



# HISTORIA

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NOVEMBER, 1993

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RICHBORO HIGH SCHOOL 1896-1946

by Betty Cornell Luff

As early as 1819 there were one room school houses in Northampton Township. First through eighth graders were in one room with one teacher. By 1871 there were nine of these schools scattered throughout the township. The most centralized one, located on what is now the Davis Pontiac property, had a second floor added in 1896 and became a two year high school. First through sixth grades were held downstairs with Miss Sally Twining as teacher and seventh through tenth grades were upstairs, with Thomas Bock as the first high school teacher and principal.

Students who wanted to continue their education had to walk to this school from all parts of the township. There were just two students in the graduating class in 1900. They were Elva Fenton and Antoinette Praul. There were three years when there were no graduates and then in 1907, William Scott was the only graduate.

In 1913, a larger four room stone building was built a little further North, on Second Street Pike. In 1914 the first class of three graduated from this three year high school.

By the late 1920's the population had increased enough to cause the school board to discuss adding and addition to the stone building, but for economic reasons it was decided to build a "modern" four room brick building on ground purchased from Mr. Betz.

*Please turn to page 2*



The students pose for a picture postcard, in front of the school, about 1910. It was located where Davis Pontiac now stands

## AN INTERVIEW WITH A BARN THE HISTORY OF THE SCHILL BARN

By Dave Gauntt

President, Warick Historical Society

An "interview" with a barn? Of course, you can't talk to a barn, but the barn in a sense can talk to you

The subject of this article is the old Schill barn at Old York Road and Almshouse Road, that was taken down at the close of August, 1992. Interested folks might pass such a building and say, "If that old place could only talk..." Well, it might not actually speak to you, but there are clues to be read if you look for them. Following are observations made by myself, an amateur, and only suggest the possibilities that an expert might find.

Since one of the many purposes of a historical society is to record historical data for future generations to study, the following observations were taken when the barn at Almshouse and Old York Roads was razed on August 28-31, 1992. The data was gathered at the site on 8-31-1992 for the Warwick Township Historical Society.

The barn was constructed of a stone foundation and first floor, with a wooden upper structure. The stone foundation consisted of random size flat stones with flat sides presented to the exterior and interior surfaces of the wall. The walls were exceptionally flat and plumb. The doors were batten, constructed with tongue in groove plank, with iron strap hinges and lift latches. The hardware was not blacksmith made.

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The "Schill" barn as it appeared just before it was demolished. The stone foundation still remains.

## SCHOOL from page 1

There were four students in the class of 1927 and this was the year that principal, Charles Boehm, made a change to a four year high school. Just three of the class returned for another year. They were Eleanor Luff, Charles Fromuth, and Wesley Thoman.

School records for the year 1927-28 show one of the first improvements for the term was the addition of the Jacksonville bus. The new four room brick building was originally built for elementary grades but over the years many additions were added and this writer spent most of her high school years in this building.

Graduating classes at Richboro averaged four to twelve students in the 1920's but by 1942 there were fifteen graduated with a staff of nine teachers for the whole high school. This included Raymond Gilbert, the principal, who also taught math. The largest class to ever graduate from Richboro was 28 in 1943. Approximately 385 students graduated from Richboro High School from 1900 until 1946, when Northampton consolidated with neighboring townships to form the Council Rock School District.

This article was originally prepared for and read by Betty Cornell Luff at the 50th reunion of her graduating class on



**The "new" school built in 1913 is still standing, with many later additions, across from the Richboro shopping center North of Almshouse Road on Second Street Pike**



**The 1904 class. George Hellyer (Sitting next to pole, second row from front) taught high school upstairs.**



**The 1904 "downstairs" class of Miss Sally Twining**

## NEWS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

Haven't the leaves been beautiful this past week as well as the Flaming Burning Bush? Of course this is a signal that the Holiday Season will soon be upon us, as well as the two important activities of our society.

May I invite you all to attend our yearly COVERED DISH SUPPER on Wednesday, November 17th at 6 p.m. Please bring a dish to feed 6 to 8 people. The BOARD will supply the paper plates and other paper products as well as the meat dishes, bread and butter, coffee and tea. You are asked to bring either a salad, dessert, or a vegetable. Doug has a great speaker for that night, Ralph Thompson, who will speak on Bucks County History, 1650-1800.

Remember Sunday, December 5th is the LIVING TREE AWARD. You will be very proud of this year's choice. Bill Blumhardt, chairperson, will make the announcement on Nov. 17. We hope as many people who are on our membership list will attend this wonderful day. Courtney Yelle, the person honored last year, has donated a tree for this year and with the help of member Fred Stewart, and Paul Smyrl will have it in place by December. WE have had 2 trees die, and they will also be replaced by Courtney. So thus we will see you at 3 p.m. and hopefully you will bring a friend.

We are delighted with the wonderful response to our newsletter. Doug. Crompton deserves it all because he is doing a super job. If you are a long time resident and have some interesting stories to tell about Northampton, please take the time to share them with us.

Looking forward to seeing you on November 17. If you have any questions please feel free to phone me or any member on the board.

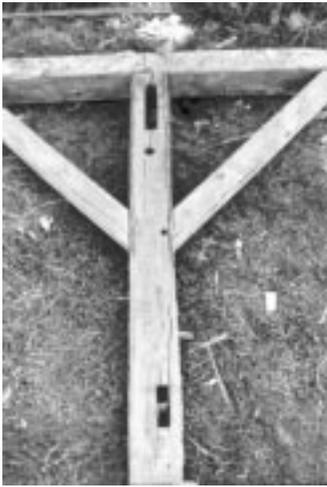
Sincerely,

JEAN GALLAGER

## BARN from page 1

The upper portion of the structure was of oak post and beam construction with mortise and tenon joints secured with oak trunels. The joints of the posts and beams were stamped with Roman numerals for custom assembly on the ground.

Evidence of alterations was apparent when the asbestos siding was removed, revealing the random width plank sheathing. The sill on the northeast wall facing Almshouse Road was mortised on the outside surface. That, and the lighter wood color of replacement sheathing above it, showed that an extension or shed of some kind, (probably to facilitate the loading of hay) had existed on the northeast side of the building.



**A reassembled post and beam section. Notice the roman numeral "key" markings**

The sheathing was of mixed ages, some very old and some more recent. The older planking was random width and measured 1 inch to 1 1/8 inches in thickness and ranged from 8 1/4 inches to 14 1/2 inches in width. Newer sheathing was of tongue and groove construction and was of consistent width and thickness. The older sheathing appeared to be oak. The older sheathing was rough sawn, with a vertical reciprocating saw, leaving parallel saw marks nearly perpendicular to the length of the board that were 1/2 inch apart.

The newer sheathing was sawn with a circular saw. Nails used were of many sorts, square shanked cut nails and round wire nails. None of the nails appeared to be hand made.

The floor of the oldest section of the barn was the only wooden portion of the structure still intact at the time of this inspection. The floorboards were of mixed ages. Tongue and groove had replaced most of the older random width planking. The older boards were 1 to 1 1/8 inches thick and were 13 1/2 to 15 inches in width. The planks and joists were vertically sawn leaving 1/2 inch saw marks. There was no evidence found of pit sawn lumber anywhere in the structure. The joists in the old section of the barn (nearest Almshouse Road) were hand hewn and most were untouched on two sides leaving the bark intact. Only the upper and lower surfaces were hewn flat.

Most of the posts and beams were hand hewn on all four sides, but some (replacements or additions) were vertically sawn or circular sawn. Sample measurements of the posts

and beams revealed them to be random measurements, also. No two posts or beams were identical.

The foundation is not scheduled for demolition, at present, but with the protection of the upper structure removed, the old mortar will probably deteriorate fast. Estimates on the age of the masonry are nearly impossible. It could be eighteenth century or just as likely be 1890. To the best of my knowledge, no adequate dating methods exist for this kind of construction.

Sample sections were cut from joists, and a post, believed to be from the older section of the barn close to Almshouse Road. These are to be used for later tree ring study. A preliminary look at a 16 inch half-hewn joist revealed 128 years of growth. The first three inches of growth radius contained about 30 rings. The next inch contained about 30 more. The last four inches contained about 60 rings. A tree ring specialist may be able to determine the year the tree was cut down.

What conclusions can be drawn using the above criteria?

1. (Batten doors and strap hinges are used up to the present time on barns. Not being blacksmithmade indicates they were probably made within the last century, or so. These doors and hardware could be original or replacements.)

2. (Hand hewn beams and mortise and tenon joints were common to houses before 1840, but are used in barns up to the present day. Hand hewing is labor intensive and avoided when machinery can do the job. However, longer posts and beams of a barn that won't fit a saw mill are still hand hewn. All lengths of joists were hand hewn in this barn, but no hard conclusions can be drawn from this. The owner may have decided to save mill fees and do them all by hand, or the mill may have been out of operation at the time.)

3. (Machine head cut nails started to be manufactured in the 1820s. The fact that no handmade nails or hand headed cut nails were found indicates that the structure was built, or rebuilt, after that period.)

4. (The water powered vertical power saw came into use about 1720 and was used until supplanted by the circular saw in the 1830's. However, many old vertical saws continued to be used for many years after that, especially in more remote areas. Warwick's mills may have retained their vertical saws for quite some time. All we can deduce from the above data is, once again, that the barn was probably built sometime after the 1830s.)

5. (Tree ring data can suggest something more definite. The trees used for joists in the barn were 128 years old when cut. The early growth pattern indicates rapid growth

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## CHURCHVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Northampton Township Historical Commission members, along with the help of Jeffrey Marshall of the Bucks County Conservancy, are in the process of making the village of Churchville a historic district.

In the early 1700's about 40 Dutch families from Long Island and Northern New Jersey moved along the Neshaminy creek where fertile lands promised good farming. Because the men were great pipe smokers, the settlement became known as smoketown,

These people, Low Dutch Reformed, organized the Church of Bensalem and Sammeny in 1710, under the direction of Rev. Paulus Van Vlecq. This was the first organized church of any denomination in Bucks County and the first Reformed Church in Pennsylvania.

The Dutch met in members homes, traveled to Feasterville or Addisville, until in 1814 the North and Southampton Reformed Church was built. Since so many of the activities in the village centered around the church, when a post office was opened in 1816, the name was change to Churchville.

The Reading Railroad came through with the first station on Bristol Road in 1878. Electricity came to the town in 1913, followed by the first telephone exchange, which soon became the largest in Bucks County.

There are many early colonial and Victorian homes in Churchville. The Commission has met with several interested residents and all agree that this charming village has much historical heritage and should be kept intact. Representatives from Harrisburg have visited the area and have agreed. Maps and pictures are now in possession of a committee there.



**Interior view of the North/Southampton Reformed Church as it looked from 1903 until 1968 when the Sanctuary was on the second floor. Since 1968, services are again held on the lower level with the balconies as it had been originally**

## MEMORIAL DAY EXERCISES RICHBORO, PA.

May 30th, 1928 Standard Time

Memorial Day Committee  
HARRY E. BURGER, Chairman  
Quartermaster, Sipler-Wells Post 927, V. F. W.

Secretary  
CHAS. H. BOEHM

Treasurer  
MRS. EVA CAFFEY



12.30 P. M.—ASSEMBLY (at the old firehouse),  
By North Penn Post, V. F. W., Bugle Corps  
PARADE TO UNION CEMETERY  
1.15 P. M.—INVOCATION ..... Rev. M. P. Luther  
Pastor Churchville Ref. Church  
ORIGIN OF MEMORIAL DAY.. Capt. John M. Rulon, G. A. R.  
FORMAL MEMORIAL DAY SERVICES,

By the Sipler-Wells Post, 927  
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the  
United States, Huntingdon Valley, Pa.

PARADE TO RICHBORO HIGH SCHOOL

2.30 P. M.—ASSEMBLY.....By High School Bugle Corps  
INVOCATION .....Rev. M. P. Luther  
WELCOME ..... George Riley,  
President of Student Council  
PURPOSE OF DEDICATION..... Catherine Yerkes  
Vice President of Student Council  
UNVEILING OF MEMORIAL to Veterans of Past Wars  
UNVEILING OF MEMORIAL  
to Aviation and Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh  
PRESENTATION OF MEMORIAL..... Charles Fromuth  
Retiring President of Student Council

OFFICIAL DEDICATION  
Sipler-Wells Post 927, V.F.W.  
Commanded by { Harpur M. Tobin,  
Vice Commander in Chief  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Arthur T. Morrissey,  
Commander Phila. County  
Council V. F. W.

ACCEPTANCE OF MEMORIALS.....Dr. E. E. Pownall

GREETINGS..... { Hon. William Ryan  
Congressman Henry Watson  
Henry A. James, Esq.  
Prof. J. Harry Hoffman  
Furman Edwards

BENEDICTION

(OVER)

**This is a page from the Richboro Memorial Day exercises that will be seen in "old movies" at a future Northampton Township Historical Society meeting. Many Northampton events have been recorded.**



**Harry Feaster Gill, Born in 1887, Married Ophelia Gaskill in 1919. Harry took many of the early 16mm movies which have now been transferred to video tape.**



**Edna Search Cornell poses in 1933 with the Veterans Memorial presented in the 1928 Memorial Day exercises**

## BARN from page 3

for the first 25 to 30 years, suggestive of a sapling in plenty of sunshine, growing in a clearing. The next 45 years shows very dense growth rings suggesting the tree was now in heavy regrowth and striving for height to reach the sun. After about 75 years the growth rings gradually increase in size suggesting the tree achieved dominance in its territory, or the area was opened up by nearby cutting. This scenario would produce a very tall, straight tree, the kind sought after for construction.)

How does this fit into the demographic history of this parcel of land and when would the first probable forest cutting occur at this location? Henry Jamison bought this property as part of a plot of 250 acres in 1723. His son, Robert was the first settler and lived where the Mountain View housing development is today. Henry's descendants, Robert and John, jointly inherited this tract in 1757, which we can suggest to be the earliest probable cutting date of the primeval forest at the present corner of Almshouse and Old York Roads for construction there. The 250 acre property was first subdivided in 1797, with 165 acres going to John and Robert Jamison. In 1808 the property was deeded to John and Martha Jamison. By this time there most certainly had to be a building at the corner.

"So get to the point" you're saying, "how old was the barn that was torn down?" It's difficult for an expert, let alone an amateur, to make an accurate guess where a barn is concerned, but the best estimate here, based heavily on the tree ring evidence, is that it was built, or rebuilt, 128 years after the first cutting of the forest, or near the end of the nineteenth century. The house, next to the barn, on the Southwest corner of Almshouse and Old York Roads is of 1890's architecture and probably replaced or was a remodeling of a previous structure. The barn may have been built around the same time. Further document research could explain more about both the barn and house. So, the evidence "speaks" of a 100 year old barn.

## MARY SHALLCROSS

It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of Mary Shallcross on October 23, 1993. Mary was a charter member of our society and served as a director in the early 1980's. Mary was a school cafeteria worker and is fondly remembered for organizing the refreshments at our meetings and covered dish diners. Her husband Walter, was a former chairman of the historical commission. Contributions in memory of Mary may be given to the American Lung Association, 1100 East Hector Street, Conshohocken, PA 19428



**Looking North on Second Street Pike at Almshouse Road in the early 1920's. The Spread Eagle is to the left and the Stone house, behind the tree, is where the Exxon station now stands.**

Well this is our third edition of the Historia. From the comments I have received it seems to be enjoyed by all. Remember thought that this is YOUR newsletter and I would like to publish articles written by our members with their accounts of Northampton Township history or any other historic story of interest to all. The next edition will be in March, so you have many cold Winter months to put together a little something for the next issue. Articles can include pictures or other graphics which WILL be returned.

This edition of the Historia is a little late getting out due to the passing of my grandmother, Florence Smethurst. She was 100 years old and some of you may remember her as she lived in our house in Richboro for many years before going into a nursing home. Florence was my mother, Elinor's mother.

I am always looking for ideas for interesting speakers for future meetings. The first meeting of next year, in March, will probably be a showing of some early scenes in the township. The movies were transferred to videotape and we have to setup a suitable viewing screen for them.

We have not decided on a fund raising activity for next year. A kitchen and garden tour has been discussed, as well as a "barn" sale at the library. If you have any ideas please pass them on to one of the board members.

Since this is the last Historia until next year, have a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year. See you in the Spring - that sounds good, wish we could be there now!

Your Editor, Doug Crompton

# MAY I INTRODUCE

## Joanne M. Kerridge

Joanne is Membership Chairperson and sharing the position of Corresponding Secretary of the Northampton Township Historical Society. Joanne and her husband, Charles, moved to Richboro 26 years ago from New Jersey.

Their oldest daughter, Beatrice, will graduate in May from Syracuse University with a masters degree in consumer economics. Daughter, Jane, graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and is currently substitute teaching in the Council Rock School District.

Joanne was active with volunteer work while her daughters were attending school. She served as President and Treasurer of the Council Rock Band Parents Association. She is currently serving as a member of the Bucks County Special Olympics advisory committee. Joanne has been employed for the last seven years by the Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22.

Joanne and Charles are both looking forward to retiring next year and being able to travel!



**Eileen's home before the loss of the hemlock tree.**



**After the tree came down and an addition was added**

## Eileen Zolotorofe

Eileen is our Recording Secretary. She was born and raised in the Philadelphia area. She remarried in 1988 (in Williamsburg, Va.) and moved to Richboro into her new husband's old (ca. 1780) farm house. She quickly adapted herself to the renovation of "this old house" and the quest for old things to fill this old house. In 1989, Eileen and her husband engineered a large addition across the front of the house. Local builder Mike Mullin erected the shell and completed the exterior work. Eileen and her husband completed all of the interior finish work over the following 2 1/2 years.

The accompanying photos show the house as it appeared in 1940 and as it appeared before and after the addition. The large hemlock in front of the house lost about 40 feet off the top during a storm in December of last year and had to be removed recently a tree ring count indicated that it had watched over the house for 95 years prior to its demise.

Besides the never-ending job of maintaining an old house, Eileen works part-time at Rohm and Haas as a Recruiting Assistant in the Corporate Staffing Department. She has a daughter, Susan, who recently married and lives in Langhorne. She loves to read, especially about old houses, antiques, and collectibles. She crochets, does calligraphy (Italics and Copperplate), and thoroughly enjoys entertaining. She's been taking courses at BCCC, focusing on American History, English Composition, and Psychology. She is also a convert to snow skiing, but since it never snows in Pennsylvania anymore, Eileen and her husband go out west to ski. She's in the process of making plans to investigate the "history/genealogy" of her home and hopes to enlist the help of others who have done the



**Eileen's home as it appeared in a 1940 photo, when It was owned by Percy Jones.**

# NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**55 Township Road, Richboro, Pennsylvania**

**1993 OFFICIERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

President	Jean Gallagher	357-7833
Vice President	Doug Crompton	355-5307
Recording Secretary	Eileen Zolotorofe	598-3065
Treasurer	Florence Leedom	357-3121
Corresponding Sec.	Eleanor Ewing	860-5288
	Joanne Kerridge	355-2193
Director	Bill Blumhardt	357-3260
Director	Chris Fleuhr	355-8712
Director	Ted Robinson	357-6820
Social Committee	Dorris D'Ardene	968-5507
	Eileen McAdams	364-6924
Historia Editor	Doug Crompton	355-5307

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. All are welcomed at our meetings. Meetings start at **7:30 P.M.** with refreshments, general meeting, and a featured speaker.

### Meeting Dates for 1993-94

November 17	Dinner Meeting 6PM
December 5	Living Tree Award 3PM
March 23, 94	General Meeting
May 25, 94	“ ”

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL CLASSIFICATIONS

PATRON:	Extra support for the society	\$25.00
FAMILY:	All members of one family	\$10.00
SINGLE:	Adult individual membership	\$5.00
SENIOR CITIZEN:	Age 65 years or older	\$2.00

This will be your membership for the calendar year of 1993 (January 1993 to December 1993)

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 onto 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**  
**469 Twining Ford Road**  
**Richboro, PA 18954**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Nov 93

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ DUES ENCLOSED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to serve on one of our committees ? : Y \_\_\_ N \_\_\_ Maybe \_\_\_

Please give us your ideas for speakers at future meetings : \_\_\_\_\_

Your comments and suggestions are welcomed : \_\_\_\_\_