

Hale Byrnes Newsletter Winter 2012 . 2013



Come On In and Sit a Spell!

Many, many loud and enthusiastic Huzzahs and thank you to all our Board members and wonderful volunteers who helped with the Hale Byrnes Holiday 2012 Open House on December 1, 2012. It was an amazing, hectic, fun and wonderfully-well attended day!

A Special thank you to Barbara and Harold Miller who brought the fresh greens and decorated the old place, to Barbara Miller, Donna Draper, Kathy DeSimone, and Debbie Poffenberger for the outstanding hot cider, cookies and cakes, to John Foskey for his cheering mulled wine, to Chris and John and their 1st Delaware Regiment, the Niekamps, Paula Rudnick, Linda Moss and her Fifes and Drums of the Delaware Militia, Lynn King and Bill Lindsey for an outstanding job, and thanks to Oriole for looking out for the money.

Kevin McKenney, (who works at UD), generously donated a bicentennial era print by Paul Catts (Wade's father). The framed print features the Delaware Blue Hens, and Wade proudly proclaimed that he had posed for the soldier in the picture. Chris selected the spot on the wall directly above the Keeping Room table where it is currently hung.

Paula Rudnick and Lynn King both contributed a few dollars from the sale of their textiles to HB House, Lois Niekamp received \$44 towards our 18th century Bible restoration, and Bill Lindsey generously and unexpectedly brought his flute and played 18th century music.

The expenses of our Dec 1st evening speaker, author Todd Andrlik, were totally covered by his publisher, so that was a nice bonus! We are pleased and impressed to say that Todd left here to give a talk about his beautiful new book, "Reporting the Revolution," at Harvard University. Todd's book is gorgeous and can be ordered in time for Christmas at a discount from Amazon.com. It contains numerous articles by leading scholars as well as useful thoughts on using these fascinating documents in a classroom situation.

Photos from the 2012 Open House and other images may be viewed by clicking on our photo link.

As winter sets in, the house will be open only on the First Wednesdays of each month at lunch time. Please click on our Calendar link to see the great programs we have in store for 2013. Our Revolutionary Round Table series and other weekend programs will recommence in March.

NEW news--The grant application for "Before the Underground Railroad," a symposium on 18th century abolitionists that Michael McDowell, Mary Starkweather-White of Quaker Hill, Oriole and I submitted to the Delaware Humanities Forum has been approved.

Did you know that "our" Daniel Byrnes was one of the first known abolitionists in America or that our Board Member Michael McDowell is researching the life of Warner Mifflin?

The DHF grant (just under \$3,000) will cover transportation and motel/hotels for scholars who will be speaking on March 9 at a daylong symposium we are hosting in honor of the 300th anniversary of Benezet, a famous Philadelphia educator and abolitionist whom Daniel Byrnes knew. The symposium will be held at Wilmington Friends Meeting, where Daniel Byrnes once served as Clerk of Meeting.

Speakers will include Maurice Jackson of DC, a prominent African-American scholar of the educator and abolitionist Anthony Benezet; Julie Winch of Boston University, the authority on James Forten; Martha Paxson-Grundy of Case Western Reserve who is a leading Quaker scholar; Christopher Densmore, head of the Quaker Historical Society at Swarthmore, Pa.; our own Mike McDowell speaking on Warner Mifflin, and yours truly (chief researcher of the Emmy-award-winning *Whispers of Angels: Story of Delaware on the Underground Railroad*, which featured Blair Underwood and Ed Asner.

Pastor Catherine Short, (whom some of you may have met last spring at the evening reception for the National Coalition of American Revolution Round Tables), and Kay Wood Bailey, a Kent County member of the Delaware Press Association and Underground Railroad aficionado will act as Discussion Group leaders.

Although there is already a built-in audience of Underground Railroad aficionados and area Quakers, we are also hoping that Delaware Department of Education will offer continuing Education credits to teachers who attend.

Our plan is to have a reception here for conference attendees on Friday, March 8, to which you are all invited. Tickets will be \$20 per person to cover costs. I am hoping that we can bring down two people from Christ Church-Philadelphia to present the program that is held up there featuring a man as narrator, and a black woman who portrays a former slave born in Delaware who attended Christ Church at the same time the Founding Fathers were there. It is an outstanding presentation.

The next eventful weekend (all day long on March 23) will include Chris's "Games Tournament," Chris will be chairing that event which will be co-sponsored by 1st Delaware Regiment and will serve as a fundraiser for them in recognition of all the hard work they so consistently do for Hale Byrnes House.

We have especially blessed by the addition to our corps of loyal volunteers of James Douglas, a 9th grader in the Christina School District, who has been helping with the heavy lifting involved in setting up and taking down tables, chairs, and helping Ralph set up the audio visual equipment before and after meetings and programs. We also wish to thank Ted Burdick, who is now in college, for his past four years of generous service in that role.

Kim has also been quietly helping five Museum Studies/ Winterthur and Longwood students on their "Sustaining Places," projects. Two Longwood students are researching our old sycamore tree; Jodie is learning how to monitor heat and humidity, and Lauren Brincat and Philippe Halbert are making a podcast about handling antique objects. When the projects are done, we hope to post them on our links page.

OLD NEWS

Compared to "Irene", "Hurricane Sandy" was not too big a deal. The flooding only reached to bottom step of the back deck. Many of the bricks along the edge of the parking lot and on the steps were loosened and will need to be re-mortared. The south side lawn is in need of some dirt to even it out and make it safer to walk on, but it remains a lovely spot for outdoor events.

We still need a bigger propane tank and Marco continues to work with State to get that and the drainage issues addressed. The floor in the museum room seems "squashy" since the storm, maybe a result of humidity expanding and contracting the boards--maybe more bugs--dunno. You can view dramatic scenes of both floods on our photo page.

Our river bank restoration project is doing well. many of the native trees and shrubs that were planted last fall have survived and are beginning to take hold, and generous local gardeners have contributed thyme, daylilies, asters, iris, Sweet Annie, artemesia and ferns to the effort.

The local fishermen reported more shad under the bridge at the top of our road. For the third year, teacher Julia Dooley and Martha Corrozzi, Andrew Homsey and Gerald Kauffman of UD's Water Resources brought Christina School District children to the Hale Byrnes House to release the shad fingerlings the students raised in their science classes.

Water resources also researched Daniel Byrnes mill dam which was up near the golf course at Delaware Park and their report can be found on our Links Page.

We anticipate once again hosting the Christina River clean-up volunteers in the spring. Last year Nancy Parker graciously juggled eighty-one people coming in and out the door for coffee and potty-breaks. As soon as we get the date from the overall committee we will let you know.

Mary Kastner and her family have donated some lovely metal benches to be placed along the creek bank on nice days. They have come in handy when we have had programs outdoors and are a peaceful place to sit and watch the birds, bugs and butterflies on a summer day.

Whether you enjoy shoveling snow, weeding gardens, baking, or playing board games or tootling your flute, there is always something to do at the Hale Byrnes House. Volunteer whenever you can and do let Nancy Parker know if you are interested in being a First Wednesday docent.

Thank you for all you do. See you in the Spring!

Kim Burdick, Resident Curator