

# The Chronicle

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

Fall 2011

Volume XL No. 2

P.O. Box 26708  
201 W. Main Street (Trappe)  
Collegeville PA 19426-0708  
Tel/Fax: 610-489-7560  
www.trappehistoricalsociety.org  
info@trappehistoricalsociety.org

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The Henry Muhlenberg House  
201 W. Main Street, Trappe  
(across from St. Luke's UCC)



The Dewees Museum  
301 W. Main Street, Trappe  
(corner Main Street/Rt 113)

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## The Muhlenberg Home Is Our Precious Gift

In the months that followed the big kick-off parade celebrating the *Three Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of The Rev. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg* we have had numerous visitors tour *Pastor and Anna Maria Muhlenberg's* home that was so carefully restored over a decade ago. *Dona McDermott's* careful attention to detail and unending energy to obtain furnishings and household artifacts to turn the house into a home has brought praise from all who have spent time in their home.

A number of *Lutheran Heritage Congregations* have provided us with artifacts to highlight their long history and tradition, for which we are extremely grateful. You can see their gifts in our *Deweese Tavern Museum* in which we have also highlighted people and places in the *Muhlenberg Neighborhood* in a special exhibit provided for us by *Catherine Minardi* and *Barbara Wentz*. In the Tavern Room we are telling the story of the often-overlooked *Muhlenberg Women* in vignettes originally provided by *Dr. John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg, M.D.*

Visitors have come from near and far to experience the life of this famous *Patriarch* of the *Lutheran Church* whose family went on to help shape our nation and the Church he planted in the colonies. A reporter from *Halle, Germany* wrote an extensive article in her German language newspaper that I am eager to have translated since I am mentioned in it! Earlier this month we hosted a lecture on Pastor Muhlenberg given in German by *Jean Godsall-Myers*, with a promise of a return engagement by her group that is encouraging the use of the German language.

I was especially heartened recently by a visit from a descendant of the *Muhlenberg's* youngest daughter, *Salome*. Imagine his pleasure in noting that we had several items in the Muhlenberg House reminding visitors that this then twelve-year-old girl occupied the house from when her parents moved there until her marriage. His father was a past *President* of the *Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States* that was established by *Pastor Muhlenberg*.

I'm sure your visit to our *Muhlenberg House* and *Deweese Tavern* has left you with your own lingering memories that you may wish to share with our readers. If you haven't come by yet, there's still time since we will be keeping our exhibits up through next summer. But why wait that long? Bring a group to our *Candlelight tour in December* or call our office and schedule a tour.

Rev. Bob Meschke

## From the President . . .

Fall is the kick-off time setting the stage for the holidays to come. With family and friends surrounding all of us I'm reminded of the wonderful folks who give their time and themselves to better serve The Historical Society.

In fulfilling this term as President I have truly learned how the Society runs. Let me be the first to say—without a great Board of Directors we wouldn't be here today. The hours that are spent in planning, coordinating tour guides, events, mailings, community programs, museum events and archeological digs would shock you! These things happen because someone gave their time.

We have had a great summer starting with the celebration of Flag Day with the Sojourners' program about the Flag. Our archeological dig was slow to solve the many questions we have. Due to the backfill of road grit, I personally found it very hard work to move by the wheelbarrowful! We will continue to dig the site next summer. Heritage Day was the best ever: we had two local Pennsylvania regiments and lots of crafters demonstrating their wonderful crafts.

Our Tavern Party is in the works and will be great fun. We'll be having a German theme this year in keeping with the celebration of Henry Muhlenberg's 300th birthday. I also invite you to come to the Candlelight Tour and bring a friend or two! Look inside for more details on these events.

I'm pleased to share with you that the Restoration Room at the Henry Muhlenberg House is almost completed. We have a few minor details left but will be fully finished for the Candlelight Tour. Almost 20 years in the making, we have finally removed it from the to-do list. We look forward to your visit to share this display with you.

Please come by for a visit and possibly volunteer some time—we have a job for everyone!

Linda J. Kehr Wiernusz  
President

*The winter of 1777-78 was a particularly harrowing one for Henry Muhlenberg and his family. As Rev. Muhlenberg continues to try to stay neutral between the British and the rebellious Americans, the war is coming closer to his Trappe doorstep. The British have captured Philadelphia, the Continental Army has suffered setbacks, and confusion reigns. The following excerpts from The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg: Volume III better illustrate the tumult the family experienced as the Continental Army fought for its very life.*

**December 8 (1777), Monday.** Since yesterday I have not felt well. The tabernacle is becoming more and more dilapidated. Today the baggage wagons of the American army are coming back again into our Providence neighborhood. It is said that there was a battle yesterday between the British and American troops between Germant[own] and the old York Road. The British, it is reported, gave no quarter and cut down many of the Americans, while the Americans took more than a hundred prisoners among the Hessians.

**December 9, Tuesday.** God's grace preserved us during the past night and brought us to the light of day. Early this morning shooting could be heard again from the direction in which the armies lie. The fence around our house was broken and partly burned . . . . News came that the Americans followed the British back to Philadelphia yesterday.

**December 11, Thursday.** At one o'clock this morning an express came from the American camp with an *ordre* that the baggage wagons and the men in charge of them should move back in the direction of the camp . . . . What a difference there is between peacetime and wartime, especially when hostilities are pushed to extremes! About eleven o'clock some of the wagons and carts returned at full gallop and a terrible clamor arose: The British, the English are only two miles from here and intend to take the baggage wagons, etc. The confusion defies description. Between three and six o'clock in the afternoon all of the several hundred wagons returned with their men and encamped hereabouts.

. . . The American army broke camp before dawn today and marched as far as Matheson Ford [at Conshohocken], where there is a new bridge over the Schuylkill in Chester *County*, and some troops have been posted, as a watch, on the Chester side of the bridge. Unexpectedly, however, the British army broke camp in Philadelphia even earlier in the night and took a position on the Chester side of the bridge. The British killed some of the militiamen and put the rest to flight. So the American army, with nothing accomplished, pulled back to its former camp.

I am told on all sides that the English and Hessian officers have singled me out for revenge and that they will have me captured by their dragoons at the first opportunity. I do not know what offense I have committed against their cause, nor do I understand what the caribes will find to devour on such an old carcass as mine . . . . Everyone advises me to get out of the way. But where should I go? I have a sick wife, am myself old and feeble, and other families are at a loss to know how to meet their own needs in this time of scarcity.

**December 19, Friday.** . . . The American army is said to be entering winter quarters at Valley Forge and Gulf Mills on the other side of the Schuylkill in Chester *County*; hence several roads for excursions into the country are open to the British in Philadelphia. If the Lord of Sabaoth does not watch over the country the outlook will be bad.

**December 22, Monday.** We are now living in constant expectation of an attack from Philadelphia as the American army has gone into winter quarters across the Schuylkill and left the pass open. Hitherto hath the Lord of Sabaoth stretched forth His all-gracious, protecting hand over us! . . . School sessions and church services have not been held since the British landed, and he [the schoolmaster] fears that they

will still burn down both the school and the church. Question: Would it not have been better if the preachers had declared themselves for either one of the opposing parties? No. Whichever party happens to be stronger wreaks havoc upon the other and does whatever damage it can to the opposite party, so it makes little difference whether one is called a *Dependent* or an *Independent* until the issue is settled.

**December 25, Thursday, Christmas Day.** . . . Moreover, it is becoming more and more dangerous from day to day in our own region of Providence. The American army is preparing its winter quarters on the other side of the Schuylkill, about ten miles from our homestead, and part of the British army has moved out of Philadelphia. They are not far separated from each other.

**January 13 (1778), Tuesday.** . . . The name Muhlenberg has been made a highly suspicious one among the Hessian and English officers, and they are very angry; they threaten imprisonment, torture, and death as soon as they catch the old fellow. As far as possible I have stood between both parties, and I could not have done otherwise, for I have had no vocation to meddle in political controversy. Meanwhile, this remains the burden of my prayers and entreaties to God, that if it should ever come to my choosing, I may fall into His hands rather than the hands of men, for His mercy is great.

**February 11, Wednesday.** . . . In a sense, the weather also serves as a barrier, for during this time, we need hardly fear an attack by the British from Philadelphia. The armies of both sides are at present fairly inactive in their winter quarters.

**February 26, Thursday.** . . . The British cavalry is coming nearer and nearer and is taking captive former officers of the American militia. Toward evening came a report that they were nearby and were going to take me. I cannot flee, much less leave my sick wife behind, so I must await whatever God's holy providence and governance, which doeth all things well, has ordained for me and commit it to Him, the Lord of Lords, in humble prayer.

**February 27, Friday.** In the evening I read and prayed. The flesh and spirit and struggling within me. The flesh tells me that I should flee or seek protection from the commander-in-chief of the British. The spirit says: Seek protection from Him who has all power in heaven and on earth; He can and will save all who come to Him.

**March 15, Sunday.** As it had been reported that the British cavalry was not far away, I stayed up. About eleven o'clock someone hammered on the door, and when I opened it, it was an Irishman who was unknown to me. He whispered in my ear that the British cavalry was already near and that he would stand watch in front of my house, and when they arrived he would fire a shot as a signal for me to flee out the back into the bushes and hide. I thanked him for his kindness, forbade him to stand watch, and told him that if he would come to me in the daytime, I would discuss the matter further.

*As winter turned to spring, the entries in Rev. Muhlenberg's journals turned from the war to thoughts about parishioners, his services, and more mundane topics. Of course, Rev. Muhlenberg was never captured by the British army or the Hessians, and lived out the rest of his days in his Trappe homestead.* ❖

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

- Two Under-sink Hot Shot Water Heaters (approximately \$200 each)
- Roof Repairs to Shingles at Henry Muhlenberg House
- Tour Guides
- Committee Members: Fund Raising, Gift Shop, Property, Museum, Heritage Day, Hospitality

Call (610-489-7560) or e-mail (info@trappehistorical.org) to discuss any item(s) you may wish to donate to assure that it is an appropriate match for our needs.

If you would like to sponsor a project or purchase an item listed above, we will research the cost and advise you.

... *Thank you for your help!*

**To all who are interested in local ghost stories and folklore:** I am trying to collect as many stories as I can about the Trappe/Collegeville and surrounding areas. My hope is to compile these stories for a program. Please email me (jenmd18@yahoo.com) or leave a message at the Historical Society (610-489-7560). These stories do not have to be specifically about the Muhlenberg house or Dewees tavern, but any regarding those two buildings will be greatly appreciated. Thank you . . .

Jennifer Moyer-Damiani, *Historian*

### **Weatherization Program Update . . .**

We are now in the third year of our efforts to increase the energy efficiency of our **Andrew Miller House-Dewees Tavern**. We have not been able to move as quickly on this project as we would like to, but rest assured that we are making some headway, thanks to the efforts of many and your contributions to support the program.

I am pleased to report that our largest artifact has had some upgrades with more in the offing. Thus far we have been focusing on our west basement with insulation on all the ductwork delivering heating and cooling to this wing of the building. Hopefully, before this heating season, we will also have a door installed that should reduce the flow of cold air into the basement. The east side already has this upgrade.

We have repaired and/or replaced trim on various windows that were a serious source of cold drafts and currently have a grant request to replace the storm doors on Main Street. We will also be installing exterior storm windows where there are none currently and moving ahead with our plan to ultimately have "**low e Inner-Glass**" covering all the windows.

To reduce our electric costs during the summer your **Board of Directors** agreed to participate in the **PECO Smart Ideas** program that has saved us \$60/month during this cooling season. Like everyone else, we have also adjusted our thermostats for more efficient climate control and turned down the temperature on our gas hot water heater. Every little bit helps!

I hope you will continue to support these efforts with your financial gifts as well as your volunteer participation.

**Bob Meschke, Museum Committee Chair**

### **Election of Officers - 2012/2013**

The Nominating Committee of The Historical Society of Trappe recommends the following slate of officers be presented to the Society for election to full terms of office at its Annual Meeting on November 13, 2011:

President:	Linda Wiernusz
First Vice President	Thomas Biggar
Second Vice President	Zita Millichap
Treasurer	Trevor Hart
Recording Secretary	Ruth Daller
Historian	Jen Moyer-Damiani
Chaplain	Rev Thomas Kochenderfer
Member at Large	Anne Lachenmayer

### **Necrology**

During the annual meeting on November 13th we will remember those who died during the year:

U. Berkley Ellis, July 28  
Richard L. Franks, September 8  
Harvey J. Gennaria, June 8  
Charlotte J. Rosser, June 10  
Esther Ziegler, May 10

If you know of a member who should be added to this list, please call 610-489-7560 so that person's name can be included.

**Be a Participant! Be Involved! Be a Member!**

**Help Preserve Our Historic Sites**

**. . . and the History of the Area!**

### **Membership Application**

- 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\* \_\_\_\_\_

\*Please send my newsletters and announcements via e-mail!

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

The Historical Society  
of Trappe, Collegeville, Perkiomen Valley, Inc.  
P.O. Box 26708 Collegeville PA 19426-0708

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**Annual Candlelight Tour**  
**The Henry Muhlenberg House**  
201 W. Main Street, Trappe  
Sunday, December 4th  
4:00 PM - 7:00 PM



*Start your tour at the Visitors Center, enjoy light holiday refreshments, and shop for unique items in the Gift Shop!*

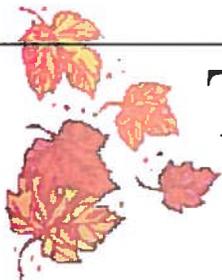
(Located across from St. Luke's Church where parking is available)

Donations Appreciated: \$4.00 adult - \$2.00 under age 12  
(Reservations Not Required)



FALL 2011 NEWSLETTER

*Timely Information — Please Do Not Delay!*



# TAVERN PARTY!

**Dewees Museum**  
**Sunday, November 13, 2011**  
**4:00 to 7:00 PM**  
**Annual Meeting at 6:30 PM**



Dewees Museum, Headquarters  
The Historical Society of Trappe  
Collegeville, Perkiomen Valley  
301 W. Main Street, Trappe  
(corner of Main Street and Rte 113)  
Info: 610-489-7560  
www.trappehistoricalsociety.org

Come to the Tavern Party in celebration of Veterans Day, bring friends and neighbors, enjoy German wine and beer and a menu of German-inspired recipes!

Parking available at Trappe Feed & Pet Supply (beside the Dairy Queen)

*RSVP by November 4th !!*

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Veterans Day Tavern Party (Sunday, November 13, 2011)

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

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Members # at \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Members # at \$22.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Children # at \$5.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Richard A. Holcombe P.O. Box 26708 Trappe, PA 19426-0708

Total Amount of Enclosed Check: \$ \_\_\_\_\_