



**NEWTOWN HISTORIC ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
P.O. BOX 303 · CENTRE AVENUE & COURT STREET · NEWTOWN, PA. 18940

**NEWSLETTER**  
**May, 1988**

**ANNUAL MEETING**

On Monday, April 18, 1988, the annual meeting at the Court Inn was called to order by President Fran Smith. Secretary Helen Randle presented the minutes of the previous annual meeting. Because she had a slight cold, Elizabeth Gish read her report. Reports of the standing committees were then read. The Secretary will furnish a summary of these proceedings on request.

Treasurer Eleanor Janney reported the following:

Certificate of deposit-----	\$1000.00
Certificate of deposit-----	15000.00
Checking account-----	4797.14
General account-----	7498.89
Restoration account-----	5601.11
Acquisition account-----	980.56
Total cash on hand-----	34877.70

The nominating committee presented the following slate of nominees.

**OFFICERS (TWO YEAR TERM)**

President-----	Francella Smith
1st V.P.-----	Elizabeth Gish
2nd V.P.-----	Roger Cook
Recording Secretary-----	Helen Randle
Corresponding Secretary-----	Mary Rounsaville
Treasurer-----	Eleanor Janney

**DIRECTORS**

Sidney T. Yates-----	four years
Ernest Millard-----	four years
Mary Jane Crumlish-----	four years
Charles Rollins-----	four years
Thomas Mayer-----	two years
Lorraine Pentz-----	two years
Kathy Fink-----	two years

Since there were no nominations from the floor, the secretary was instructed to cast a unanimous ballot.

The terms of the following directors have not expired:

- David Callahan
- Margaret Danese

Welcome to our newly elected officials. They are urged to assist us with their special talents toward achieving the objectives of the Association.

## PRESERVATION WEEK

Mary Jane Crumlish read a proclamation of Mayor Harold Smith declaring the week of May 22nd to be "Newtown Historic Preservation Week", to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of Newtown Borough. It was formerly part of Newtown Township. Residents are encouraged to display the National Emblem during this period.

It was also announced that the Newtown Historic Association will sponsor its second annual walking tour on May 22nd. It will be entitled "150 Years as a Borough: A Newtown Walking Tour." Groups will leave the Court Inn every half hour from 2:00 P.M. until 3:30 P.M. Costumed guides will escort the groups. Distance is about a half mile and will take less than an hour. Cost is \$2.50 each and includes refreshments. For information phone Mary Jane Crumlish at 968-5448 or Fran Smith at 968-3519.

The President appointed the following Standing Committee Chairmen:

Finance-----	Eleanor Janney
Acquisitions and accessions-----	Kathy Fink
Open House Coordinator-----	Eleanor Janney
Market Day-----	David Callahan
Archaeology-----	Roberta Taylor
Membership-----	Ernest Millard
Library-Documnt Room-----	David Callahan
Restoration-----	David Callahan
Publicity-----	Lorraine Pentz
Programs-----	Fran Smith
Building Use-----	Ernest Millard
Ways and Means-----	Margaret Danese
Annual Report-----	Helen Randle
Building & grounds-Security-----	David Callahan
Restoration Award-----	Roger Cook
By Laws-Parliamentarian-----	Richard Walton

## DEDICATION

On the evening of March 24th 1988 a reception was held in the Hicks Room of the Court Inn to dedicate a plaque honoring the First National Bank of Newtown for underwriting the cost of restoring and mounting the Edward Hicks Tavern Sign. President Fran Smith expressed the appreciation of the Association and the Community. President Theodore Miller responded that the Bank is a service institution and welcomed the opportunity assist in the preservation of such an important community asset. Bank Executive V.P. John Parry also spoke.

## NEWTOWN RAILROAD HISTORIC ARTIFACTS

See Elizabeth Mayer's latest exhibition in the second floor display case.

#### MARKET DAY 1988

Saturday, September 17th is the date. The committee consisting of Dave Callahan, Elizabeth Mayer, Lorraine Pentz with Mary Rounsaville on publicity are hard at work. Volunteers are needed.

#### CHARLESTON OPEN HOUSE TOUR

A trip to historic Charleston, South Carolina for its open house tour was sponsored by Fran Smith and arranged by Ginnie Willis of Merriman Travel. A group of nineteen made the trip. The weather was beautiful, accomodations most attractive, and the meals were excellent. A cosmopolitan city, delightful in the springtime with its elegant mansions, gardens ablaze with cascades of azaleas, flowering jasmine and camelias, it was a charming adventure in a place of great beauty and gentle people.

#### LECTURE

Margaret Bye Ritchie will give a slide lecture on the "Origins of Bucks County Architecture" to the American Art History Club of Bucks County at the Court Inn on Thursday, May 26 at 7:30 P.M. All Newtown Historic Association members are invited to attend. For reservations phone Fran Smith at 968-3519.

#### LIBRARY REQUEST

Our library desires to establish a complete file of "The Magazine Antiques". Librarian Frances Cronin requests copies of all months from 1922 to 1972; June, 1977; May, 1979; March 1984; and all since August 1987. Anyone having these copies stored away would do a service to the rest of us by sharing them.

#### IMPORTANT MAPS

"Sanborn" maps are made of various areas for use of insurance appraisers. They show details of buildings, including lot size, construction materials, etc. One of these maps covering Newtown was donated some years ago. After some research, Tom Mayer located several others at the Library of Congress. He secured microfilms and our archives now have maps of Newtown dated 1909, 1915, 1924 and 1945. These are valuable since they may show buildings no longer in existence. Anyone wishing to view these maps should visit the Court Inn any Thursday night between 7:00 and 9:00 P.M. Tom is usually on duty

#### UNUSUAL ACQUISITION

Through the efforts of Dave Callahan we have added a most interesting device to our collection: a PIPE RACK. Made of iron consisting of several rings four inches in diameter connected by two flat bars 18 inches long, with feet on each end. In the old days clay pipes were widely used for smoking tobacco. When they became too foul they were placed in a pipe rack and put into a hot oven. After the corruption was roasted out, they were good as new.



PIPE RACK

#### INFORMATION

An important suggestion of the RESOURCE TEAM of the National Trust for Historic Preservation was that the members of an organization such as ours should be kept fully informed. Feedback should be encouraged. A function of this Newsletter is to pass on all information of general interest, including executive decisions, committee actions, acquisitions, special exhibits, and all other Association matters.

In this regard, we will start with this issue to add a feature article of importance to members.

Helen Randle has consented to prepare a two part essay on the history of this organization. Part one is attached.

Many who were important in establishing our Association are no longer with us. They were good people; they managed well the many problems and conflicts that must have confronted them, for they passed on to us a functioning entity within which we, in turn, can use the time available to us to build upon the foundation which they firmly established: to preserve our lovely little town and assure that the rich historical record of the entire area will be available to those who will follow us.

## A CONDENSED HISTORY OF THE NEWTOWN HISTORIC ASSOCIATION

### Part I - The First Decade by Helen F. Randle

It was early in 1963 when a group of concerned and dedicated residents of Newtown Borough and Township met in the spacious living-room of Newton ("Newt") and Elizabeth ("Dolly") Gish at 222 S. Chancellor St., where Dolly, our present Vice-President, still resides. These citizens were vitally interested in both the past and the future of this community and they discussed the possibility of forming an association to foster their aims and encourage others to take part in the "study of matters of civic interest such as planning, zoning, taxes, historical preservation, recreation, education and safety." There had been a civic association in the 50's, but it had died out when there were not pressing issues to spur it on. The hope was expressed in 1963 that this would not happen again. (That was 25 years ago!) There is no known existing written record of that meeting, so we must rely on Dolly's memory for the names of attendees, who included: the Gishes, Edward R. ("Ned") and Ruth Barnsley, Ernest ("Ernie") and Jane Rae Millard, Charles and Ann Miller, Thomas Talbot, Thomas Tewksbury and Henry Pearson. (It is of interest to note that two of these founders, Dolly Gish and Ernie Millard, are members of the present Board of Directors; and a third, Ned Barnsley, a member of the organization, has donated priceless documents to our archives.)

This gathering resulted in a "pre-organizational" meeting held February 25, 1963 in the Neshaminy Valley Youth Center (presently the Council Rock Youth and Community Center) on N. State St. Forty people attended. Ernie Millard acted as Temporary Chairman and Dolly Gish as Temporary Secretary. It was agreed that this group be organized into the Newtown Civic and Historic Association. One of several suggested matters to be pursued was "preserving the historical aspect of the community, including efforts for preservation of historical buildings."

On March 25, a second meeting was held at the Youth Center. It was agreed that the first officers should be elected for a six-months' term since the group might not yet be representative of the community. The first President was Helen Randle. On May 9, 1963, with 73 people in attendance, the Constitution and By-Laws were adopted. In September, William ("Bill") Doherty was elected President for a year's term. The first Open House was held on December 13, with approximately 350 people attending and a \$395 profit realized. Committees had been formed, reports were made on various community activities and programs were held at each meeting. (This history will only address those which were historically-oriented.) There was an October Walking Tour conducted by Dr. Raymond Hennessy. At the February, 1964 meeting, David Taylor, a former resident and author of a number of American historical novels, including "Lights Across the Delaware" and "Mistress of the Forge", was the speaker. (The writer was privileged to have typed the manuscript for the first of these, which was a fictional narrative based on Washington Crossing the Delaware.)

It was in 1964 that the Newtown Historic Association, Inc. evolved out of the original organization. It had been learned that Robert and Ruth LaRue were planning to give the Court Inn to the Association and it was necessary to incorporate as a historic association only, in order that such gifts would be tax-free. Articles of Incorporation were signed on August 17, 1964. The incorporators were William Doherty, Raymond Hennessy, Ann Miller, Helen Randle and Bertha Sheeran. (Bill Doherty and Ann Miller have moved out of the area, Dr. Hennessy is deceased, "Bert" Sheeran is a life member and Helen Randle is a present officer.)

Bert Sheeran was elected the first President of the newly-formed organization in September, 1964. One of her first announcements was that the Court

Inn would serve as the Association's headquarters. Dr. Hennessy undertook supervision of the restoration immediately. Those serving as Presidents following Mrs. Sheeran and through 1972 were: Raymond Hennessy (now deceased), John Cummings (moved), Charles Miller (moved), Richard Walton (presently Parliamentarian), John McKinney (deceased), and Robert Miller (moved). Open Houses were established as an annual event and steadily grew in attendance and profit to an event anticipated with great interest each year. (A separate article will address the history of these significant activities.) The Association took part in Market Day, sponsored by the businessmen in June, by opening the Court Inn, holding a flea market one year, and garden tours on several occasions.

In February, 1966, the first George Washington's Birthday Dinner was given, a practice which has also continued each year. Clambakes at Sheeran's became a yearly social affair and were greatly enjoyed. Toward the end of the first decade, these were changed to the present Steak Fries.

After the first trip, there were others which were highlights in both the education and entertainment of members and friends: to Winterthur in 1965; in 1966, to Tarreyton, New York; a week-end visit to Deerfield, Mass., in 1967, which was a favorite; in 1969, a repeat of the New Castle, Delaware trip; and in 1971, Open House at Greenwich, New Jersey.

Many gifts of furnishings for the Inn, too numerous to mention in the limited space available, were made by both members and non-members. (This would make an excellent subject for a future article, perhaps by a member of the Acquisitions Committee.) A policy was established of giving to the Newtown Library a book in memory of each member who passed away, which has been continued through the years.

Program subjects included: plans for the Bucks County Community College, including the preservation of the mansion, etc.; The Antique Market Today; slides on the entertainment of the National Trust for Historic Preservation; a movie on the re-enactment of Washington Crossing the Delaware; Mercer Museum tools; Colonial tools; early American chairs; slides of old homes and landmarks of Newtown; slides of Old Deerfield Village; Jenks Hall; antique glass; "Highways of History"; Council Rock Indians; antique brass candlesticks; the 350th anniversary of Plymouth, Mass.; refurbishing of antique brass, copper, tin and pewter; early lighting and primitives; Bolton Mansion and Christmas in Colonial Williamsburg. In addition, the slides of the annual Open House were shown each year.

The Association expressed concern about and tried to prevent the demolition of Headquarters House (where the Mobil Gas Station now stands); decried the demolition by the State of the Buckman House on Rte. 332 (unexpected and sudden); recognized a threat to West School across from the Junior-Senior High School; and took an active part in preventing the destruction of the houses throughout Tyler Park (a successful and commendable project).

Highlights of the decade included: the inspiration to form the original association; the first Open House in 1963; the incorporation in 1964; the gift of the Court Inn in the same year, plus a \$20,000 restoration fund by the LaRues; a visit by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1966, the year their National Convention was held in Philadelphia; the publication of the cook book "A Pinch of Salt" in 1967; the establishment, during Charles Miller's presidency and greatly due to his efforts, of the first Historic Zone in Newtown Borough, March, 1969; a tour of the Inn and other Newtown historical buildings by the Historical Society of Montgomery County in 1968 - with 65 attending; and a gift from Grace ("Missie") Boone, by a Codicil of her Will in 1972, of the "Boone Garden" across Court St. from the Inn, together with \$750 for its perpetual care.