

# The Chronicle

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

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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)

The Historical Society of Trappe, Collegeville, 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 1-800-732-0999 toll-free (within Pennsylvania). Registration does not imply endorsement. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

## Exhibit Highlights 50th Anniversary

This year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of The Historical Society of Trappe, Collegeville, Perkiomen Valley, Inc. It is hard to believe that we have been in existence for so long, have relied on so many over the years, have lost so many of our beloved members, but are grateful for members and volunteers, some of them new, who have stepped up to take on new or added responsibilities.

From its beginnings in 1964 with Frederick Grimison as our first president and leasing the Dewees Tavern from St. Luke's UCC church for \$1 for 100 years, to 1998 when restoration of the Henry Muhlenberg House was completed, to the present with tours and events scheduled to encourage the community to learn about the history of the area—it has been a labor of love, a learning and a rewarding experience for us all.

We have compiled photos and documents in the Miller Room at the Dewees Museum to recall memories from some and instill



a sense of our history in others. Photo (above) shows anniversary exhibit being prepared by (left to right) Joyce Haas, Ruth Daller, and Amanda Schaefer.



At left Museum Chair Rev. Bob Meschke and Historian Rev. Jay Meier review documents for the exhibit.

You may have photos or mementos of years past that relate to your association with the Society. If so, we would love to see them.

Join us some Sunday afternoon—we are open the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month through October from 1:30 to 4pm. We would enjoy hearing your story or, if you are new to the area, telling you about the growth of the Society. ❖

## Dear Friends of the Society . . .

Spring is here! The snowplowing season has ended! Thank you, Sassafras Landscaping Services, for keeping the driveway and walks open—and we thank A&D Nester Lawn Service in advance for their continued diligence in mowing the property around our two sites.

David Detwiler has rototilled Mrs. Muhlenberg's kitchen garden and planting has begun. Two new volunteers will help with watering and weeding.

Remember, our two historic sites are open the 2nd and 4th Sundays for tours from 1:30 till 4:00pm.

Our Headquarters (Dewees Museum) will continue to have open hours every Thursday from 9am to noon for your use to do research or just enjoy the contents of the library.

Manni McNeil and Amanda Schaeffer continue to organize and catalogue our artifacts, and their job is so much easier with the newly installed computer donated by TR Insurance. Be sure to check our website and Facebook page.

In closing, I need to announce the resignation of Linda Wiernusz from the Board of Directors so as to have more time to devote to her new job.

I want to thank Linda publicly for all her hard work these many years when she served as Vice President, President, and now Past President. She promises to remain involved at the committee level with Security, Gift Shop, and Museum Committees.

I can't thank Linda without including her husband Matt and daughter Sophia. This family has devoted countless hours to our Society, and we look forward to working together in the future.

Sincerely,

President

*Muhlenberg Preaches First Sermon  
in Trappe*

From The Journals of  
Henry Melchior Muhlenberg  
1742

**December 12, Sunday.** I preached for the first time at Providence in the senior deacon's barn, since the poor folk there have no church as yet. After the sermon Mr. Kraft read to the congregation my letter from the Rev. Court Preacher. The congregation appeared to be pleased. In the congregation there are many members from the province of Darmstadt who must have had good instruction in their youth. In the evening some of the members were present with us and we engaged in edifying conversation and closed with prayer.

**December 13, Monday.** Mr. Kraft took a horse and rode ahead to New Hannover, and towards evening I was fetched and brought to New Hannover. Mr. Kraft had put up at a deacon's house and had sought out the advice of the matron of the house as to whether I should take as wife a girl from the city or a farmer's maiden from the country. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Arrived safely in New Hannover in the evening and lodged with the deacon with whom Mr. Kraft was also staying. There was also present a drunken barber who had been summoned by a Reformed man to speak to a ghost which made frequent appearances and disturbed the minds of the people. We had a discourse on this hocus-pocus. Afterwards a stranger, a so-called Lutheran, asked me what the sin against the Holy Ghost was. I explained it to them.

*Submitted by The Rev. Thomas Kochenderfer*

*Happenings at the Society . . .*

**Community Events Calendar . . .** In response to an increasing number of requests by community organizations in our area to publicize their activities we are including them in our **Community Events Calendar** on our website. Now you can get up-to-date information on upcoming Society events as well as those of our friends. And while you're there also check out the excellent Home Page spreads of **Historic Milestones** so ably put together by our **Webmaster, Richard McDowell**.

**High School Seniors . . .** We are happy to support your community volunteer projects for graduation. Call for an appointment to meet and plan.

**Eagle Scout Candidates . . .** If you are seeking an opportunity to fulfill your candidacy, we would welcome the opportunity to provide a project. Give us a call.

**Like us on Facebook! . . .** Thanks to **Manni McNeil**, the Society is proud to announce the launch of our new **Facebook** page! We'll be posting upcoming events and other items to promote the Society. Tell all your friends! The direct link is <http://facebook.com/trappehistoricalsociety>.

**Used Book Sale at Dewees Museum Continues . . .** Stop by on Thursdays from 9:00am to noon or during our Sunday Tours (2nd and 4th Sunday of each month through October).

**New Use for an Old Space . . .**

An underutilized office in Dewees Tavern is being prepared for use as an **Archaeology Room**. **Jon Costanza, Jen Cianci, and Anne Grasberger** are freshening the room with a coat of new paint. Soon information about digs at Dewees, Muhlenberg, and the Speaker's house will all be available for comparative research. Artifacts from all sites will also be on display. Many thanks to Marcy Gilmartin, proprietor of the **Collegetown Home Paint and Decorating Center**, who helped make this project possible through her donation of Benjamin Moore paints and supplies.

**We Welcome Groups . . .** On April 1st we enjoyed a visit from the **Poor Richard Questers** who toured the Dewees Museum, and look forward to a visit from the **German Society of PA** who will tour the Henry Muhlenberg House on June 21st.

**And Thank You to so many who have made a difference . . .**

Debbie and Randy Riegner of **TR Insurance** for a new Dell Computer;  
**Dan Mitchell (Mitchell Heating and Air Conditioning)** for repairs to our furnace at Dewees;  
The **Krug Family** for a donation in honor of Marge Krug for a new kitchen sink;  
**Mary Grimison Hettrick** for a donation to beautify the grounds at the Henry Muhlenberg House and Dewees Museum;  
**Manni McNeil and Amanda Schaeffer** for office and tech support!

**A Warm Welcome . . .**

We welcome **Paige Meacham**, to both the Board of the Society and to the Community. Paige, who is Manager of First Niagara in Collegetown, will serve as **Treasurer**.

She looks forward to meeting our membership and getting to know the community—and we look forward to working with her.

*Mark Your Calenders for Upcoming Events!*

*June 8      Flag Day (see details on page 4)*  
*June 28      Grange Fair Booth, 10am to 4pm  
                  Montgomery County 4H Center*  
*August      Tea at the Tavern—History of Knitting  
                  by Manni McNeil      Details TBA*

**THE HISTORIAN'S CORNER** ..... *By The Rev. Judith A. Meier, Historian*

Before the super highways, before the railroad, before the canal, there were wagon trails and rudimentary turnpikes connecting Philadelphia and Pottstown and Reading and beyond, even to Harrisburg and Pittsburgh. Normally I have used the Historian's Corner to tell a story I had unearthed from the Historical Society's holdings or to tell a new story based on my research through the archives of the county and state.

Today finds me at the beginning of a story, not the end. I have more questions than answers, and when I have finished my work, I hope to have a wonderful story to tell you about wagons and stage coaches, the men who drove them, and the taverns that met the needs of drivers, horses, and passengers.

The Historical Society of Trappe, Colledgeville, Perkiomen Valley, Inc., has in its collection one of two journals of Berks County Sheriff and Surveyor Henry Vanderslice who served as wagon master in Gen. Peter Muhlenberg's brigade of the Virginia Battalion Artillery along with other wagon masters, Philip Kramer and Abner Berry. Vanderslice's story is well told by Arthur D. Graeff, in an address to the Historical Society of Berks County published in the August 28, 1927, issue of the Reading Eagle.

Did Henry Melchior Muhlenberg mention in his Journals any farmers or wagoners pressed into service during the Revolutionary War? Can we recognize certain men who appeared to be making regular trips from one town to another as they hauled household goods or merchandise or travelers?

We also have the names—many names—of men who drove their stage coaches and teams up and down the roads and turnpikes, carrying travelers, products, and mail. And then there were the taverns, particularly the taverns in Trappe. It appears that there were more taverns than churches in this part of Upper Providence, or Providence Township as it was called in the olden days. But little hard information exists about these individual taverns, and most of the buildings they occupied are gone, as are the landmarks that might have helped us to pinpoint their sites.

Trappe must have been a busy place—a literal crossroads of the roads between Philadelphia and Reading and the road to Doylestown, or at least what used to be called in some quarters a “kiss me quick,” a level area where the horses could get some rest and refreshment while the passengers caught a simple and nourishing meal and a little grog to boot.

And so I begin my own journey to investigate some of the taverns of Trappe, beginning with our own Dewees Tavern, the

headquarters and museum of our Society. Just how long was it an active tavern? What constitutes a tavern in the first place? A building where travelers could stay overnight? Get a meal? Stable the horses or exchange the horses for fresh ones?

An abbreviated story of the Dewees Tavern has been told in these pages before. We know that David Dewees operated the Duke of Cumberland on the southeast corner of the road from 1796 to 1820, when a mental incapacitation forced him to turn his duties over to his wife Mary Catherine and his son Dr. Jacob Dewees. Sometime after Jacob Dewees bought the Andrew Miller house (1827) the family moved to “the northwest corner of the Gotwals Mill Road and the Perkiomen and Reading turnpike, opposite the Bringhurst Mansion, and there conducted a hotel known as Dewees Inn.” [Henry A. [Hunsicker, 1906] Dr. Dewees and his mother continued to run their enterprise as a boarding house, often accommodating the students of her son-in-law's school. An advertisement in a Norristown newspaper described the property's improvements as “a large and commodious stone tavern house, with five rooms and a kitchen on the first floor and seven rooms on the second, a good cellar, and a well finished garret, sign of the *Brig Holker*.” Additionally the ad described “a stone shed sufficient for 36 horses, two wells, and a good orchard.” The Philadelphia and Harrisburg Stage Line stopped there for many years.

But we need to know much more about the sign of the *Brig Holker* and about Mother Dewees' Inn and her boarding house.

And then there are the other taverns in the neighborhood: The Fountain Inn, The Trappe Tavern (John Jacob Schrack's original one), Hugh Cousty's tavern (Perkiomen Bridge Hotel), the Distillery, the Trappe Hotel.

The names of a number of tavern keepers and stage drivers need to be collected and investigated: Joseph Goodwin, Lewis and James Nicola, Nicholas and William Coleman, David Palsgrove, Reinhard Keelor, Peter Fritz, Jacob Heebner, Mary Dewees Weachter Patterson. Lewis Schrack, and Joseph Denson, to name a few.

So this will be a long journey, and I welcome our readers to communicate to me any information you might have on these people or taverns. Furthermore, if you have any artifacts that help to tell the stories of our taverns and stage coaches, please feel free to donate them to the Society. They will be gratefully accepted and suitably displayed.



**The Gift Shop**  
at the  
**Henry Muhlenberg House**

*If you haven't visited The Gift Shop recently, you're in for a surprise!*

*Unique items for your home? A last-minute gift? A memento of your visit?*  
We are not staffed on a daily basis, but we will make arrangements

to be available for you—with no obligation to purchase!

**201 West Main Street in Trappe**  
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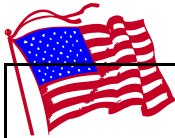
# The Historical Society

of Trappe, Collegeville, Perkiomen Valley, Inc.

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## An Invitation to Celebrate Flag Day . . .

We invite you to join us to celebrate Flag Day on Sunday, June 8th, at 5:00 P.M., to enjoy a **Ham and Bean Supper** at **St. Luke's United Church of Christ** and a presentation by **Susan McLellan Plaisted, MS, RD, CSP, LDN**.

Susan is the Proprietress of Heart to Hearth Cookery, a food history business based in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Among her various presentations, she offers demonstrations of 17th through 19th century Colonial American and European cooking methods, practices, and recipes. With her diverse historic foodways experience, she will explore the foodways of the Eastern Woodland Indians (Lenape, Iroquois, Wampanoag, etc.) with visuals of the firing of the clay pots and use of the resources of the land and gardens for food. Her research has spanned the United States, Canada, England, and Scotland, and she has amassed an amazing inventory of recipes, techniques, attire, and equipment to correctly interpret and demonstrate Scottish, Welsh, English, Dutch, German, Swedish, Colonial, and Native American foodways practices from many periods of history.

St. Luke's is located at 200 W. Main Street, Trappe, across from the Henry Muhlenberg House. The cost is \$7.00 per person. We are sure you will enjoy this presentation as well as the delicious supper to be provided. Invite your friends and neighbors to join you. To help us plan—**before June 1st**—please return the form below with your check to: **The Historical Society, P.O. Box 708, Collegeville, PA 19426-0708**. You may also e-mail your reservation to [newsandevents@trappehistoricalsociety.org](mailto:newsandevents@trappehistoricalsociety.org) or call **Rich Holcombe (610-489-7266)** and bring your check with you. Hope to see you there!

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

No. in party @ \$7.00 ea: \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (check payable to The Historical Society)

## Membership Information

*Renewal Information is Enclosed*

*Please renew today—your participation is vital!*

- |                          |            |                     |
|--------------------------|------------|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Student    | \$10.00             |
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*. . . and encourage your friends and neighbors  
to visit our historical sites!*