

NEWSLETTER

Winter 1998 Issue
David Callahan, President

Helen F. Randle &
Lorraine H. Pentz, Editors

CALENDAR

Monday, February 2 7:30 P.M.	Full Board Meeting
Sunday, February 8 10:00 A. M.	Clean Up Day (see below)
Monday, February 16 6:00 P. M. Cash Bar 7:00 P. M. Dinner \$25/Person Questions-Call Mary Callahan 968-3914	Presidents' Birthday Dinner Temperance House Ward Vinson, Local Historian, will speak on "Washington Crossing the Delaware - a Behind the Scenes View"
Monday, March 2 7:30 P. M.	Full Board Meeting
Saturday, March 21 5:00 P. M. - 8:00 P. M.	Margaret Thornton Birthday Party Court Inn - \$15/Person. Guests invited. (If you wish to assist call Jeanette Rogers 968-6985 or Lorraine Pentz 968-4357)
Monday, April 6 7:30 P. M.	Full Board Meeting
Monday, April 20 8:00 P. M.	Annual Meeting - Elections
Sunday, May 3 2:00 P. M.	Walking Tour (see article on page 2)

CLEAN UP DAY---SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8

This was a very rewarding and successful event in 1997. Come at 10:00 A.M. or when you can thereafter; wear working clothes; choose your assignment; work at your own speed; enjoy the unusual camaradie; and take pride in the remarkable results. Informal lunch will be provided. YOU are invited.

WALKING TOUR

An Architectural Walking Tour and Membership Reception , co-sponsored by the Heritage Conservancy and the Newtown Historic Association, will be held on Sunday, May 3, with "Skip" Gittens in charge. The Tour, conducted by Jeffrey Marshall of the Conservancy, will convene at the Court Inn at 2:00 P. M. and will be followed by a reception for new members with refreshments served at the Inn. There will be no charge.

BOARD NOTES

Joanne Nardo was appointed Chair of the Nominating Committee. Other members are Gail Blandy, Laurie Gouza, Brenda Mc Intyre, and Stephen Von Hohen.

The Board reacted favorably to an offer from the Lower Makefield Historical Society to hold a joint membership meeting with us. Date and program will be announced in the next issue.

The Board agreed that this Association would help the Newtown Cemetery Company with the restoration of the Cemetery Chapel in an advisory capacity.

The Editors of the Newsletter and the Costume Librarian were commended by the President for the fine work they are doing.

HELP WANTED:-

Names of Newtown oldtimers who would make good candidates for the Oral History interviews, which are to begin this month. Call Ann Linkenheimer (968-4378) or Joanne Nardo (968-9052). The committee also includes Mary Callahan, Mary Kester, Lois Molloy, and Fran Smith.

A volunteer to type library cards at the Court Inn on Tuesdays between the hours of 9:00 A. M. and 3:00 P. M. Call Mary Kester (968-2317).

Additional help for interior clean up at the Toll House. Several volunteers have come forward. Call Dolly Gish (968-3402).

VOLUNTEERS

Three people, Ann Balderston, Ruth Augustine and Dottie Soden, have volunteered to help with the mailing of the Newsletter. Thank you - the Editors.

HISTORICAL NOTES
An Architectural History of the Court Inn
The Early Period
by Thomas C. Mayer

During 1976 and 1977 John Milner Associates of West Chester, well known historic restoration architectural firm, completed two studies of the physical development of the Court Inn in preparation for an extensive restoration and adaptive reuse of the building by the Newtown Historic Association. The information presented here is derived from their reports, and the cardboard models pictured were created by the architects.

Period A. c. 1720-1730. The first period of construction on the site was a one-room, one-story dwelling house with loft above. It was constructed of wood frame on a stone foundation, cellar below, and a bulkhead cellar entrance on the south facade. A massive stone cooking fireplace was in the north wall and a bake oven extended outside through the east fireplace wall. The remains of this period of construction are visible today in the Reception Room of the Court Inn. The stone cooking fireplace with bake oven opening and a portion of the original wall framing exposed for view in the northeast corner of the room are clear evidence of this early building. Figure 2 shows a model of Period A viewed from the southwest corner. It is believed that this small house was built by Joseph and Margaret Thornton after they came to Newtown about 1730, and they continued to live here and operate a tavern from this site until 1752 when Joseph Thornton died. His wife Margaret continued the operation of the Inn until 1790.

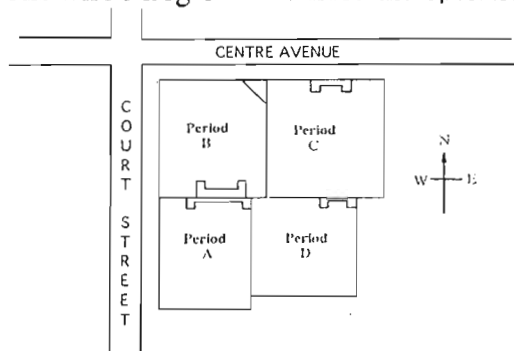


Figure 1. Early plan of the Court Inn showing the four periods of construction as described in the text.

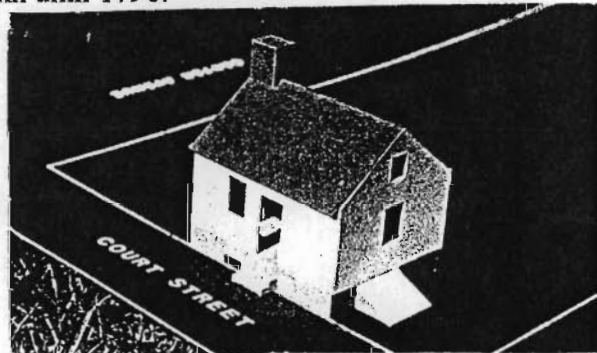


Figure 2. Period A (c. 1730), the first building at the Court Inn site. It was located along Court Street about 30 feet from the corner of Court Street and Centre Avenue. Of frame construction except for a large stone fireplace in the north wall, it is represented today by the Reception Room of the Court Inn.

Period B. c. 1730- 1740. With their favorable location across the street from the courthouse and the rapid development of the Village clustered around the public buildings, the Thorntons opened a tavern on the site, called the Half-moon Inn. The tavern (Period B) was a two and one half story “hall and parlor” plan structure appended to the north face of Period A. It was built of stone with a brick front of Flemish bond and glazed headers facing Court Street, an unusual construction material for early Newtown. The first floor was originally divided into two rooms, a “hall” with large stone fireplace to the south, and a “parlor” with small corner fireplace to the north. The Tavern Room of the Court Inn today contains the original fireplace on the south wall. The partition has been removed and the corner fireplace is no longer extant, the northeast corner now occupied by a wooden “bar” of recent construction. Evidence for the existence of the corner fireplace can be seen in the cellar as corbelling that would have supported the fireplace above. The fireplace may have been removed when the inn was enlarged during the next period of construction. Figure 3 on the following page shows the stone and brick Half-moon Inn of Joseph Thornton added to the north face of Period A.

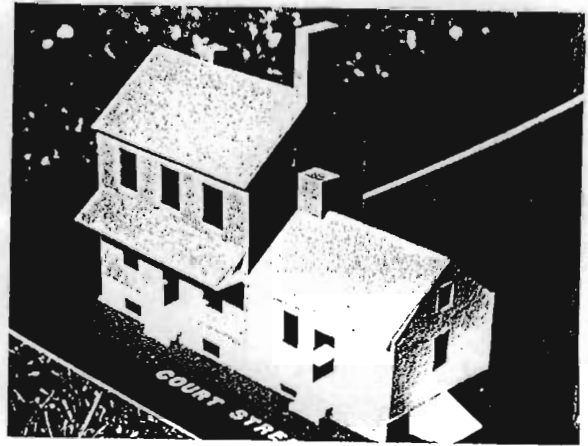
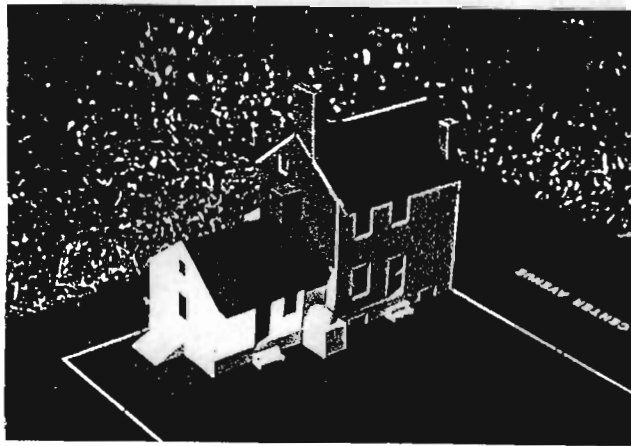


Figure 3. Period B, the tavern of Joseph and Margaret Thornton, c. 1735, called at the time the Half-moon Inn. A stone 2 1/2 story building facing Court Street with brick front was appended to the north face of the Thornton cabin of Period A.

Period C. c. 1740. A frame shed-roof addition with stone foundation and full cellar was appended to the east face of Period B. This change greatly enlarged the space of the tavern that must have been experiencing a rapid increase in business at this time. When this addition was made, a majority of the east stone wall and corner fireplace with associated chimney mass were removed from Period B stage. A portion of this stone wall remains today and can be seen in the northeast corner of the Tavern Room and in the Hicks Room on the second floor. The foundation support of the corner fireplace is also visible today in the cellar. A new closed stringer stair was installed at this time. Figure 4 below shows details of this construction period (C).

Period D. c. 1745. This was a similar frame shed-roof addition to the east face of the original Thornton cottage (Period A). It was built on a stone foundation with full cellar containing a large cooking fireplace, bake oven and east facing bulkhead, all still extant. Strong evidence supporting this sequence of events comes not only from the investigative architectural study, but also from the advertisement placed by Joseph Thornton that appeared in the Pennsylvania Gazette in 1746 for a tavern for sale in Newtown as follows:

"The Half-moon Inn, which he now keeps, and hath done about 14 years; it is a convenient house for a tavern or store, having four rooms on a floor, with fireplaces in each, and two ditto above the stairs; also four good cellars, one of which is a kitchen, with an oven and sink in it, and room for a copper to be hung (the flews already made) that adjoining to it has a fireplace; they are all well wall'd and pointed, and have inward and outward doors to each. It is the nearest to the Court-House, and the Court is pleased to dine at it."

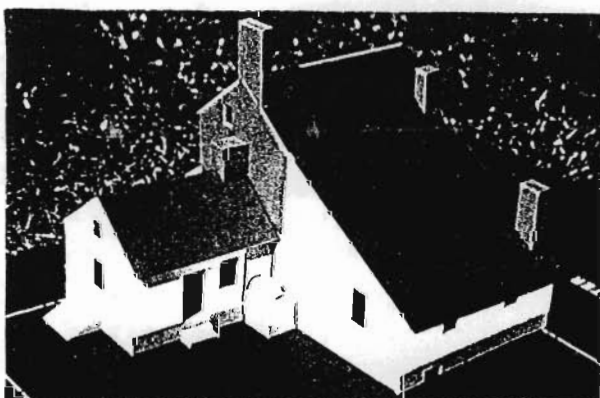


Figure 4. Period C, c. 1740 showing the east facade with frame shed roof addition to Period B.



Figure 5. Period D, c. 1745. A frame shed roof addition has been attached to the east face of Period A.

Architectural and historical evidence suggests that at the early period of 1746, the time of the Pennsylvania Gazette advertisement, the majority of the building was frame. The only stone and brick section, with the exception of masonry fireplace walls, flews and foundations, was the northeast Period B section. Later extensive reconstruction events created the building that we know today, and will be the subject of a second article on the Court Inn in another Newsletter.

REPORT ON 1997 OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, December 6th marked our 35th Annual Christmas House Tour, "Christmas in Colonial Newtown". It was a walking tour with seven houses and five public buildings. We had the weather on our side, and sold 1,000 tickets. Because of our blend of homes and architecture, the old and the new, not all of our hostesses were in costume. This year we used Art Miller as our photographer. We photographed the homes prior to December 6th during the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 4:00 P. M. Art declared I was some taskmaster! He had never taken so many pictures in one day. I know everyone will be pleased with his work. A special thanks to the volunteers who made the Tour a success. I greatly appreciated your thank you notes. It was my pleasure.

Lois Molloy, Chairman

The October Membership Meeting program was provided by Patricia Stallone, of Bristol, who spoke of "Women in Colonial America" with an emphasis on the working class, who, in many cases, proved to be both hardy and hardworking, although usually treated as second-class citizens. Legally, women had three rights - the right to live at home, the right to be fed, and the right to protection. Many served for four to seven years as indentured servants. However, during the Revolutionary War, many took over men's work, some even disguising themselves as men in order to serve in the army; or they followed their husbands to war to see that the latter were properly cared for. Ms. Stallone read a number of wartime letters which point out the hardships, both physical and emotional, which the women endured. Still, there were heroines, albeit mostly unrecognized. Two exceptions, both recognized, were Abigail Adams, who had the advantage of being a member of the upper class; and Betsy Ross, who may have received credit for more than she earned.

At our November Membership Meeting, Florence Wharton, a member of the Langhorne Borough Planning Commission, spoke on "Historic Zoning, A Langhorne Perspective", with great enthusiasm for her community's dedication to preserving significant historic buildings, some of which were portrayed in slides. Langhorne's Historic Zone covers two-thirds of the borough and comprises 305 parcels. Ms. Wharton stressed the cooperation which the various governmental bodies and organizations share with one another. An interesting sidelight was the revelation that the well-known Richardson House is owned by four boroughs.

We have our faithful Vice President, Martin Sutton, to thank for obtaining the above two, and many other fine meeting programs.