

# The Chronicle

A Publication of the Historical Society of Trappe and the Perkiomen Valley

June 1996

Trappe-Collegeville, Pennsylvania 19426

Volume XXV, No. 2

## *The Tabor Camerata*

The Tabor Camerata, a Baroque ensemble based in Philadelphia, will present a concert on period instruments at Old Augustus Lutheran Church, Dr. Herbert H. Michel, Pastor, East 7th and Main Streets, Trappe, on Sunday, June 2nd at 4 P.M. The concert, entitled "The North German Cantor Tradition: Music of Muhlenberg's Time and Place," will commemorate Henry Melchior Muhlenberg by exploring music of the church tradition into which he was born in 18th century Germany. The Camerata will perform works by important Lutheran cantors, from the most famous, including J. S. Bach and Dietrich Buxtehude, to the more obscure, such as Johann Nicolaus Hanff. Musicians who will be performing in this concert include soprano Jacqueline Smith, Baroque flutist Margaret Claudin, Baroque violinist Kang Won Kim, gambist Eve Miller, and harpsichordist Marcia Kravis.

The Tabor Camerata has performed throughout the Philadelphia area, in series at Hope Lodge in Whitmarsh, St. John's Lutheran in Allentown, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, the German Society of Pennsylvania, and in many other churches and schools. In the Fall of 1994 they presented "The Muhlenberg Series," a series of lectures and concerts, including the Heritage Day service at Augustus Church, Trappe, to focus attention on the restoration of the Muhlenberg House by the Historical Society of Trappe and the Perkiomen Valley.

This concert is made possible by very generous support from Aid Association for Lutherans and by the sponsorship of several individuals. A substantial amount of the money which is raised through these sponsorships goes directly toward the Muhlenberg House restoration project.



## *The President's Message*

*We have a signed grant agreement with Keystone '95-'96. This means that work on the interior restoration of the Muhlenberg House will begin in the very near future. We still need funds to meet the match.*

*Grading in front of and to the west of the Muhlenberg House will be completed as soon as the weather permits.*

*We did not receive the grant for which we applied to the Philadelphia Historical Preservation Corporation. Our need was not "urgent" was the reason given.*

*Our Community Mailing requesting funds was mailed at the end of April. We hope the community will respond as they have in the past. This will enable us to continue our restoration work.*

*Ken Joirè, lead archeologist, will be our speaker at the Flag Day Dinner on June 14, 1996. Please come and welcome him.*



Ivan W. Hess, M.D.  
President

## *Archaeologist Speaks at Flag Day Dinner*

Residents of the Perkiomen Valley are invited to the annual Flag Day Dinner of the Historical Society of Trappe and the Perkiomen Valley on Friday, June 14th at 7:00 P.M. at Moorehead's Catering, First Avenue, Trappe.

Mr. Kenneth Joirè, Senior Archaeologist for Kittany Archaeologists, will speak on the discoveries at the Muhlenberg House, 221 Main Street, Trappe. The presentation will include slides of the work and an exhibit of artifacts discovered on the site.

The display will include artifacts from the pottery which was discovered to have operated to the east of Muhlenberg House approximately 1720 to 1750.

This Spring Mr. Joirè has been engaged in archaeological work at the Cornwall Furnace which is a site of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

*From The Journals of  
Henry Melchior Muhlenberg  
1777*

**May 14, Wednesday.** All kinds of visitors. My family [HD: those who are left in the house] were busy washing, whitewashing, and cleaning the rooms. I instructed Peter's ignorant [HD: and still sick] servant in matters of [HD: in the elements of the Christian] religion. [HD: The inhabitants in the frontier regions of America have an experience like that which the Dalecarlians once had in Sweden when a vigorous preacher went among them and vividly portrayed how the Savior of the world, out of love for them, too, had died on the cross and had eagerly desired to save them all. Unfortunately this fundamental truth was new and unfamiliar to the people. In their simplicity, therefore, they excused themselves and protested that they lived so far from the king's palace that they seldom or never got to hear about anything new that happened there.]

**May 16, Friday.** At eight o'clock in the morning the deacon set out with me after I had asked several neighbors to make my necessary trip to Philadelphia known as much as possible [HD: and to have me excused] because I announced last Sunday that, God willing, I would preach in Augustus Church on Whitsunday, German in the morning and English in the afternoon, and now I cannot fulfill my promise. Our journey was quite uneventful until we were within five miles of the city. Then the *chaise* broke down. This put us in straits because I am not in a condition to walk one mile, to say nothing of five miles, while carrying my bundle. Before we knew it, a prominent Catholic man of the city with whom I was acquainted came up behind us in a *chaise*. Without being asked he came to our aid. Fortunately he had a long rope with him, and with this he helped us tie the broken *chaise* together in such fashion that we were able to proceed slowly to Philadelphia. Thus divine providence extends even to little trivialities; a Samaritan had to assist an orthodox priest and Levite in order to point out that we should do likewise. [HD: I found my son Heinrich on the mend and Mr. Kuntze intermittently cheerful.]

❖ **Library Hours** ❖

Please call The Rev. R. David Koch (495-7767) to make an appointment to visit our library. Contribution expected for research.

**Dr. John C. Shetler, Editor**  
**Myrna Knaide, Managing Editor**  
**M-K Computing Services**

Printed by ProCopy

Write to *Editor* at:  
300 W. 3rd Avenue  
Trappe, PA 19426-2226

## History of the Incorporation of Collegeville Borough

By James T. Stewart, Editor, *The Independent*

W. H. Auden wrote, "History is, strictly speaking, the study of questions; the study of answers belongs to anthropology and sociology." And it is true this year that as Collegeville embraces its 100th Anniversary of Incorporation, a good many questions had to be answered and primarily the question of what to name the town.

Twenty-five years before incorporation, a debate had raged as to the name of the area now known as Collegeville. Some folks called it Perkiomen Bridge, some Freeland, and some Townsend. Finally in 1868, by the railroad company, the name Collegeville was settled upon—but some still called it Freeland or Perkiomen Bridge. All vestiges of the name squabble had disappeared by the 1890's.

Early in the 1890's a committee was formed to explore incorporation. In the Spring of 1896, the small village had filed a petition signed by a majority of the freeholders asking the Court of Quarter Sessions, with the concurrence of the grand jury, to incorporate the area into a new borough, which was the manner of incorporation at the time.

The coming of the Perkiomen Railroad in the late 1860's had spurred the growth of the settlement. The name of Collegeville was chosen by the railroad because of the presence of the Pennsylvania Female College which was located off Glenwood Avenue. About the same time, Freeland Seminary was reopened as Ursinus College, so the name seemed fitting.

On April 14, 1896, Collegeville Borough began the process of incorporation by court decree by duly advertising in *The Independent* their intent of splitting from Upper Providence Township. By a decree of June 2, 1896, Collegeville was formed as a separate entity of approximately 1,000 acres.

On June 30, 1896, borough officers were first elected. J. Shelly Weinberger was the first Burgess. Town Council consisted of George Z. Vanderslice, James E. Paist, Henry H. Fetterolf, David Allenbach, E. S. Moser (founder of *The Independent*), M. O. Robers, and A. H. Tyson.

The first public activity for the small town was street lighting. In all, 28 oil lamps were purchased and William Gordon hired to maintain these at a cost of \$90 per year.

In February of 1897, Francis J. Clamer was elected Burgess along with all the same Council members. A big public project began when Council agreed to spend \$9,500 to pave Main Street from First to Eighth Avenues—using \$2,500 from the right-of-way money gathered from the Perkiomen Valley Traction Co.—the first trolley for the town. During these early years, Street Commissioner wages were set at \$1.50 per day and a laborer at \$1.25 per day. Council agreed to pay the Fire Company \$20 per year for rental of the Fire Hall for Borough meetings.

In 1899, Council approved the purchase of an iron cage lockup at a cost of \$125. This was to become the beginning of our Police Department which has enlarged with the population to a six-member department, now costing over \$313,000 to maintain the peace.

In 1900 there were 611 residents of the 1.64 square mile town. By 1960, there were 2,254 residents and in 1980 there were 3,406 (including resident college students). Estimated population in 1992 was 4,250 residing in 1,312 housing units.

In 1896 the Borough tax on real estate was five mills on a value of \$333,730. In 1980 the tax was 18 mills and the value was \$6,546,200. In 1996, real estate tax is 29 mills on a valuation of \$12,126,000.

One hundred years has passed since Collegeville was incorporated to provide public services and improvements . . . and that legacy continues to this day as the modern Council tackles the transportation, traffic, and safety issues confronting the town.

## History of the Incorporation of Trappe Borough

By Dr. John C. Shetler, Historian,  
Historical Society of Trappe-Perkiomen Valley

Having been settled in 1717 by John Jacob Schrack with the purchase of 250 acres of land, the settlement was known by two names—Providence and Trappe. Since the townships were called Upper and Lower Providence, very soon the residents accepted the name Trap.

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg records in his Journal that the name Trap derived from the tavern which Schrack operated in his first log home which stood where the parking area of the present Trappe Plaza is located along Main Street.

The first Post Office was established in October 1794 with the spelling of Trap and William White as Postmaster. In 1824 the spelling was changed to Trapp with John Todd as Postmaster, and in 1832 the final spelling for the Post Office was Trappe.

Through the 19th century, Trappe remained a small farming village. The most outstanding feature of it was the Washington Hall School Academy for boys who wanted to enter the professions.

In order that there may be more improvements available for the residents, an unsuccessful attempt was made in 1875 to incorporate the village as a borough. By 1890 there were still less than 300 inhabitants and by the 1900 census 324 residents.

The desire for incorporation continued and by 1896 a petition was presented to the judges of the Quarter Session Court in Norristown stating "That the said town, by reason of the large number of its inhabitants, the collection of its houses and buildings, and the requirements for its further progress and development, needs to be incorporated."

Thirty-seven of the sixty resident freeholders and six non-resident freeholders signed the petition, which was approved. The incorporation occurred on September 21, 1896.

The first Council chamber was the small office building which served as the law office of Henry W. Kratz, Esquire, now owned along with the residence by Mr. and Mrs. John Comiskey, 378 W. Main Street, Trappe.

The first meeting of the Borough Council, according to the minutes by the Borough Clerk, was held on October 23, 1896. The Council members and their positions were: President, John D. Kepler; Streets and Road Commissioners, Charles H. Tyson (Chairman), Jacob Wisler, and David G. Tyson; Finance Committee, David M. Fulmer (Chairman), Harry H. Stearly, and Henry U. Wismer; Clerk, James H. Hart, with salary of \$25.00 (resigned December, B. F. Schlichter appointed).

E. L. Hallman, Esquire, was appointed Borough Solicitor at a salary of \$25.00. It was decided that the meeting would be held on Monday evening preceding the full moon of each month.

At the November meeting, Philip Willard was appointed Borough Treasurer and I. P. Rhoads was named Surveyor. The first Burgess was John D. Saylor.

In 1896 the Independent School District of Trappe, Collegeville, and Freeland was abolished at the incorporation of the two boroughs, with each municipality responsible for its own school.

The first Borough Ordinance was enacted in 1897 to widen and straighten Main Street to a uniform width of 50 feet, with 8 feet on each side for a walkway.

## Children's Exhibit Opens June 2nd at Dewees Museum

The Spring and Summer exhibit at the Dewees Tavern Museum is for children and adults who still have the spirit of children. Included will be toys, dolls, books, and other items, all of which at one time belonged to children.

A number of items will be for touch-and-see experiences for children. Included will be a stereoptican viewer with the picture cards that give a three-dimension effect. On loan from Clay C. Hess will be a farm-type boy's wagon made for his grandfather one hundred fifty years ago. Children will be able to sit in a school desk once used in the area schools.

The museum, located in the Historical Society Building at 301 W. Main Street, Trappe, will be open Sundays from 1:30 to 4:00 P.M. Children must be accompanied by parents. Parking is available at the rear of the building or at Muhlenberg House.

Exhibitors include Eric Hundertmark, Clay C. Hess, Ivan W. Hess, Jr., Mrs. Edith H. Ashenfelter, the Rev. and Mrs. R. David Koch, Dr. and Mrs. John C. Shetler, the Rev. Robert E. Home, and John Keyser.

### C E R T I F I C A T E O F G I F T FOR MATCHING KEYSTONE GRANT

To help restore the Muhlenberg House, I/we enclose a check made payable to  
the HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF TRAPPE, in the name of

Street \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$500 \_\_\_\_\_ \$1,000 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
Town \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_

Clip and mail to: Historical Society of Trappe  
P.O. Box 828 Collegeville, PA 19426

### NEEDED

### DEWEES LAWN ATTENDANT

We urgently need a person or persons to volunteer to mow the grass at the Dewees Tavern. Please call Dr. Ivan W. Hess, President, at 489-2624. We want to have the property looking in good shape for the Spring and Summer.

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF TRAPPE**  
**P.O. BOX 828**  
**COLLEGEVILLE, PA 19426**

NON-PROFIT  
 ORGANIZATION  
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
 COLLEGEVILLE, PA  
 19426  
 PERMIT NO. 9

# A Salute to Two Boroughs

**JUNE 1996 NEWSLETTER**  
**PLEASE, DO NOT DELAY!**



## FLAG DAY DINNER

June 14, 1996 7:00 P.M.

**Speaker: Kenneth Joirè, Archaeologist**

Moorehead's Catering ❖ 1st Avenue, Trappe

Clip and mail to Mr. Norman Holcombe, 21 Main Street, Trappe, PA 19426

----- Reservation Form -----

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

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

Street

Post Office

Zip

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ places at \$15.50 each for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.  
 The cost covers the dinner, decorations, and incidental expenses.

**Bring a Friend!**

### C · A · L · E · N · D · A · R

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Through May 31     | By Appointment<br>Dewees Museum<br>(Please call in advance)  |
| June 2, Sunday     | 1:30-4:00 P.M.<br>Open House Dewees Museum<br>Children's Exhibit: Toys,<br>Furniture, Books<br><i>Children must be accompanied by parents</i>          |
| June 14            | 7:00 P.M. Flag Day Dinner  |
| June 9-August 31   | 1:30-4:00 P.M.<br>Museum Sundays Only<br>Weekdays By Appointment<br><br>Children's Exhibit Continues<br><i>Children must be accompanied by parents</i> |
| September-November | By Appointment<br>Museum Open  |
| September 7        | Flea Market and Auction  |
| November 11        | 7:00 P.M. Veteran's Day Dinner   |
| December 8         | 1:30-4:00 P.M.<br>Museum Open House  |

