



# Haverford Township Historical Society



P.O. Box 825                      Havertown, PA 19083                      610-446-7988                      Winter 1998

## Federal School Rolls Down Darby Road

What do a golf cart, teenagers, a lot of cloth, and paint have in common? Add to these a couple of dedicated adults and the result is a replica of the township's historic Federal School. The young people were participants in the Margaret Johnston Summer Research Project in June. During that week, they designed and built a float to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the historic Federal School for the Haverford Township Day Parade, October 4th.

The float, piloted by Mary Courtney, led the parade down Darby Road mounted on a golf cart generously lent by Betty Grimes, of the Quadrangle.

Participants in the summer program were Amy Carney, Lauren Cordes, Pallavi and Pooja Paunikar, Katie Loftus, Jessie Mortimer, and Lindsay O'Brien. Sue Kratzing (Vice-President) and Mary Courtney, (Education Director) coordinated the program, which invites students to get close to history while performing community service at one of the Township's historic buildings. The projects change each year. ❁

## Civil War Is Topic of General Meeting

The 18th PA Cavalry Company L Living History Association will present "Civil War History and the Art of Clothing with a Personal Touch" at the February general membership meeting. Catherine Datto-Smythe will demonstrate Civil War era women's clothing. Larry Smythe, Jr. will present Cavalry uniforms and accoutrements. The Smythes will also display samples of original and reproduction equipment and firearms from the 1860s. Company L was a Delaware County regiment. All are welcome.

February 19, 1998  
8:00 pm  
Llanerch Presbyterian Church  
Park Road and Lansdowne Avenue  
Havertown, PA

Note: 1998 membership dues may be paid at the February meeting. ❁



*Walking with the Federal School float in the Haverford Township Day Parade are Carl Huber, Sue Kratzing, Claire Halberstadt, Chrissy Donovan, Erica Dobbs, Sarah Marton, and Chris Rossi.*

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## Get in Touch with History: Become a Guide

If you are reading this newsletter, you are probably already interested in the history of Haverford Township. Maybe architecture intrigues you, or daily life in earlier times. Perhaps you fancy antiques or study the Welsh Quakers or live near one of the historic buildings in the township. *Whatever your reason, consider this idea.* For the small investment of two hours in training to be a guide, you can get closer than you may have ever been to Haverford Township's history. You may discover more fascinating facts and artifacts.

Being a guide means learning more about the Society's buildings, their contents, and some of the stories that go with them. Attend a two-hour training session on Sunday, March 15 from 1-3 and you will touch, hear, see, and admire the history of Lawrence Cabin (1700) and Nitre Hall (1810), both on Karakung Drive along Cobbs Creek. You don't have to be a teacher or an actor to participate. Just be yourself.

### *What Do I Have to Know?*

Nothing, until you have your training. You will receive a packet of materials to help you describe the buildings, history, and contents.

### *Will I Work All Alone?*

No. You work with one or more other guides.

### *What Do I have to Do?*

Volunteer to guide visitors through Nitre Hall or Lawrence Cabin, at least once a year on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon.

### *How Do I Get Training?*

At the February General Membership Meeting, sign up for the March 15th training or contact Elaine Halberstadt at 446-0872. ❁

## History Events of Interest in the Area

### For Transportation Buffs

Delaware County Historical Society is sponsoring several talks on the theme of transportation at the main campus of the Delaware County Community College. The three remaining topics in the series are "The Horseless Carriage in Delaware County" on February 9, "Ferry boats on the Delaware River" on March 16, and "Railroads" on April 20. The lectures begin at 7:30 PM.

### For Architecture Fans

Thursday, April 9th, the Main Line Art Center is sponsoring "The Architecture & History of Country Houses and Mansions on the Main Line" by John Groff at the Quadrangle at 7:30 PM. To reserve, call 525-0272.

## Recipe for Historic Stucco

Planning to mix up a batch of stucco for your 1800s castle? You'll need a lot of slaked lime, water, sand, and some straw or animal hair as a binder. Be sure to do a lot of preparation of the surface. You may have to repair or replace the lath or metal base that holds the stucco. It takes three layers to do the job right. You may also want to whitewash the surface.

In the early 1800's, stucco was softer than modern stucco. Similar to plaster; the terms were once interchangeable. Portland cement was first added to stucco in the 1870s.

What gives stucco its color? The color could come from several sources: the color of the sand, burnt clay or brick added to the mix, or natural pigments added to the third layer (the finish coat).

The finish coat is usually a thin coat of fine stucco that can be marbled or stained to look like stone. Faux effects were also often used, for example, lines were often scribed into the stucco to represent blocks.

Source: Grimmer, Anne. *Preservation Brief 22: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco*, U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division.

## Get Well Wishes to Board Members

We hope 1998 brings good health back to these dedicated members.

Peg Johnston  
Millicent Phillips



# HTHS Awarded Grant for Nitre Hall

When State Senator Richard Tilghman called Board Member Irene Coffey in January, he had good news. The Haverford Township Historical Society received one of only 30 Keystone Historic Preservation grants awarded for the 1997 application year. The \$17,650 award from the PA Historical and Museum Commission will be matched by Haverford Township. The money is earmarked for four projects on the exterior of Nitre Hall on Karakung Drive. Addressing water damage is the main goal.

For the last several years, as a result of "delaminating" of the stucco, water has seeped into Nitre Hall. Some of the artifacts are at risk and the library had to be moved to an inside wall to prevent damage to the books.

In 1960, in a well-intentioned attempt to repair cracks and other damage to the exterior walls at Nitre Hall, a hard portland cement stucco was used. It did not match the original "cladding" and was not properly keyed in to bond or blend with the existing stucco. Recent efforts at patches were merely temporary emergency measures.

In 1993, a preliminary study of the stucco surface was performed to determine what was to be done. This study provided the starting point for the grant proposal that resulted in the current award. The goal of the project is to repair the exterior of Nitre Hall with an historically correct finish consistent with the period, and as close as possible to the original finish when it was owned by Israel Whelen in the 1810s.

According to Irene Coffey, who wrote the grant proposal, the funds will become available in April. Historic Preservation Architect, John Milner, will examine the delaminating stucco to determine its composition. In addition, Mr. Milner will analyze the layers of stucco to try to determine the original color and finish of the historic stucco that covered Nitre Hall in the 1810s.

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*Why is there an outside door that appears to go nowhere? Was a porch once there?*

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The Society expects that the exploratory work will help answer some of the lingering questions about the original design of Nitre Hall as well. For example, why is there an outside door that appears to go nowhere? Was a porch once there?

## Stucco removal and repair

Once the research is completed later this spring, the removal of the delaminated stucco will commence and new historic stucco will be applied. The architect expects the work to take approximately two months. See "Recipe for Historic Stucco on Page 2".

## Exterior painting

Water has taken its toll on the exterior woodwork as well. The grant provides for the repair of the windows, trim, and bargeboards and for repainting in the original color, which the architectural

investigation will determine.

## Drainage

To direct water away from the building, foundation and downspout drains will be installed. Then the area will be regraded and reseeded.

Lawrence Cabin will be open during the work, but Nitre Hall may have to curtail tours and exhibits temporarily. When children arrive for the Colonial Living program in the Fall, a bright, "old" Nitre Hall will be ready.

## Retaining wall to be repaired

In the meantime, the Township has undertaken the responsibility of repairing the retaining wall along the bridge entrance to Nitre Hall. Township Manager Tom Bannar said the repairs will be made in February, weather permitting. This will ensure safe access to the building for handicapped visitors. ❁

## House for Sale: \$20.00

Historic Federal School lintel houses are now available. Charming, detailed, and hand-painted, the houses perch over doorways or on a convenient shelf or table and the proceeds help support HTHS. Call the HTHS Message Line at 446-7988 to order yours or pick one up at the General Membership meeting on February 19th.

## New Members Welcomed!

Welcome to the following members who have joined or renewed their membership in HTHS since the publication of the membership list.

Eileen Abrams  
Susan Faccioli  
Sally Griffith

Nancy Rosenblatt  
Charles Rupp  
Dr. and Mrs. Jack Stein

## Dates to Remember

- ⇒ **Winter General Meeting: Thursday, February 19, 1998**  
8:00 PM, Llanerch Presbyterian Church, Park Rd and Lansdowne Ave
- ⇒ **Spring General Meeting: Thursday, April 16, 1998 8:00 PM,**  
Llanerch Presbyterian Church, Park Rd and Lansdowne Ave. "Native Peoples of PA: Indian Culture and History" presented by Dr. Marshall Becker, Professor of Anthropology, West Chester University. This Commonwealth speaker presentation is supported by a grant from the PA Historical and Museum Commission.
- ⇒ **Historic Houses Guide Training: Sunday, March 15, 1998 1-3 PM,**  
Nitre Hall.
- ⇒ **Appraisal Day: Saturday, May 2, 1998 1-4 PM,** Nitre Hall,  
Karakung Drive. For a small fee per item, you can have your treasures evaluated by professional antiques appraiser, Ray Spiller.
- ⇒ **House Tours: 1-4 PM**  
Nitre Hall and Lawrence Cabin - May 2, June 6-7  
Historic Federal School - June 6-7

### *Raffle Winner: Catherine Hand*

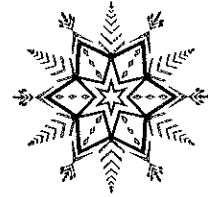
The Federal School pillow, quilted and donated by Peg Johnston, was won by Catherine Hand. The drawing was held at the October General Meeting.

## Wanted: Old Items for School Program

If you have, and can part with, any of the household items listed below, the Colonial Living program can put them to good use.

- ⇒ Buckets (wooden, tin, or leather),
- ⇒ Pitchers, (metal or enamel)
- ⇒ Refrigerated cooking fat (bacon, pork, beef, but not chicken) - to be used in making soap
- ⇒ Candle stubs (any color) - to be used in candlemaking

Call Mary Courtney at 789-5169 to arrange for pickup.



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# HAVERTOWN TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY



P.O. Box 825

Havertown, PA 19083

610-446-7988

Fall 98

Volunteers Welcome - Call 789-5169

## **Powder Mill Valley Day Is October 24**

Mark your calendars for Saturday, October 24. The 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry Company L, featured at our February General Membership Meeting, will demonstrate a Civil War Era Encampment on the grounds of Nitre Hall. Bring the family and experience camp life in the 1860s. There will be period fashions, firearms, hardtack to sample, and 19th century games for kids of all ages. Don't miss the demonstrations of pumpkin carving and decorating. *This event replaces the Fall General Membership Meeting.* The goal is to encourage new membership and to give families the opportunity to participate in activities linked to our local history. Proceeds will be used in the restoration work to begin in the Spring at Nitre Hall. Watch your mail for details about this exciting new event.



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1998

10:00 AM — 5:00 PM

participate in activities linked to our local history. Proceeds will be used in the restoration work to begin in the Spring at Nitre Hall. Watch your mail for details about this exciting new event.



Rebuilt retaining wall behind Lawrence Cabin and Nitre Hall. Spring, 1998

## **New Retaining Wall Behind Nitre Hall**

The red-tailed hawk seems to like the view from the top of the new retaining wall behind Nitre Hall. The old wall had developed a serious bulge; at some points it was two-feet out of line. Township Manager Tom Bannar agreed that the wall was a danger to visitors and to the children attending the Colonial Living program.

In late Spring, Jeff Hanna Construction of Eagle PA, removed (and saved) all the stones, excavated the dirt, and reinforced the wall with steel rods. Pipes were installed to improve drainage and a concrete wall was poured.

Then, stone masons from South Philadelphia took over and re-set the stones. See *photo at left.*

Next Spring, a perennial garden designed by high school students in the Summer Research Program will be installed. See *Page 3.*



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## Stucco Tests Prepare for Nitre Hall Restoration

In preparation for restoration work on Nitre Hall in the Spring of 1999, historic preservation architects, John Milner and Dan Campbell performed some preliminary tests of the stucco on September 1. The purpose was to help the architects determine how to proceed with the repairs funded by a grant from the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission.

### Nitre Hall Stucco Test Findings:

Stucco is solidly adhered to the exterior walls in some places and not-so solidly in others. There appears to be three kinds of stucco covering Nitre Hall.

- Original soft stucco (c 1810), which can be identified by the obvious lumps of limestone in the surface
- Pebble-dash stucco (c 1900), which contains tiny stones mixed in with the stucco and has a rough appearance.
- Hard stucco - (c1960s), cement-based, non-pebbled stucco, which covers most of the outside of the building

The architects are considering three options to repair the stucco.

- 1 Remove all of the stucco and re-stucco the entire building - risks damage to the underlying areas where stucco is firmly attached.
- 2 Remove loose stucco, fill bad spots, and stucco the entire building - stucco will be thicker in some places than in others.
- 3 Attach wire lath over existing stucco and apply a fresh coat over the entire building - nailing lath into the stucco risks splitting underlying stones and weakening the building.

Local plasterer George Brown, who worked on Nitre Hall in the past, is consulting with the preservation architects to determine the best solution.



Lawrence Cabin ready for rethinking - Summer, 1998

## Bores Infest Lawrence Cabin; Repairs Begun

Last year, guides noticed rotting of the logs on the outside of Lawrence Cabin. The culprits were bores that had gotten in because of bark remaining on some of the logs.

Fortunately the infestation affected only the one non-historic wall. (Lawrence Cabin, at one time, was connected to an addition. The new wall was added when the original cabin was reassembled at the Karakung Drive site in 1961).

The township contacted 18th Century Restoration, who proposed a state-of-the-art approach to repairing the historic log cabin. The plan was approved by the PA Historical and Museum Commission. Research determined that the porridge between the logs was neither original nor authentic. It consisted of a hard, inflexible cement. Also, expansion and contraction of the wood caused damage, requiring replacement of two of the logs.

A two-phase restoration has begun. Phase one includes rethinking three walls. All of the old, hard cement porridge was removed in August. *See photo at left.* The cabin was wrapped for protection while awaiting the rethinking. A soft, flexible, more historically accurate, and safer porridge is being used. The repairs should be completed before the start of the Fall Colonial Living Program.

Phase two, scheduled for 1999, addresses repairing and rethinking the chimney wall. To complete the work, the inside of the cabin will be white-washed.

### Porridge

A thick, soft mortar used for sealing or "chinking" gaps between the logs of a cabin.

## High School Students Tackle Two Summer Projects

Work inside or outside? Spend a week learning the fine art of archiving or plan a perennial garden? Why choose? Do both.

That is what ten Haverford High School juniors did in June.

Under the direction of Renee Coffey and Mary Courtney, ten juniors (now seniors) spent their first week of summer vacation participating in the Margaret Johnston Summer Research Program. For five days, the students tackled two very different projects. Nitre Hall benefited from both efforts. One project headed by Renee Coffey focused on learning some inventorying and basic curatorial skills. The other project, under the direction of Mary Courtney, involved "garden variety" research in the planning of a perennial garden along the retaining wall behind Nitre Hall and Lawrence Cabin.

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THE STUDENTS WERE A PERFECT CREW TO UNDERTAKE COUNTING AND MEASURING EVERYTHING IN NITRE HALL.

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The ten students from the Haverford High School Junior American Studies class were: Jodie Song, Jessica Clamage, Kristen Nickel, Andy Lee, Zach Allen, Nate Oxman, Callan Wall, Marc Lazarow, Lindsey Sanna, and Stephanie Sciamanna.

### Counting and Measuring

The Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA), through a subsidized grant, provides expert advice on conserving, preserving, and repairing paper-based historic materials. CCAHA will

survey our collection and advise us on preservation methods. Prior to conducting a survey, CCAHA requires a general inventory of the collection to determine the number of hours and staff needed. According to Renee Coffey, the students were a perfect crew to undertake counting and measuring everything in Nitre Hall. To prepare for the task, the students toured the Conservation Center at 22nd and Spruce and the nearby Rosenbach Museum, where the conservator discussed textile conservation.

### Basic Archiving

After taking inventory, the students took on the initial archiving of 15 boxes of materials collected over the years by long-time HTHS member and sponsor of the summer program, Peg Johnston. The items were well annotated, but not yet categorized.

Donning white curatorial gloves, the students sorted the artifacts, which consisted of photographs, letters, notes, deeds (some from the early 1800s), wills, scrapbooks, and brochures. Subjects, all relating to the township, include schools, churches, railroads and trolleys, medical institutions, and historic buildings such as Nitre Hall, Casa al Sol, and Pont Reading. The students carefully did a "rough sort" of

the materials into subjects. At the end of the week, they selected, labeled, and set up a display of pictures and other items from the collection.


### Perennial Garden Planning

Some of the students also researched perennial plants and native wildflowers for a garden to be installed along the retaining wall at Nitre Hall. Because the reconstruction of the retaining wall was still in progress during the summer program, planting the garden will occur next year. *See Retaining Wall on Page 1.*

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THE GROUP TOURED JOANNA REED'S EXTENSIVE PERENNIAL GARDENS IN MALVERN.

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On the final day of the program, Mary Courtney and four of the students (Lindsey, Stephanie, Kristen, and Callan) visited Longview Farm in Malvern, the home and garden of Joanna Reed. The group toured her extensive perennial garden and learned the names and needs of various native plants in the woodland and meadow settings there. Joanna gave them many leaf and flower samples to help them identify and make appropriate choices for the garden beneath the newly rebuilt stone retaining wall. 

### Haverford Township Day

Look for the HTHS table at the Haverford Township Day on October 10th. We'll be set up near the Skatium and will have information on township history and membership opportunities. Various items will be for sale, including the charming lintel houses of the Historic 1797 Federal School. You can also purchase a raffle ticket for a beautiful, handmade Victorian afghan, donated by Sally Boyer. Stop by for a visit or sign up to spend an hour or two "on duty" by calling Elaine Halberstadt at 446-0872.

## Dates to Remember

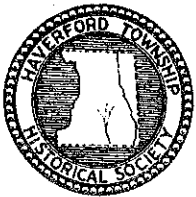
- ⇒ **Haverford Township Day - Saturday, October 10, 1998 10 - 4**  
Darby Road, between Brookline and Mill Roads
- ⇒ **Powder Mill Valley Day - Saturday October 24, 1998 10 - 5**  
Civil War Era Encampment - Nitre Hall on Karakung Drive
- ⇒ **Nitre Hall House Tours: 1 - 4 PM**  
Sunday, December 6, 13, and 20
- ⇒ **Winter General Meeting: Thursday, February 18, 1998**  
8:00 PM, Llanerch Presbyterian Church, Park Rd and Lansdowne Ave

### Monday Morning Volunteer Wanted

A Society member is needed to represent HTHS at meetings of the Historic Sites Committee of the Darby Creek Valley Association (DCVA). Benefits include the opportunity to see inside the various historic buildings along the Darby Creek Valley, which stretches from Daylesford to Tinicum. The next meeting occurs at our own Historic 1797 Federal School on Monday, October 26th at 9:30 AM. If you are able to attend this meeting, please call Mary Courtney at 789-5169.

### Colonial Living Is 25!

If you or your child attended fifth grade in a Haverford Township school since 1963, then you'll no doubt remember a day churning butter, fetching water, or making soap at Lawrence Cabin. For twenty-five years the members of HTHS have been providing the Colonial Living enrichment program for all Haverford Township School District's fifth graders. The program runs from mid-September through early October. This year, Education Director Mary Courtney expects 17 classes to spend a day doing 18th and 19th century lessons and chores at the cabin and in the summer kitchen of Nitre Hall.



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