



# 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.

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## Newtown Historic Association

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## Honoring Officer Gregg

The Historic Association offers its most sincere condolences to the family of Boro Officer, Brian S. Gregg, who recently died in the line of duty while serving Newtown.

## Chair Repairs

The NHA would like to thank Pete Fisher for repairing several old chairs in the Court Inn. The chairs were previously thought to be beyond repair, but Mr. Fisher did a wonderful job restoring them.

## October Meeting

The October meeting of the Newtown Historic Association was held on Monday, October 17<sup>th</sup> at the Court Inn. About 45 people attended the lecture entitled, "The Delaware Canal - Commerce, Calamities, and Conservation" that was presented by Susan Taylor, Executive Director of Friends of the Delaware Canal. The slideshow showcased the 60-mile-long Delaware Canal that runs from Easton to Bristol, PA. Historic photographs illustrated stories of the era when teams of mules pulled canal boats laden with tons of coal to Philadelphia and New York. Calamities caused by structural failures and Mother Nature were described and the challenges of maintaining and restoring the Canal was related. Those in attendance enjoyed the informative lecture.

## New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

- Don & Daisy Grubbs, *Newtown, PA*
- Audrey Liss, *Newtown, PA*
- Joseph McEwen, *Newtown, PA*
- Robert Weiss, *Newtown, PA*

## Market Day Recap

Our annual Market Day colonial craft fair was held on Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup> after a touch and go situation with hurricane Ophelia. The day turned out to be very nice for the many visitors who enjoyed over 60 craftsmen and demonstrators. The candle making and children's craft activities were again very popular, along with the AARK Wildlife Refuge who brought many interesting animals to showcase. There was open hearth cooking by Susan Plaisted from "Hearth to Hearth" cooking, while "A Better Way Farms" Belgian draft horses pulled the very popular hayride. Music was provided by The Sugar Sands Ramblers Band. Area food vendors who participated in our "Festival of Foods" were: Avalon Café, Temperance House, Lee's Hoagie House. The kettle korn vendor "Kornecopia" was a huge success as usual, and funnel cakes were provided by the Irish Lassie.

The winner of the raffle to the Duke of Windsor Inn in Cape May, NJ was Diane Orr. The Countryside Gardeners had a table displaying flower arrangements. The Court Inn was open all day with a wonderful display of old maps and for tours. The Court Inn was open all day for tours. Overall, the public really seemed to enjoy the day. The Market Day Committee would like to thank everyone who helped make the day a success.

## Volunteering to Serve and Preserve Newtown's Legacy



*Photo courtesy of the NHA Archives.*

Quietly, he goes about his business helping out in any way necessary at the Court Inn. His duties typically range from tending the fires throughout the day during the annual Open House Tour; to opening the Court Inn research center early on Tuesday mornings and Thursday evenings preparing for visits from interested patrons; to spending many hours tirelessly assisting researchers and staff identify old photographs of Newtown or researching details associated with Newtown-related historical topics.

The Newtown Historic Association is fortunate to benefit from the service of Maurice J. (Mike) Donovan, a life-long Newtown resident and long-time volunteer at the Court Inn. Mike often calls upon his memories of Newtown from the days when he had a part-time mail route as a young man, or from his experiences as a member of the Class of 1945 at Newtown High School, as well as from serving his country in the U.S. Coast Guard as a member of the combat rescue flotilla in World War II.

Perhaps one of the least-known, yet most passionate, interests Mike shares is his endless work to honor and remember those fellow classmates and Newtown residents who sacrificed their lives during World War II.

In recognition of his work, the Chancellor Street Center Committee and the Morell Smith Post #440 of Newtown held a special dedication of the permanent new World War II Honor Roll at the Chancellor Center on May 21, 2005. Over 200 people attended the dedication of the Honor Roll that memorializes the eleven Newtown High School students who were killed in action or lost at sea during World War II.

The eleven Newtown High School students were:

- Robert J. Cahill
- George F. Dutton
- George F. Hennessey
- Leon M. Hennessey
- Marvin H. Hilsee
- Varsal Kirby
- Edward L. Maher
- Wallace G. Murfit, Jr.
- Arthur R. Strathie
- William H. Swayze
- Clifford C. VanArtsdalen

The Honor Roll is a testament to the brave men who willingly gave their lives so that we might enjoy the many freedoms our country has to offer.

For years, Mike has worked to recognize Newtown's World War II veterans. Over the years, he's gathered extensive information about their service by researching American Battle Monuments Commission documents and local archives. In addition, he contacted each family to collect photographs and details about the lives and deaths of these veterans. Mike has documented the contributions of these men so they will never be forgotten.

As historian of the American Legion Morell Smith Post #440 and as an active member of the Newtown Historic Association, Mike Donovan has worked to organize the recognition of Newtown's men and women who have served in the Armed Forces of our country. At the dedication service, family members were presented with a framed biography of their loved ones, spelling out details, such as rank, where they served, where and when they died, and the medals they received.

The display in the Chancellor Center contains a biography and picture of each veteran, including replicas of all medals received. The medals were donated by an anonymous donor.



*Photo courtesy of the NHA Archives.*

At the dedication, Mike was presented with a citation from the Pennsylvania House of representatives honoring him for his time and energy given toward the creation of the WWII memorial at the Chancellor Center.

Newtown is fortunate to have long time members of our community and volunteers, like Mike, who work hard to preserve the memory of both Newtown and its veterans.

*[Excerpts from articles printed in the December 20, 2001, December 7, 2004 and May 26, 2005 issues of the Advance of Bucks County.]*

## Helen Randle, Founding Member & First President (1911-2005)



*Photo courtesy of Lorraine Pentz.*

Helen Randle, long-time resident and volunteer in Newtown, died on July 30, 2005 at the age of 94. Born in Philadelphia in 1911 to Thomas J., a renowned artist and lithographer, and Ray M. Flanagan, Helen graduated from Germantown High School in 1928 and Swarthmore College in 1933 with honors in mathematics. In 1946, she moved to Newtown with her young family and lived on Frost Lane for almost 50 years. She moved to Pickering Manor in 1995 where she resided until her death.

While raising her two daughters, Helen worked for the Council Rock School District and the Natural Resources Department of the County Planning Commission, and later for the Township. But it is for her volunteer work and her dedication to the betterment of the greater Newtown community that Helen will be best remembered. She “has become something of an institution in Newtown,” wrote Sue Blank in an article written about Helen in *The Advance of Bucks County* in May 1986. It was in September of that year that Newtown honored her for forty years of service to the community at a dinner at the Northampton Valley Country Club. Little did anyone know that this dedication and service would continue for another twenty years.

During the time that Helen’s daughters were in school, she was very active in the Newtown school

system. She organized and was first president of the PTA and was later secretary of both the Newtown Joint PTA and the Council Rock PTA. She was a member of the Board of the Council Rock School District and president of the Newtown Joint School Board.

Although she still remained active in the school system for many years, she later turned her energies to local government, and historic and natural preservation. She was a founding member and first president of the Newtown Civic and Historic Association (now the Newtown Historic Association, Inc.) and chairman of the Newtown Joint Historic Commission. In March 1998, Helen and her colleague, Elizabeth “Dolly” Gish, were honored by the Newtown Historic Association for their 30 years of work and dedication to the preservation of historic properties in and around Newtown. Thanks to their efforts, numerous historic properties, including White Hall on State Street, the Brookside House, which was part of the Twining Farm, houses at Newtown Grant and Newtown Crossing, the Toll House at the Village at Newtown, the Lovett House, the Tyler Park Farmhouses, and the McMaster House, were preserved.

In addition to her interest in historic preservation, Helen was an active member and president of the League of Women Voters, a member of the founding board of the Neshaminy Valley Youth Center, a writer for the *Advance of Bucks County*, a long-time volunteer at the Newtown Library, secretary of the first Bucks County Government Study Commission, member and secretary of the Newtown Township Planning Commission, and one of a team of three who took on the task of codifying the ordinances of Newtown Township, Newtown Borough, Wrightstown, and Upper Makefield and secretary-treasurer of the Joint

Zoning Council until 1992. “I recall that she was always busy, volunteering on one committee or another, but as a single mom, she always had time for her girls. She was there for us 120 percent,” said one of her daughters. “She was an incredible woman and role model.”

In the late 1970s, Helen and fellow members of the Newtown Township Lanning Commission saw an opportunity to acquire for a recreational park more than 30 acres of land on Swamp Road, land previously owned by Mr. and Mrs. George F. Tyler that they had given to the state. It took close to 10 years of perseverance, but in 1987 the acquisition was complete and the land was developed as Swamp Road Park. In June 2002, the park was renamed Helen Randle Park in her honor. “There could be no better tribute to Helen than to have a park named after her,” said her good friend, Lorraine Pentz. “For generations to come, people in the community will be able to enjoy this park and see the name of the person who made it possible on the sign at the entrance. That’s quite an honor for an honorable lady.”

Helen is survived by her two daughters, Judith Iden of Upper Black Eddy, PA, and Patricia Hawthorne of Baltimore, MD, four grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, and a sister, Jane Hack, of Ocean City, NJ.

A memorial service to celebrate Helen’s life was held on October 8<sup>th</sup> at the Friends Meeting House. Contributions in her memory may be made to the Employees Fund of Pickering Manor, 226 N. Lincoln Avenue, Newtown, PA 18940 or to the Newtown Historic Association, Inc., Box 303, Newtown, PA 18940

*[Adapted from an article originally printed in the August 4, 2005 issue of the Advance of Bucks County.]*

## November Meeting

The November meeting will be held on Monday, November 21<sup>st</sup> at 8:00 PM at the Court Inn. “*The Historic Buildings of the Tyler Estate and Tyler State Park*” will be presented by Jeff Marshall of the Heritage Conservancy. Tyler State Park consists of over 1,500 acres in Bucks County. Before becoming a state park, the land was owned by Mr. & Mrs. George F. Tyler. By combining the smaller farms and by astute management, the property became a self-sustaining and even a profit-making investment during the Depression era. The old original stone dwellings in the park stand as fine examples of early farms of rural Pennsylvania. Some structures date back to the early 1700s. Original farm houses are currently being leased as private residences. The presentation will illustrate how the properties and dwellings were acquired and how they look today. The public is invited, refreshments to be served.

## Corporate Members

We are proud to highlight our corporate members, both long-time members and those recently joining:

- Anthony Petsis & Associates
- David J. Witchell Salon & Spa
- Dragonfly, Ltd.
- First National Bank of Newtown
- Johnson, Kendall & Johnson
- Mom’s Bake at Home Pizza
- Newtown Hardware House
- Newtown-Jamison Physical Therapy
- Newtown Roofing Company
- One Ten South Salon
- Peruzzi Automotive Group
- ReMax Properties, Ltd.
- Stuckert & Yates
- The Law Office of Paul Beckert
- The Township House
- Thomas-Guy Design, Ltd.
- Wells Fargo Home Mortgage
- YellowHouse Antiques

## Open House Tour

The 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Christmas Open House Tour will be held on Saturday, December 3, 2005 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. A partial list of featured private homes and public buildings include:

- O’Malley House (313 East Washington Ave.)
- Malzone House (126 N. State St.)
- Anderson House (148 N. State St.)
- Godwin House (144 Liberty St.)
- Gabbe House (109 N. State St.)
- The Brick Hotel
- St. Mark’s AME Zion Church
- Newtown Theatre
- Newtown Borough Council
- The Stocking Works
- The Court Inn

The Court Inn will feature open hearth cooking, colonial music and re-enactors of the colonial period. Refreshments of mulled cider and cheese will be served throughout the day. Tickets are \$20.00 and will be sold the day of the tour at the Court Inn and at the Stocking Works. Parking is available at the Stocking Works. Advance ticket sales at Newtown Hardware House. Rest room facilities are located at the Court Inn and the Newtown Borough Council Chambers. No photos or high-heeled shoes allowed in the houses. For information, call the Association at (215) 968-4004.

## Recent Acquisitions

- *Furniture Treasury*, Wallace Nutting, Vol. I & II – *Harriet & Paul Beckert*
- *Real Estate Assessment & Occupation Roll Books, 1984-1990* – *Newtown Borough Council*
- *My Draftee Life* – Charles & June Fulton
- *Papers Relating to the Relocation of the Newtown Post Office* – *Newtown Borough Council*

- Various Newtown Photos, Postcards and Advertising Cards – *Langhorne Historic Association*
- Various Items Related to Newtown, Including: First Night Badges, Posters, and 275<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Flag – *Glenn Hains*
- 1880 Census Records for Newtown Borough – *George Moser*
- *The Newtown Railroad* Reel, Vol. I 1783-1838; Vol. II 1838-1850; Vol. III 1850-1865 – *Richard Mansley*
- Exchange Club 60 Year Service Plaque of Morris Savidge, 1972 – *Sarajane Dallas*
- Papers Relating to the Annexation of the Hotchkiss Farm and the Development of Washington Village, 1967-1978 – *Newtown Borough Council*
- WWII Medals, Ribbons and Other Items from the Estate of Duane P. Slump – *David Krewson*
- Newtown Borough Council Minutes and Treasurer’s Reports, 1959-1964, 1965-1969, 1970-1977 – *Newtown Borough Council*
- Various Items Related to Newtown, Including: Historic Photos, Business Advertisements, and George School Year Books 1926-1930 – *David & Mary Callahan*
- Various Items Related to Newtown, Including: Historic Photos, Postcards, American Legion Garage Plot Plan and 1966 Phone Directory – *Michael Donovan*

## Upcoming Events

- **General Membership Meeting**, (*Jeff Marshall – Tyler Park Building History*), November 21.
- **Open House Tour**, December 3, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- **Volunteer Recognition Dinner**, January 29, 6:00 p.m. at a location to be announced.

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