

# Newsletter Excerpts

## ***From the Spring 2024 Newsletter:***

**The origins of our Historical Commission's (HC) Logo** There are ten properties in "Beautiful Downtown Thornton" bearing this logo. Here is its abridged story.

With our Supervisor's permission, in 2009 the HC initiated a program to recognize the **nine major historic resources properties** (HRP), and their owners, of our Thornton Village Historic District. These **nine** had been placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of Interior. See the HC portion of the Township Website for links to this

Concurrently, the HC was designing the Town Center Sign, *to bring public awareness of our Village's businesses*, and was designing an HC logo. The logo was designed to complement the Township Seal.

Yellow House, being the most prominent HRP in the Village, led to us asking township resident Kristina Fennelly if she would design a Yellow House logo for us. Kris volunteered to do that and the logo was completed in mid-2009. In 2009 the Town Center Sign was designed and in 2011, at the Thornbury Historical Society's (THS) 03 May dinner, the THS and the HC presented tastefully designed dark green and bronze plaque to each of the **nine** HRP owners. Those plaques are now attached to the fronts of their specific resource and together with the Town Center Sign, comprise the ten properties mentioned above.

**In Loving Memory of Dennis L. Hunsecker** 24 November 2023, marked the passing of Denny, a friend to many of us and longtime HC member. Dennis was a very kind individual who easily gave of himself and was always there when asked. Our condolences to his family. He will be greatly missed.

**HRP Research Project Updates** The five properties researched in 2023 have been completed and are being reviewed. They should be out for distribution by the end of February 2024.

**Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation** Located in Ridley Creek State Park this 17<sup>th</sup> century farm, aka plantation, is a wonderful day trip for all ages. Here are three links which give much more information:

- [Farm site in Ridley Creek State Park offers history lessons](#)
- [Ridley Creek's Colonial Plantation: For the Shear Fun of It](#)
- [Take a look at the Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation where history comes alive](#)

## ***From the Winter 2019-2020 Newsletter:***

**The Method to Our Madness** - Yes... we have one. Knowing some consider history a boring subject, we endeavor to pique interests to help save that history. Vast varieties of ice cream exist to interest as many as possible to support that industry. Our industry, saving history logically, is no different. It is beneficial for younger generations to understand the everyday earlier lives of our older generations. Hard to imagine for the young ones that we never locked our doors or we would sit and listen to the radio, as we had no TV. Or we had no electricity. Our Commission's article in the spring 2009 issue of the township newsletter rolled out the Ben Franklin quote we opted to use as seen above. Short, sweet and deeply meaningful; a more eloquent way of saying...you don't know what you have till it's gone. Our well contains houses, landscapes, memories and knowledge.

Keeping the well full though quality education, communication and teamwork is our method. All accomplished with the Board of Supervisors backing and some with the wonderful collaboration of the Thornbury Historical Society (THS). Our partnering with THS helped produce the Timeline in Thornbury Park, the Frazer Ruins interpretive panels, the Oral Histories and Historic Resource Property Histories projects. Downtown Thornton Brandywine Battlefield Wayside signage is being discussed, donated by the Pennsylvania Society of Sons of the Revolution. Discussions are ongoing for several interpretive panels for the Summer Kitchen and Springhouse buildings on the grounds where the Farmer's Market is staged. All our methods are designed to educate and inspire a further desire of our residents to remember and help preserve.

This is a team effort.

---

## ***From the Winter 2018-2019 Newsletter:***

**Firecakes...** After defeats at Brandywine and Germantown and with the British Army taking up comfortable headquarters in Philadelphia, a mere twenty miles away the battered remains of George Washington's Army settled in for the long cold winter of 1777-78 at Valley Forge. From this strong defensive position on the Schuylkill they had to ensure the safety of the Continental Congress in York and the Pennsylvania legislature in Lancaster. It was during this terrible winter at Valley Forge that Washington molded his army and brought hope to what at times had seemed like a hopeless fight for freedom. When Washington's twelve-thousand-man army made camp, they were short of every conceivable provision, including food, clothing and medicine. Two out of three soldiers lacked shoes and were barefoot. Four thousand men lacked blankets. Many were half clothed and covered their freezing feet with rags. Our Polly Frazer, even in the roughest of weather, made regular trips from Thornbury to Valley Forge with provisions.

With dull axe blades the men were broken into squads of twelve to build huts. Measuring fourteen by sixteen feet, with six and one half feet of head room, each would house twelve

men. Within a month a village of more than two thousand log cabins materialized.

For days many of the troops were forced to subsist on a mixture of water and flour known as a "firecake." This is a crude mixture of flour and water cooked on a hot stone. While the British occupying Philadelphia had feasts by blazing fireplaces, the Continentals someday could not scrape together any food.

The 1779-80 winter at Morristown was worse but they survived through what would be the coldest winter on record. Incredibly throughout most of the war, while these men lacked provisions, great numbers of them had an abundance of spirit and fortitude resulting in our United States of America.

---

***From the Summer 2018 Newsletter:***

**Looking at our Historic Resource Properties (HRP's) thru a fresh set of eyes ...**

To date 12 of the 204 studies are complete. Our Board of Supervisors approved three more for 2018. The three chosen were standing during the day of the Battle of Brandywine... September 11, 1777. All played a part in helping to secure America's independence from England. These properties were either subject to raids by the Redcoats or were part of George Washington's Strategic Retreat.

Our goal on these studies is to share our Township's history with you and not have the facts of these properties just sit on paper in some file somewhere. Thornbury had many important founders of this country live here, work here, fight here or pass thru. Our little township was a key component to making America what it is today. There is a story behind every property and the histories these studies produce are fascinating.

We would like you to be able to look at a piece of ground or a building and know its historical relevance. Do you know where in our township the Lenni Lenape Indians lived...taking game from our forests and fish from our streams? Are you aware that William Penn gave his son and his daughter, each, a hunting cabin along with the surrounding acreage and that both of those cabins are extant and one is in our township? Does it mean anything that our township served as one of the primary retreat routes through which George Washington ordered his Army to travel, thus securing they could fight another day...and win.

The Thornbury Historical Society and our Historical Commission are partnering to complete two HRP studies of the Station Road area, per year. Stay tuned.

Thornbury Newsletter Summer 2018

---

## ***From the Spring 2017 Newsletter:***

When our area was first settled... two of the most important aspects of survival were food and shelter. Precious seeds were brought from Europe as there was no source for the needed crops. Today, Burpee and other companies offer varieties and quantities of seeds that would boggle our ancestor's minds. Shelter had to be gleaned from the forests and fields, through hard physical labor. No power tools, no Home Depot, no drone deliveries from Amazon. Shelter has evolved from caves, tents, barns, log cabins and rapidly progressed to houses as we know them.

These changes were a result of our ability to adapt; knowing if we did not our future would be difficult at best.

In the mid 1960's the demolition of the beautiful original Penn Station, gave rise to the architectural preservation movement in the United States. New laws were passed to restrict such demolitions and those laws brought about Historic Resource Preservation ordinances.

On June, 19 1996 Resolution No. 6 of 1996 the Thornbury Board of Supervisors created our Historical Commission. Our Commission's tasks are to recommend, to the Supervisors, how to preserve and promote our rich historical past and work hand in hand with the owners and protectors of our 204 Historic Resource Properties with their 488 associated resources.

After Penn station was demolished it was realized that unless this nation adapts its thinking toward logical preservation practices, those first shelters and subsequent improving ones, along with their level of importance to our lives, would be lost forever. To not adapt would erase our heritages and that was not an option.

---

## ***From the Winter 2016 Newsletter:***

### **Home Sweet Cave?**

"They were only holes digged in the ground"

Mid to late 1600's... A passenger boarding a ship in England would have no idea the time length their voyage would be to America. History indicates voyages varied from 47 to 138 days. Eight miles an hour was top speed when there was a promising wind. The Mayflower, moving an average of about five miles an hour, took 66 days to cross. Of primary importance to Pennsylvania's first settlers was shelter. The most primitive of all shelters, the cave, became home to those who could not find family to stay with while a cabin was being built. The families of Joseph Gilpin and William Brinton, original Settlers of our area, separately took shelter in caves in the sides of hills near Dilworthtown. The location of the Brinton cavestead is said to have been paved over by 202 and is in the area across from the Super Wawa at Dilworthtown. The most common usage of cave dwellings was in Philadelphia, near the Delaware

River.

In 1683, Francis Daniel Pastorius, a first Settler of Philadelphia and founder of Germantown, described his early shelter: “The caves were only holes digged (sic) in the ground, covered with earth, a matter of five or six feet deep, 10 or 12 wide and about 20 long; whereof neither the sides nor the floors have been plank’d. Herein we lived more contently than many nowadays in their planted and wainscoted places. I myself purchased one for 5 pounds—in the midst of Front Street at Philadelphia.”