



The Historical Society of Trappe Pennsylvania

*For the preservation of the history, ancient buildings and land marks
of the Trappe area.*

VOLUME XIV, NUMBER 3

THE TRAPPE CHRONICLE

THIRD QUARTER, 1985

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

As we pass the half-way point of 1985 I hope this letter finds all our members in good health. As a member of the Trappe Historical Society I have had the opportunity over the past few years to reflect on several things. One thing in particular is the fact that I have had the opportunity to be a part of the community which just doesn't sit back and take things for granted. After witnessing what I consider one of the finest, if not the finest, Grange Fairs, I feel proud to be not only a Historical Society member but a Grange member also. The work that goes on within organizations can never be fully appreciated by the public in general. The countless hundreds of hours that is put in by volunteers, like yourselves, never goes rewarded. The unselfishness of a persons time and resources can never ever be fully known to anyone but that person alone. This Country was built on that unselfishness everyone has somewhere in their bones. Most never show it, many never want anyone to know what they have done. We in Trappe see it happen every day. Volunteerism is alive and well in Trappe. It is alive in the People of Trappe as can be witnessed by the Grange, the Historical Society, the 4-H, the Boy and Girl Scouts, the Fire Company and the Ambulance Corps as well as the many other organizations which are run by volunteers. People care, we care, I care. Your continued support is what makes us strong. Alone we are but one standing against the tide. Together we are an impenetrable wall which holds back the tide of indifference and allows us to retain our past with honor and look to the future with pride and dignity.

THE QUILTERS:

The quilters have been very active throughout the entire summer. If you have a quilt you have started, or know of someone who would like for us to do a quilt for them please have them contact anyone within the Society so we can contact them. Remember all the work being done is for the benefit of the Historical Society.

Anne Schrack

PROPERTY:

Bids are still being taken to have the parking area black-topped. A New roof was put on the shed where the wind had blown the old shingles away over last winter. The painting is progressing and we hope to have the second floor completed by the end of summer.

Fred Conard

TRAPPE DAY - SEPTEMBER 22nd.

This year we would like as many as possible to attend the 10:30 church service at St. Luke's Church. After we return to our respective homes to have lunch and to change our clothes if we so desire, I would like everyone to return to the Tavern by 1:30 P.M. and we will all take a group tour of The Boone Home. Please be prompt.

THE DEWEES TAVERN

The exact origins of the house so long known as the Dewees Tavern are still not documented, but before the Revolutionary War the house was owned and occupied by Andrew Miller, who purchased 168 acres and 126 perches of land in January, 1750 from Michael Hawk and his wife Eva. The property included what is now the Wismer farm directly behind the Tavern. On the Tax record of 1774 for Philadelphia County, of which this township was then a part. Andrew Miller was listed as being taxed on a dwelling and 150 acres of land. There are several references in the Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg to "my neighbor Andrew Miller". At that time the Muhlenberg was the next house south-east to the Miller home.

Andrew Miller died in 1792 and, according to his will, left to his wife Mary, "the house lot on which I live together with the plantation adjoining, the cattle, household furniture and whatever else I die possessed of for her own use and behoof during her natural life". After Mary's death the house and lot and 20 acres of land were to go to son Joseph, and the remainder was to be sold. However, Mary and her children sold the house and lot (1 acre) and 20 acres to General Peter Muhlenberg in 1794, and the remainder of the plantation to son Jacob. Peter Muhlenberg evidently bought the property as an investment; he then lived in the Muhlenberg home and Mary Miller continued to live in the house and pay taxes until her death in 1808. In the direct tax list of 1798 for Providence Township, Montgomery County, the house of Mary Miller was listed as being of stone, two stories. 25' x 30', with 12 windows of 12 lights each. Also listed was a stone kitchen, one story, 15' x 12' .

In 1802 Peter Muhlenberg sold the property to his brother-in-law, John Christopher Kunze, husband of Margareta Muhlenberg, who lived in New York City. In June, 1808, Margareta Kunze, now a widow, sold the house and 21 acres to Israel Bringhurst. Mary Bringhurst, widow, sold the house and 7 acres 140 perches to Enos Lewis in 1817, who, in turn, sold the same to Abraham Everhart, an innkeeper from Norristown. Abraham Everhart never appears on the tax lists of Upper Providence Township. No deed was recorded when Abraham Everhart sold to Dr. Jacob Dewees on the 3rd of April 1827: this information was found on the mortgage records.

The family of David and Mary Catherine Dewees had come to Trappe from Womelsdorf, Berks County, about 1796 when David bought from Andrew Wachter, innkeeper, a house and 36 acres of land across the turnpike (now Main Street) and several hundred yards northwest of the present Dewees Tavern. Here he kept a tavern until he became incapacitated about 1820, when we presume his wife and grown children took over. In 1802 David had purchased an addition property, a farm of 152 acres which was the farm which Andrew Miller had owned. In 1822 all the properties of David Dewees were sold at Sheriff Sale and were purchased by his son, Dr. Jacob Dewees. When Jacob purchased the present tavern in 1827 he the owned two taverns and a farm. We assume he bought his father's properties as a home for his mother and his brothers and sisters, and that they still ran the tavern. The tax records for these years for the most part do not indicate innkeepers. In the tax list for 1828, Jacob is listed as having 188 acres and dwelling (his father's former properties) and " a separate estate his present dwelling of 7 acres" .

Jacob became involved in financial difficulties, and in 1831 a Public sale by order of the Sheriff was advertised in the Norristown Herald and Weekly Register, listing two tavern stands and a farm of 152 acres 140 perches. The present Dewees tavern is described as "a large and commodious stone tavern house with five rooms and a kitchen on the first floor and seven rooms on the second floor, a good cellar and a well finished garret, sign of the "BRIG HOLKAR"... there is also a large stone shed sufficient to contain 30 horses..." The first tavern is described as "recently occupied as a tavern house". The information in this notice is the first proof of the use of the present Deweed Tavern as a tavern. Just when the entire family moved across the street is not known, but approximately 1829-1830.

The property, tavern building with 7 acres 140 perches and the farm of 152 acres 140 perches were sold at this sale to Enos Lewis, son-in-law of Mary Catherine and brother-in-law of Jacob. He evidently bought the tavern for the use of Mrs. Dewees, she being listed on the tax records as innkeeper from 1835-1855, two years before her death. (David Dewees died in 1837) In 1829 Jacob was noted and also in 1830. In 1831 "The Inn called The Dewees Tavern" was listed: no records in 1832 and 1833: and only "Dewees" in 1834.

During these years the Dewees Tavern, according to Henry Hunsicker, a resident of Trappe at the time, "Mother Dewees" was well known as "an elegant provider and

had the reputation deservedly so of keeping a first class hotel". The tavern served for many years as a stagecoach stop, a polling place, a local court, and the scene of local rallies for Presidential campaigns. After the death of Mary Catherine Dewees in 1857 the property was held as a private dwelling by her sons and daughters until sold by son Percival in 1886 to a grandson of Mary Cather, Lewis Royer. He, in turn, sold in 1899 to St. Lukes German Reformed Church.

The oldest section of the building is the southeast end which is exactly the dimensions noted in the 1798 tax list. The second or middle section was added very early in the 19th century, and the third and fourth sections probably in the 1830's. St. Lukes Church used the building for 75 years as a three unit rental property, and it was known locally as "Cemetary House".

In 1964 the newly organized Historical Society of Trappe, under the leadership of its first President, Mr. Frederick Grimison, rented the two rooms on the first floor of the northwestern end of the building and there established its headquarters. The entire building was in very poor condition and for a time it was feared it would be torn down. In 1975, the Historical Society and St. Luke's agreed on terms of a lease which gave the Society 99 year tenancy of the entire building in return for restoring and maintaining the same. At the same time the Trappe Borough Council agreed to designate the restoration of the Dewees Tavern as a Bi-Centennial project for the Borough with the Historical Society. Many hours of labor were donated, as were material and money from members of the Society, the Borough, and neighboring businesses and organizations.

At present the Historical Society maintains a museum of local artifacts and a research library for the use of the general public.

Esther O. Keller
Historian
Historical Society of Trappe
1985