

HS NEWSLETTER



Spring

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Welcome again!

Spring is here, in bits and tantalizing pieces that give us that "get-up-and-go" feeling to do something! We've got one something for you - Heritage Day in the Park on Saturday, May 20, 1978.

You say you came once? Well, there is a lot more to see and we don't want you to think this is just a play-day for the kids. We want all of you to come, and have poked and prodded here and there and we've got some pretty fascinating things that you might be very sorry to miss.

When you first get to the Park, and park - just stand a minute and decide how you would have made out this past winter, if you had lived in either Nitre Hall or the Lawrence Cabin. Then, come see how Nitre Hall is progressing. Like the turning of the mills of the gods, the work moves slowly - but surely. Betsy Hoffman, one of the outstanding librarians in the state (who lives with the two Claras) is cataloguing and arranging our already excellent library.

Mr. Irvin (who does a lot himself, plus some other eager beaver members) says the paint in the hall and the upper floors is fairly well scraped down, ready for painting. This is being done largely by Dan DiImperio, who comes to us from Outreach 78 - a continuation of the Bicentennial Program.

Through them, we also have two girls who have been visiting schools and clubs, and who put on a most impressive demonstration of Indian Arts and Folklore. This deals mainly with the Lenni Lenape Indians who were living in this area.

(Editor's note - about fifteen or more years ago, there was a violent storm, causing a mud slide near the hills in Beechwood. A huge number of arrowheads were discovered in various stages of being finished. One of my pupils found this, collected several hundred,

B. Irvin

many of which he sold to a dealer in Indian artifacts, and some he kept, and gave a few to his friends, in which I was lucky enough to be counted.)

The girls will be helped by our rope-maker, Larry Neal. He makes his rope in the old colonial way, not in the rope-walk as seen at Mystic. He braids his rope from colonial hemp in six strands, using a colonial shuttle. Besides demonstrating his skill, he will have a display showing some of methods of knots, etc., which is very similar to macrame. He is bringing a bridal and reins of rope, which were used by the farmers in colonial times. Leather was too expensive for all but the very wealthy.

Much of his information comes from an old groom who took part in the cattle drives to Newtown Square and later became groom to Man-O-War. His words were, "Rope for farmers, leather for gentlemen." There is some equipment at the Grange in the "barn." Mr. Neal said he would try to bring them over -- if not, look for them at the Grange. He is proud to boast that he is half Cherokee, which always sounds pretty glamorous to me. So he would naturally be able to assist our two friends with the Indian display, Diana Klinkhard and Frank Sauers. The Indian artifacts they will show are from Mr. Joe Alhaht.

Another treat we have for you is the folk singing with dulcimer by Dorothy O'Donnell. She has performed before the Queen of England, during her visit to the White House, and was also invited to play for the Governor's Council. For those of you who don't play the dulcimer - or maybe can not particularly identify it, Sue Loder will bring hers, so the ambitious souls may try it out.

After you have toured all of the sites around Nitre Hall and the Lawrence Cabin, start out to circle the grounds. Many of our friends will have returned, but as you go away from the house, down on the level, you will discover some eager beavers, chopping away at a long spar. You will be in at the birth of a mast to be used on an old-fashioned sailing boat. All of this is through the courtesy of The Heritage Ship Guild of the Port of Philadelphia. Our sail-maker, Mr. Cooper, very logically told me of this group last year but they were already involved in the Bicentennial activities. So we are most happy to welcome them this year. The spar will be 20' long and they hope to finish it by the end of the day - so you

can see this is not just the ordinary chop and chip. It will be used on one of their four ships.

In 1972, the nucleus of this group, having already purchased a not too new ship from Portugal, flew over and sailed it back. The crew were all amateurs who really wanted to take to the water and sail. Mr. Paul Coyne, the Director, very kindly compared their efforts as a nucleus of ambitious beginners to the type work our own Society is doing.

Last year, the group was involved in the maritime activities around the Centennial which prevented them from visiting us. The official berth is Pier 30, South, the Tennis Pier. Their office is at the Bryn Mawr Station. They are the proud owners of 3 ships, none of which were spanking new, and part of the fun was to begin restoring them, as we are working on Nitre Hall. One is the "Nellie and Mary", built in 1891. "Mary" was added to the name as Mrs. Peterson, the Captain's wife, just had her second child. It is the only lightship still operating in America; the light boats at Nantucket and other ports are only showing a light- not maneuvering. "Nellie" weighs in at 480 tons. "The Salty Dog" is a catboat. The "Rere" nee "Baltimore" has had two successful cruises. She is 230' long, weighs in at 980 tons and used to be the Maryland Pilots' Boat. You can see each one of their acquisitions need a lot of work.

They have over 300 members and publish a newsletter eleven times a year. They casually mentioned 1200 man hours of work and had one of their ships at the Civic Center Museum.

It should be a real pleasure to meet them.

HERBAL WORKSHOPS

In order to get really inspired by herbs, you might be interested in a series of lectures at the Grange. The first on Saturday, April 22 will deal with the history of herbs and herb gardens. On Saturday, April 29, Nancy Webster will describe the medicinal uses. The 3rd, on May 6, will concentrate on comparing traditional and modern herbs, their uses, both culinary and medicinal, and the harvesting. For further information, contact the Grange. (Also article on our herb garden).

THE STORY OF BEECHWOOD PARK

(How delightful it is to ask for something and receive it by the next issue! In the Spring issue, it was hopefully asked if any information was available about the amusement park at Beechwood. Ever since I first came to teach at Brookline, I was fascinated to know that such a place existed. Thanks to Mrs. Burton England, the following is now available. If any other facts are about, please send them to the editor.)

Around the turn of the century and in the early twentieth century, most trolley and interurban lines owned and operated their own amusement parks. Philadelphia and West Chester Traction had its Castle Rock Park. Philadelphia Rapid Transit had Willow Grove Park. The fantastic story of Beechwood Amusement Park is best told by George K. Barry in a 1956 article in the Upper Darby News.

"One of the Caesars gave the Romans the Appian Way in 312 B.C., and the remains stand today as reminders of another age. Haverford Township also has reminders of a long-forgotten day, going back five decades - reminders that few people are familiar with, though most people in the township have seen them at one time or another.

"A history of Haverford Township would not be complete without some mention of the stantions that line a long stretch of land near the P & W tracks in Beechwood. If nothing else, they represent a dream that would have made a sizeable portion of the township into a public amusement park had it come true. The stantions are all that remain of this dream.

"On May 30, 1907, Beechwood Amusement Park was opened and 5,000 recreation hungry people came from Philadelphia, the Main Line, and all parts of Haverford Township to hail the new venture- a promotion conceived by the P & W.

"It was truly a great day. The Royal Imperial Italian Band under the baton of Signor Rossi, and decked out in red and green uniforms, was on hand; carbon lights were strung up to lend a Broadway color to the scene; acrobats were on the program, and a nickleodeon showed 'The Great Train Robbery' on its fluttering screen.

"Somewhere along the line, the promoters of Havertown's great amusement venture were careless. The park lasted less than two months. An ambitious fellow named Major Downes tried to revive the park, but he had no success, and it finally folded.

The park had every known amusement to thrill the visitors. The

acrobats from Europe were there; the carousel twirled and twirled and there was the inevitable Laughland or crazy house.

"No such park could be complete without the Canal of Venice or the tunnel of love. Havertown's great amusement venture had it. There were games of chance, too, and all of them rigged to give the house its usual percentage.

"This great amusement dream was chartered under the name of the Beechwood Amusement Park, Inc. A brick building was erected as a power house to light up the park, and to provide power for the various amusement devices.

"When the end came, tabulators gave out the report that the park owed \$30,844.63, principally to bondholders in the bankruptcy papers. It was disclosed that the park had been losing \$700 a week since it opened.

"The weather of the era did not help the park much. Then there came charges of poor management. But the coup de grace was the riot that broke out in front of the Gypsy fortune-teller's tent, and spread to such proportions that the State Police had to be called in from Norristown to restore order.

"The P & W conceived the idea of Beechwood Park more to develop passenger traffic on its line than to become the owners of an Amusement Park.

"Hidden behind the whole story of Beechwood Park, however, is something more than rioting. There was a depression back in 1907. At least that is what we would call it today. In those days they referred to it as a 'panic'. And in those days \$16 per week was top pay, and the low prices of those times did not mean that a family man could be a spendthrift on such diversions as merry-go-rounds and love-tunnels - even at Beechwood Amusement Park.

"The scarcity of money during the panic of 1907 most certainly had a great deal to do with the failure of Haverford's greatest amusement venture. The stations built in 1907 are still there, standing like gaunt ghosts of an era that dates back nearly 50 years, reminders of a great dream that turned into a nightmare, and never came true."

The ride from 69th Street Terminal to Beechwood Park took only six minutes and cost only five cents. The passengers who visited the park were accommodated by an extra track and large station.

platforms. Passengers reached the park safely over a bridge carried on concrete towers. The railroad company also erected on the park grounds a 600-kw sub-station for lighting and power. The park was divided in two sections, one of which was enclosed and devoted wholly to amusements of the highest order. This section consisted of about ten acres. The other section was mainly the picnic grounds.

And so, a venture that usually added additional revenue to most electric lines, became a tragic enterprise for the P & W.

(At the risk of knowingly repeating some of the above, an additional article is re-printed.)

Beechwood Park.

Operated between 1907-1909. Fare - 69th St. to Beechwood - 5¢.

Contained two Scenic Railways, Merry-Go-Round, Small Theatre, etc.

Three tracks. Power House on Beechwood side. (Some of this is extracted from Electric Railway, January, 1906.)

The picnic grounds extended all the way to Docky Road and the Ardmore trolley. Still to be seen today near the Haverford Library on Docky Road are three five-foot pillars, which were originally the rear entrance to the park. Also, on Edgewood Road, between Brookline Boulevard and the Brookline P & W Station, two such pillars may be seen. These led to the station.

(The writer of this article concludes) I'm not sure what became of the park. Some say it closed because of lack of customers, others say it was destroyed by fire. No one seems to know.

(The editor would welcome any other articles or comments that you can give us, so please ask older residents.)

OUR HERB GARDEN by Dotty Speedy, the instigator, planter, and author.

An herb garden- a display of beauty- but lesser known to many of us are the medicinal and seasoning qualities of these fragrant and aromatic plant. To delve into the wonders of nature and to learn a little more about our exciting flora is always a challenge.

When it was decided that we could "cheery-up" the front of Nitre Hall and the Lawrence Cabin with a display of some of the well-known herbs, we went to work with pack-axe, muscel, 2 willing husbands (and several sometimes helpful children.) Also, bricks from the old floor of Nitre Hall, and determination to produce an aromatic garden

that our Historical Society could consider an achievement, even though a minor one in conjunction with all of the other hard and earnest work that is being done.

It is interesting to note that most herbs are home-grown and usually used fresh. They can be green-dried and are then available throughout the year for seasoning dishes. For medicinal purposes, herbs both wild and cultivated are used fresh, dried, or processed. They are flavoring agents.

With the help of herbs the pioneers enriched their diet, made medicines, sweetened the interior of their homes, and dyed their clothes.

Modern research on the volatile or essential oils contained in herbs and spices has shown the nutritional importance of adding herbs to the present day diet. So you see that to pursue this study is an adventure into learning more and desiring to know more about our lives in conjunction with what herbs and spices can do for us and have been doing since the tradition of their seasoning and spicing has been passed down to us through the centuries.

Sincere thanks to
Kathy and Bill Foden

Dave Speedy
Mr. and Mrs. Young

Yours seasonally, Dottie Speedy

(Dottie is also a poet).

Most herbs are green, their blossoms vary in hue.

If you enjoy aromas fragrant, herbs are worth a whiff or two.

What flavors they'll uncover in a salad or a stew,

And their medicinal qualities are a study to pursue.

The toil of our herbal offerings was worth it all for you.

So linger on Nitres' Hill-top and take in your Valley view.

What follows should be a quick but careful trip to examine the garden around the flagpole, and maybe start an herb garden of your own. If you haven't tried herbs in your own cooking, do so. Most cook books have excellent suggestions.

Now, what about spices? Most of them are imported and dried, then either sold in pieces or powdered. When we visited Cliveden on our Germantown trip, I purchased "Dessert Recipes" (Pub.-1974)

The favorite spices were cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, vanilla or rose-water, almond extract, ginger, lemon abstract, and allspice.

Our own herb gardens will produce more of the grassy type, which were dried, and sometimes quickly powdered. Just check the Cabin garden and see how well you would have eaten at Nitre Hall.

(Occasionally, we have been lucky enough to print the story of one of our members. This time, it is our pleasure to present a brief autobiography of Betty Stafford.)

LIVING HISTORY

Elizabeth, daughter of the early Quaker settler, Henry Lewis, who built the Grange (then called Maen Coch), married Richard Hayes II, a close neighbor in 1697. After a Friend's wedding at Old Haverford Meeting she came to live in his home, a stone farmhouse still standing on Manoa Road in Haverford Township, part of the Welsh Barony.

Dr. George Smith, a great-great-grandson, the author of the first History of Delaware County, was born there in 1804. It was his mother, Margaretta, widow of Benjamin Hayes Smith, who had the last addition to the home built in 1812-13.

How could one escape being historically minded while living for more than twenty-five years in that home, with a "William Penn" oak tree to view each day in the year? Your second vice-president, Betty Stafford, is most fortunate to do so.

She notes that those Quaker women, members of a religious society that has always believed in equality for all persons, were in the forefront of the suffrage movement in the 19th and 20th centuries. Remember hearing of Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony working nationwide? In Haverford Township, Mrs. Hartshorne and friends worked for and saw the passage in 1920 of the constitutional amendment giving women the vote.

For some years Betty Stafford has been active in the League of Women Voters whose purpose is to promote political responsibility through informed participation of citizens in government. She served as a member of the Government Study Commission and helped write the Home Rule Charter for Haverford Township which the voters approved in 1976. That's history in the making - a tie-in with the Historical Society of Haverford Township's concern with past traditions, principals, and material.

BIG REQUEST

Betsy Hoffman, who is cataloging and arranging our library, would dearly love either a book case or a china closet with glass doors so that our really valuable books may be protected.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR HERITAGE DAY?

1. Come, bring your children, grandchildren, neighbors, who will bring their own children; city friends; anybody who got winded with all of the goings-on last year but are now ready to try again.
2. Make something to contribute for selling:

cookies	brownies	anything else that your family
candy		likes and is not too messy to
cupcakes	nut bread	sell.
cakes		
3. Either bring your lunch or better, plan to eat at the excellent lunch wagon.
4. Volunteer to give an hour to:
 - collect tickets
 - sell at goodies table
 - sell at anyplace that needs you as gift table
 - bring some gifts, so that we may have a gift table.
(Knit hats, sweaters, scarves, etc.)
 - Any lovely home-made embroidery or belts or
some valuable home-made trophy.
5. Try out all of the activities listed, and there are plenty for all
6. Listen to the dulcimer and then try it. There really is no music for it so it's easy.
7. See how far Nitre Hall has come in its redoing.
8. Cook at the cabin - consider from where you would have to get your water supply
9. Examine the herb garden, then go home and plant your own.
10. Get a really good start by visiting THE THOMAS MASSEY HOUSE on Saturday, August 5th. Get tuned in for the 18th.

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Contributions, suggestions, disagreements, new ideas are welcomed. Any interesting recollections would be great.

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