

Newtown Historic Association

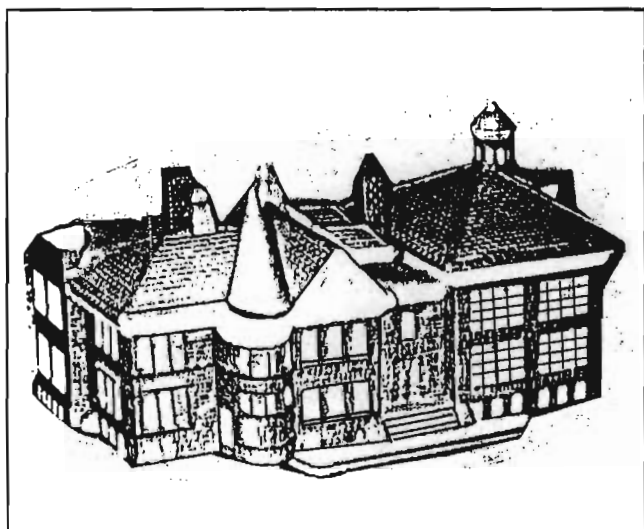
NEWSLETTER

Fall 1998 Issue

President: David Callahan

Editors: Lorraine Pentz & Helen Randle

Coordinator: Ann Balderston



GREAT HOLIDAY GIFT IDEA!!

Don't you know someone who has attended Chancellor Street School and who would enjoy receiving a replica of it? Made of ceramic and painted in soft colors, it looks so attractive when lit. **Cost is \$42.40 (\$40.00 plus 6% sales tax of \$2.40).** Check should be made payable to Newtown Historic Association and sent to Michael Donovan, 426 Burns Lane, Newtown, PA 18940. For more information, call Mike at 968-4153.



CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE TOUR

Our 36th annual Open House Tour will be held on Saturday, December 5, 1998 from 10:00am to 5:00pm and will feature eleven homes and historic sites.

Jeanette Rogers-must be accessed by bus
Mr. & Mrs. Skip Gittens- " " "
Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Lesser- " " "
Mrs. Ann Balderston- Chancellor St.
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Koenig-Chancellor St.
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Valenti- Chancellor St.
Friends Meeting House
Newtown Turnpike Toll House
Newtown Library Company
Stocking Works
Court Inn

Tickets are \$15.00 and can be purchased at the Court Inn. Lunch will be served at Newtown Presbyterian Church, St. Luke's Episcopal Church and the Macedonia Baptist Church.

CALENDER

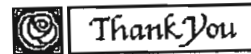
- Nov.16 - General Meeting - Speaker Ward Vinson, "Washington's Thoughts as he planned the Crossing of the Delaware"
- Dec.5 - Christmas Open House Tour
- Dec. 7 - Board Meeting
- Jan. 4, 1999 - Board Meeting



NHA IS ON THE INTERNET

Information can be obtained on the Newtown Historic Association, the Research Center and the Barnsley Room of Newtown History, and upcoming events through:
<http://www.twp.newtown.pa.us/historic/nha.html>

The Common room in the Court Inn has a new look. Raine vonHohen, who is well known in Newtown for her tailoring of historical dress, has covered the windows with a depiction of an 18th Century swag. Made of 100% finely spun wool gauze, the curtains are held in place with a brass hold-back. They have replaced the 30 year old crewel-work curtains.



The Newtown Historic Association wants to acknowledge the contribution made by the local quester's group, the Newtown Commoners, toward the lights in the Boone Garden.

Joanne Nardo has replaced Michael Swanda who has resigned his position as Board Member.

An interview with Newtown Historic Association President, David Callahan, will be part of a documentary filmed by the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center. A production crew from the museum recently visited Newtown and Langhorne to record significant properties connected with the life of Edward Hicks. The documentary will accompany the "Kingdom of Edward Hicks" exhibition when it goes on a three year national tour. Several items have been contributed by the NHA to the exhibit.

History of Square #5 on the Courthouse Tract from 1725 to the Middle of the 19th Century

by Thomas C. Mayer

On July 17, 1725, John Walley, Sr., sold to Jeremiah Langhorne, William Biles, Joseph Kirkbride, Thomas Watson and Abraham Chapman, Trustees of Property for Bucks County, five acres of land strategically situated adjacent to the Common in the Townstead of Newtown to be used for the construction of a new County Courthouse (DB11 p186). The land was divided by streets into Six Squares, one being retained for the public buildings. The other five squares were subdivided into building lots and sold. This development became the most important one in Newtown history and promoted the growth of the Village on the Courthouse grounds. Square #5 was bounded on the north by King Street (now Centre Avenue), the south by Queen Street (now Mercer Street), the west by Second Street (now Court Street), and the east by Back Street (approximately at the location of Corrio Alley today). Square #5 was divided initially into four lots numbered 17, 16, 15, and 14 as shown in the Figure 1.

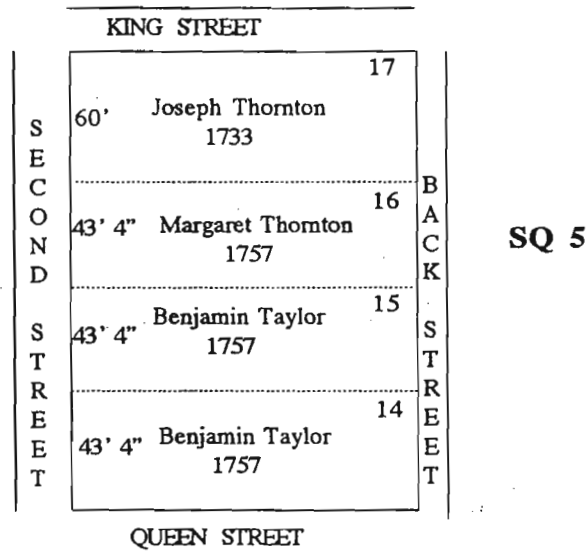


Figure 1. Layout of Square 5 into lots 17, 16, 15, and 14, and showing the original owners. Distances along Court Street are indicated.

Lot 17 was the northernmost lot on Square 5, measuring 60 feet frontage on Second (Court) Street and 142 1/2 feet in depth to the Back Street. It was sold by the Trustees of Bucks County to Joseph and Margaret Thornton in 1733 (DB6 p427), and today is the location of the Court Inn, headquarters of the Newtown Historic Association. The history of this property has been described in previous reports in this Newsletter on the architectural history of the Court Inn.

Lot 16 directly adjacent to the Court Inn was sold to Margaret Thornton by the Trustees in 1757, and this land remained undeveloped until 1782 when she built a 2 story brick front stone house here. Margaret Thornton was operating the Tavern at this time and her "new house" was a convenient location. Lots 15 and 14 were sold by the Trustees to Benjamin Taylor in 1757 and then to Thornton in 1762 (DB26 p47). After this transaction she owned the entirety of Square 5, and the undeveloped portion south to Queen (Mercer) Street was used as orchards and gardens to support her tavern. The executors of Margaret Thornton's estate, Joseph Thornton, Jr., and William Bidgood, sold lots 14, 15 and 16 to Abraham Chapman on December 16, 1790 (DB26 p47), and this deed contains a lengthy recital of the history of these lots. The land extended along

Second (Court) Street 130 feet to Queen (Mercer) Street, easterly 142 1/2 feet to a strip of land left for an alley, and included Margaret Thornton's 1782 house. Abraham Chapman was a lawyer and he lived in the "Thornton" house. In 1811 he sold his property, 130 feet (lots 14, 15 and 16) along Second (Court) Street, to Edward Hicks (DB39 p542). Hicks lived in the "Thornton House" and had his shop in the rear until 1821 when he sold the house and all three lots to John Comly (DB49 p252). Comly was a friend and supporter of Edward Hicks, and did not live in Newtown. The entire property was sold by Comly on March 28, 1834 (DB66 p547), to Joseph Schofield. The size of the property at this time remained 130' along Second Street and 142 1/2' deep and included a messuage or tenement, it being the old "Thornton House" which Schofield was using as his residence.

Joseph Schofield now re-subdivided his land into four lots and began building houses along Second (Court) Street, the first being a two story brick "mansion" house at the corner of Second (Court) and Queen (Mercer) Streets. This house may have been constructed soon after Schofield purchased the property in 1834, and he and his wife Lydia lived there until he sold it to Joseph Paul on June 19, 1843 for \$1400 (DB69 p438). The property measured 62 feet along Court Street and 142 1/2 feet to a 15 foot alley.

It appears that at about 1840 Schofield built two additional brick houses along Second (Court) Street filling in the space between his residence and the old "Thornton house". One directly abutting his residence was sold in 1843 to Ann Drake for \$1000. The twin to the north was probably built at the same time. It appears that the builder made a miscalculation and did not leave space for the completion of the arch to the fanlite doorway of the Drake house. Details of these developments along Court Street are shown in Figure 2.

Schofield maintained ownership of the two houses and approximately 49 feet along Second Street between the old tavern (Court Inn) and Ann Drake's property until his death in 1863 when they passed by will to his wife Lydia. It seems the Schofields lived in one or both of these houses from 1843 to 1863. Lydia Schofield, Joseph Schofield's widow, sold her two houses to Lucy Krewsen in 1863 and 1865 as two separate parcels.

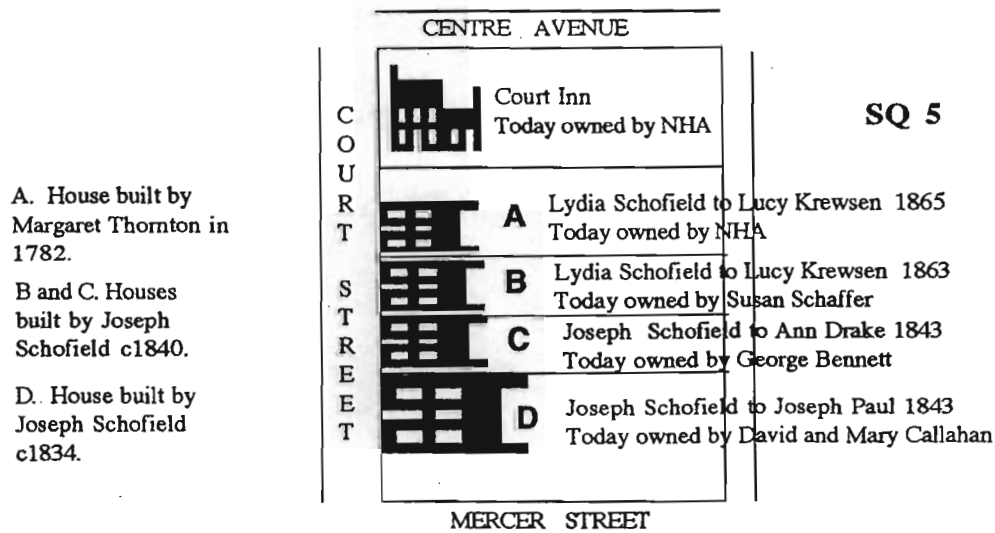


Figure 2. Buildings on Square 5 after it was developed and sold by the Schofield family. Names of present owners are listed.