



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*
Teena Hanlon, *Recording Secretary*
Mary Callahan, *Corresp. Secretary*
Marge Torongo, *Treasurer*

Board of Directors

Harriet Beckert
Douglas "Skip" Gittens
Paul Gouza
Jeanne Haeckel
Joanne Nardo
Geno Peruzzi
Susan Thompson
Cathy Treverio
David Walton
Dolly Gish - *Hon. Director*
David Mahler - *Parliamentarian*

Newtown Historic Association

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www.newtownhistoric.org

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting will be held on April 21st 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)
Jeanne Haeckel (2 Year Term)
Bronwyn Jones (2 Year Term)
William Mahler (3 Year Term)
Joanne Nardo (3 Year Term)
Geno Peruzzi (3 Year Term)
Susan Thompson (3 Year Term)

Other Directors (not up for election):

Paul Gouza
David Walton
Parliamentarian - David Mahler

Following the Annual Business Meeting, a presentation entitled, "The Discovery and Excavation of the Root Cellar at the Half-Moon Inn" will be given by David Callahan. The lecture will cover the excavation of the root cellar located behind the Half-Moon Inn and will show photographs of the excavation process as well as artifacts that were uncovered during the dig.

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

- Faith Foyil, *Newtown*
- Patricia Steele, *Newtown*
(*Life Member*)

Annual Dues

The annual dues notices have been mailed to all active members. To continue our membership drive, members are encouraged to submit the names and addresses of potential new members to the Corresponding Secretary, Mary Callahan at dcnhh@comcast.net. We are always looking for new members interested in joining to celebrate Newtown's history and heritage.

Spring Cocktail Party

Invitations have been mailed for the annual spring cocktail party that will be held on April 19th from 5-8 PM at the Half-Moon (Court) Inn. Take this opportunity to catch up with acquaintances, old and new. Tickets are \$35 per person. Join us for this wonderful event. For more information, contact Mary Callahan at (215) 968-3914 or dcnhh@comast.net.

Clean-Up Day

The annual Court Inn Clean-up Day was held on Sunday, March 29th. About 15 volunteers helped restore luster to the many historical items and furnishings in the Court Inn. We are very appreciative of their efforts!

Come Celebrate!

Join us in celebrating the 275th Anniversary of the *Half-Moon Inn*. See the website for more details in 2008.





The Hungry Ten (225-245 South Lincoln Avenue)

- Compiled by Brian Rounsavill -

Known as the "Hungry Ten", the ten identical brick row houses located at 225-245 South Lincoln Avenue were built beginning in 1908 by the Newtown Improvement Company. The land upon which the houses were constructed actually sits astride the dividing line of two traditionally separate lots that were not joined together until the late nineteenth century. The property was owned by Ashbel W. Watson, and after his death, his widow and heirs agreed to sell the property to the Newtown Improvement Company. The sale was recorded on October 15, 1908, but the buildings were well underway when the sale was consummated.

In the "Home Notes" column printed in the July 18, 1908 edition of the *Newtown Enterprise*, it was reported that efforts were being made to form a company to build several houses in Newtown to rent at about \$9 or \$10 per month. The newspaper stated that such dwellings were always in demand and would provide a fair return on investment. Two weeks later, on August 1, 1908, the newspaper reported further progress. It announced, "A company has been formed in Newtown for the erection and ownership of ten houses. They will be built in a row on land belonging to the estate of Ashbel W. Watson, deceased, on the east side of Lincoln Avenue, below the steam railroad crossing. Concrete or brick will be used in their erection, and it is said they will rent for about \$10 to \$11 per month. It is claimed that more houses of this character are needed to accommodate workmen who will be employed in the new pottery on South Chancellor Street."

From this point on, the newspaper gave a running account on the progress of the buildings. On August 22, 1908, it was reported that, "Joseph Linnington, of Langhorne, was putting up the stone foundation walls of the ten new houses being built by a Newtown company

on South Lincoln Avenue. Water is being introduced from the pipe on Sterling Street." By September 5, 1908, the foundation walls were about finished and workmen of the Edward Kelly & Sons, Company of Germantown, were "running up the brick walls of the buildings on the north end." According to the newspaper, it would "take about 150,000 bricks to complete the work."

The bricklayers finished their work on Tuesday, September 22, on the ten new houses being erected on South Lincoln Avenue, and the carpenters immediately began work on the interiors. The September 26, 1908 *Newtown Enterprise* remarked on the progress by stating, "It is hoped the houses are ready for occupancy by cold weather." Work continued steadily, and by October 17, 1908, the *Newtown Enterprise* reported that, "J. Harrison Wilson, of Doylestown, has contract for plastering the ten new brick houses of the Newtown Improvement Company on South Lincoln Avenue. On Monday morning, 15 workmen were on the job. It is hoped to have them completed while the good weather lasts, as many are already rented." All the original houses were surmounted by a decorated frieze board that was interrupted at each house division and each window had a cement lintel to simulate a keystone. The two-over-ten windows are an original design of the houses. Unless there were two companies in Newtown with the same name, it appears that the newspaper was not quite accurate in its initial statement that a new company would be formed to buy the property and build the houses. According to the later newspaper account and deed records, the property was acquired by the Newtown Improvement Company, which had been formed thirty years earlier.

The Newtown Improvement Company was chartered in 1878 after the arrival of the railroad in Newtown. Its charter indicates that, "Said corporation is formed for the purpose of purchasing of real estate, erecting buildings and other

improvements thereon, the renting and selling of real estate for the benefit of the stockholders.” The Newtown Improvement Company was one of many such companies established in larger boroughs of Bucks County. These companies were formed to provide capital, buildings, and other enticements for industries to relocate to their respective towns.

After passing a resolution authorizing the sale of real estate on December 11, 1919, the Newtown Improvement Company sold seven of the ten houses it had constructed on this site to the U.S. Bobbin and Shuttle Company (now known as the Stocking Works). The deed contained an easement for an alley 10 feet wide along the end of the property for access to the U.S. Bobbin and Shuttle Company and the Newtown Producing Company (a corporation that dealt in ginseng and poultry).

At this time, the houses had no electric, no bathrooms, running water and were rented for \$12 per month. Many of the Newtown railroad station employees and freight agents resided here, as well as employees of other local businesses, such as the U.S. Bobbin and Spool Works, Newtown Pottery, Worstall’s Feed and Flour Mill, and Kenderdine’s Coal Yard. These homes served as affordable rentals for laborers and their families.

From 1920 until 1975, the houses were sold to individuals that included: Alfred Bohmler, William T. Wright, Emma S. Wright, William Stattler, John S. Wright, Margaret S.W. Tomlinson, Charles O. and Ada W. Barton, Ruth E. Roberts, C. Allen and Lilly F. Barton, Harold and Mary Jane Catz, The Lafayette House, Inc., Matthew J. Siano and Joseph D. Anding.

It is said that the “Hungry Ten” took its nickname from the simple fact that, during the Great Depression, the ten families that rented these houses had no money to afford food, even though they were the most affordable houses to rent in Newtown at the time. Today, much has changed around Newtown, and people are now “hungry” to own one of these quaint homes in Newtown Borough.

References:

- “Our Town, Newtown” by Jeffrey L. Marshall, *For the Newtown Historic Association, Newtown, PA, March 13, 2005, p. 54.*
- “A History of 241 South Lincoln Avenue”, *Part of the “Hungry Ten” Block, Newtown, PA, Prepared by the Historic Preservation Department of Heritage Conservancy, November 1994.*
- “Christmas in Historic Newtown”, *37th Annual Open House Tour Program, Newtown Historic Association, December 4, 1999.*

Bird-in-Hand Raid Reenactment

- Compiled by Paul Gouza -

As part of the celebration of the 275th Anniversary of the Half-Moon Inn, the Newtown Historic Association will host “*The Bird in Hand Raid Reenactment*” on Saturday, May 10, 2008 from 10:00 AM to Noon on the streets of Court and Mercer (*if it rains, the event will be canceled*). The special reenactment will feature The 5th PA Regiment (*Continental Army*) and The 1st Crossing Volunteers (*British Army*).

On the evening of February 18, 1778, a raiding party of forty Loyalists in the Light Dragoons and Bucks County Volunteers left Philadelphia and marched the twenty-six miles to Middletown in Bucks County, where they surprised and captured a guard and some cloth at Jenk’s Fulling Mill. They then continued to Newtown, where they over-powered sixteen Pennsylvania militia men, led by Francis Murray, in a house known as “Bird-in-Hand,” five of whom they killed. They then returned to Philadelphia, carrying with them 2,000 yards of material, two wagons filled with timber, and thirty-two prisoners.

The Bucks County raid, fifty-six miles traversed in only twenty-two hours, was a bold stroke. In addition to depriving poorly dressed soldiers of the 13th Pennsylvania Regiment of cloth they desperately needed for uniforms, it was the most daring and successful military venture undertaken during the British occupation of Philadelphia – and it was led and carried out by Pennsylvanians. A Tory newspaper in Philadelphia called the “Newtown Skirmish,” as it would later become known, a “gallant action” that “must certainly meet with the applause of the public, and do great credit to officers who conducted it, and the men who, under their direction, accomplished it.” It also showed the commitment of Americans loyal to the Crown to fight for their beliefs.¹

The commemorative plaque in front of the house reads, “*Loyalist Raid of 1778 - The largest Loyalist raid during the British occupation of Philadelphia (1777-78) took place at the “Old Frame House,” an inn in Newtown where a group of tailors was making uniforms for the Revolutionary Army. The loyalists killed five American soldiers and made off with 2,000 yards of cloth, a commodity highly valued by the American forces.*”

¹ <http://www.explorepahistory.com>

Archival Grant Update

In October 2005, the Newtown Historic Association had a preservation assessment survey performed by the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission Technical Assistance Grant Program to evaluate our archival storage facilities at the Half-Moon Inn. The survey gave us a good review for our facility and suggested that we acquire more storage space and archival storage boxes. As a follow-up, we applied for a Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission grant to pay for 50% of the costs associated with the needed storage containers, along with some new shelving. We are pleased to report that we have acquired the shelving, assembled it, painted the storage room and are in the process of filling the shelving with the boxed items. We also created some additional storage space in the Thornton Hicks House attic for materials that are not accessed regular basis. If you have visited the Half-Moon Inn over the winter, you may have seen stacks of boxes being readied for storage. We are indebted to the many volunteers who have been helping us catalog and prepare the items for storage during this project. Thank you!

Historic Walking Tour

On June 6th, we welcome you to join us for an historic walking tour featuring the Half-Moon Inn, Court Street and the surrounding area. The tour will be led by Jeff Marshall, Vice President of Resource Protection at the Heritage Conservancy. Join us for an informative stroll through the historic streets of Newtown at 6:30 PM on Friday, June 6th at the Half-Moon Inn. The public is invited and refreshments will be served. Free admission.

March Meeting

The March meeting of the Newtown Historic Association was held on Monday, March 17th at 8 PM at the Half-Moon Inn. The meeting featured the "Newtown Film from 1976 entitled, "A Peaceable Kingdom." Filmed for the 1976 Bicentennial celebration in Newtown, this film offered the unique opportunity to take a step back in time to see what it was like to live in Newtown over thirty years ago. This general membership meeting is one of a series of yearlong events and programs celebrating the 275th Anniversary of the Half-Moon Inn. The public is invited, refreshments will be served.

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
- Gemmi Construction, Inc.
- Johnson, Kendall & Johnson, Inc.
- Mom's Bake at Home Pizza
- Newtown Hardware House
- Newtown-Jamison Physical Therapy
- Newtown Roofing Company
- One Ten South Salon
- Peruzzi Automotive Group
- Pickering Corts & Summerson, Inc.
- ReMax Properties, Ltd.
- St. Mary Medical Center
- Stuckert & Yates
- The Law Office of Paul Beckert, Jr.
- The Temperance House
- Thomas-Guy Design, Ltd.
- Waitkus Design Landscape Architects
- Wells Fargo Home Mortgage
- YellowHouse Antiques

Some New Accessions

- Milk Bottle Caps from The Dell Dairy – *Jeff & Becky Marshall*
- "Colonial Inns and Taverns of Bucks County" – *Marie Duess*
- *The Newtown Railroad Reels, Vol. XVII* – *Richard Mansley*
- Frank M. Musser Pharmacy Pill Box – *David & Mary Callahan*
- Photograph of Dr. Benjamin Smith and Daughter, Mary – *David & Mary Callahan*
- Files of Documents Pertaining to Newtown Residents Who Have Been Awarded a Purple Heart – *Mike Donovan*
- Personal Letters, Portable Writing Box, Ink Well and Contents of Charles Savidge, circa 1870-1920 – *Sarajane Dallas*
- Unidentified Photographs, Glass Negatives and Tin Plates of Members of the Hogeland, Hampton or Savidge Families – *Sarajane Dallas*

Upcoming Events

- **Cocktail Party**, April 19. 5:00 p.m.
- **Annual Meeting**, "Discovery and Excavation of the Root Cellar at the Half-Moon Inn", April 21. 8:00 p.m.
- **Bird-in-Hand Reenactment**, May 10, 10:00 a.m.
- **5th Grade Historic Walking Tour**, June 4. 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- **Historic Walking Tour**, June 6. 6:30 p.m.
- **Annual Picnic**, June 21, 6:00 p.m.
- **Market Day**, September 13.
- **Antique Appraisal**, Oct 4, 1:00 pm.
- **275th Celebration**, Oct 11, 7:00 pm.
- **General Membership Meeting**, "The History of the Half-Moon Inn", October 20. 8:00 p.m.
- **General Membership Meeting**, "The Role of Women in World War II", November 17. 8:00 p.m.
- **Open House Tour**, December 6.

The Half Moon is published quarterly by the Newtown Historic Association, Inc., P.O. Box 303, Centre Avenue & Court Street, Newtown, PA 18940



Printed on Recycled Paper.