



HISTORIA

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER, 1995

RICHBORO LOSES ANOTHER ONE AS DAVIS HOUSE FALLS



JEFF MARSHALL TO SPEAK AT SEPTEMBER MEETING

Jeff Marshall, Director of Historic Preservation for the Heritage Conservancy in Bucks County will be our guest speaker at the September 27th meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Northampton Township Cultural Center in Richboro. Jeff has spent the last 20 years actively involved with preservation efforts in the Bucks County area. He will describe

the preservation efforts in our area and in nearby Chur-chville. He will also discuss why preservation sometimes works and sometimes does not work. He will expand on a recent article in the Conservancy's publication, ENVIRONS, where he stated that "...historic preservation works best when people are convinced that there is value to preserving our past...I believe we owe a debt to those who came before us and built these structures, and we owe it to those who will come after us to preserve them." Jeff's talk should be both informative and instructive. Please plan to join us.

Another page has closed in the Richboro history book with the demolition of the Davis house on Second Street Pike. The Historical Society had attempted to save the structure, which was owned by the Addisville Reformed Church.

The Society, in its search for a home, had been interested in the structure since it was offered as a possible rental to us by the Church in the Fall of 1994. We were attempting to negotiate a rental agreement when the house was damaged by water, due to frozen pipes, last winter.

The damage, although it looked bad, was mostly cosmetic. The basic structure of the building, a rubble stone filled frame design built in the mid to early 1800's, was intact. Because the house was in less than modern condition before the damage and the insurance coverage was not adequate, the cost to the Church to make the facility "rentable" again was deemed by the Church to be prohibitive. The decision was made to demolish the property.

The Society heard about this decision, (we were never directly informed) and decided to attempt to come to some agreement that could possibly save the structure. Saving the structure, one of the few remaining Richboro homes, was paramount. Having a home for the Society was a possible side benefit. We had a restoration expert tour the property and the assessment was made that it could be restored.

Please turn to page 7



NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is hard to believe but fall is here. I hope that everyone had a good summer. Our September meeting will feature a talk by Jeff Marshall of the Bucks County Conservancy. He will speak on historic preservation in Bucks County. Please plan to attend.

We lost a longtime and faithful member in June with the passing of Bill Blumhardt. Bill, as usual, hosted our barn sale in early June. Bill was one of the original members of our Society. He was a past president and, at his death, a director. Bill remembered the Society in his will, leaving a trust of \$10,000 for building upkeep should we acquire a property. Although Bill could be cantankerous at times he always spoke very highly of my father and was in part responsible for my becoming involved in the Society. I would always call and remind him about our meetings but in the last year he would often decline because he was not feeling well. Farewell Bill.

The barn sale was a success especially considering the weather and the fact that, for many of us, it was our first time. We would like to do it again next year. A location is under discussion with the most likely place being the Cultural Center. If anyone has any ideas let us know.

As you can see from the lead article in this issue of the HISTORIA we have brought to close the saga of another property in "downtown" Richboro. I am often asked "What is the Historical Society doing to save some building?" This question has come up in regard to the Spread Eagle Inn. We as a group have no power to do anything directly but we can raise awareness and educate the public about these matters. If the public outrage about a particular action were loud enough it could cause an individual, organization, or company to think twice. The township does have an Historical Commission which does have the power to stop the demolition of a property for a period of thirty days. This is not a long time but it would give the community time to respond and comment. It would also more importantly make a statement from the commission, an official advisory body to the supervisors, that they are not rubber stamping a request for demolition.

The Northampton Library is celebrating it's 25th anniversary during the month of October. Please plan to attend their celebration functions (see the notice on page 6).

Remember I can always use your articles and pictures for the HISTORIA. See you at our meeting. Please bring a friend!

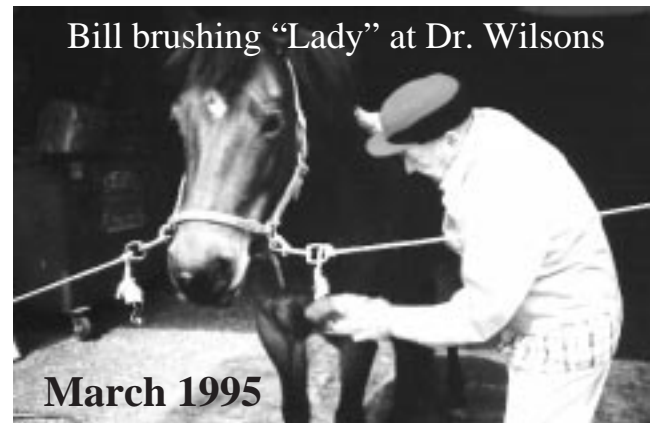
Douglas J. Cooney

BILL BLUMHARDT (1916-1995)

Just weeks after a barn sale at his property, William A. Blumhardt, a longtime member of our Historical Society, died on Friday June 30 at his home. Bill was 79. He most recently worked for Wagner's, a spice and tea company in Ivyland. Bill had operated a meat business in Jenkintown for many years until his retirement in 1957. The Blumhardt Markets butcher and meat business was started by his father and at one time there were many corner stores located throughout the Philadelphia area.

From 1957 to 1972, he was the owner, trainer and driver of standard bred horses that raced at the former Liberty Bell track in Philadelphia and Freehold Raceway in New Jersey. In later years his friendship with Dr. Wilson kept him close to the racing events. He would often ride a horse drawn carriage with Dr. Wilson into Tyler State Park.

Bill was a buyer, seller and collector of antique carriages and related memorabilia. He often attended local auctions and would travel to Lancaster and beyond to farm auctions.



Bill was born in Philadelphia and raised in Jenkintown, where he graduated from Jenkintown High School. He served as a technical sergeant in the Army in England and Germany during World War II.

From Jenkintown Bill moved on to Southampton and then to the Ivyland/Richboro mini-farm where he had lived for the past 25 years.

Bill had been a member of the Historical Society since the mid-1970s and served as president in 1980. In December 1989, he was given the society's Living Tree Award in recognition of his community service. He was nominated by township residents and a tree was planted in the township in his name. Bill will be remembered for the "Barn Sales" that he hosted at his property to raise funds for the Society.

He held memberships in the Northampton Township Lions Club, where he served as a director; the Bucks County Historical Society and the National Trust for Historical Preservation.

Bill is survived by his former wife, Natalie Case Blumhardt, and her daughter, Gail Blumhardt Case.

A memorial service was held at his Church, Advent Lutheran, in Richboro. The service was well attended and many people reflected on their past experiences with Bill. The burial was private.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Northampton Township Lions Club, c/o George Ryan, 429 Twining Ford Rd., Richboro, Pa.



SOME SCENES FROM OUR SPRING ACTIVITIES



The Herzog's display their World War II memorabilia at the May meeting.



Eileen Zolotorofe's father, Jim Fetter, explains his World War II display to Florence Leedom. Jim had a wonderful display of his personal experiences in the war.



Jill Kohles, our May speaker, and Muriel Briggs, try on World War II hats. Jill told several fun stories which took place during the war.



Diane Amadio and Adelaide Crompton await buyers while Eileen Zolotorofe sells bake goods and raffle tickets at the June barn sale at Bill Blumhardt's.



Bill selling from his porch at the barn sale. This is the last picture we have of Bill and the last Historical Society function he participated in.



At times we had many buyers at the barn sale but threatening weather both Friday and Saturday discouraged many buyers and sellers.



WHO SHOT THE EAGLE?

By *DAVE GAUNTT, WARWICK HISTORICAL SOCIETY*



The Spread Eagle Inn on the Southwest corner of Second Street Pike and Almshouse Road in Richboro. This view could be replaced by a Gas station in the future.

Conti's Cross Keys - Spread Eagle Tavern - Ho-hum, yet another Bucks County Landmark will come crashing down to be replaced by yet another gas station. Two and a half centuries of caretakers have brought this structure to the brink of the 21st century, only to be demolished by today's caretakers and replaced by fuel storage. Think about that. A reasonable trade-off?

If I worked for Amoco I would believe there was little or no opposition to the proposed demolition of the Spread Eagle Tavern in Richboro. In short - it appears that no one cares. I have seen *Intelligencer/Courier Times* editorials and minimal reader response to the Conti's destruction, but not a thing in response to "The Eagle." Save the Spread Eagle? Who cares? Publicly, not a soul, at least in the *Intelligencer* or *Inquirer* as far as I have seen.

Is everyone automatically giving up because a large corporation is involved? Amoco's too big, maybe? Let me point out that the very fact of their size is an asset to a conservationist. Who else would have the assets to save and/or move the structure? Who else has the assets to move and donate it to a caretaking organization (such as yours)? Who else is so vulnerable to public spirit and dependent on good relations with the local public for its business?

Amoco, or any other oil firm, needs the good will of the neighborhood to survive. As a large non-locally based organization, they may not have the appreciation that we do for our historic treasures and they need to be publicly apprised, in no uncertain terms, just how dear we hold them. They may not see a 250 year old building as unusual. Let them know that it is to us!

How? What can be done? As I see it, you must first identify what is wanted. Some options are:

- * Demolish it, archeologically sifting every trace of dirt and claiming every artifact and building part?
- * Don't touch it at all and leave it as is in place?
- * Move it to the back of the property and develop the front?
- * Move it to another property altogether and refurbish it and allow development of the corner?
- * Move it, renovate it, donate it, as well as the land it will be moved to?
- * Fill in your own ideas

Whatever you decide, a clear objective must be defined. Next, dialogue with Amoco must be initiated - and soon. In the meantime, broad-based clamor for the structure's preservation must be made public. Write to the newspapers, Township and County offices with your concerns and reasons for saving the building - after all, it was an underground railroad station, wasn't it? And it is the last remaining colonial tavern (the last of the "Bear Taverns") in Richboro, isn't it? Research its history and flaunt it. Isn't this what an Historical Society is for - preserving and broadcasting history?

Demonstrate on the corner. Attend Township meetings and raise the issue - over and over. Call Township Officials, County Officials, Civic groups, and Conservation officials and don't take no for an answer! "No" is their easiest response and what they are best at, but show determination and they will address your concerns. If you don't demand to be heard, sure as the next day's dawn, you won't be. The developers are always at public meetings because that's part of their process of doing business. They have the officials ear through familiarity, but the officials must pay attention to you if they want to stay in office, don't they? You have much more power than you may think, but only if you use it, and use it, and use it. Don't just ask for their action, ask what you can do to help them achieve this goal.

Perseverance is the key. Never let up - (you can bet the developers won't, since they stand to profit greatly at the public's expense.) You can win, but you've got to be willing to fight for it, and don't give up until the rubble is on the ground - even then, demand that it be sifted. Be a force in your community for future generations. You will be carrying on the founder's traditions. Community activists have changed America, indeed they created it. Mount Vernon

Please turn to page 6



Good Ol' Days

By Dave Gauntt, Warwick Historical Society

Sitting in a summer traffic jam, I stared at the hot concrete and steel and tried to shut out the noise of the motors and radios. My thoughts fell back to the "good ol' days" and how nice they must have been. No superhighways that so often serve as parking lots and diesel fume pressure cookers. No mad rush to and from work and no onslaught of rock music at decibels that massage the liver. No steel, and concrete blotting out the countryside. The air was fresh and clear and the waters were pure as the proverbial driven snow. Life had to be great back then, - right?

Well, I've taken a pretty good look at just that and it's true there were no superhighways. I have to admit though, the roads were mostly single lane with a dirt surface - dust bowls in summer. Some had wooden planks, oyster shells or coal ashes firming up the footing, but in bad weather they were mostly impassable seas of mud. Even in good weather a few miles' travel took hours. Most people traveled on foot because one had to be fairly well off to own and care for a horses and carriage in town. (Incidentally, studies of vehicular travel in New York and London reveal that the pace today is the same as it was in 1890.) In the rural country of the past, a horse was the only power source available. No diesel fumes here, although there was pollution of a different nature - but then, it was good for the flowers. When I was a kid, people used to chase the milk and bread wagons to pick up whatever free fertilizer dropped along the way. OK, travel has improved since then.

But it had to be healthier living back then, right? Well, I've looked into that and maybe there's some reassessment due here, too. Life, itself in those days was a gossamer existence - tenuous at best. Death was indiscriminately democratic. The daily death notices in newspapers of old, show that folks died at any age at all, - infants, toddlers, teens, young adults, middle aged and old, in relatively equal numbers. There was no common denominator. Rich and poor, healthy and infirmed, wise and imbecilic, cautious and foolhardy, all fell victim at random. They died from what seems today to be unreasonable causes. Did it make people more appreciative of life or were they just more callous about death? Maybe a bit of both.

In one 1840 example of those unreasonable causes, a whole family (parents and five children) were wiped out in rapid succession within a week, from trying to clean out a putrid well on their farm. Another example from the same time period finds a man who went fishing and while catching a catfish was pierced in the hand by its spine. A week later he was dead from the infection. Diseases that are unheard of today took thousands in communities every year. Yellow fever, cholera, diphtheria, measles, small pox and typhoid were dreaded killers that came in waves of destruction. Something regarded as lightly today as diarrhea was deadly. In fact, most of the casualties of wars prior to the twentieth century were from this ailment. In my

own lifetime, polio killed and maimed in epidemic proportions. Its peak was 1952, when 57,000 cases were reported. Statistically 10-15% of those afflicted died and most who lived suffered some degree of paralysis. Tetanus, tuberculosis, rabies, - the list goes on and on. Ok, not healthy times compared to today.



Well surely, food had to be better without the laundry list of chemicals included in today's groceries, right? Again, there's a caveat here. Another regular killer was food poisoning from bad preservation of food. There were no vegetables in winter except root stocks, onions and cabbages. The rest were "canned" in jars at harvest time. Many of these jars went bad, which I can attest to, from the experience of my own family. I can remember opening a jar or two to the repulsive odor of preserves that didn't make it - and we were lucky. Botulism didn't telegraph its deadly existence that easily. We also had to carefully examine such things as cereals and flour to be sure there were no weevils inhabiting our breakfast. My family would sooner dine on living tarantulas than eat something that had been previously inhabited. To be certain of purity, meats had to be well-cooked to kill off parasites, especially the pork products. This wasn't that long ago - despite what my kids think. All right, today we don't worry about such things.

Please turn to page 6



Good Ol' Days from page 5

Today, if people are infirmed or die from an accident, ailment or sub-par food before their "allotted 72," or even note evidence of other life in his or her cuisine, it is considered criminal negligence and someone must be found to pay for it. In the "good ol' days", death and infirmity were constants and were attributed to "God's will," having very little to do with us, mortals. Times have changed.

Imagine going to the dentist in the era before novocain. Or how about surgery before anesthetics? A hangover before aspirin? How about childbirth before antiseptics? Many a mother, child, or both, would not survive birthing less than a century ago. Birth defects and blindness afflicted a significant percentage of the children born. Birth started the gauntlet of childhood diseases that threatened life and limb. No wonder the population grew more slowly then, even if there were more births per family. It was a rare household that didn't experience some tragedy of this sort. It did make religion easy, though.

The good ol' days also preceded central heat, indoor plumbing, municipal sewage, and all the trappings of electricity. No radio, television, microwave, automatic washer, drier, lighting at a touch, air conditioning, (or even fans), motor travel, air travel, computers, movies, fast food, running water, and even things so highly regarded today as deodorant. There was a reason for the nightcaps worn then, too, and it had to do with body lice. Think of it.

So there are many more benefits to living today than the "halcyon days of yore." In fact, had I lived in any time period at all, prior to the last half-century, I wouldn't have lived half my present years. I'd have been the victim of any number of the childhood diseases I'd had, or pneumonia as a young adult, or major infections of the hand and arm, bee-sting reactions, or two surgical procedures. I wouldn't be here to do all this complaining.

But optimism can have its limits. Isn't there some part of the good ol' days we can trade for these darn traffic jams?

NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP LIBRARY 25TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

September 30, Saturday, 10 a. m. - 4 p. m. Friends of the Library 25th Anniversary Fair Book & Bake Sale, Barber-shop Quartet, raffles, refreshments

October 21, Saturday, 7 - 9 p. m. Library Founders' Celebration: Evening of the Arts Awards, musical entertainment, art show, refreshments

November 11, Saturday, 7 p.m. Fundraiser Comedy Murder Mystery Dinner at the Fountainhead in New Hope "If Books Could Kill" (Lighten Up Productions), Tickets \$40.00

Spread Eagle from page 4



Easterly view of Almshouse Road showing an entire block that has been demolished in the past Five years. A shopping center and gas station / car wash may occupy it soon. Spread Eagle Inn can be seen at left.

was saved by a group of women activists. A small group saved Washington's Crossing and a smaller group saved the Eight Arch Bridge and is saving the Moland House in Warwick Township. An active group can do the same in Northampton if they put their minds to it. Be innovative, be flexible, but be firm in your ultimate objective of saving the structure. Go for it ... and good luck.

DAVE GAUNTT HONORED

Dave Gauntt was recently honored at a Warwick supervisors meeting for his service to the township. Dave started the Warwick Historical Society in 1991. He and his wife, Margaret wrote the quarterly township newsletter for the past five years. Dave was also instrumental in obtaining funds to restore the Eight Arch Bridge and led the move to restore the Moland House.

The proclamation read "To all good men and ladies that chance to make Mr. Gauntt's acquaintance, be it known that we, his friends of earlier times, hereby recommend that Mr. Gauntt be treated with respect, high regard and kinship. For he hath given of himself to help his fellow man by speech, by words, and by deeds, wherever his path should lead him. He will always be thought of fondly by the people of Warwick."

Unfortunately Dave's job with the Navy is moving to Maryland and he will be transferring there for at least a few years. He plans to return when he retires.

I want to personally thank Dave for all of the support he has given me and our Society over the last few years. We have all shared his fine articles in our HISTORIA and the pleasure of his company at our meetings. Good Luck Dave! Please come back and visit.

DAVIS HOUSE from page 1



We also approached the Buck County Community College Historic Preservation Program director, Lyle Rosenberger, about a possible school project to restore the property. The school has an accredited Historic Preservation certificate program. Each student must complete an intern program in which they participate in actual restoration work under the guidance of instructors. They were very excited about the possibility of using the Davis house in their program. This would have benefited the program, giving them great publicity in the center of Richboro. The Society would receive top notch restoration work for the cost of the materials and the community would have a beautiful property with an Historical Society sign hanging on the front door.

The Church originally bought the property to avoid the possibility of having commercial activity nearby. They used it for temporary housing for missionaries. About \$80,000 was owed on a mortgage and it was going to cost more than \$7,000 to demolish it. We had proposed that the Church donate the property to the Society, avoiding the demolition costs and future property taxes. In turn we would have restored the property, at no expense to them, and used it as our home. As part of the lease the Society could not sell the property and would return it to the Church if it no longer used it. In a meeting with the Church property committee we also made it clear that we were open to any and all suggestions on how the property could be saved. It was evident however that their minds were made up and we walked away from that meeting with little hope. We were later informed by letter that the demolition was going forward and as you can see from the pictures, it certainly did on Friday September 8, 1995.

Pictures; cover left, East view of house before demolition; cover right, same view after; top left, North view of Davis house hours after it fell; top right, South view; right center, West view; right bottom, One of two first floor fireplaces exposed days before the demolition. Note the large cut stone back wall. The wood lentil and some stone were recovered. The opening measured 56 inches wide. Both were covered with bricks and plaster.





WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE REPORT

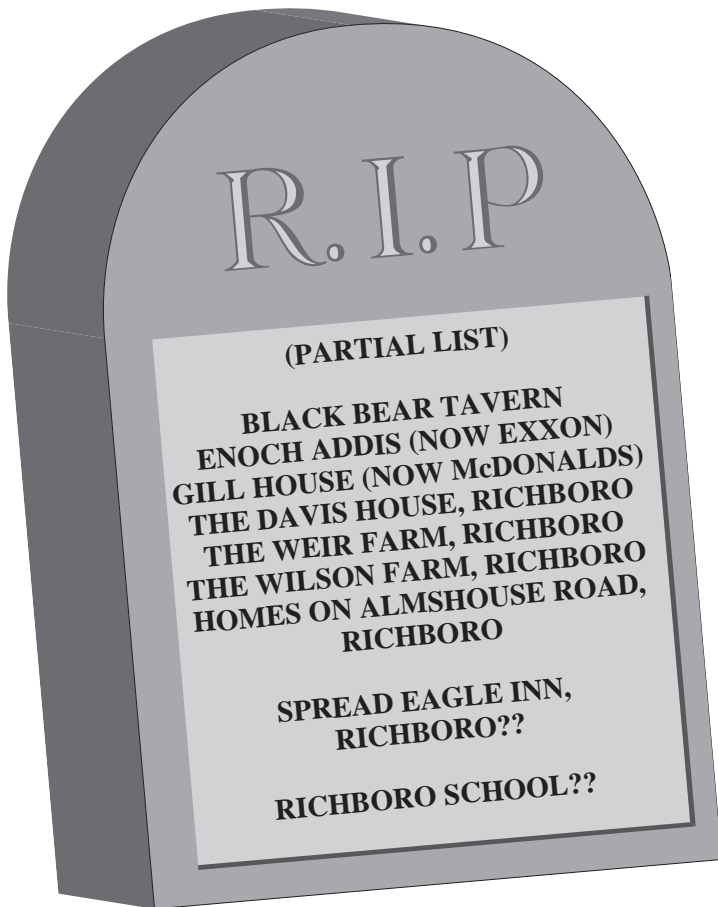
The NTHS Barn Sale was held as scheduled on June 2 and 3, 1995 at Bill Blumhardt's farm in Richboro. Although the weather did not cooperate, those who participated had a nice time and we managed to raise the coffers by approximately \$350.00. We also recruited some new members in the process. My sincere thanks to all of you who volunteered your time to "man" the booths and hot dog stand.

The single best money maker was our beautiful basket of cheer. A special thanks to Jean Gallagher for her help, and to Tanners, Thrift Drug, and John Wagner's for their contributions. The winners were Karen Kowal of Rushland, Dave Gauntt of Warwick, and Anne Downey of Bensalem

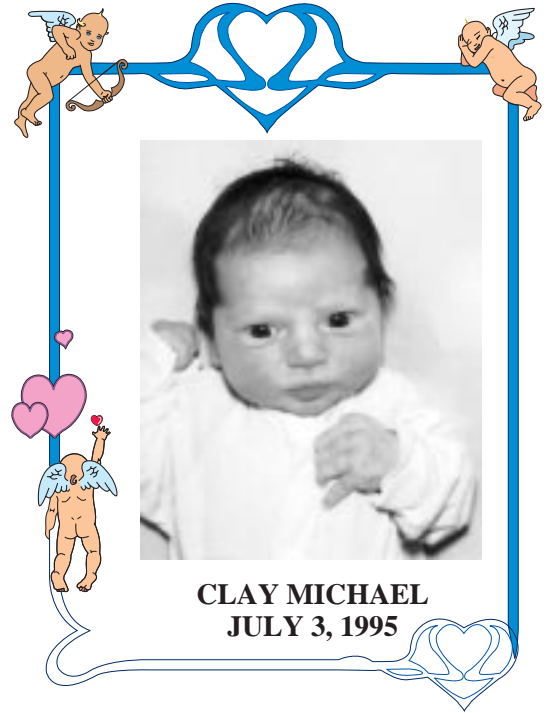
Congratulations!

This was the first Barn Sale for many of your Board members and we've learned a lot from the experience. The NTHS looks forward to implementing many of our new ideas at future sales.

Diane Amadio



CONGRATULATIONS LARRY AND ROSEMARIE BLUMENTHAL



**HISTORIC HOMEOWNER ASSISTANCE ACT
H.R. 1662**

A bill is currently making it's way before congress to amend the 1986 Internal Revenue Code. It is H.R. 1662, Historic Homeownership Assistance Act, sponsored by Representative Shaw. There are currently 45 cosponsors including House Speaker Gingrich.

Historic Homeownership Assistance Act - Amends the Internal Revenue Code to allow a tax credit for 20 percent of the qualified rehabilitation expenditures made by a taxpayer with respect to a certified historic structure which has been substantially rehabilitated and which is owned by the taxpayer and used as his or her principal residence. Allows the credit for such expenditures to be taken by a purchaser of the rehabilitated home. Permits, in lieu of the credit, a historic rehabilitation mortgage credit certificate, which shall be transferred to a lender in exchange for a reduction in the rate of interest on the loan secured by the building.

Please contact your U.S. Representatives in favor of this bill!

NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO BOX 732, RICHBORO, PENNSYLVANIA 18954-0732

1995 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President	Doug Crompton	355-5307
Vice President	Eileen Zolotorofe	598-3065
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Corresponding Sec.	Joanne Kerridge	355-2193
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Send articles to:	1269 2nd St Pike Richboro, PA 18954	

(All numbers [215] area code)

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 P.M.** with refreshments, general meeting, and a featured speaker.

Meeting Dates for 1995 / 1996

September 27	General Meeting	-	7:30 P.M.
November 15	Dinner Meeting	-	6 P.M.
March 20	General Meeting	-	7:30 P.M.
May 22	“ ”	-	“ ”

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 1995 (January 1995 to December 1995)

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 : _____