



# HISTORIA

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 1

NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MARCH 2003

## MARCH MEETING FEATURES “HIDDEN TREASURES OF BUCKS COUNTY”

Join us for an “*armchair tour*” of the *Hidden Treasures of Bucks County* at our meeting on March 19th . Marlene Miller, a mother and grandmother, has been a resident of Bucks County for 25 years. Before founding **Executive Events**, she was in sales.

Marlene will give a slide presentation highlighting romantic covered bridges, the early mills, colorful gardens (both public and private), celebrity homes of the many “Rich and Famous,” historic villages, early forms of transportation, the Mercer Castles of Doylestown, important historic sites, and, of course, the people.

### THE OLD RICHBORO SCHOOL FINALLY MAKES ITS MOVE!

With little fanfare the old Richboro School moved to its new location during the first few weeks of January. The weather was cold and wet, but it beat the big snowfalls we have experienced since. The school will be elevated at the new location to make it visible within the new shopping center that will be constructed around it. The center will include a Commerce Bank and a Burger King. It is expected to be completed by early summer.

See more pictures on page 3



The old Richboro School sits on temporary wooden pillars at its new location at the rear of the original school property - January 2003.

### FORMER NTHS MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN DONATES \$10,000 TO HONOR HIS FATHER

Former NTHS member, Fred Holzwarth, has bequeathed \$10,000 to the Northampton Township Historical Society, specifically earmarked for an annual dinner to be held in memory of his father, Frederick W. Holzwarth, Sr.

The first dinner will be held at the Northampton Township Country Club on Wednesday, June 4, 2003.

Fred, our society’s former membership chairperson, was a retired math teacher who taught at George Washington High School in Northeast Philadelphia until his retirement in 1990. He was a Civil War aficionado and was a member of the Bucks County Civil War Round Table in Doylestown. Members who knew him said that “Holzwarth was not a fan of Lee or Grant; he didn’t really care about sides or who won the bloodiest battle on U. S. soil. He was fascinated with the strategy and planning behind the war.”

Holzwarth was a retired lieutenant colonel in the US Army Reserve and a Korean War veteran. He spent his summers visiting Civil War battlefields and many days holed up at home, researching the many facets of the war.

Holzwarth left the bulk of his estate, 1.5 million dollars, to the Bucks County Civil War Round Table to purchase a home for the organization, specifically designating that a room in the house be dedicated in honor of his father.

## NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT

### Dear Members:

All of us are looking forward to the warm, sunny days of spring and respite from the cold, snowy weather that has plagued Bucks County this winter. Along with nature's signs of rebirth, we are also working on changes, which, we hope, will trigger a rebirth of the Northampton Township Historical Society.

Your executive board has discussed modifying the membership hierarchy to include various levels of membership, hopefully to encourage more bequests and contributions to the society.

Pat Komelasky and the Social Committee are planning activities which members may enjoy participating in between our general meetings. Tentative plans include a meal and tour of Fonthill.

The first memorial dinner to be held in honor of Fred Holzwarth's father, Frederick M. Holzwarth, Sr., will be held at the Northampton Township Country Club on June 4<sup>th</sup>. Mark your calendars! Details will be forthcoming.

Activities for children include our annual Preservation Week Poster Contest and an archaeological dig at the Willett-Knight House.

Do you remember that favorite recipe your grandmother or mother made which was so special? Please share those with us for inclusion in a NTHS cookbook.

Lastly, congratulations to member Lewis Hull who was honored by Northampton Township supervisors at the February 26<sup>th</sup> meeting as Northampton Township Citizen of the Month, for his contribution to the founding of the Churchville Nature Center.

We look forward to seeing all of you at our March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. Come for an evening of discovering and enjoying Bucks County's Treasures with Marlene Miller. Don't forget to renew your membership for 2003!

*Debbie Glessner*

## WILLETT-KNIGHT HOUSE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG

The NTHS sponsored archaeological dig at the Willett-Knight House, has been rescheduled for the weekend of May 3 – 4, 2003, with a rain date of May 17 – 18. This activity will be led by Vivian Braubitz and Michael Tomkins. Interested students may register by completing the form on page 7 and mailing the \$10.00 registration fee.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**March 19 - 7:30 PM**

Northampton Township Historical Society  
General Meeting - Hidden Treasures of Bucks County

**April 22 - 7 PM**

Northampton Township Historical Society  
Board Meeting

**May 21 - 7:30 PM**

Northampton Township Historical Society  
General Meeting

**May 23 - Friday 11 AM - 5 PM**

Old Ricboro School Reunion - Years 1924-1957  
Northampton Country Club  
Emma Walker Worthington - 215-943-0108

Lectures at the

**DAVID LIBRARY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

Free and open to the public. Reservations required  
215-493-6776 or [dlar@dlar.org](mailto:dlar@dlar.org)

**April 24 (7:30 pm) Dr. Hendrik Booraem**

"A Child of the Revolution: The Early Life of William Henry Harrison"

**May 29 (7:30 pm) Dr. Craig W. Horle**

"Without Society, Amongst Barbarians: The Allen Family of Northampton and Philadelphia in the Revolution"

**June 12 (7:30 pm) Prof. Judy L. VanBuskirk**

"Gentlemen at War: Civility and Conflict in Revolutionary New York"

### MERCER MUSEUM

#### Bucks County Historical Society Events

Calligraphy & Illumination Tuesdays, March 4-18  
6:30-8:30 p.m., Mercer Museum

Built by Hand: The Garden in Clay Workshop Sundays,  
March 9-30 1-4 p.m., Fonthill Terrace Pavilion

Sensational Stuff Sale Mon.-Sat., March 17-22 10 a.m.-  
4:30 p.m., Tues. to 8:30 p.m., Mercer Museum Pavilion

Teen Fine Art Classes

Tuesdays, March 18-May 6

3:30-5:15 p.m., Fonthill's Terrace Pavilion

"Your Old House: Documenting Historic Properties"

Tuesday, March 18 7-9 p.m., Elkins Gallery, Mercer Museum

**LEWIS W. HULL  
Northampton Township  
Citizen of the Month**

Congratulations are extended to NTHS member, Lewis Hull, for being recognized at the February 26, 2003 meeting of the Northampton Township Board of Supervisors as Northampton Township Citizen of the Month.

Lew and his wife, Margaret, have been long-time residents of Northampton Township. Lew has been a steward for the protection and conservation of our natural resources.

In 1964, Lew was one of the original founders of the Churchville Nature Center and Chairman of the Advisory Committee that petitioned the County Commissioners to preserve the land of the Nature Center in its natural state.

In addition, Lew was also an original founder of the Heritage Conservancy where he currently serves as a member of its Board of Directors.



**Betty Luff, Rosana Slack, and Thelma Tanner take time to pose at our November dinner meeting.**



**Supervisor Peter Palestina presents the Northampton Township Citizen of the Month Award to Lewis Hull as his wife, Margaret looks on.**

**2003 PRESERVATION WEEK  
POSTER CONTEST**

The 2003 **National Historic Preservation Week** will run from May 5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>. This year's theme, as established by the National Trust, is *"Cities, Suburbs, and Countryside."*

Again, NTHS is sponsoring a poster contest for elementary age students in Northampton Township, open to Council Rock School District, private schools, and home schoolers. The judges will be Jim Kinney, Northampton Township supervisor, Larice Burt, NTHS member and recognized stone artist, and Chris Steiber, Executive Director of Churchville Nature Center. There will be two divisions, and prizes are being donated by Mr. and Mrs. George Komelasky.

**Doris' Corn Fritters**

- 1 and 1/2 Cups Flour
- 2 and 1/2 Teaspoons baking powder
- 1 Teaspoon Salt
- 2 Large Eggs
- 1/4 Cup milk
- 1 (15 Oz.) Can "Cream--style" Corn
- Maple Syrup

1. Pour oil into a fry-pan with a setting of 375 degrees
2. Meanwhile, in a bowl, stir together the flour, baking powder and salt.
3. In Another bowl, mix the eggs, milk and corn. Then, add the corn mixture to the flour mixture, stirring until moistened.
4. Drop the batter into the hot oil, fry until golden brown, and drain on a paper towel.
5. Serve hot with warm maple syrup!

Please mail your recipe's to Pat Komelasky, 42 Larch Circle, Holland, PA 18966 for inclusion in an NTHS cookbook. Please see page 8 for a blank recipe card to submit.



**The old Richboro School is made ready by the moving crew for its journey downhill to its new home.**

# HISTORY OF THE WHITE FARMSTEAD

## 1056 EAST HOLLAND ROAD

### IN MEMORY OF ANNE R. NIXON (1918-2003)

*By Michael Tomkins*

This past month I learned with great sadness that one of my Northampton neighbors, Anne R. Nixon (nee Savage), had passed away. About this time last year, I had the pleasure of researching her great-grandfather's farmstead located on East Holland Road, about a quarter of a mile from its intersection with Bridgetown Pike. As I read Anne's obituary, I could only think back to last January, as she, her husband Jack, and I reminisced about her life on the farm. She was very proud of her heritage, and afterwards I felt honored to have met such a thoughtful woman.



**Anne Nixon  
in the  
kitchen of  
the family  
farmhouse.  
Photograph  
taken  
sometime  
during the  
1970s.**

Anne was born on the farm to Ira J. Savage and Ethel Savage (nee White) in 1918. Her mother had just inherited the farm from her father, Charles H. White, three months prior. Charles was the son of Nathan B. White, the first of the White family to claim residence within the farmhouse he purchased from Dr. Thomas L. Allen in 1856.

The origins of the farmstead date back to the early 1800s. It appears to have been established by Thomas Martin, a carpenter from Middletown Township. Martin is believed to have never occupied the property but instead, leased it to a

Thomas Renshaw. In 1824, the property was acquired by Dr. Thomas L. Allen, a physician and a resident of Middletown Township. He and his wife, Sarah, and their son, Marmaduke, lived there throughout the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Northampton place remained a tenant farmstead throughout Allen's ownership. When Allen sold the property to Nathan White, it contained 57 acres of land. The farmstead would remain within the White family for the next century and a quarter.

By 1860, as recorded within the agricultural census published in that year, White had improved all 57 acres of the property. In that year, the farm yielded 400 bushels of wheat, 400 bushels of Indian corn, 650 bushels of oats, 60 bushels of Irish potatoes and 40 tons of hay. In addition to having six horses and eight swine, the farm contained 13 cows, from which 1,600 pounds of butter was yielded. White at this time was married to Tacy White (nee Nice). Nathan and Tacy would raise three children on the farm. Emma White was born one year before they purchased the farm, and Charles H. White was born in 1857, the year after they moved onto the farm. Their youngest child, Sarah E. White, was born in 1860.

Nathan B. White continued the operations of the farm until his retirement, which occurred sometime around 1900. In 1870, Tacy's mother, Sarah Nice, who was 71 years of age, had moved into the farmhouse with them. In 1876, their oldest child, Emma White, was married to J. Canby Milnor. Together they settled in Lower Makefield Township. Their other daughter, Sarah E. White, would later marry John C. Paxson.

In 1880, the White Farm was sown with seven acres each of wheat, Indian corn, oats and Irish potatoes. In addition, by this time the Whites had established a two-acre apple orchard on the property. Sometime during the early 1880s, Nathan B. White's son, Charles H. White was married to Annie P. Reynolds. Charles, who was in his early twenties by this time, continued to reside on the farm with his wife and assisted his father with the daily chores.

The population census of 1900 indicates that, by the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Charles H. White had taken over the operations of the farm, renting the place from his father who was now of advanced age. Residing with him on the farm were his father (age 73) and mother (age 71), his wife, Annie, and his only daughter, Ethel White (age 11). In addition,

**Please turn to page 5**

## THE WHITE FARMHOUSE from page 4

Charles' sister-in-law Cordelia Reynolds, a dressmaker, was also living with them. The census indicates that Charles and Annie White had a total of five children, Ethel being the only one to survive childhood. As was the case with many farmers in the area, Charles H. White would take his produce weekly to Philadelphia where he would sell it door to door and to local markets.

Nathan B. White died on August 26, 1912 at the age of 84. His last will and testament drafted 17 years earlier, bequeathed his farm to his son Charles. Charles continued to farm the property until his death in 1918. Upon the death of Charles H. White, his daughter, Ethel W. Savage, inherited the farm. Prior to this time, Ethel and her husband, Ira J. Savage, were residing in the state of Maryland where Ira worked for a milk separator company. It is likely that they returned to her father's farm just prior to his death. Ira J. Savage probably worked with his father-in-law on the farm for a period of time before he took over the operations in its entirety. In November 1918, Ethel and Ira were blessed with the birth of their only child, Anne R. Savage.

In 1920, the three lived on the farm along with Anne's two grandmothers, Emma W. Savage and Elizabeth Reynolds, and her grandfather, Eugene A. Savage. One Sunday afternoon in August 1923, while the Savage family was away visiting a neighbor, the farmhouse accidentally caught fire. Another neighbor across Bridgetown Pike saw the flames coming from the roof, but by this time it was too late to save the structure. Anne, who was five years old at the time, recalls watching the building burn to the ground. All that remained were the stone walls.

Shortly thereafter, the Savages hired a local architect and friend, Harry Parker of Southampton. Parker drew up plans to rebuild the house utilizing the original walls. It took about a year to construct the new house, during which time the family resided with their neighbor, the Paxsons. During the construction, Ira J. Savage continued to tend to the needs of the farmstead visiting the farm at least twice a day to care for the animals. The fire fortunately did not destroy any of the farm's outbuildings.

During the 1930s, the farm had about ten cows. Milk was stored overnight in a milk shed, built by Ira J. Savage, located immediately to the south-southeast of the house. The shed contained a tank full of cold water where the milk was placed to keep it cold. The following morning, the milk was shipped to the Greenwood Dairy located on West Maple Avenue (Route 213) between Langhorne and Feasterville. From about 1932 to 1940, the farm had several acres of tomatoes, specifically grown for Campbell's Soup Company located in

Camden, New Jersey. Savage hired Charles Tranter of Newtown to truck the large volume of produce to Campbell's processing plant. Other produce grown during this time included sweet corn and potatoes, which were bagged and brought to either local markets or trucked to Philadelphia wharves.

On December 30, 1942, Anne R. Savage was married to John (Jack) E. Nixon. Together, they first rented a family member's house in Langhorne, while Nixon, a mechanical engineer, worked for the Roebling Wire Rope Company in Trenton. They lived in Langhorne until Nixon was drafted for WWII. During the war, he taught an electricity course in Denver, Colorado where he and his wife rented an apartment for a few years. Upon his discharge in 1946, they moved back



**White Farmhouse as it appeared in 1989.**

to Langhorne where their son, John Alan Nixon, was born in the following year. Nixon returned to work with Roebling who had held his job during the war. He remained with the company for a total of 33 years until the Trenton works closed. He then worked for Steinman Engineering, a New York firm, for the next 25 years. Around 1950, the Nixons made plans to build a new house on a portion of White Farmstead. They purchased a one-acre parcel of land located at the intersection of Bridgetown Pike and East Holland Road from Anne Nixon's parents; soon afterwards they contracted to have their house built. In October 1953, approximately three years later, their second child, Martha Ann, was born.

**Please Turn to page 6**

## THE WHITE FARMHOUSE from page 5

In 1959, Anne's father, Ira J. Savage passed away. Her mother, Ethel W. Savage, continued to reside in the farmhouse for the next 18 years, during which time she leased the farmlands. In 1976, Ethel Savage deeded one-fifth of the farmstead property to her daughter, Anne Nixon. In August of the following year, Ethel passed away. Her last will and testament, drafted on October 25, 1975, assigned Anne and her husband, John E. Nixon, as trustees of her estate.

For about a year, Anne and John, or Jack as he liked to be called, contemplated what to do with the family farm. Several scenarios were proposed. They considered selling a portion of the farmland, while retaining the farmhouse. They also considered selling the house they built in the early 1950s and renovating the family farmhouse to their liking. In July 1978, the Nixons entered into an agreement of sale with DeLuca Enterprises, Inc. to sell all the farmland, excluding a one-acre tract surrounding the farmhouse and another located immediately adjacent and to the west of Anne and Jack's house. The tract of land surrounding the farmhouse contained all of the outbuildings except the barn. Shortly thereafter, DeLuca Enterprises laid out several streets (Ridge Circle, Savage Drive and the continuation of Pepperell and Watergate Drives), and began construction of a multiple dwelling community. The barn was torn down during the early construction phase of the development. The following year, the Nixon's made the difficult decision to sell the farmhouse, thus ending the White's 125 year ownership of the farmhouse. On April 12, 1979, they sold the place to Nicholas Peter Halkias and his wife, Marilyn C. Halkias. The Halkias' still retain ownership to this day.

Twenty-three years later, Anne, Jack and I sit in Jack's office, which is decorated with various pictures of some of the bridges that he and his father help construct. Anne sits in front of me with a contented smile, while Jack is at my side. We thumb through an old photo album containing pictures of the farm from the 1940s. There is a feeling in the air of a wonderful bond between the two of them. They look to each other for answers to the many questions I ask about the farm. It gives me great pleasure to have had the opportunity to walk down memory lane with them.

During her lifetime, Anne Nixon was a member of the Bucks County Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and an active member of the Society of Descendant's of Washington's Army at Valley Forge. She was also a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Church of Newtown. Her husband still resides in Northampton, while her son, John Alan, and his wife, Julie Nixon, live in Willow Grove. Her daughter, Martha, and her husband, Norman Shirley and their son, Eric J. Shirley, reside in Anderson, Indiana.



**Watercolor of the White Farmstead painted by Edith Berry in 1978. Buildings from right to left, include the farmhouse, pump house/wash house, wagon house, chicken coop, corn crib, and barn.**

**WANTED:**

**Young Archaeologists to Dig for Lost Foundation  
Children: ages 10 and up**



**Sponsored by Northampton Twp. Historical Society  
May 3 and 4, 2003  
(Rain dates: May 17 - 18)  
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Willett-Knight House  
1409 Bustleton Pike, Feasterville, PA**



This historic home is currently owned by Mr. Clyde Cobb. Research indicates that the house was built in 1748. It sits on two and a half acres, which is part of an original parcel of 500 acres that was purchased from William Penn by John Harding.

The Bucks County atlases of 1876 and 1891 show that there were originally three buildings on the lot. There are now only two. The current garage was built on the winery foundation. Mr. Cobb has requested assistance in locating the foundation of the third building. Vivian Braubitz, a professional archaeologist, and Michael Tomkins, president of Tomkins Historical Research, will lead the dig.

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**REGISTRATION FORM**

**Fee: \$10.00 (Checks made payable to NTHS)  
Mail to: Deborah Glessner, 234 New Rd. Churchville, PA. 18966  
NO MORE THAN 10 participants will be registered!  
DEADLINE: April 23, 2003**

**Child's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Town:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ **School:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

I grant my child permission to participate in the archaeological dig sponsored by NTHS and agree to hold harmless NTHS for bodily injury or loss of personal property that may occur during this activity. It is my understanding that the \$10.00 fee grants my child membership into NTHS and all rights thereof.

**Parent signature:** \_\_\_\_\_





# NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO BOX 732, RICHBORO, PENNSYLVANIA 18954-0732

[www.NorthamptonTownshipHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.NorthamptonTownshipHistoricalSociety.org)

## 2003 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

<b>President</b>	Debbie Glessner	215-357-2449	dglessner@earthlink.net	PA Relay 800-654-5988
<b>Vice President</b>	Mary Seader	215-355-4467	RJSTioga@cs.com	
<b>Secretary</b>	Linda Daly	215-598-3345	LJDalyasid@yahoo.com	
<b>Treasurer</b>	Michael Tomkins	215-504-1998	michaeltomkins@comcast.net	
<b>Membership</b>	Doug Crompton	215-355-5307	doug@crompton.com	
<b>Ways and Means</b>	Diane Amadio	215-355-6399	dianerealtor@enter.net	
<b>Social Committee</b>	Pat Komelasky	215-355-0649	gkomelasky@msn.com	
<b>Director (Past Pres.)</b>	Doug Crompton	215-355-5307	doug@crompton.com	
<b>Director</b>	Jean Gallagher	215-357-7833		
<b>Director</b>	Sydell Gross	215-322-5547		
<b>HISTORIA Editor</b>	Doug Crompton	215-355-5307	doug@crompton.com	

HISTORIA is published quarterly by the Northampton Township Historical Society. The Society meets four times each year at the Northampton Township Cultural Center, Upper Holland Road, Richboro. Everyone is welcome at our meetings. Meetings start at 7:30 PM with refreshments, general meeting, and a featured speaker. For more information visit our web page or email us at [nths@NorthamptonTownshipHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:nths@NorthamptonTownshipHistoricalSociety.org) Past issues of the HISTORIA, in color, are available on our web page [www.NorthamptonTownshipHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.NorthamptonTownshipHistoricalSociety.org) The HISTORIA is edited by Doug Crompton. Articles are always welcome.

### Meeting Dates for 2003

March 19	General Meeting	7:30 PM	May 21	General Meeting	7:30 PM
Sept. 17	General Meeting	7:30 PM	November 19	Dinner Meeting	6:30 PM

Board Meetings will be held on April 22, August 19 and October 21. Members are welcome. Locations to be announced.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL CLASSIFICATIONS

PATRON:	Extra support for the society	\$35.00
FAMILY:	All members of one family	\$15.00
SINGLE:	Adult individual membership	\$10.00
SENIOR CITIZEN:	Age 65 years or older	\$5.00

This will be your membership for the calendar year of 2003 (January 2003 to December 2003)

Note - Applications received after October 31 will be credited for the following year. This application is sent with all editions of the HISTORIA. Please check your mailing label for the expiration year. Normal renewal time is the first quarter of the year or when the March HISTORIA is received. If your membership is current, please pass this application on to others who may be interested in our society. Please consider a contribution of more than the minimum membership to help defray increasing society costs.

**Send to:**  
**Northampton Township Historical Society**  
**PO BOX 732**  
**Richboro, PA 18954-0732**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SINGLE:  FAMILY:

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ DUES ENCLOSED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

May we count on you to serve on one of our committees ? : Y \_\_\_\_\_ N \_\_\_\_\_ MAYBE \_\_\_\_\_

Please give us your ideas for speakers at future meetings : \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to write an article for the HISTORIA \_\_\_\_\_

Your comments and suggestions are welcomed : \_\_\_\_\_