



HISTORIA

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1

NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MARCH 2005

MARCH MEETING TO BE HELD AT HISTORIC CRAVEN HALL



The March meeting of the Northampton Township Historical Society will be held at Craven Hall, Newtown road and Street road in Warminster. This is the home of the Craven Hall Historical Society headed by Erik Fleischer. Erik will give us a tour and talk about Craven Hall and Warminster history and we will have a brief general meeting. Please bring a friend and if you need directions or a ride to the meeting feel free to contact one of the officers listed on the back page of the HISTORIA.

History and facts about Craven Hall

Craven Hall was built on land which was part of a 551 acre land grant from William Penn to William Bingley in 1681. Within the next 45 years, William Stockdale acquired the land, and in 1726 sold the acreage to James (Jacobus) Craven. The land stayed in the Craven family until 1761. The Craven Vansant Cemetery (sold to Vansant in 1798) remains to the South of the hall. Nine Revolutionary soldiers are buried in the cemetery along with members of the Craven/Vansant families.

Traditionally, William Tennent preached in the “House of Craven” in the early 1720’s before founding the “Log College” in 1726. It is unlikely that the earlier portion of Craven Hall could have existed at that time, however it is still the only 18th century artifact associated with this significant event. The “House of Craven” was then most likely a log house, situated on the same land and perhaps even the same location.

The Log College was the direct ancestor of Princeton University and its influence on an evangelical reform of the Presbyterian Church, which reached culmination in the Great Enlightenment under George Whitefield in 1739. This was of great cultural importance throughout the colonies.

Please turn to page 3

NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Folks,

Welcome spring, green grass, flowers and the warm sun on the back of my neck. Next month I will off to the sunny south for the usual trek to Charleston, South Carolina. Wish we could all take the trip together.

Our March meeting will be at the historic Craven Hall in Warminster. Our meetings will be away from our normal location at the library until construction is completed, hopefully for our dinner meeting in the fall.

I want to make a public announcement of how much I appreciated Debbie Glessner as our previous president. Debbie did an outstanding job and gave so much of her time and energy to the historical society. Debbie is an intelligent, classy lady and deserves much success and our thanks.

Please enjoy the planet,



RICHBORO SCHOOL REUNION 2005

The Richboro School reunion committee has set Friday, May 27, 2005 as the date for the next school reunion. This follows the two very successful reunions in May 2001 and again in May 2003. The call is going out to notify anyone who graduated or attended the old school between 1925 and 1955.

Those interested in attending should contact Emma Walker Worthington at 215-943-0108.

Spring Programs at the David Library

An Empire Gained... And Lost: 1754-1777

The David Library presents three lectures in observance of the 250th anniversary of the French and Indian War and a forty that examines unique primary sources on the Battle of Brandywine.

Thursday's February 17, March 10, April 21, and May 19 7:30 PM at the David Library 1201 River Road, Washington Crossing - 215-493-6776 - www.dlar.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

**NTHS General Meeting
Craven Hall
Wednesday March 16 - 7:30 PM**

**Richboro School Reunion 2005
Friday May 27, 2005
Northampton Country Club**

**Contact:
Emma Walker Worthington
215-943-0108**

MERCER MUSEUM

Pine and Ashland Streets, Doylestown, PA
(215) 345-0210 Hours: Mon.-Sat. 10-5, Sun.
Noon-5, Tues. until 9 Admission: \$6, \$5.50
seniors, \$2.50 Ages 6-17, Free to members
and children under 6

Animals on the loose, A Mercer Menagerie
Through December 31, 2005

Saturday March 5 - 11 AM - 4 PM
Doll's Day Out and Remembering Doll's Day Out

Wednesday March 20 - 9 AM
Bus trip to the Bryn Athyn Cathedral

Friday April 8 6-9 PM
Mercer Museum Auction

Saturday / Sunday May 14 / 15
32nd Annual Mercer Museum Folk Fest

Saturday / Sunday May 28 / 29
Civil War Encampment - Mercer Museum grounds

Pennsylvania Guild of Craftsman
2005 Workshop Series at the Tyler Craft Center
215-504-0650 www.pacrafts.com

Craven Hall History from page 1

The "House of Craven" is mentioned in perhaps the only significant battle fought in Bucks County. The battle of Crooked Billet, staged mainly in the Hatboro, Montgomery County area spilled over into Bucks County when the wounded were carried across the Jones farm and into the house on May 1, 1778. Washington had stationed a detachment of 200 militia under Brigadier General John Lacey in Bucks County. Their mission was to interfere with Howe's communication and foraging expeditions to the north. Lacey's troops were surprised asleep near the Crooked Billet Tavern in Hatboro, and found themselves surrounded by the British Calvary. They were able to cut their way through but suffered heavy casualties and retreated to the north across Thomas Jones's farm where the wounded were given refuge. Twenty six Pennsylvanians were killed and a number missing. Lacey was exonerated but severely reprimanded by Washington.



A monument to those Revolutionary soldiers who so cruelly died there is erected on Jacksonville road, just west of the SEPTA station on the south side of the road. The town Johnsville grew around the corner of Street road and Newtown road, which was originally known as "Craven's Corner." The name of Johnsville apparently came from John Craven, a son who opened a store in that vicinity in 1814. However, John Craven's name does not appear on property titles for the store. In 1761 the property was sold by Giles Jones to Daniel Longstreth but Giles retained an interest in the property and in 1798 the title reverted to him. In that year Giles sold it to his "kinsman and friend", Harman Vansant. Harman (Harmon) Vansant was a prominent citizen and well-to-do farmer at his death in 1823. Inventory of his possessions describes the house as including the additional wing. The house was left to his daughter Alice, but was to remain the property of his widow, Alice, until her remarriage or death.

Alice died in 1831 and the house was inherited by Harman's other daughter, Ann Eliza Vansant. Ann owned the house until her death in 1871.

The elaborate and monumental character of the decoration appears to be part of the original construction of the house as evidenced in the carefully planned center staircase and the asymmetrical southwest elevation. It is believed that the construction and decoration of the wing took place prior to Harman's death and that no significant changes other than the porches and extension of the gable ends of the roof, have taken place since that time.

It is surprising indeed to find such sophisticated Classical Revival detail in a modest farmhouse twenty miles from Philadelphia in 1820. The Second Bank of the United States was not completed at the time of Harman Vansant's death.

The general concept of the house with its addition is quite typically Federal. The asymmetrical plan and elevations are free of Georgian rigidity, the cornice is small in scale, horizontality is emphasized by the water table, and the grace and elegance of the staircase is characteristic. Even the exposed stone quoins in contrasting color are a common feature of the first decades of the nineteenth century vernacular in Southern Pennsylvania, where red sandstone and gray limestone alternate in convenient quarries.

The interior decorative trim, especially in the southwest parlor, is exceptional in a house of this size and place as to raise a question whether Harman Vansant had personal contact with that extraordinary group of young architects in Philadelphia during the ten years from 1800 to 1810. L'Enfant, Latrobe, John Haviland, Robert Mills, and William Strickland were all working in Philadelphia, even Thomas U. Walter and Gideon Shryock were in Strickland's office by 1819. They were architects that designed the Capitol, the Washington Monument, the city of Washington, and literally hundreds of the most important and monumental buildings of the next fifty years, from South Carolina to New England.

Whether the actual contact between these remarkable designers and the designer of The Craven Hall Parlors is ever discovered, the contact was there, and the appreciation and understanding of these interesting and beautiful decorations has now been ensured.

Over the years the building was known as the Vansant Farm and the Bennett Farm and had a number of owners from the early 1900's to 1952 when it was acquired by the Centennial School District. It was used as their administration offices until 1979 when it was leased to "The citizens for the Preservation of Craven Hall," headed by Jeanna Smith, former Centennial History teacher who had spearheaded the grassroots effort to save the hall. Restoration of the house and adjoining cemetery began and is ongoing. These efforts are funded by sponsors, grants and events held by the Historic House Historical Society.

Story continues on page 4

DAYS GONE BY IN RICHBORO

By Betty Luff

A lot of people are witnessing the many changes that are taking place in Richboro today, but having grown up and married here, can one imagine the changes that I have seen? I really enjoy looking back to my childhood days and remembering how things were when I would sit on my front porch swing in the late afternoon. The traffic would increase then as everyone was picking up their mail at the post Office in the rear of the Luff and Traub Unity Store (now the Sunoco gas station). The porch I'm referring to is now enclosed and is a barber shop and nail salon. I lived at 987 Second Street Pike before we even thought about house numbers. I was married in the living room there in 1943 and a few years before that I learned to roller-skate right there in front of my house.

“How Happy I would be if I could pick 33 boxes of strawberries at three cents a box and receive a dollar bill”

One of my daily chores was to carry a one quart pail down to McMullens each evening for fresh milk. This little farm is now the McDonalds fast food restaurant. Besides having a cow, they also grew strawberries and for many years, after school had closed for the summer, I picked strawberries for them. How happy I would be if I could pick 33 boxes at three cents a box and receive a one dollar bill.

My, what excitement preparing for May Day on the front lawn of the school and the Memorial Day parade when we would all get out our white dresses and shoes and bring bouquets of peonies from home to place on the cemetery graves. The Walker house sat close to the corner where the Exxon station is today. Sunday afternoons were spent sitting and watching the traffic or taking long walks. If you wanted to walk around the block, you had to take Almshouse road to Hatboro road to Tanyard road and back to Richboro. If we wanted to visit a classmate, we would even walk to Holland or Churchville. Many snowy moonlight nights I remember walking to Mehler's hill in Churchville (now Churchville Manor) to sled. Another good hill for sledding was at the Osmond farm (now Highland Farms). I even remember sledding there during our school lunch hour.



Ely's Restaurant was located near the current entrance of the school house shopping center.

The kids who lived in Richboro could walk home for lunch. My mother, who worked at the "Seltzer Pork Products" also walked home for lunch. This place was famous for their sausage and scrapple and was located on Almshouse Road. It was demolished many years ago by Guiseppi's so they could expand. I remember eight families living between the Spread Eagle inn and Pucker's Greenhouses, where Country Crafters and the Car Wash are today.

Story and Pictures continued on Page 5

Craven Hall from page 3

John Dickey, AIA was commissioned to complete the structure report of Craven Hall in 1979. Portions of this article were taken from his report. Mr. Dickey has a most impressive background and has worked on numerous well known restoration and preservation projects in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey.

The name Craven Hall was apparently given to the house in 1955 by W. Thomas Vaughan, principle of the William Tennent High School, according to his wife, Clara. The house was a junior high school in the Centennial System before becoming administrative offices. Mr. Vaughan gave the name to commemorate the original Craven homestead and added the word "hall" to sound as part of the school complex.

Craven Hall and the Craven/Vansant burying ground are now owned by the Craven Hall Historical Society, Inc.

”Days Gone By” from page 4

For Excitement on many Sunday afternoons we would lay a ladies purse on a little bridge on Almshouse road near Temperance lane and we'd all hide beneath the bridge and what fun it was when a car would stop to pick it up. If they threw it back we were OK, but if they kept it, we were always knocking on neighbors doors asking for old pocketbooks.

On Christmas eve our church group would sing carols under every street light in town and end the evening having hot chocolate in the Chapel (now Ohev Shalom).

The double-house across from the post office was owned by an elderly couple who sold penny candy in one of their front rooms. I can still see one of them come from behind the curtain when the bell rang and we kids would buy one or two cents worth of candy.

As for employment, there were no job opportunities for teenagers like there are today. If I wanted spending money, it was usually doing house work. Sometimes I also had baby sitting jobs

I remember going to Ely's restaurant for ice cream cones, but really most of their business was travelers, business men or people passing through town. I don't remember any locals eating out in Richboro in “Days Gone By”.

This article was originally published in the November 2005 issue of the complimentary monthly publication “In Your Prime” and is reprinted here with their permission.



The Luff home, 987 Second Street Pike in 1940.



987 Second Street Pike in recent times as barber shop. Sunoco gas station to left.



William and Bertha Wendig house and farm, 2nd Street Pike, Richboro

Now the Shop-N-Bag shopping center.

The Historical Society held a barn sale at the Heist Farm a number of years ago to dispense the remaining items which had been removed from the Spread Eagle Inn before it was moved. The proceeds were donated to the C.W. Schrenk Family Foundation. We received the following letter from the foundation.

November 17, 2004

Northampton Township Historical Society P. O. Box 732 Richboro, PA 18954--0732

Dear Friends from the Northampton Twp. Historical Society:

Mare and I, as well as the other board members, can't thank you enough for your generous contribution to our foundation in the amount of \$331.00. You can rest assure that these funds will be put to good use.

We have been contacted by the Emergency Relief in Fairless Hills to supply 60 turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas to help supply food baskets for low-income families in the Lower Bucks area. We have arranged for the turkeys to be distributed just before each holiday.

We are in the process of helping a gentlemen in the Churchville area who became paralyze from a rare neuro-muscular disorder which is an inflammation of the brain and/or spinal cord that came on suddenly. He has been wheelchair bound since 2002. He is in need of a handicapped bathroom as his wife is struggling with three jobs to keep up with their bills. Many of the health care bills were not covered by their insurance and Jim needs home care services 24 hours per day. Our foundation will be working on this project in the near future.

These are just a couple of the projects that we are undertaking at this time in our community.

Again, we appreciate your donation in helping us to continue with our endeavor to help those in need and for being so supportive of our family foundation.

Sincerely yours,

C. W. Schrenk CWS/bbs

C.W. and MARJORIE J. SCHRENK FAMILY FOUNDATION
130 BUCK ROAD, SUITE 201 • HOLLAND, PENNSYLVANIA 18966

MEMBERSHIP IS DUE FOR 2005

If we have not received your dues for 2005 you should have received a letter in the last week asking for your renewal. Please take a moment to renew your membership. Your continued support of the society is greatly appreciated.

Congratulations to the following NTHS members that gave above and beyond their normal membership dues.

- NTHS
- Circle - Doug Crompton
- Patron - Margaret and Lewis Hull
- Sponsor - Elinor Crompton, Stanley and Dorothy Davis, Norman Turner
- Sustaining - Kathy and Larry Belikoff, Thersa Craven, Christine and Joseph Fluehr, Deborah Glessner, Patricia and George Komelasky, Florence Leedom, Lois Leitenberger III, Virginia Smith, Michael LaVanga

Slate of Officers and Directors to be Presented for Vote in March

The nominating committee of the Northampton Township Historical Society met on Monday evening, December 13th, 2004. The committee consisted of Vivian Braubitz, Jackie Liney, Dr. Art Friedman, Mary Seader, and Pat Komelasky

The nominating committee submits the following nominations for approval at the March Historical Society meeting:

Officers And Terms

- President- Mary Seader (November 2004-06)
- Vice President- Betty Luff (November 2004-06)
- Secretary- Sylvia Amato (November 2003-05)
- Treasurer- Michael Tomkins (November 2004-06)

Directors And Terms

- Doug Crompton (November 2004-06)
- Jean Gallagher (November 2004-06)
- Christine Fluehr (November 2003-2005) – to complete term of Betty Luff

As presented by the 2004 Nominating Committee, Pat Komelasky, Chairperson.



NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO BOX 732, RICHBORO, PENNSYLVANIA 18954-0732

www.NorthamptonTownshipHistoricalSociety.org

2005 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

President	Mary Seader	215-355-4467	tiogacbnrjs@aol.com
Vice President	Betty Luff	215-357-3767	
Secretary	Sylvia Amato		CAmato@voicenet.com
Treasurer	Michael Tomkins	215-504-1998	michaeltomkins@comcast.net
Membership	Doug Crompton	215-355-5307	doug@crompton.com
Ways and Means	Vacant		
Social Committee	Pat Komelasky	215-355-0649	gkomelasky@msn.com
Director (Past Pres.)	Doug Crompton	215-355-5307	doug@crompton.com
Director	Jean Gallagher	215-968-5222	
Director	Christine Fluehr	215-579-4334	chris@fluehr.com
HISTORIA Editor	Doug Crompton	215-355-5307	doug@crompton.com

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. For more information visit our web page or email us at nths@NorthamptonTownshipHistoricalSociety.org Past issues of the HISTORIA, in color, are available on our web page www.NorthamptonTownshipHistoricalSociety.org The HISTORIA is edited by Doug Crompton. Articles are always welcome.

Meeting Dates for 2005

March 16	General Meeting	7:30 PM
May 18	General Meeting	7:30 PM
September 21	General Meeting	7:30 PM
November 16	Dinner Meeting	6:30 PM

Board Meetings 2005

February 8, April 12,
August 9, October 11
7 PM - Call for location

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL CLASSIFICATIONS

This will be your membership for the calendar year of 2005 (January 2005 to December 2005)

INDIVIDUAL - \$15 SENIOR - \$10 STUDENT - \$10 SPONSOR - \$100 PATRON - \$250 (5 year membership)
FAMILY - \$20 SUSTAINING - \$50 NTHS CIRCLE - \$500 or greater (Life membership)

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 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: _____ Membership Classification _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ DUES ENCLOSED: \$ _____

EMAIL: _____ Shirt Size [S] [M] [L] [EXL] - (Sponsor and higher)

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 welcome : _____