

# The Chronicle

A Publication of The Historical Society  
of Trappe, Collegetown, Perkiomen Valley, Inc.

Summer 2009

Volume XXXVIII No. 3

## Ongoing Textile Exhibit

If you haven't had a chance to stop by the Dewees Museum to see our Textile Exhibit, you still have some time to do so. Both the Dewees Museum and Henry Muhlenberg House will continue to be open on Sunday afternoons (1:30 to 4:00pm) through September 13th (with the exception of September 6th). We also hope to have both sites open for *Heritage Day* on September 19th.

This special *Summer Exhibit* showcases our large textile collection consisting of coverlets, quilts, and fabrics of various types, as well as some on loan. ❖

## Around The Society

*Thanks to Sunpower Builders* (Jon Costanza) who replaced the entry ramp at the back door of the *Muhlenberg House* and repaired the one at the *Visitors Center*.

*Larry DiPiano*, our First Vice President and Property Chair, has been insulating the ductwork in the west basement of "*The Tavern*" as a first step in reducing our energy costs. He would also like to have programmable thermostats for the *Andrew Miller-Dewees House* that would help to better control our heating and air conditioning. Recently, *Larry* met with a *Geothermal* contractor to perform some very much needed preventive maintenance and system upgrades in *Muhlenberg House*. Did you know that this "cutting edge" system of heating and cooling is fast becoming the system of choice in public buildings as well as private homes?

A lot of planning is going on by our Administrative Advisor, *Dona McDermott*, and her committee to assure that this *Heritage Day* celebration on *September 19th* will be the best ever. Now is the time to put it on your calendar and start telling family members and friends about it. We also very much need your help as a volunteer for at least some of the day. Call *Pat Mancuso (610-489-7560)* and let her know you'll be there.

Our *Flag Day Dinner* brought together forty members and friends for this annual event that was held at the *Bay Pony Inn*. After a delicious meal and relaxing dessert we were treated to some reminiscences from *Harry S. Truman*, as portrayed by *John Roushey*. Many memories were rekindled and much new information learned about this former President who saw our nation through the end of World War II.

We also had the opportunity to recognize with *Certificates of Appreciation* three of our members who have given so much to *The Society* but now live at a distance from us. The beautifully inscribed certificates prepared by *Myrna Knaide* recognize *C. Marie Shetler*, *Esther L. Ziegler* and *Lloyd L. Ziegler* for their "*years of devoted service and spirit of generosity and community*" that have been an inspiration and motivation to all of us.

*Happy Birthday, Heinrich!* *September 9, 2011* marks the *300th Anniversary* of the birth of *Pastor Henry Melchior Muhlenberg*. *Dona McDermott* has been selected to co-chair the committee that is planning events to mark this historic milestone along with *Lisa Minardi*. The celebration will extend all the way from *Halle, Germany*, where he received his theological education and call, to *Providence (Trappe)* where he began his ministry and lived out the final years of his life. ❖

## From Our President . . .

Front page news the past several weeks has been the devastating affects that budgetary shortfalls are having on museums and historic preservation sites across the country. You may have been wondering how we have been faring though all this. *Your Society* has been very fortunate in that we have always maintained that we would be sustained by the support and volunteer efforts of our *members* and *friends* who believe in what we do together. While this support has always included annual contributions from local government and, in the past, major grants for the restoration of the *Dewees Tavern* (1976) and the *Muhlenberg House* (1988-98), you are the engine that drives what we are able to accomplish.

The long term effect of reduced public funding means that there may possibly be fewer donor dollars to go around in the future. It also means that the grant we applied for this year to explore how we might reduce our energy usage and weatherize our buildings may not be funded. But this will not prevent us from moving forward in this important effort of preservation. Your donations have been a vote of confidence for this project and are being utilized to work toward our goal. The *imperative* for us remains, as it has always been, to wisely use our resources of time, talent, and money to further our mission of *preservation and education*. When people are seeking out their family roots or have a question about an historic structure or event they usually turn to us first.

This past month I came to better realize an unstated, yet significant, component of our mission that may well lie beneath the reason why donors choose to bring to us their family heirlooms. I call it, "*peace of mind.*" Over our long history we have been the beneficiaries of artifacts, records of family histories, books, and furnishings, far too numerous to mention, that provide unique glimpses of our communities and the people who made them what they are today. We do not solicit such donations. They are usually brought to us with the understanding that your *Historical Society* is committed to preserving our historic legacy for future generations.

If you haven't already done so, do plan to stop by *Dewees Tavern* some Sunday afternoon, or schedule a tour for your group of five persons or more at another time convenient to you, to experience the beautiful coverlets, quilts, and other textiles we have on exhibit this summer. The other "*must see,*" even if you are a regular visitor to the *Muhlenberg House*, is the early 19th century *Albrecht Piano* that has been placed on temporary loan by our neighbors at *The Speaker's House*.

I look forward to greeting many of you at our annual *Heritage Day* celebration on September 19th. This is also the final day that our houses will be open to visitors on our summer schedule until the *Candlelight Tour* of the *Muhlenberg House* on December 6th.

Your partner in preservation and education,



Rev. Bob Meschke, President

## Silent Auction Underway . . .

State Senator Andrew Dinniman has donated a beautiful Coffee Table Book entitled *“A Sacred Challenge: Violet Oakley and the Pennsylvania Capitol Murals”* *plus* a personally hosted tour of the *Senate Chamber* to view these murals as his way of assisting us in our fund-raising efforts.

Our Board of Directors felt that the best way to give as many people as possible an opportunity to take advantage of this unique offering would be to conduct a *Silent Auction*. Bidding on this gift (in \$5.00 increments) will continue throughout the summer and close after *Heritage Day*. Bids may be submitted at any time by calling *Linda Wiernusz* (610-489-8805) or our office on Tuesday or Thursday mornings (610-489-7560). If you leave a message please note the date and time. Current bids will also be updated weekly on our website: [www.trappehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.trappehistoricalsociety.org).



### Two-Part Harmony:

#### Piano from Speaker's House Loaned to Historical Society

by

Lisa Minardi, Chair of the Restoration and Collections Committee,  
The Speaker's House

The Historical Society and The Speaker's House are partnering in order to share with our members and visitors an exciting piece of history that has both Trappe and Muhlenberg connections. Several months ago, The Speaker's House was offered a gift of a c. 1790-1810 piano for its collection, made by a former occupant of the house. Given the unrestored condition of the Speaker's House building, we could only accept the piano if an alternative display or storage location was found. The Historical Society then came to our rescue. Through many conversations between the Speaker's House and the Historical Society we agreed that placement of the piano on loan at the Henry Muhlenberg House for an initial period of two years was the best solution. This arrangement provides visitors to the Henry Muhlenberg House with the opportunity to see the piano and enables The Speaker's House to acquire an important object for its collection.

The piano is significant to both Trappe and the Muhlenberg family. Its maker, Charles Albrecht, was one of the first piano makers in America. A number of his pianos survive, including examples in the collections of the Smithsonian, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, State Museum of Pennsylvania, Vassar College, and Colonial Williamsburg. Like most other early piano makers in America, Albrecht was a German immigrant. By 1789, he was producing pianos in Philadelphia in a workshop on Vine Street.<sup>1</sup> In 1803, he purchased the Speaker's House from Francis and Mary Muhlenberg Swaine and relocated to Trappe. In the deed he is identified as a musical instrument maker. It is possible that he may have used the general store on the Speaker's House property—built in 1782 by Frederick Muhlenberg—as his workshop. In 1808 Albrecht sold the property in Trappe and returned to Philadelphia.

In addition to Albrecht's ownership of the Speaker's House property from 1803 to 1808, his relationship with the Muhlenberg family extended to his profession as an instrument maker. On August 5, 1803, Peter Muhlenberg recorded a payment in his daybook, "To Albrecht \$125 for Fortepiano."<sup>2</sup> Four years later when preparing his will, Peter Muhlenberg bequeathed "the forte Piano" to his daughter Esther. Given the 1803 date when Peter Muhlenberg purchased this piano from Albrecht, stylistically it would have appeared very similar to the one now owned by the Speaker's House. The exception to this would be that the legs on the latter piano have been replaced with turned legs of the c. 1850-1875 period, whereas the original ones would have been square tapered legs in the Federal style.

Although the 1803 purchase by Peter Muhlenberg of an Albrecht piano is the only direct documentation of Albrecht making instruments

for the Muhlenberg family, it is possible that he made other instruments for them as well. From several sources it is evident that the Muhlenberg family owned various musical instruments and included music as part of their daily lives. When Frederick Muhlenberg died in 1801, the inventory of his personal property included a violin as well as a "Spinnet" valued at £7 10 shillings.<sup>3</sup> The latter was likely the instrument to which Henry Muhlenberg referred on Easter Sunday in 1787, when he noted in his journal, "In the afternoon my wife persuaded me to crawl with her once again, and perhaps for the last time, to the home of our son Fr Aug. He gathered his wife and seven children about him and together they played and sang several edifying hymns."<sup>4</sup> It may have also been the instrument to which Henry Muhlenberg referred on October 23, 1776, when he wrote "Fried[rich] M[uhlen]b[erg] had just received his clavichord and put it in order last evening, and so we were able to cheer ourselves this evening with spiritual songs, which were the more needful because we had just learned that a bloody battle had recently occurred at Ticonderoga..."<sup>5</sup>

Peter and Frederick Muhlenberg were likely not the only family members who owned pianos. Their sister Mary, who was married to Francis Swaine, also appears to have been musically inclined. Both vocal and instrumental music lessons were available by the early 1800s in the region. In 1803, a Charles Fortman, "Master of Music," placed a notice in the *Norristown Herald and Weekly Advertiser* stating that he "gives lessons on the Piano Forte at 3 Dollars per month..."<sup>6</sup> In his 1884 *History of Montgomery County*, Theodore Bean wrote that among Fortman's students was Mary Muhlenberg Swaine, "probably one of the first owners of a piano in Norristown."<sup>7</sup>

Be sure to visit the Henry Muhlenberg House to see the piano on view in the front parlor. Research into both Charles Albrecht and the Muhlenberg family's ownership of musical instruments is ongoing by Speaker's House volunteers. To contact the volunteers or learn more about the Speaker's House, please visit [www.speakershouse.org](http://www.speakershouse.org) or call 610-489-2105.



<sup>3</sup> Probate inventory of Frederick Muhlenberg, taken June 17, 1801. Private collection

<sup>4</sup> Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein, trans. and eds., *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg*, 3 vols. (1942-1958; reprint, Camden, Maine: Picton Press, [1980]), vol. 3, p. 705.

<sup>5</sup> Muhlenberg, *Journals*, vol. 2, p. 751.

<sup>6</sup> *Norristown Herald and Weekly Advertiser*, 22 April 1803. Cited in Judith A. H. Meier, *Advertisements and Notices of Interest From Norristown, Pennsylvania, Newspapers, 1799-1821* (Apollo, Pa: Closson Press, 1987), p.19.

<sup>7</sup> Theodore W. Bean, *History of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Everts and Peck, 1884), p 763.

<sup>1</sup> A piano by Charles Albrecht and dated 1789, in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, is the earliest known extant piano made in America.

<sup>2</sup> Muhlenberg family papers, private collection.

*In Memoriam*

**Dr. Evan S. Snyder** passed from this life to be with his Lord on May 24, 2009, at the age of 85 years. He resided in Trappe for many years and until his passing was a very active supporter of various Historical Societies and community organizations. His activity in the **Trappe Historical Society** is probably best remembered by the many children (and adults) who were drawn to his table of toys at our annual Heritage Day celebration. In addition to being a renowned physicist and faculty member at **Ursinus College**, he was also an avid historian of the **Pennsylvania Dutch Culture**. He served as a docent in the **Muhlenberg House** and the **Dewees Tavern**. Dr. Snyder's **World War II** military service was spent at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Los Alamos, New Mexico, where his scientific knowledge was utilized by those working on the **Manhattan Project**. Evan's son, John, and daughter, Susan, recently entrusted to our care numerous documents and writings from his collection pertaining to this effort.

**Lloyd L. Ziegler** passed from this life to be with his Lord on July 10, 2009, at the age of 84 years. He and his wife, Esther L. Ziegler, were long-time residents of **Trappe** before moving to Shannondell in Audubon last year. Both Lloyd and Esther contributed much to the life of **The Society** and were recently honored with **Certificates of Appreciation** at our annual **Flag Day Dinner**. During his many years of membership Lloyd shared his expertise as a fine craftsman and woodworker with us in many ways. A monument to his skill is the completely restored **Dewees Tavern** door over which he labored many long hours. That things needing repairing were restored to their former condition was in large part due to Lloyd's careful attention to detail. Lloyd was born in Bethel Township, Berks County on December 12, 1924, and lived in South Annville, Lebanon County, before coming to Trappe. It was in South Annville that he and Esther met as children in the same church and to which he returned for his final resting place.

**Do You Shop at Redner's???**

If you shop at Redner's you can support the Historical Society. It's easy! Pick up a Save-a-Tape card at Dewees or the Visitors Center. Swipe your card every time you visit Redner's and save your receipts after each purchase. Drop off your receipts at the Historical Society office, and we'll do the rest.

Questions? Call Linda at 610-489-8805.

**Call for Volunteers!**  
**HERITAGE DAY**

Saturday, September 19, 2009  
11:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Help with . . .

- Collecting Admissions
- Membership Recruitment
- House Tours
- Gift Shop Sales
- Children's Activities



Set-up 9/18 beginning 5:00PM  
and 9/19 at 9:30AM  
Breakdown 9/19 beginning 4:00PM  
. . . and more, so save the date!

Call Pat at 610-489-7560 to let her know your 1st and 2nd choices.

**It's Time to Renew your Membership!**  
**Invite and encourage friends and neighbors to join also!**

- Student \$10.00
- Individual \$25.00
- Family \$50.00
- Supporting \$100.00 - \$249.00
- Patron \$250.00 - \$499.00
- Sustaining \$500.00 - \$999.00
- Benefactor \$1000.00 and up

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No. \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Checks Payable to: The Historical Society

Mail to: Richard Holcombe  
The Historical Society  
P.O. Box 26708  
Collegeville, PA 19426-0708

**Weatherization of the Dewees Museum**

Our Museum Committee has developed a **weatherization plan** that we can begin implementing as donations are received. We will first focus on the windows on the **Main Street** façade which is most visible to passersby, and are presently looking at several ways to accomplish this. Additional contributions have also been received this past month.

**Mrs. Marjorie Krug** has provided us a second donation in memory of her husband and long-time **Society** member, **Louis A. Krug**. Likewise, **Mrs. Catherine Minardi** has provided an additional donation to help with this effort. **Memorial** donations have also been received from **Ms. Lisa Minardi** in memory of her grandfather, **Silvio J. Minardi**, and from **Rev. Bob Meschke** in memory of our past Historian, **Dr. John C. Shetler**. We greatly appreciate your support of this effort. Please complete the Certificate of Gift below and return it with your tax-deductible donation.

**CERTIFICATE OF GIFT**

**for Painting and Energy Saving Weatherizing  
of Windows and Doors at Dewees**

Enclosed is a check made payable to The Historical Society . . .

Designated for: \_\_\_\_\_

In the Name of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Street

City State Zip Tel.

- \$25
- \$50
- \$100
- \$500
- \$1,000
- Other

Clip and Mail to: The Historical Society  
P.O. Box 26708 Collegeville, PA 19426-0708

## The Chronicle

a publication of

The Historical Society

of Trappe, Collegetown, Perkiomen Valley, Inc.

P.O. Box 26708 Collegetown PA 19426-0708

Tel/Fax: 610-489-7560

Website: [www.trappehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.trappehistoricalsociety.org)

e-mail: [info@trappehistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@trappehistoricalsociety.org)

### Board of Directors

The Rev. Robert A. Meschke, *President*

Lawrence G. DiPiano, *1st Vice President*

Stacey A. Swigart, *2nd Vice President*

Patricia A. Quilty, *Treasurer*

Ruth T. Daller, *Secretary*

The Rev. Judith A. Meier, *Historian*

The Rev. William A. Fluck, *Chaplain*

Myrna Knaide, *Past President*

Anne Lachenmayer

Richard A. Holcombe

Raymond Spaid

Linda J. Kehr Wiernusz

Dona M. McDermott, *Administrative Advisor*

Kim Haas, *Financial Advisor*

Richard B. McDowell, *Webmaster*

James L. Hollinger, Esquire, *Solicitor*

Myrna Knaide, Editor 610-489-3736

Printed by Print Copy Design Solutions Trappe

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION

U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
COLLEGETOWN PA  
19426

PERMIT NO. 9

### Mark Your Calendar!

- ✓ **Sunday Openings - Henry Muhlenberg House and Dewees Museum**  
1:30pm - 4:00pm **Visit our Textile Exhibit at Dewees!**
- ✓ **9/12 Trappe Community Day** *Visit our Booth!*  
Waterworks Park, Trappe - 10:00am - 4:00pm
- ✓ **9/19 Heritage Day Celebration**  
Henry Muhlenberg House - 11:00am - 4:00pm

### SUMMER 2009 NEWSLETTER

*Timely Information — Please, Do Not Delay!*

## New Feature in the Chronicle

... Larry DiPiano, Vice President

Our members have many questions about the Historical Society and the story of our buildings. We want you to send your questions about some aspect of the Society you were always curious about.

We will select one or two of these questions from the many we are sure to receive. Our crack staff of researchers headed by "Hugh Nu" will find an official Historical Society answer. The question with its answer will be published in the next edition of the Chronicle.

Please submit your questions to [info@trappehistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@trappehistoricalsociety.org) or by snail mail to Historical Society of Trappe, P.O. Box 26708, Collegetown, PA 19426. No phone calls please as the phone disturbs our resident ghosts in the building when no one is there. Please keep questions short and to the point—just like in school, we fall asleep when we read long questions. ❖

## Horse Shed at Dewees Museum

The next time you visit the Dewees Museum, take note of the horse shed, recently renovated by **Jon Costanza** of **Sunpower Builders**, Collegetown.

We are grateful for this rescue from further deterioration and possible collapse. ❖



## Watch for Details of Upcoming Veterans Day Event November 2009

- New Format / New Time
- Open House at Dewees Museum
- Lower Cost per Person
- More Time for Socializing



Plans are being formulated for a new and exciting format for the enjoyment of our members and guests.

## Wish List . . . If you can provide any of the following, The Historical Society would be most grateful!

- Two programmable thermostats for proper climate control in **Dewees Museum**. Also, insulation materials to reduce heat loss in our duct-work and some volunteers to help get this job done ASAP.
- Tour Guides for Dewees Tavern and the Henry Muhlenberg House
- Committee Members: Fund Raising/Gift Shop, Property, Museum, Hospitality, Heritage Day
- Painting and energy saving weatherization of windows and doors at Dewees (see page 3)
- Your **donation** through your employer which comes to the **Society** as a matching gift.

Give us a call (610-489-7560) to discuss any item(s) you may wish to donate to assure that it is an appropriate match for our needs.

The Historical Society of Trappe, Collegetown, Perkiomen Valley, Inc., is a Pennsylvania non-profit corporation, a 501(c)(3), exempt organization under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and is registered with the Pennsylvania Department of State, Bureau of Charitable Organizations. Official registration and financial information may be obtained by calling toll-free (within Pennsylvania) 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.