

The Chronicle

March 2015

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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)

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THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear Society members,

One of the most enjoyable things about this job is getting the mail...all sorts of things arrive...bills, sales, opportunities but the most exciting is getting letters from you, the members and folks wishing to be members.

This past week was no exception when a packet arrived from Donnelly, Idaho and the contents were from Mr. Frank Eld. Longtime members will recall that he served as the "Bicentennial Chair and Restorer of our Dewees Tavern." All the "fifty something" residents of town will recall him as their shop teacher at PV.

He wrote in his letter, "...do what you wish with the pictures and if at any point someone is interested in what, how, and where and why we did what we did, I would be happy to share my information."

He will be coming for a visit with friends in Trappe this year and when we know that date, we will ask him to come to "Tea at the Tavern" and spend some time answering questions and renewing old friendships. Stay tuned and we will let you know in advance of this event.

Another part of his packet included "Chronicles" and I can't help but to pass along this poem about "The Busy Bees" by Lee Haas (Mrs. Henry Haas)

*There's a special group of ladies, No doubt
you've heard about
If you don't know about them, I'm here to tell and
shout.*

*These gals meet every Monday, Come rain or
come shine.*

With their smiling faces and flying needles.

*Not famous or great who then can they be?
There's Anne and Alice and Clara and Anna.
There's Evelyn, Thelma and Charlotte and Lee
They all have their thimble and own special seat
And oops there's Sammy who's always at their
feet.*

*No gossip is done but there's always a joke
With an occasional ouch and thread please is
spoke*

*"Bury your knots" ladies and don't sew in a
bunch*

Then before you know it, it's time for lunch.

*Then it's straight back to work we do
With great haste and always remember with no
threads to waste.*

*Whether it's a historical quilt-we sew with
pleasure*

*To many an heirloom quilt we do for pleasure
We're the busy ladies who work at the Quilting
Bee. The quilters of Trappe Historical Society.*

Explanation-the Sammy mentioned is
the toy poodle of the Sauers who
enjoys eating lunch with the ladies.

We have two quilts that were done
by this group on display at Dewees.
If you can confirm the last names
of the quilters, please pass that
information on to us. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Ruth Daller,
President

**From The Journals of
Henry Melchior Muhlenberg**

1742

December 24, Friday. A heavy rain began to fall during the past night and continued steadily during the day. I had promised to be in New Hannover to hear confessions, but scarcely knew how to get through. They gave me a strong horse with which I was able to plunge through and reach New Hannover about two o'clock, but had to remain there longer because the water rose so high that we were unable to reach the church.

December 25, Christmas Day. The waters had receded again, so we were able to get to the church. In spite of the terrible roads there was a large gathering present, and we held divine service. In the evening I had the deacons and elders of New Hannover and likewise the deacons of Providence come together in my residence, and I submitted to them for their consideration and signatures the following document:

We, the Elders and Presbyters and th[e] other Members of the Lutheran Protestant Congregations at New Hannover, Providence and Philadelphia

(1) We testify in God and affirm by Subscription, that we have accepted with a thankful Heart the Rev. Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg as a lawfull called, ordained, and by our Supplications Sent and represent Minister of the Gospel and the Augsburg Confession, by the Reverend Frederick Michael Zigenhagen his Maiestis German Chaplain and Member of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge.

(2) We promise to furnish our Minister with all Necessaries what is required for his living in the lawfull Vocation, and to assist him in every good Disposition and Direction which he gives for our and our Children Spiritual Welfare according to the Word 1 Tim. 5. vers. 17.18. Luc. 10 vers. 7.

After the elders and deacons had considered these points they subscribed their names:
Deacons and elders of New Hannover: Christoph Wittmann, Matthias Ringer, Peter Conrad, Valentin Geiger, Jacob Aister, Martin Geblinger, George Jürger.

The deacons and some members of Providence: Johann Nicolaus Croessmann, Friedrich Marsteller, Johann Georg Bender, Nicolaus Bittel, Georg Croesmann the Saddler, Johann Georg Croesmann.

Submitted by The Rev. Thomas Kochenderfer

THE HISTORIAN'S CORNER

The Sign of the *Brig Holker*

The British called her "that mischievous American the Holker" and "the swiftest sailing vessel that ever sailed from America." The Americans called her "the noted privateer Holker."

She had 16 6-pound guns and carried a maximum crew of 130 officers and men. Her owner, the American merchant Blair McClenachan, named her in tribute to John Holker, who came to the United States in 1778 from France. His father was a British émigré who ran a textile mill in Rouen. In Philadelphia Holker became the official buying agent of the Royal French Marine and served as French Consul-general to Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York. He was removed from both offices because of a conflict of interest. He was considered to be one of the leading figures in the business world at the time.

In 1778 the *Brig Holker*, under Capt. Roger Keane, was given a Pennsylvania Letter of Marque. She sailed under several masters, including Captains Keane, Walsh, and Lawler. The privateer engaged and captured a number of British schooners, sloops, and brigs, stopping the importation of guns and supplies as well as food for the British forces.

We have no idea why the public house now known as the Dewees Tavern was known by the sign of the *Brig Holker* in the early 19th century. The only evidence for the use of this intriguing name is a newspaper advertisement in the *Norristown Herald and Montgomery County Advertiser* of December 28, 1831. Sheriff Henry Longaker was holding a public sale at the public house of Jacob Dewees in the village of the Trap, Upper Providence township, on Saturday the 14th of January next, at 1 o'clock P.M. On the auction block were three properties seized and taken in execution as the property of Jacob Dewees, a tract of meadow and woodland, a commodious stone tavern house, which we know as David Dewees' old sign of the Duke of Cumberland, and a 7 acre 104 perches tract containing a messuage tavern stand, sign of the "BRIG HOLKER." This tavern at the junction of the public road leading from the Trap to Doylestown and the Reading and Perkiomen turnpike, adjoined the lands of Jacob Heebner and the Presbyterian burying ground (which we know was really the cemetery of St. Luke's Reformed Church). The stone tavern had five rooms and a kitchen on the first floor and seven rooms on the second, a good cellar, and a well finished garret. There were also a large stone shed sufficient to contain 30 horses, two wells of excellent water near the door, and a good orchard. It had the advantage of the Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Pottsville stages.

Dr. Dewees had acquired his father's properties at several Sheriff's Sales, and his mother took over from her husband David the running of the *Brig Holker* while the doctor practiced medicine and served the paupers in the county alms house. Enos Lewis and his wife Margaret Dewees Lewis purchased the *Brig Holker* at the 1832 Sheriff's Sale and eventually conveyed it to Margaret's mother, who continued to run the hotel and boarding house until 1855. After Mother Dewees' death, her son Frederick took over the tavern for a few years and then passed it on to other children and eventually to a grandson, Lewis Royer. Royer sold it to St. Luke's Reformed Church in 1899, when it became known as "the Cemetery House" or "the Church House." In 1964 the Trappe Historical Society began renting two rooms for its headquarters, and in 1975 the church and the Society negotiated a 99-year lease for the entire building. The rest, as they say, is history.

The Rev. Judith A. Meier, Historian

A tribute—and Thank You. . . .

One of the many in our organization who quietly do their tasks for the betterment of the Society, and whose merits will never receive their due, is **Richard McDowell**. After ten years as Webmaster, Richard has decided to discontinue this role, which will leave a noticeable difference in our functioning. He noted that he enjoyed the challenge of being Webmaster. We thank him for his generous time and talent, and we look forward to seeing him at our upcoming events.

In 2005, Richard designed our website, and thereafter updated it, made additions and deletions, and constantly made an effort to improve it and make it interesting and informative for our readers—all because he values the work of the Society and wants everyone to know about it.

We want him to know how much we appreciate his pioneering efforts and dedication to the Society's first website—his shoes will be hard to fill.

Myrna Knaide



Event Coming in 2016

Our Society together with The Speaker's House and the Historical Society of Montgomery County applied to sponsor a History Matters event with best selling author, Steve Berry. In late December, we learned that our application has been approved and the three groups will be sponsoring an event in 2016. The date is yet to be determined, however we should know by late Spring what his schedule is for 2016. The planning committee continues to meet. Help will be needed in many areas to successfully carry out this event which should generate significant funds for each organization as well as make each group better known in the Greater Philadelphia area. If you have experience and/or interest in event planning please join our committee. For more information, call Tom Biggar at 610-220-7174.



Exhibitors Wanted

Your **Historical Society** has become the fortunate beneficiary over the years of numerous items depicting so well the very rich and diverse artistic heritage of our community. Items celebrating our past, ranging from artworks to red ware, to fine porcelain and coverlets, have been the subject of exhibits in our Dewees Museum over the years.

Building on that tradition, and believing that craft and art talents are still very much alive and well in our neighborhood, we would like to offer local artists and artisans an opportunity to share their work. We are interested in any and all aspects of creativity and want to put out a special invitation to people who do Samplers or Fracturs. We also hope to build some interesting events like the Knitting Program last summer around these exhibits.

The success of this effort depends on the interest of our members and friends. Contact Bob Meschke (bobmeschke@verizon.net) with your ideas so we can get moving on this. Open Sundays start on April 12th.



Over the years we have been able to archive the genealogies of many of the families who shaped our community. If you have not already done so, I would encourage you to share your "**roots**" with us along with any family photographs and memorabilia. In the coming months two of our volunteers will be reaching out to long-time residents for their oral history project. We are also very interested in the history of the home you live in. Our **Historic Site Project** has not gotten much attention lately but we would still like to help you document the history of your historic structure over 100 years young and award you a plaque for your effort.

Visit our website:

www.trappehistoricalsociety.org

Sponsors: TR Insurance Group, Inc. and Holcombe Funeral Home, Inc.

Wish List . . .

In an effort to preserve the precious historical items inside the Muhlenberg House, The Society is currently in the process of installing UV filters on the Interior storm windows. The cost per window is approximately \$240.00 each. The Society would be most grateful to receive the support of the community in covering some of the costs of installing these filters. If you are interested, please give us a call at 610-489-7560.

. . . Thank you for your help!



As your **Society Volunteers** sort through our "attic" and come up with items of interest we are asking you to do the same. We are looking for loans of any artifacts, pictures, and family histories you may have as a way of broadening our displays and also enabling you to be an important part of the celebration. Please contact us if you would like to help in this way. We also invite anyone with an interest in local history to join with our cadre of volunteers to help tell the **Trappe Story**.

Membership Information

If you have not yet renewed, please do so today!

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student | \$10.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | 50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting | \$100.00 - \$249.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$250.00 - \$499.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining | \$500.00 - \$999.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$1000.00 and up |

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Address: _____

Phone No. _____

e-mail address* _____

*e-mail my newsletters and announcements

Checks Payable to: The Historical Society

Mail to: Richard Holcombe
The Historical Society
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. . . and encourage your friends and neighbors
to visit our historical sites!

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March 2015 NEWSLETTER

Timely Information — Please Do Not Delay!

Three Centuries and Counting

The *Trappe Tercentennial* will be here before we know it and your *Historical Society* has already begun to plan for our participation in the *Celebration*.

As I mentioned in our last *Chronicle*, many seeds planted in the early years of our Borough's existence continue to be fruitful reminders of our rich history.

Much research has been done by our Historians and others who are rooted in our rich tradition to add colorful detail to the story that is "*Trappe*" since the *275th Anniversary* was observed in 1992. Notable changes along Main Street alone have offered additional opportunities to highlight our history. I'm thinking now of the visionaries who have worked so hard over the past several decades to preserve and restore our *Henry Melchior Muhlenberg House* to its 18th Century roots, and of the dedicated people who saved the *Frederick Muhlenberg House ("The Speaker's House")* from obliteration in the name of progress. They stand alongside countless others who take pride in living the history which is Trappe by restoring their homes, conserving their family histories and legacies and supporting their *Historical Society* in its efforts to preserve and educate each generation in our rich historic legacy.

Since our beginning in 1964 we have been entrusted with thousands of artifacts, each of them with a story to tell of our rich history. Our Ross Library continues to be the repository of genealogical records, articles, and photographs documenting our past. Numerous donations of printed materials in the form of books, maps, civic and religious records await the curiosity of our visitors and researchers who come regularly looking for something available nowhere else, like the complete collection of the *Collegeville Independent* newspapers. In the coming months our task will be to determine creative utilization of our resources to tell the *Trappe Story*.

Rev. Bob Meschke, Museum Committee Chair

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 will make arrangements to be available for you—with no obligation to purchase!

201 West Main Street in Trappe

Phone: 610-489-7560 / Email: info@trappehistoricalsociety.org