



# The Half Moon

- The Newsletter of the Newtown Historic Association -

## Welcome

The Newtown Historic Association presents this newsletter to the Newtown community with the goal of providing news and information on related historic and preservation events in our area. We welcome any suggestions for future articles.

## Officers

Brian Rounsavill, *President*  
David Callahan, *First Vice President*  
Jeff Marshall, *Second Vice President*  
Michael DiFiori, *Recording Secretary*  
Mary Callahan, *Corresp. Secretary*  
Marge Torongo, *Treasurer*

## Board of Directors

Harriet Beckert  
Paul Gouza  
Jeanne Haeckel  
Bronwyn Jones  
William Mahler  
Joanne Nardo  
Geno Peruzzi  
Susan Thompson  
David Walton  
Dolly Gish – *Hon. Director*  
David Mahler - *Parliamentarian*

## Newtown Historic Association

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Centre Avenue & Court Street  
Newtown, PA 18940 USA  
Phone: (215) 968-4004  
[www.newtownhistoric.org](http://www.newtownhistoric.org)

## New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

- Margaret Dissinger, *Newtown, PA*
- Beverly Schaefer, *Holland, PA*
- Bill & Carol Watson, *Marietta, OH*
- Gerlyn Williford, *Langhorne, PA*

## Colonial Tavern Night

The eighth annual Tavern Night will be held on Saturday, March 6<sup>th</sup> at the Half-Moon Inn. Join us for this wonderful colonial event, which promises to have even more colonial cheer. The evening will feature 18th century music, dancing, along with delicious food catered by Joseph's Garden Grille accompanied by colonial side dishes. Join us for an evening that will take you back to a time when our country was new and exciting. RSVP by February 22<sup>nd</sup> to Jeanne Haeckel at (215) 860-0921. Tickets are \$50 per person.

## February Meeting

The February meeting will be held on Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup> at 8 PM at the Half-Moon Inn. The NHA has invited Wayne Siefert, of the Bucks County Covered Bridge Society, to present a lecture entitled, "Covered Bridges of Bucks County." Bucks County at one time had more than 50 covered bridges, only 12 of which stand today. This lecture will feature photos of many of the bridges that have been lost, as well as photos of the bridges dating back to the early 1900's. The public is invited, refreshments will be served.

## Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting will be held on April 19<sup>th</sup> at the Half Moon (Court) Inn. All members are invited. The Annual Business Meeting will include the election of officers and reports from all standing committee chairmen. The following slate of officers has been proposed by the Nominating Committee:

### Officers (two year terms):

*President* - Brian Rounsavill  
*1st Vice President* - David Callahan  
*2nd Vice President* - Jeff Marshall  
*Recording Secretary* - Mike DiFiori  
*Corresp. Secretary* - Mary Callahan  
*Treasurer* - Marge Torongo

### Board of Directors:

Harriet Beckert (2 Year Term)  
Paul Gouza (2 Year Term)  
Jeanne Haeckel (2 Year Term)  
Bronwyn Jones (2 Year Term)  
David Walton (3 Year Term)  
*Parliamentarian* - David Mahler

### Other Directors (not up for election):

William Mahler  
Joanne Nardo  
Geno Peruzzi  
Susan Thompson

Following the Annual Business Meeting, a presentation entitled, "Treasures from the Attic: Selected Items from the NHA Archives" will be given by Harriet Beckert and David Callahan. This lecture will showcase selected items from the NHA archives that are interesting and unique to the Newtown community.



Lucretia Mott (1793-1880)

## Abolitionists in Newtown

*[The following article was gleaned from the June 19, 1855 edition of the Bucks County Intelligencer that discusses a series of public meetings held in Newtown. The overwhelming social issues in the decade prior to the Civil War were the growing anti-slavery and temperance movements. Throughout the country, citizens rallied against those bold and unblushing triumphs of evil. – Contributed by Jeffrey L. Marshall]*

As the press is the chronicler of passing events, I forward to you a sketch of the Anti-slavery meetings held at the [Newtown] Hall on the 9th and 10th inst.

As you incidentally remarked in your last [issue], the village of Newtown assumed quite an air of liveliness on last Saturday, from the fact of many strangers being called there to attend two important meetings. Permit me to say also, that it was a day of considerable interest. It is ever interesting to see men working for the advancement of the moral interests of the public. It is not out of place to see the honest yeomanry meet, sternly and firmly, any usage, no matter how time-honored, that is highly inimical to the growth of moral, intellectual, and industrial interests of man. Why should the respectable association of the Agriculturists of our community be any more encumbered, and characterized in its movements by intemperance, than any other association established in the community for the advancement of its interests. The decision made on last Saturday was creditable to the honest yeomanry of the county; and it was very befitting that where the

Temperance cause in the county first had its origin, more than a quarter of a century since, that there a demonstration of the accumulated light and strength on the subject should show itself. The result was an unmistakable anticipation of the coming law.

The Anti-slavery meeting convened in the Hall at the time appointed; but it was composed at the beginning mostly of females. The men were absent to give their votes on the side of temperance at the Agricultural meeting. Most of the abolitionists in the country are temperance men; but many temperance men, and some temperance women, are not abolitionists. The meeting was addressed very ably and interestingly by Lucretia Mott, Robert Purvis, and others also spoke. The two following important resolutions were presented by Samuel Swain, Jr., of Bristol:

Resolved, That while we view with electrified horror and indignation, the stealthy and steady aggressions of the slave power, in poisoning the free purity of the ballot-- corrupting and wresting legislation from its noble offices; we do not only deplore the multiplied enormities and outrages of chattel slavery, but we deeply mourn the servitude of the minds of the whole people, the sealing up of the expression of untrammelled opinion, and the fear of acting out deeply seated convictions, that result from those bold and unblushing triumphs of evil.

Resolved, That while we sympathize warmly with our fellow citizens, whose industrious enterprise has led them to the fertile plains of Kansas and Nebraska, plundered as they have been of their dearest rights, by the ruffian minions of an outrageous tyranny and reckless political infamy that have moulded [sic] the sentiments of the State of Missouri; that we earnestly entreat them to defend to the utmost, as Christians may, as freeman can, that yet untainted soil, which has become the latest Thermopylae of freedom.

In the evening, Robert Purvis gave a very high toned and elegantly Written Lecture on the subject of Education, to a large and intelligent audience. Lucretia Mott followed, very happily, in sowing a deep interest in the success of a general education. Her facts in relation to the literary and scientific women of this country, were very instructive; and her appeals to the women present, to avail themselves of the facilities now afforded for their moral and intellectual development, were very feeling and earnest.

On the following morning, Lucretia Mott attended the Friends; Meeting of the place, and quite an unusual number were present to hear her.

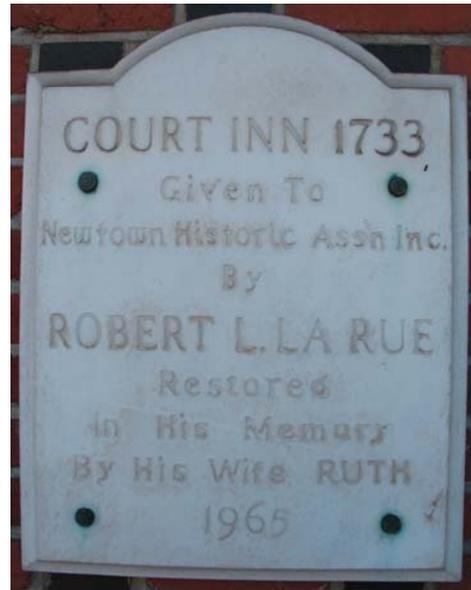
In the afternoon, a very intelligent and large meeting assembled in the Hall. The following resolution, with the previous two, were adopted:

Resolved, That we endorse fully the following language in the late sermon of the Rev. Mr. Perkins, a modern missionary: "American Slavery is the crowning abomination of the 19th century; it is perhaps the greatest of human obstacles to the progress of the Gospel. The responsibility of its continuance rests much, if not mainly, with the northern portions of our country, and especially with the churches and their ministers."

E. M. Davis, of Philadelphia, took an active part in the meeting; and the speaking of Lucretia Mott and Robert Purvis was very feeling and interesting. Behind the offices' seats was suspended a placard, issued in Philadelphia, headed, "Beware of Slave Catchers." Cautioning more particularly a man by the name of Butler, in pursuit of whom, as an alleged slave, Miss Wilson, of Kent County, Maryland, J. M. Cummings and John Wilson, of the same place, had lately arrived in Philadelphia. This notice was looked upon with considerable interest by the people assembled, and served as a practical commentary upon the workings of the divine institution. Though the theatre of action was in Philadelphia, yet it was, nevertheless, in Pennsylvania; and that it is by the consent of her Christians and republicans, that the slaveholder is permitted to come within her lines and steal back his persons held to service.

Mr. Davis narrated a circumstance that was of an opposite character, and speaks loudly for the nobility of the human heart: A man came to Philadelphia, the other day, from Georgia, and, before Mayor Conrad, executed a deed for the manumission of several slaves, and gave them their choice to stay in the North, or return with him home; they preferred to go with him under the new relation of paid laborers. Thus are we struggling along, encumbered, outraged, and heat sick with the presence of an evil, that is taxing the energies of the good and the virtuous in our land for its extinction.

M. B. Linton, President.



### Ruth K. LaRue (1913-2010)

Members of the Newtown Historic Association were saddened to learn of the death of Ruth Kerr LaRue, formerly of Newtown, on January 11, 2010, at the age of 96, in Tennessee, where she was a resident for the past several years.

Both Ruth and her husband, Bob LaRue, were very generous in their donations to the Newtown community, especially to the Newtown Historic Association. The Newtown Historic Association was the recipient of the north/tavern side of the property in 1964 as a gift from Robert L. LaRue and his wife, Ruth. The LaRues also gave \$25,000 to restore the structure.

The NHA then purchased the south residence in 1974 and fully restored it in 1982. After the restoration, the two doors connecting the two properties were re-opened to make it back into one building. The Half Moon Inn (Court Inn) has served as the headquarters of the Newtown Historic Association ever since and is on the National Register of Historic Places. Their generous donations helped give the Newtown Historic Association a tangible presence in the community that is appreciated to this day.

Several years ago, the Newtown Historic Association asked members for a photograph of Bob and Ruth LaRue to display in the Half Moon Inn. If anyone has information on where a photograph can be obtained, we would appreciate that information.

## Open House Tour

The 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Open House Tour was held on Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Over 900 people enjoyed the beautiful weather to tour the following private homes and public buildings that were open for touring:

- **The Luff House**  
211 Washington Avenue
- **The Cohen House**  
110 N. Lincoln Avenue
- **The Murray House**  
128 N. Congress Street
- **The Foley House**  
432 E. Washington Avenue
- **The McDermott House**  
35 S. Chancellor Street
- **The Callahan House**  
113 Court Street
- **The Tyrol-McGrath House**  
2 Dunham Court
- **Newtown United Methodist Church & Wesley Hall**  
(Quilt Display)  
Greene & Liberty Streets
- **Newtown Fire Association**  
14 Liberty Street
- **Newtown Library Company**  
114 East Centre Avenue
- **Half-Moon Inn**  
Court Street & Centre Avenue
- **The Stocking Works**  
301 South State Street

The Half-Moon Inn was beautifully appointed by the Countryside Gardeners and had an open hearth cooking demonstration, re-enactors portraying original proprietors Joseph and Margaret Thornton, and music was provided by the "Out of Tuners". The homeowners and volunteers did a wonderful job decorating their homes and hosting the visitors. The Open House Tour Committee wishes to thank everyone who helped make the day a great success.

## March Meeting

The March meeting of the Newtown Historic Association will be held on Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 PM at the Half-Moon Inn, Court St. & Centre Ave., Newtown. The Newtown Historic Association has invited Charles W. Lauble, Jr., Board Member of the Historic Langhorne Association, to present a lecture entitled, "*The History of the Langhorne Speedway*." Langhorne Speedway was located in nearby in Middletown Township (near the Oxford valley Mall) built by a group of Philadelphia racing enthusiasts known as the National Motor Racing Association (NMRA) in 1926 and was the first dirt track built specifically for automobile racing. The track's unique circular layout earned Langhorne the name "The Big Left Turn" and featured many famous drivers, such as Mario Andretti. As suburban growth engulfed the speedway, and offers from developers became too tempting to refuse, the final checkered flag fell on October 17, 1971. This lecture will feature photos and newspaper clippings highlighting the history of this local attraction. The public is invited and refreshments will be served. This will prove to be a very interesting and informative meeting. For further information call 215-968-3914.

## Clean-Up Day

The annual Half-Moon Inn Clean-up Day will be held on Saturday, March 20<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers are needed to help restore some luster to the many historical items and furnishings in the Half-Moon Inn. No experience is necessary! Join us at 8:30 AM. Roll up your sleeves and give us a helping hand if you can spare the time.

## Corporate Members

We are proud to highlight our corporate members:

- Anthony Petsis & Associates, Inc.
- Carriage House Collection
- David J. Witchell Salon & Spa
- DeFrehn Corporation
- First National Bank of Newtown
- Harold Beck & Sons, Inc.
- Holland Floor Covering
- James Hefelfinger & Assoc. Architects
- Johnson, Kendall & Johnson, Inc.
- J. R. Maxwell Builders, Inc.
- Newtown Hardware House
- Newtown-Jamison Physical Therapy
- Peruzzi Automotive Group
- ReMax Properties, Ltd.
- Stuckert and Yates
- The Law Office of Paul R. Beckert, Jr.
- Thomas-Guy Design, Ltd.
- Waitkus Design Landscape Architects

## Upcoming Events

- **General Membership Meeting**, "*Covered Bridges of Bucks County*," February 15. 8:00 p.m.
- **Tavern Night**, March 6. 7:00 p.m.
- **General Membership Meeting**, "*The History of the Langhorne Speedway*," March 15. 8:00 p.m.
- **Clean-Up**, March 20. 8:30 a.m.
- **Cocktail Party**, April 17. 5:00 p.m.
- **Annual Meeting**, April 19. 8:00 p.m.
- **5<sup>th</sup> Grade Historic Walking Tour**, June 2. 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- **Historic Walking Tour**, June 18. 6:30 p.m.
- **Market Day**, October 2.
- **General Membership Meeting**, "*Newtown as the County Seat: The Evolution of the Court Houses of Bucks County*," October 18. 8p.m.
- **General Membership Meeting**, "*The Art of Understanding a Building's Unwritten History: Stories Your Old House Can Tell*," November 15. 8p.m.
- **Open House Tour**, December 4.

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