



# HISTORIA

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MARCH, 1994

## WEIR FARM FALLS TO THE WRECKING

### SO CLOSE AND YET SO FAR

*By Jean Gallagher*

Douglas and I were very busy this Fall trying to obtain a home for the Northampton Twp. Historical Society. As you know, that has been one of our goals since formation of the Society in 1972. Each year we have had a Barn Sale to add money to our special account in case we ever had an offer.

Several times in the past an opportunity has come up. Once an old home in Holland was offered to us, by I think M. Schrenk, but the officers felt that we could not afford the roof that needed to be repaired and to protect the home from vandals. Another time a house in the park could have been ours but to travel to it for meetings would be impossible and again to keep it safe from vandals could not have been done.

At a Fall meeting of the Historical Commission the weir Farm came up to a vote for demolition. The Historical Commission felt that this farm had no historical value to be saved.

Because the house was:

1. Close to the road for police protection.
2. Close to the town and not in a development for protection from vandals.
3. Close to a barn that might be used for a law office, that would be looked after during the day
4. Near this law office to share parking.
5. In need of a new roof which we could afford,

We decided to go after it.

*Please turn to page 2*

If you have driven West on Almshouse Road from Richboro in the last few months then you are probably aware that the Weir farmhouse and outbuildings are no longer there. The barn will also be razed in the next few months. This issue of the historia is dedicated to the history and pictures of the Weir farm and our efforts to save it and possibly have a home for our society. This may very well be the last thing printed about the Weir property. You might want to save this issue so that your children and grandchildren will understand how Richboro once was!

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WEIR FARM

*By Doug Crompton*

Farming on the "Weir" tract dates back to before the Civil War. The current house (now razed) was built or reconstructed in about 1890 and is a classic example of 1890's architecture. The original house was largely destroyed in the blizzard of 1888. It was purchased by Thirza and John Stackhouse in 1900. John farmed the property and had a produce route to Philadelphia. Their daughter, Ester Livsey Stackhouse was born there in 1904.



**Aerial view of the Weir farm from the early 1950's.  
Taken by Harvey Weir from his plane.**

Harold Weir, who was born in 1902, married Ester in the living room of the house, in 1925. Their four children were born in the house. Harold, the first born, lived only 30 hours, followed by Harvey, in 1927, Margaret, in 1933 and Doris, in 1941.

John continued to work the Farm with his son in law, until his death, while working in the cornfield, in June 1941. Thirza died in the house in 1946

*Please turn to page 3*



## SO CLOSE AND YET SO FAR

*from page 1*

Douglas was in contact with the owner of the property who would give us the house if the township would let him convert the barn into law offices. He worked with the owner and I worked with B. Townsend to convince the Supervisors to change the zoning from residential to Professional office..

Both Douglas and I felt with the help of the membership the cosmetics of the house could be done.. We would have a home, a place to keep the antiques that would be given to us. Yes, we have the archives but that is only for NORTHAMPTON collectibles. WE also felt that some businesses in the community would help us and we were told the LION's Club definitely would. The house was big which did mean that we could rent upstairs to a tennant who would pay no rent but pay for the heat and electricity and protect our house, oh, and also shovel the snow.

We formed a list and I had the letter typed to mail to these members on our list who would form the committee to work out details on the house. But we did not have the support of the powers that be and shortly before Christmas Douglas drove home from work and the house was down without even a phone call though I had been told by R. McClellan that we had 60 days.

Both Douglas and I feel that there is no other house that can ever be ours. They are all in such good condition that these farm houses will be sold by the builders when the farm is purchased. We feel so sad and that we missed an excellent opportunity. All the old houses in town are almost all gone, and we did want to be close to the center of Richboro.

Please get back to me if you would like to meet with us as a steering committee as to how we could have handled this more wisely, and be prepared to act more quickly the next time. I also need to know if we have the support of the membership seeing that we did not have the support of the Historical Commission.

Newtown has done such a fine job with the Court Inn with everybody giving their full support. Now they own the Turnpike House near Goodnoe Dairy and have had the help of the Questers in providing the antique furniture for it. We need this energy.

Would you or someone you know like to attend our meetings and activities but you are unable because you cannot drive. The board can arrange a ride for you. Just call Jean or any of the board members listed on the backpage. We would love to see you at our meetings. If you are housebound it would also do you good to get out and visit with old friends.

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Members,

It is time to invite you to attend our next meeting on Wednesday, March 23rd. We will view old movies of the Richboro area and discuss the Weir farm. In 1972 when this Society was organized, we decided not to have winter meetings because of the bad weather, that could possibly happen. Certainly this year fits. I do not remember a year this bad since 1958. Like all of you being housebound can be very upsetting. Only last Sunday I worked in the garden with my mittens just to be outside in the warmer ( Temp 54) weather.

Memberships for the calendar year 1994 (January 1994 to December 1994) are being accepted. Membership applications are on the last page of every HISTORIA NEWSLETTER.

The Northampton Historical Commission is again selling license plates of Northampton Township. We will have some at our next meeting in case you wish to buy them. The price is \$5.00 and it is a new printing since the first ones were made in 1972. After 20 years there should be some new people who have moved into Northampton who may like these, so please spread the word. Perhaps yours is dented and needs to be replaced. These are metal not plastic. The money is going toward the improvement and restoration of the Feaster Cemetary on Middle Holland Road. If you have free time and wish to work on the headstones, please phone Ginny Geyer.

Perhaps you can help me. I plan to do a showcase to honor the 100th anniversary of Norman Rockwell. If you have any original magazine covers of his from 1933 to 1970, I would like to borrow them. Any other memento or souvenir ,old or new would be appreciated.

Looking forward to seeing you at our SPRING meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Northampton Cutural Center. Remember to bring a friend.

Sincerely,

*Jean P. Gallagher*

Phone Churchville 252

**RICHBORO ELECTRIC SHOP**

RICHBORO, PA.

Radios:

Zenith  
Brunswick  
General Electric  
R. C. A.



Refrigerators:

Westinghouse  
General Electric  
Norge

TELECHRON ELECTRIC CLOCKS

## WEIR HISTORY

*from page 1*

Harold began his farming career in Richboro when he married Ester, and continued until his death in 1991. During that time he had a produce truck route that took him to the Glenside, Willow Grove and Hatboro areas every Friday. The food was all produced on his farm; chickens, turkeys, eggs, milk and just about every kind of produce. It was a general purpose farm and served to feed many in the community. His delivery truck was custom made for him in 1935 by Fisher's Ford garage in Rushland and was a common sight in the area.



**Ester Livsey**

Harold's wife, Ester, served as secretary to the school board for many years. She died in the house in 1972.

Their son, Harvey, was an accomplished pilot and photographer. He combined the two, to take many aerial photographs of the area. There was an air strip on the property, as well as a hangar. It had the name "Weirs" written on the roof to indicate the name of the field. Harvey was killed in 1953, in his own plane, in Line Lexington.

During the Great Depression people, desperate for work, would work on the farm for a day to be able to take home food. Church services were held in the barn one Sunday each year followed by a picnic. Many "Weir" family reunions were held on the property. Harold's daughter, Peggy, gave tours to local nursery schools and Doris, taught kindergarten in Northampton and brought the children to see a "working" farm.

Before Harold's death he sold the farm, in a living will, to Bill Goldman, a Lawyer from Doylestown. In the will Mr. Weir had the right to the buildings and 6 acres until his death. The remaining 72 acres could be developed at any time, but had not been at the time of his death, as he continued to farm it.

The Stackhous / Weir families are buried in Union Cemetery, adjacent to the property.

I would like to thank Doris Weir Ladd, of Wilmington, DE, who supplied many of the photos you see in this issue and many of the facts, in telephone interviews. Also Dave Gauntt, who checks my proofs, supplied the recent Weir photos and always has a good article for us.

## MAY WE INTRODUCE

### BILL BLUMHARDT

Bill arrived in Northampton by way of Jenkintown and Upper Southampton. He moved into an old 18th Century farm house which was open for our Tulpen Feste House Tour.

Bill has been very active in the N.H.T.H.S. He has been President, Chairman of the Living Tree Award, Chairman of the Nomination Committee and Chairman of the Barn Sale for all these years doing 95% of the work. At present he is a member of the board.

Bill is a lover of horses and has worked at this occupation for many, many years. He also has warm feelings for the N.H.T.H.S. and has organized the Barn Sale each year to raise money for the building fund so that we can some day own our own headquarters. This has been Bill's main goal since joining the society. Bill always has membership applications in his car in case he meets someone who may want to join the society. He certainly is an active worker.

Bill is also a member of the LIONS CLUB and the Northampton Township Historical Commission.

### DORIS D'ARDENNE

Doris moved to Richboro with her husband Jack, and children, David, Debbie, and Joan. They moved into what was known then as the Casey Tract back in 1957 where son Jeff was born.

Doris is a charter member of the N.H.T.H.S. and has been a member of many committees. She is at present on the Board and also Chairperson of the Social Committee.

She is a member of St. John's Church and the Bucks Homesteaders in Questers.

She could use a helping hand on her committee so if you are available please phone her to help set the refreshment table.

### TYLER HALL RESTORATION PROJECT

Volunteers are needed for the Tyler Hall restoration project at Bucks County Community College. Volunteers will get to learn restoration from Behroog Salimnejad, Wood Restorer, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Project dates are March 28-31 and April 4-8. For more information contact Chris Fluehr at 968-8585.



# HISTORY AND THE WEIR FARMHOUSE

*Dave Gauntt, President, Warwick Township Historical Society*

“Not historically significant,” I believe I read in the newspaper. “Not worthy of salvation,” was the meaning. The Weir farmhouse and barn were not worth saving. Stereotypical of 1890s farmhouse construction of Bucks County - One hundred years old with no structural failure visible anywhere - A completely dry basement as well as root cellar - No rotted or infested wood anywhere except the porch. Not worthy? Not significant?

Where have I heard that phrasing before? Where, in reference to historic structures in this area? Ah yes! The Moland House in Warwick Township! George Washington's headquarters in 1777 when 11,000 Continental troops with James Monroe, Alexander Hamilton, Count Pulaski, Gen. Knox, Gen. Sterling, Gen. Wayne, Gen. Greene, Lafayette, and future Chief Justice Marshall camped for two weeks before the battles of Brandywine and Germantown.

Not significant, “not important enough in an area of so much history,” we were told by government representatives. Too close to Philadelphia, Valley Forge, and Washington's Crossing to warrant additional attention of the State or Federal Government!

Yes, that's where I heard that kind of thinking before! Thank God the State of Virginia is blind to such myopic foresight. Which sites would they have ignored? Manassas? Fredericksburg? Petersburg? Appomatox? Perhaps Spotsylvania or Cold Harbor? Sharpsburg? Williamsburg? Yorktown? Maybe Jamestown, the Monticello or Mount Vernon? Too much history, indeed! History is where it happens. You can't spread it out to make it even. Celebrate what is, not what you can manufacture.

Here in Bucks County, historical structures are being destroyed, indiscriminately, all around us. We are “fiddling while Bucks burns.” When they're gone, they're gone, you can't get them back. Not recognizing that today's commonplace is tomorrow's treasure is not only tragic but arrogantly stupid. Sure, the Weir house was nothing extraordinary, but neither is the so-called Betsy Ross House. Betsy never lived there but it was in better shape than the bonifide one down the street so they “bent” history for that convenience.

In the Weir farmhouse was a fine example of the period architecture of the common farmer. Not worthy? Too many already? Show me where they are being preserved! Just where are these examples? We can see the fine edifices of some bygone pinnacles of society but where are the examples of the multitudes, the common people? If you can find one, get a quick look now, because none are being preserved. **NONE!** Are only the elite worthy of future generations to study?

Why was the Weir farmhouse unworthy as a headquarters for the Northampton Historical Society? Someone will have to explain long and hard to me to bring light to that conclusion. If not this one, then which one - and when? How many others have you saved? How many do you plan to save? Will you leave anything for your great grandchildren to use in gaining an understanding of the common folks of Bucks County of the past two centuries?

And last, look at the pictures taken a week before the destruction of the farmhouse. Picture a few thousand dollars worth of cosmetic fixing up. Also, picture a new roof, siding, new plumbing, and new heating system and a little landscaping. And picture these things taking ten or twelve years to accomplish since money doesn't grow on trees. A lot of you won't be here by



**Harold Weir's delivery truck.  
A familiar site in the suburbs for over 50 years.  
Now owned by Steve Dautcher.**



**Harold Weir Plowing his fields.  
You have to travel to Amish country  
to see anything like this today.**



The Weir family gathers in front of their home for a Christmas card picture.



Harvey Weir, an accomplished pilot and photographer, standing in front of his plane.



A closer view, Harvey, Peggy, Ester, Harold, and Doris Weir



Harvey had a landing strip on the farm and a large hangar. WEIRS was written on the roof for identification from the air.



Ester and Harold Weir



Aerial view looking South East, showing the house, barn, hangar and other outbuildings. Almshouse Road is in the background.

## THE CHRISTMAS PRESENT THAT WASN'T MEANT TO BE

*By Doug Crompton*

One day in November I was thrust back into history. I got a call the night after our November Dinner meeting from Jean Gallagher. She was calling from the Historical Commission meeting. At that meeting the chairman brought to the table the fact that he had ALREADY signed the paperwork NOT recommending keeping the Weir buildings. This was BEFORE the board members voted on the matter.

For the next three days I visited the property. With my wife, Dave Gauntt of the Warwick Historical Society, Bill Blumhardt, and Jean Gallagher. We went over it with a fine tooth comb. Dave made measurements of every room, we took pictures and inspected all of the buildings from top to bottom. I also called the Weir daughters, Peggy and Doris. Interviewing them and visiting the house, I found myself going back in time, imagining how it was - how Harvey, Harold's son, would takeoff from the dirt strip behind the hangar. He was also a photographer and took aerial pictures. He was killed in a crash in his own plane in 1953, but the remains of his photo darkroom were still visible on the third floor. Articles and notes that he had hung on the walls were still there. His bed with a built-in radio was still in his third floor front bedroom.

Under the porch, next to the kitchen was a trap door that led to a dug well, long since out of use. Outside in front of the house was a cold cellar that was in absolutely perfect condition. In my mind all of this cried out to be restored and for the next few weeks I worked as hard as I could to make that happen. Let me briefly describe the events that happened during those few weeks.

After Jean and I were notified and the Historic Commission (NOT Society) had nixed a delay of demolition, I immediately contacted the property owner, Bill Goldman. I told him that we would like to save the house and barn and that we proposed using the house as the Northampton Township Historical Society's main location. He agreed to GIVE us the house and property in return for a change of zoning for the Barn property. The zoning change would have been from residential use to professional office use. This would allow doctors, dentists, lawyers to have offices in the remodeled barn. The parking area could have been shared between our facility and the offices, since we would rarely use it at the same time. We would have been exempt from taxes on the house and property.

Although this sounded great, there were those who had a negative attitude about this from day one. "The roof leaks", "you can't afford it", "it looks like a wreck", was heard. Mostly from people who had never visited the property. Well I can tell you that the house was in very good structural condition. The roof may have leaked but there was very little if any damage on the third floor. As for the finances - well we have \$18,000 in our "building fund". This I know is a token amount. It would probably have been used to pay utilities, insurance and other incidental items on the property. I envisioned that most of the rehabilitation would have come from volunteer work, both from our group and from businessmen in the community. We would have enlisted the help of builders, plumbers, electricians and volunteers. Jean was approached with an offer to make it a designer home. This is where a house is decorated and opened for tours to benefit an institution.

*Please turn to Page 7*



**Weir Farmhouse, looking Southeast, Just before demolition. The asbestos siding was removed exposing tar paper over original clapboard siding**



**The same view after it is gone**



## *PRESENT from page 6*

The supervisors meeting date was set. This would be the meeting where they would decide the fate of the property. I prepared a document, stating our position and a history of the property. These documents were given to each of the supervisors at this meeting. The supervisors, after little discussion, decided that the rezoning would not be possible. That called it "spot zoning". With one quick vote they condemned the Weir property. The rest is history.

Come on guys, get with it! How often does a property owner make an offer like this. Not often and maybe never again. In the worst case, if we had made the deal, and our society had not been able to restore the property, it would have become a township asset. It would have been impossible to lose money. Although our stated goal was to have a home for the Historical Society, I always had in the back of my mind, that my primary goal was to save the house and barn. If the property owner had said "no" there would have been little we could have done, but instead he had made a generous offer. The winners would have been - the Northampton Township Historical Society, we would have gained a home, the property owner - he would have been able to take an income tax deduction on the value of the donated property and benefited from a business property conversion, and last, the township - because they would have saved a property with much history from extinction and would have maintained some diversity of character in the area. Now there will be three (or more) new homes in it's place.

Well it is over now. It was all very upsetting to me. I will never forget this one. I got my taste of local government at it's finest. I am not sure exactly what happened. I can only surmise from what I have heard from others and what was seen on cable TV of the supervisors meeting. It is obvious to me, and many others, that the supervisors and historic commission failed miserably to provide for the community in this case. I am sure from their actions and comments they do not even realize the impact of what they did or, more importantly, failed to do. Perhaps it is politics and the "good old boys network" that makes the final decision? We were not even given the courtesy of a phone call to inform us of the final decision.

What could we have done to make this one go a better way? Looking back I am not sure. Maybe scream a little louder, maybe make it a legal battle, but we had so little time. What the supervisors should have done is "stayed the execution" pending further investigation. Unfortunately they were given bad signals by the Historic Commission. The townships Historic Commission is an appointed board. It's primary task is to review zoning actions in the township and the effect they would have in regard to historic preservation. This could be as simple as a sign ordinance to the disposition of a property. Unfortunately these appointments are not always based on the applicants expressed goal of preserving history in our township. But rather who knows who, How they can benefit, and of course what political party they support! **History knows no political party!** When these properties are gone they are gone. We cannot call them back. There is power in numbers though and perhaps the next time you have an opportunity to vote you could ask some tough questions of the candidates about their attitude on things of historical nature in the township.

One of the things that WE, the Northampton Township Historical Society need to do is discuss the relationship between us and the Historic Commission. What responsibilities each group has. At the moment this is not clear to me. In my observations of other Bucks County Townships it seems that Society's perform many of the tasks that our commission is now doing. Things like interviewing residents, collecting artifacts and maintaining documents. Maybe if they spent less time on that and more on



**A Northeast view of the barn.  
The barn is in excellent condition.**



**A view of the house looking Northwest.. There was a full front porch. Architecture is classic, turn of the century, Bucks County Victorian farmhouse.**



## WHAT IS QUESTERS?

I have received several phone calls asking what is QUESTERS. At this moment Finney's Corner Chapter, of Questers International, has decorated the showcase of the Northampton Twp. Historical Commission Archives Showcase.

Questers is an organization of both men and women (but there are more woman) who are interested in antiques, preservation and restoration. Each chapter is formed and usually have about 20 members. They select a name that goes with their community. We have in our area Finney's Corner, Walking Purchase, Dames of Rocksville, Bucks and Does, Buck's Homesteaders, Lingohocken, Mercer Mile, Penn's New Towne and and the Questers of Font Hill to name but a few.

Questers was started in 1944, during W.W.II by Bess Barden of Montgomery County. She had a collection of "Tea Caddies" and each person coming to her house wanted an explanation. So Questers was born to share the knowledge of what you collect and why. The motto is "It's fun to search and a joy to find." "Would you believe that Douglas Crompton's grandmother, Florence Smethurst, was a member of the first Quester Chapter with Bess.

Each chapter raises money and takes on a project to preserve and restore. Penn's New Towne has completely restored the Newtown Council Chamber and completely did the kitchen, (curtains to antiques) of the Toll House (Turnpike House) for the Newtown Historical Society. The project for the next 2 years is restoration of a room in the Tyler Mansion.

Each group does a paper (term Paper) now and then, where research has been done. Penn's New Towne is now doing one on all the school houses of Newtown and Northampton which they will share with you in the April showcase.

The state board meets with the chapters twice a year. Each meeting is a learning situation, as well as a social with people who are interested in the same thing that you are. This April will be a big meeting, celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Questers, with the International President attending.

The state and international both present grants to chapters for restoration. These matching grants are helpful when the project undertaken is expensive. The International supports 2 scholarships each year at Columbia University for those people interested in Architectural Restoration. The state is now paying for the refurbishing of the Pa. State Capitol murals near the Senate Chambers.

If you love history you will love Questers. Call Sandy at 659-5695 for more information.



**The real beauty of the barn is in it's interior. Classic post and beam construction. One of the finest standing barns in the Richboro area.**



**The house looking West. The side and back porch entrances, which entered into the front parlor, diningroom and kitchen. The cold cellar entrance was in the right foreground.**

### IN MEMORIAL

It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of two of our members, SARAH EACHUS, and EVELYN WYATT. Sarah did much research on the Leodoms and wrote a book about them. Evelyn was a hostess at our meetings for many years.

### LOOKING FOR ARTICLES

I am always looking for articles for the Historia. Please think about writing an account from the past about Northampton, your house, people, or anything historic. Pictures would be great also. They will be returned. Send articles to:

Doug Crompton - 1269 2nd St. Pike - Richboro

# NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**55 Township Road, Richboro, Pennsylvania 18954**

### 1994 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 Fluehr	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. Anyone is welcome at our meetings, which start at **7:30 P.M.** with refreshments, general meeting, and a featured speaker.

### Meeting Dates for 1994

March 23 7:30PM	General Meeting
May 25	“ ” “
September 28	“ ” “
November 16	6PM Dinner Meeting

## 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 1994 (January 1994 to December 1994)

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.

**A red sticker on the address page indicates that membership is in arrears and this will be your last issue.**

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: \_\_\_\_\_

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 : \_\_\_\_\_

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