

NEWTOWN HISTORIC ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 1997 Issue
David Callahan, President

Lorraine H. Pentz &
Helen F. Randle, Editors

CALENDAR

November 3, 1997
7:30 PM

Full Board Meeting

November 17, 1997
8:00 PM

Membership Meeting
Guest Speaker - Florence Wharton,
a member of the Langhorne Borough
Planning Commission, will speak on
"Historic Zoning - a Langhorne
Perspective".

December 1, 1997
7:30 PM

Full Board Meeting

December 6, 1997
10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Christmas Open House Tour
(See brochure)

January 5, 1998
7:30 PM

Full Board Meeting

January 19, 1998
8:00 PM

Membership Meeting
Slides of the 1997 Open
House Tour will be shown

BOARD NOTES

At the October Board Meeting, the following actions were taken:

A Fee Schedule for the use of the Court Inn was adopted.

A decision was made to conduct and publish a second Oral History of Newtown.

It was agreed that the Edward Hicks rocking-chair be loaned to the Michener Museum in Doylestown for their exhibit on the artist (prior to its loan to the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Museum in Williamsburg).

Tentative plans were laid for a number of events to look forward to in the Spring of 1998: - a cocktail party in celebration of Margaret Thornton's Birthday in March; an Architectural Tour in May; a repeat of the 1997 Spring Clean-up Day (which turned out to be a day of much work accomplished and much fun experienced, not to be missed in 1998).

1997 MARKET DAY

Our annual Market Day craft fair was held on Saturday, September 13 with excellent weather in Newtown. We had 50 craftspeople and demonstrators participate this year after a few last minute cancellations. We had some new crafts this year - hand-carved walking sticks and period clothing; and, we have ventured into the area of artists' works in water colors. A new feature this year was a Silent Auction which was held on North Court Street and chaired and organized by Vince Stefani. This was a successful event for Market Day and raised significant funds for the NHA. Six restaurants participated with great food selections. Other events were the Hayrides by Shady Brook Farms and the Corn Husking Contest run by Bruce and Dorothy Stevens. We had a new musical group this year - the Mountain Strings Dulcimer Band and everyone enjoyed their music. The Germantown Country Dancers danced for us in the afternoon.

Committees

Information and Membership - Lorraine Pentz, Helen Randle, Catherine Boyer, Dolly Gish, Marion Dahlman
Weekend in Williamsburg raffle - Wendy and Ed Curtin
Publicity - Cathy Treverio
Museum Shop - Margaret Danese, Jeanette Rogers, Susie Sutton, Lois Molloy, Terry Keane and Donna Halas
Silent Auction - Vince Stefani, Judy Stefani, Joanne Nardo, Ginny Willis, Chris Bauman
Corn Husking Contest - Bruce and Dorothy Stevens
Soda Sales - Gwen Gittens and her friends
Coffee and Donuts for Craftsmen - Penny Ettinger and Eleanor Janney
Hostesses for Demonstrators - Marge Torongo
Court Inn Hostesses - Ann Linkenheimer, Fran Smith, Roberta Arrowsmith, Mary Lou Kauffman, Anne Winter, Margrit Shoemaker, Bob Michels
Restaurant Signs - Lee Gittens
Poster Distribution - Dolly Gish
Funnel Cake Ticket Sales - Barbara Reeder
Hayride Ticket Sales - Mary Kennedy, Dolly Gish, Marion Dahlman, Judy Musto
Coordination of Restaurants with the Board of Health - Glen Blakely of Isaac Newton's Finances - Eleanor Janney and Helen MacCorkle
Setup and Cleanup - Ted and Gail Blandy, Laurie and Paul Gouza, Barbara and Michael Swanda, Brian Rounsavill, Jane Spector, Justin Lewis, Taylor Welsh, Skip Gittens, Joanne Nardo, Bill Platt, Mary and David Callahan.

The Market Day Committee would also like to thank anyone else who helped in any way to make our Market Day a success again and a fun day for everyone.

Market Day Committee - Laurie Gouza, Gail Blandy, Barbara Swanda,
Mary and David Callahan



HELP!!!

TOLL HOUSE - There is some interior clean up work needed in the Toll House. (The NHA was one of the groups instrumental in saving the house, which is located in the Village of Newtown Shopping Center.) If interested in helping, please call Dolly Gish at 968-3402.

HELP NEEDED WITH NEWSLETTER MAILINGS - A couple of people are needed four times a year to help attach labels and stamps to the newsletter envelopes for delivery to the post office. Please call Lorraine Pentz at 968-4357 or Helen Randle at 968-3735

EDWARD HICKS - DEDICATION OF HISTORICAL MARKER

Edward Hicks, one of the foremost American primitive folk artists, was honored on September 6 when a Pennsylvania State Historical Marker was dedicated in front of the house he built in Newtown at 122 Penn Street. Mayor Glenn Hains spearheaded the drive for the marker and was supported by David Callahan, President of the Newtown Historic Association. Marty Sutton compiled the research necessary for the Pennsylvania Historic Museum Commission application process, which was helped along the way by State Representative David Steil and his staff. Newtown Borough was responsible for the printing of the invitations and programs. Approximately 80 people turned out for the event on a delightful Saturday morning.

Participating in the ceremony were Glenn D. Hains, Mayor of Newtown; H. Paul Kester, Esq. who gave the invocation and benediction; Honorable David J. Steil, PA House of Representatives; Honorable Charles H. Martin, Bucks County Commissioner; Honorable Thomas C. Corrigan, Member PA Historical and Museum Commission and PA House of Representatives; Richard Bullock, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Department of Art, Bucks County Community College; Dr. Martin Mersky, present owner of the Hicks house and his son, David. Below is a reprint of a portion of the dedication program:

EDWARD HICKS

Edward Hicks (1780 - 1849) is remembered today as a leading American primitive folk artist, whose paintings hang in prestigious museums. He was known by early 19th century fellow Newtownians foremost as a tireless Quaker minister who painted to support his horseback preaching forays and to provide for his family.

Born in 1780 in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, Edward Hicks got his start as an apprentice to a local coach maker, eventually becoming a carriage maker and sign painter in his own right. He used his untrained but undeniable talents to paint and letter coaches and wagons. He created signs for taverns, streets, and shops in the region.

EDWARD HICKS (continued)

At the age of 31, he moved to Newtown with his wife Sarah and their children. Here he would spend the balance of his life preaching and painting.

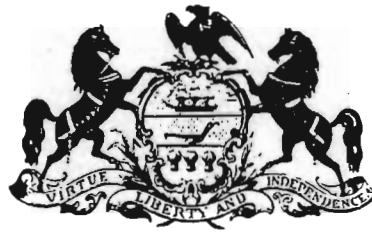
As an artist, he painted on board as much as on canvas. He embellished chairs, clock dials, oil cloth and all manner of materials. Places in and around Newtown have evidence of this handiwork. Around 1820, Benjamin Franklin's adage, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" inspired the name on the tavern sign for the Bird in Hand inn at Mercer and South State Streets, today a private residence. The Brick Hotel also once bore a Hicks tavern sign, now lost to history.

Of his many paintings, (he painted over 100 versions of his Biblically-inspired The Peaceable Kingdom), two original signs survive in Newtown - one painted for the Newtown Library Company, which hangs in the library; the other at the Newtown Historic Association.

Hicks built his home and studio in 1822 on Penn Street. He lived and painted for 28 years until his peaceful death there in 1849. Hicks was instrumental in establishing the Newtown Friends Meeting where he often preached, and where several other members of the Hicks family now rest in the adjoining cemetery.

Following the dedication, refreshments were served at the Court Inn. Guests were invited to tour the Edward Hicks room on the second floor where Hicks memorabilia, including the two-sided hanging tavern sign, are displayed.

Many members of the Historic Association helped at the dedication and the reception. Their contribution is greatly appreciated.



NEED A COSTUME FOR THE OPEN HOUSE TOUR? If you wish to borrow a costume for the Open House Tour on December 6, they will be available at the Court Inn on Thursday evening between 7:00 and 9:00 PM on November 20. Costume Mistress Sarajane Dallas will be there to help you with your selection. If you have any questions, please call Sarajane at 968-2644.

IN APPRECIATION: The Editors of the Newsletter wish to express their heartfelt thanks to Vincent Stefani, whose expertise in the use of the (his) computer has resulted in a much easier job for us and a much more attractive publication!

Recollections of Our Photographic Past

by Michael Swanda

How many times have we sat in the drug store parking lot, eagerly anticipating how many photographs turned out, concealed in that fat white envelope? There we are, sitting in the hot sun with the windows rolled down, smiling, or even laughing out loud, at the glossy prints propped on our laps against the steering wheel. There's no question that most of us really enjoy looking at photographs.

The world's first photograph was a view from a window taken by the French experimenter Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in 1827. The exposure time was eight hours and the sun can be seen shining on both sides of the picture! Most of us are familiar with the "daguerreotype" that was invented in 1837 by another Frenchman named Louis Daquerre. Daguerreotypes produced a clearer image but were fragile, positive pictures that could not be reproduced -- there was no negative.

Additional processes were invented throughout the 19th century and included "Calotype," "Ambrotype" and "Collodion" dry-plate photography. Developing these early prints was not for everyone. It was messy, cumbersome and required considerable practice and dexterity, not to mention the handling of many toxic chemicals such as mercury. By 1878, new methods allowed photographers to take pictures with exposures of 1/25 second, fast enough to hold a camera steady without a tripod. Various hand cameras were marketed in the 1880's as novelty "detective cameras" disguised as walking sticks, watches, books and other small articles.



In 1888, George Eastman invented the famous Kodak box camera, pioneered roll-film and changed the world of photography forever. By the beginning of this century, everyone wanted to be a photographer and Kodak made sure it happened by providing the inexpensive "Brownie" camera in 1900, and the folding-bellows pocket camera in 1903. Kodak products provided ample opportunities for the amateur photographer on a limited budget. How many of us can remember the "Kodak 35" camera of the 1940's, the yellow cartons of "Sure Fire" flash bulbs, and the "Snapshot Kodaguide" exposure wheels of the 1950's?

Advances in "digital" photography today were unheard of only 20 years ago. No longer is it necessary to drop off a roll of film at the drug store. In the comfort of our own homes, it is now possible to just drop a floppy disk from a digital camera into a computer and produce high resolution, quality images that can be processed on glossy paper right from a color printer. It really is amazing!



The Newtown Historic Association has an important collection of 19th and 20th century photographs that vividly document the many people, places, and events associated with Newtown and its heritage. A selection of the more interesting places in Newtown is being prepared by Jeff Marshall and David Callahan for publication. Did you ever wonder how your house looked when it was new? There are many house photographs in the collection. We are always looking for additional historic photographs of Newtown and welcome anyone who may wish to see the collection. Volunteers are always needed to help with the continuing curation of the collection.