upstairs and was preparing for bed. It was a night John felt unusually well. It was one of those rare nights he felt he could relax with a good book. The children had long been asleep and the house was a haven of quiet. A unique moment in a household of four young children.

John turned a page. In the dense stillness of the night, the soft rattle of the paper page was like a momentous sound. He read quietly on. Margaret called down "goodnight" and turned in. The house was dark save for the yellow glow of the lamp where John read.

It all began delicately, at first. So gently and naturally, John was hardly aware that he was hearing anything. Then gradually his senses became aware he was listening to the voices of little children. The tones were light, tuneless, the lisping ramblings of the very, very young. One moment the tinkling notes were those of laughter, then chattering back and forth between several voices. In the next instant, the tripping notes were slipping up and down the scales in a light singing. It seemed a group of two and three-year olders were holding a midnight conclave above!

John got up and moved quickly up the stairs. He knew without looking that it was not his own children. He found what he knew he would find. The upstairs was absolutely quiet. Everyone was asleep. The air was dense silence. Nothing more.

To this day, two years since the first manifestation, the Gallaghers have lived with these curious and disquieting children. Who are they? Why are they there? The answer is always in the past. . . perhaps, tied with a link to the present.

Did some family of many children live there in the long ago? Did a tragedy strike their father? Their income? Their homestead? Did the mother of some centuries-old household listen to the plaintive weeping of her young children as she packed all their worldly goods

Please turn to page 6

DON'T TEAR IT DOWN! PRESERVE IT!

by Deborah Glessner

How often have you heard the refrain, "Tear it down!" or "It's an eyesore!"? Those of us who are concerned with the preservation of historic buildings are constantly attempting to explain the rationale behind saving our local history. Recently, in response to township threats to raze The Spread Eagle Inn, a group of concerned community members joined forces to form the Committee to Save The Spread Eagle. As the committee's work began to evolve, the group's focus began to change. The committee is now in the process of forming the *Committee for Historic Preservation* under the auspices of the Northampton Township Historical Society.

Under the knowledgeable and capable leadership of Doug Crompton, the meetings have addressed a myriad of issues surrounding The Spread Eagle, The Mill Race, and the Old Richboro School. The pros and cons of establishing as a foundation were vigorously discussed. In a county rich with history, Northampton Township has been a bit remiss in taking a proactive stance to preserve its historic sites.

In an attempt to involve and educate the youth of our township, a poster contest was organized to recognize National Preservation Week 2001, which will be celebrated May 13 through 19. Students in the six Council Rock elementary schools located in Northampton Township were invited to participate. The National Trust organization in Washington, DC designated this observance to create public awareness of the plight of historic buildings across the United States.

Posters must emphasize the theme – "Restore, Renew, Rediscover Your Township's Historic Buildings." Students are being challenged to think about why it is important to save our historic buildings and express their ideas on their posters. Judge Warren Hogeland, Police Chief Barry Pilla, and stone artist Larice Burtt will select the winning posters, which are on display in Northampton Public Library.

To recognize National Preservation Week, the members of the committee also challenge the public to reflect upon "why" historic preservation is important. Information on the National Trust web site (www.nationaltrust.org) has provided a spectrum of concepts for our consideration.

As an educator in the Council Rock School District, I enjoyed the opportunity to announce the poster contest to my students. Being a librarian, I am fortunate to meet with all students in my building. When I began to talk about historic preservation, the children enthusiastically entered into spirited discussion about what historic preservation means. As I proceeded to share information about the three buildings

currently at risk and the situations surrounding each one, the children were amazingly spellbound. As this experience occurred class after class, with the children wanting to "share" their knowledge about and experiences with these buildings, I began to realize that these young citizens really do care about their communities.

What an untapped source of energy these children are! I can envision a junior preservation group functioning under the umbrella of the Northampton Township Historic Preservation Foundation. These children are our future, and we need to give them a voice! Our history becomes their history. Without history, we have no sense of who we are or from where we have come. If we do not respect and cherish it while it is still here, it will not be standing for the children of tomorrow.

GHOST TALES

From page 5

and moved away? Did the very little ones play to the last moment in their tiny nursery above, serving tea to passive china-faced dolls?

Did some young son chase through the parlor searching for his dog? Was he playing one last game of tag?

Was there a pale-mooned night at some later time when the children came back and stood outside the house, crying for the warm walls that housed them no more?

Who are the children? Do they come back to share the little moments of joys and sorrows experienced by the large Gallagher family living within those walls? Can destinies and understandings be shared by thoughts centuries apart?

Some questions in life can never be answered, only pondered. Questions, which hover in every corner of the old Richboro house. Thoughts that may forever haunt the Gallaghers.

What do the children want? Why will they not be still?

***This house is now the Bash Barber Shop
at 987 Second Street Pike, Richboro, PA.**

IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP UP TO DATE?

PLEASE TAKE A MINUTE TO CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL ON THIS HISTORIA. IF IT DOES NOT INDICATE 2001, YOUR MEMBERSHIP IS DUE!



NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO BOX 732, RICHBORO, PENNSYLVANIA 18954-0732

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

2000 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|----------|
| President | Mary Seader | 355-4467 |
| Vice President | Vacant | |
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| 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, in color, are available at our web page.

Meeting Dates for 2001

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|---------|
| May 23 | General Meeting | 7:30 PM |
| September 26 | General Meeting | 7:30 PM |
| November 14 | 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 2001 (January 2001 to December 2001)

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 : _____