

The Half-Moon

The Newtown Historic Association, Inc. Newsletter

Thornton\Hicks Findings - Oct 16

The NHA General Membership meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 16, 2000 at 8:00 p.m.. The guest speakers will be John Milnor of John Milnor Architects, Inc. of Chadds Ford, PA and John Hinchman an undergraduate from the University of Penn. Their topic of discussion will be the historic structures report of the Thornton\Hicks House that was completed this summer. The NHA recently received a construction cost estimate regarding the repair and restoration of the roof and west attic wall of the Thornton\Hicks House of \$92,000.00. Be sure to attend.

Thornton/Hicks Campaign

The costs are in and fundraising is underway. Any NHA member who would like to help with grant writing or fundraising for the Thornton\Hicks House should contact Dave Callahan at 215-968-3914. Contributions can be made to Newtown

Historic Association, P.O. Box 303, Newtown, PA 18940.

President's Message

A special thanks to the Market Day Committee of Mary and Dave Callahan, Laurie Gouza and Gail Blandy. The committee has met monthly since January to plan NHA's major annual fundraiser. Also thanks to all the NHA members, family and friends who volunteered. With everyone's hard work, this was our most successful Market Day ever.

New Accessionor

NHA member Susan Bannon has volunteered to help take over the accessions for our museum items. With the recent purchase of new museum software and Susan's help, the NHA will be entering in all of our collections into a database.

Research Hours

OPEN - Tuesday
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

OPEN - Thursday
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Calendar of Events

General Membership Meetings
Monday, October 16, 2000
(John Milnor, John Hinchman
Historic Structures Report -
Thornton\Hicks House)
8:00 p.m.

Monday, November 20, 2000
(Speaker to be determined)

Odd Jobs Party - 8:30 a.m.
Sunday, October 22, 2000

Annual Open House
Christmas in Newtown
Saturday, December 2, 2000
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

INSIDE.....
Donations & New Members
"Friends Indeed" Review
Good Intent School

Market Day Success

The NHA Annual Market Day was a huge success. Sixty crafters and artisans participated this year. The weather was cool with pleasant winds which allowed thousands of patrons to wander the historic streets of Court, Centre and Mercer. The four restaurants: The Temperance House, Isaac Newtons, Marita's Canteen and Avalon Cafe all had plenty to offer. The Kornucopia popcorn maker and Funnel Cake Libery Concessions did a thriving business with long lines throughout the day.

Officers & Board Members

President: Paul Gouza
 First Vice President: Brian Rounsavill
 Second Vice President: Ann Balderston
 Recording Secretary Terry Keane
 Corresponding Sec.: Mary Callahan
 Treasurer: Marge Torongo

Board of Directors:
 Skip Gittens, Maureen Harrison,
 Liz Kelsey, Jean Haeckel, Barbara Reeder, Dave Callahan, Ann Linkenheimer, Joanne Nardo, Lorraine Pentz, Barbara Reeder

Also attending the Board Meetings:
 Parliamentarian: Paul Kester
 Honorary Life Director: Dolly Gish

Newtown Enterprise News - October, 1901

Owing to inclement weather last Sunday afternoon, the baptism announced to take place near Jefferson street bridge was postponed for two weeks, and is now fixed for Sunday afternoon, Oct. 27th, at four o'clock.

.....
 The Newtown Mushroom Club has gone out of business for the season, owing to the absence of this edible fungus in our old meadows and pasture fields.

.....
 Parties from Reading were in Newtown on Saturday looking for a site on which to erect a knitting mill. Their plant and machinery in Reading were recently partially consumed by fire, and they think our town offers facilities for the successful operation of their business. A number of Newtown capitalists are interested in the movement.

.....
 A brace of wandering musicians with harp and violin, performed on Newtown streets last Saturday. The quality of their music was pronounced good by competent critics. In sunny Italy, no doubt, these artists received their training.

Donations Received:

The Research Center

By John Hayden, a poster showing "Historic Development - Chronology of Construction" of Chancellor Street School from 1860 (proposed) to 1932 (final construction).

.....
 By Doreen E. Cornell, many items relating to Newtown. Including a brief of title of Cornell J. Watson and list of owners at 127 Liberty Street.

.....
 Any research item pertaining to Newtown and donated to the NHA is placed in the Edward R. Barnsley Room of Early Newtown at the Court Inn where it is preserved and available for study and display.

Welcome New Members:

New members from Newtown:

Dan Bornstein, Mark & Paula Craig, Robert Griffiths III, Dr. Alan & Diana Barbera-Horwitz, Douglas & Margaret Levin, Mr. & Mrs. Charles McKinstry, Michael & Lorraine Morse, Michael & Christine Sciarrota, Warren & Barbara Snyder

New Members (Continued)

George Chambers Dole, New York; Diane Cerrick, Langhorne; Joseph & Barbara Guarnieri, Yardley; Jack & Ruth Harrison, Scotia, New York; Gary & Kathryn Lohse, Ivyland; Margery Peet, Wyndmoor

"Friends Indeed" A Bucks County Family History

The NHA recently received a letter from Constance Rogers of Cold Spring Harbor, New York writing about her dear friend Charlie Waugh, formerly of Newtown. She cites a brief commentary on Charlie's new book "Friends Indeed," A Bucks County Family History. She writes, *"In the process of researching the history of his family, Charles has crafted a remarkable book that defies conventional classification. This is not merely one family's saga of fleeing from an England that inflicted cruel punishment on those questioning religious and moral authority. It is a far more in depth. Perceptive evaluation of the political, scientific, philosophical and historic forces that had such a profound effect on that tumultuous era, and subsequently on the fledgling nation that served as*

a haven for those seeking freedom. Chronicling the lives of the first settlers who arrived with William Penn, he deftly interweaves the progress of seven generations of his forebears, with significant historic events. With consummate skill he depicts the growth of America over the next three centuries, tracking key economic, political and scientific forces that have lead us to the much heralded millennium. Finally, this is a sensitive memoir of a gifted man for whom much gratification and success in his personal life has all too often been tempered by tragic personal loss. To read this book is an inspiring experience that should invoke a response from many."

Anyone interested in purchasing a copy of "Friends Indeed" should contact the Court Inn.

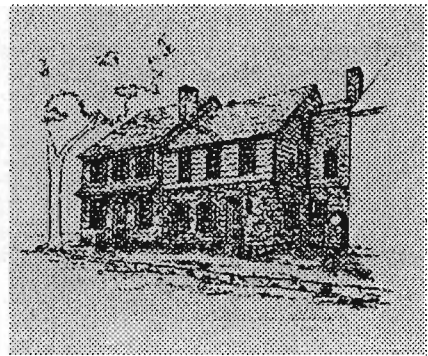
Good Intent School "Third Base is Still There"

The NHA recently received a letter from Jack Harrison, class of 1942, Newtown High School. He enclosed a copy of an article for which he wrote about the Good Intent School (Rte 413, Newtown Township). The

NHA has inserted this article for your enjoyment.

Odd Jobs Party

Mark your calendar, for Sunday, October 22, 2000 at 8:30 a.m. Anyone interested in helping scrape, paint and help with odd jobs at the Lauer property (next door to the Court Inn), please plan to join us.



The Half Moon is a publication of the Newtown Historic Association, Inc., P.O. Box 303, Newtown, PA 18940 - Paul Gouza - Editor 215-968-4004.

Articles for this issue of *The Half Moon* were contributed by Constance Rogers and Jack Harrison.

Third Base is Still There



his story is a compilation of recollections of bygone school days that need to be recorded before they are lost in the mists of aging memory. Henry Kissinger once stated that for any student of history, change is the law of life. Any attempt to contain it guarantees an explosion down the road; the more rigidly one adheres to the status quo the more violent the ultimate outcome will be. So, in agreement with this statement, I will try to tell the story of a time that once was. It was a good time, but we had to let it go.

I am struck first by the difficulty of transferring sensory remembrances into words. My memories truly involve all five senses, which I hope to develop as the story progresses. This account is definitely not biographical; on the contrary, it recalls people, places and a way of life that live on in memory. It involves only one school. There were three other practically identical schools in the township. If we added other schools to the story, township by township, county by county, and state by state, only minor details would change.

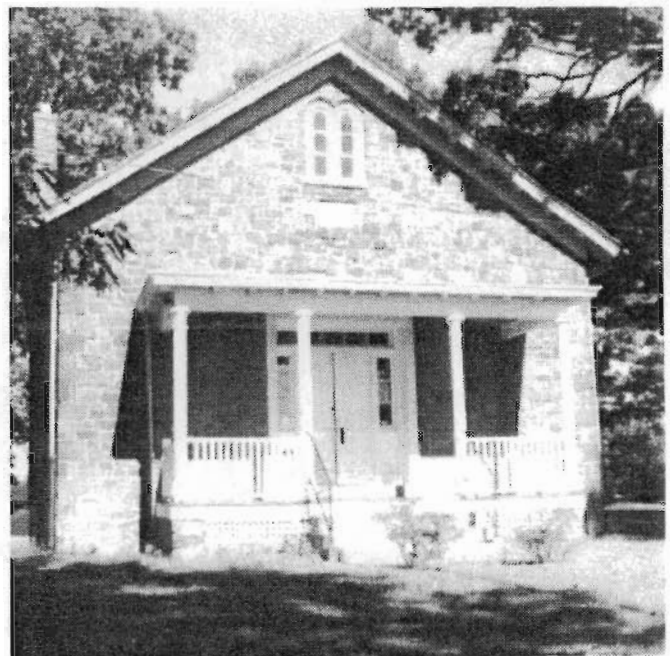
Over the years, I have returned to the old grammar school and walked around the grounds many times. Almost every time, another familiar object has been missing—the side steps on the porch, memorable trees (especially the huge one directly in front of the porch with four or five trunks that one could climb inside), the outhouses (strangely, the girls' had a side window that was heavily screened to keep errant snowballs from shattering the glass), and the deep-well hand pump with its huge stone base. In addition, a new township garage building and parking area now occupy much of the old play area.

The ball field was close to the school building. Home plate was a stone just off the corner of the porch; the other bases were trees. The angles of the base paths were not exactly ninety degrees, and the distance from third base to home was about half the distance of that between the other bases. Second base was well guarded by above-ground roots. I am ashamed of my ignorance of trees. As much as they meant to me, I can't say what species they were. However, the abundance of acorns meant that there must have been many oaks. A rule that was invoked at times (depending on what crops were growing on the

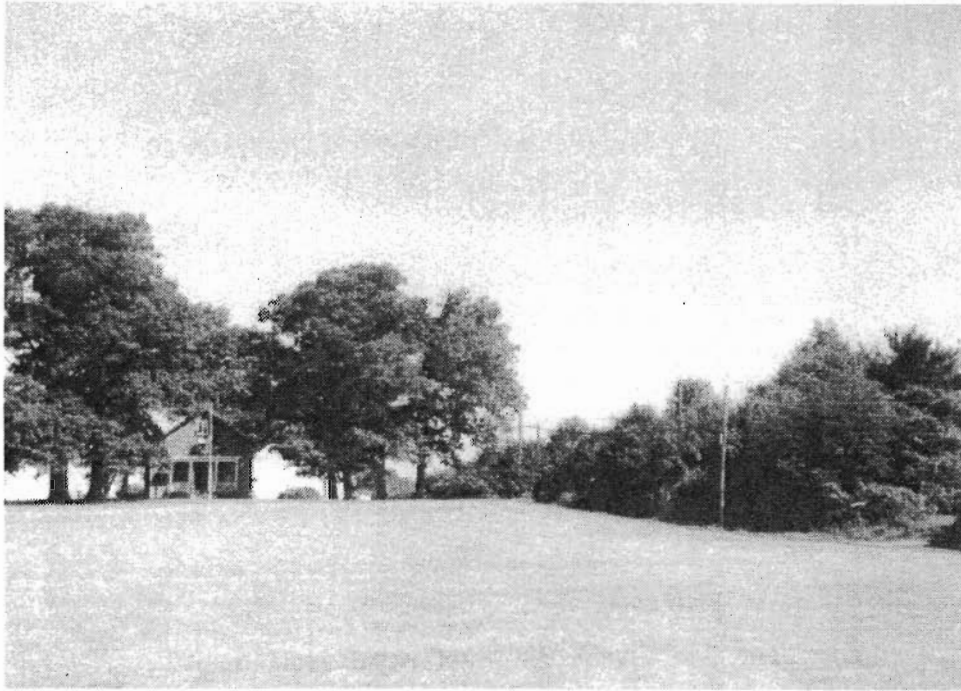
farm adjacent to the school yard) was that a ball hit into left field in danger of becoming lost in the vegetation constituted an "out." We could not afford to lose a ball or the time spent hunting for it. At present, alone with the school building standing amidst all the changes, third base is still there; and it is a welcome sight.

The school building is constructed of sandstone with large and small stones set in horizontal courses. It is a one-story building thirty-five to forty feet wide and fifty to sixty feet in length. An attic contained old records and a cellar accommodated the coal bin. A stone plaque at the front peak announces that the name of the school is "Good Intent" and that it was a gift of one Jacob Buckman in 1874. Directly inside the entrance was a coatroom containing the cellar door and separated from the class area by a windowed wall.

The blackboard stretched across the entire back wall with the teacher's desk in front. High on the wall above the blackboard were examples of penmanship. Other prominent displays were the familiar Stuart painting of Washington and a poster showing the presidents up to the last elected (F.D.R.). If there was an old clock on the wall, it didn't run. There was a piano in one corner that was only used at Christmas



Good Intent School, 1973. Home base was located right off the front porch.



Time has brought many changes, but the school building and several beautiful old trees remain to remind us of the one-room elementary school education that prepared us well for life. Good Intent School, 1983.

time and an Edison wind-up phonograph with John McCormick records.

The floors were of oiled wooden boards about three inches wide. The desks were unique; I have never seen any one-room school desks like them. They were two-person desks with a single bench; the individual desk tops were hinged and lifted upward. Each side had a hole to accommodate glass inkwells which were present only on some of the desks. They were never used and not replaced if lost or broken. The front edge of all the desk tops were grooved from rulers being rubbed hard and vigorously to bring forth plumes of smoke when the teacher wasn't looking in that direction. The odor of that charring wood is vividly remembered. The flat surfaces were adorned with many varied initials, which had accumulated over the years. In the front of the room there were long benches on either side of the center aisle, which were used for individual class recitation (an important source of pre-learning for lower classes as they paused from their immediate studies to discover what was ahead for them in a year or two).

At that time in our school, Christmas was not only celebrated but the preparations for the season were quite involved. Usually some of the older boys would go into the surrounding countryside and bring

back a cedar tree selected from the many which grew wild. It was then trimmed with the same ornaments that had been used for many years. The primary decorating effort was the making of multi-colored chains from construction paper. This activity began at least two weeks before Christmas. The construction paper was cut into strips about five inches in length by $\frac{3}{8}$ inch wide and pasted end to end to form the chain links. (The odor of that paste always returns to me as the Christmas season approaches.) These chains covered the length, width and diagonals of the ceiling. The Christmas celebration concluded with a program of recitations and skits on the last day before

vacation, usually attended by mothers of some of the students. Valentines Day was another recognized holiday. A large box with a slit in the top served as a mailbox where romantic thoughts could be exchanged (almost always anonymously). Most of the cards were handmade. Wallpaper scraps were a favorite material.

Other lingering aromatic sensations were the smell of burning gloves hung to dry on the hot outer steel shell of the pot-bellied stove after getting soaked from snow-ball engagements; the pungent skunk odor that signified a trophy had been bagged during the tending of traps on the morning trek to school; the smell of aging books that permeated the book closet in the corner of the room; and outside, the mustiness of decaying acorns and other vegetation.

This would be an appropriate time to recall memorable sounds. Of course the foremost would be the sound of the hand bell that was rung by the teacher four times a day to announce that play should stop and study begin. The clanging rattle of the deep-well hand pump noisily testified to the time and effort required to start water flowing from far below.

First thing in the morning and after noon recess, the teacher would read to us before formal studies began. Two of the books that I remember were *The*

Adventures of Peter Cottontail by Thornton Burgess and *The Pony Rider Boys* series. (Remember, in a one-room school, the interest of six-year olds to thirteen- or fourteen-year olds had to be whetted.) Talking about formal study brings to mind one year in which there was a big snow. The unusual part was that it didn't melt right away (which was usual in Pennsylvania). For about two weeks, it would melt a little during the day but would freeze again at night. So that we could take advantage of the "favorable" situation, the teacher allowed us to spend most of the day sledding; returning in the morning about 11 AM and in the afternoon around 3 PM. I remember that my dollar Ingersoll watch was a necessity because the hill was a half-mile or more from the school.

The games that were played outside in good weather were "Ball" (played with some kind of rubber ball other than a hard ball), Prisoner's Base, Red-Light, Ante-Over (probably a mispronunciation of Indian-Over), Tag, Kick-the-Wicket, and Sock-the-Rabbit. No equipment was provided by the school district. The ball needed for the game that was played most often was always provided by one of the fortunate players at the time who had acquired a ball. Bats usually consisted of tree limbs, bed slats or pieces of old broken bats. Indoor games played on bad-weather days were Marbles, Slip-the-Ruler, and a form of Leap-Frog. Time does not allow more detailed descriptions of playing conditions or rules other than to remark that the enforcement of rules was never a problem. Everyone seemed to recognize that a preponderance of "fair play" was required for enjoyment of the games. And, coincidentally, there was respect for the teacher and a recognition of her authority.

What did we wear? (Sorry, girls, only the boys will be discussed.) My memory on this subject is a little dim. But, I do remember high-top shoes (at least in the winter), the kind with knife pockets that came just below the knee. And then there were the corduroy knickers. Everybody wore knickers of one material or another; however, the corduroy variety turned to various shades of purple after many washings, and always scraped together when a boy walked. Other items of apparel were leatherette aviator-style hats with ear flaps and goggles, and pre-tied ties with a hook in the back or a slit in the knot.

Supplies furnished by the school were very meager. One writing tablet and one pencil (either a regular one with an eraser or one with thick lead and

no eraser) were allowed each month. I think we had to show the stubs to prove that new ones were necessary. Aluminum drinking cups were provided for each student and replaced only when they became too battered for use and if new ones were available (which probably took place only two or three times during the eight years of schooling). And of course, there were erasers and chalk for general use. Textbooks were well used and it was encouraged to take good care of them. It was a real treat when new ones were passed out. There were only a few chores required of the students: cleaning erasers by hitting them on trees outdoors; bringing up coal from the cellar (done only by the older boys); and raising the flag in the morning and taking it down and folding it at night.

No school buses or other forms of transportation were provided by the school district. Many students, as young as six years old, walked a mile or more through woods and fields after doing their morning chores (and their attendance was very good). A couple of the boys had bicycles. Most of the students really wanted to come to school even though they wouldn't have admitted it. In spite of the digressions from formal curricula at times, we were all well prepared to go on to the "big city" high school and to be assimilated into another lifestyle. All of the required instruction, counseling, judging, disciplining and first aid duties were provided by one teacher for an average of twenty-eight students distributed over eight grades. The teacher at "Good Intent" served for an estimated thirty years.

My problem now is how to fade this story out gracefully and yet present it for future generations. Perhaps the best way is to strongly encourage the reading of John Greenleaf Whittier's "In School Days" or a lesser known poem by Louise White Watson entitled "The Old School House."

We have come to the end of a time that we will let go, but that we will not forget. Third Base will always be in our memory and our hearts.

AUTHOR: Jack Harrison—March 2000

Author's Note: The locale of this story is Newtown Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The time in which it takes place is between 1931 and 1938. This small excursion into the history of elementary education is dedicated to Adrian and Niall so that they may compare the old ways with the new and realize that one is not necessarily better than the other—only different. It is also dedicated to all my unnamed schoolmates who are so much a part of the story and a part of my memories.