The King of Prussia Gazette

Preserving Upper Merion's Past to Enlighten its Future

Volume II, Number One

Spring 2013

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Michael Morrison

The State of the Society, 2013

As we begin the Tricentennial year of 2013, and we near the end of our first year as a reborn society, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported our efforts. Growth is not without its pains, but we stand resolute and will continue to bring you the story of our rich local history so it will never be forgotten.

In review, our first year was a busy one, with the anticipated Tricentennial celebration just around the corner. Last June, members of the Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society (est. 1936), were invit-



ed to the historic King of Prussia Inn, and we shared the story of its history. Nearly 50 people attended the presentation, and we plan to offer it again this year.

In November, I hosted Chef Walter Staib of City Tavern in Philadelphia and gave him a tour of the historic King of Prussia Inn. Chef Staib and his crew filmed the visit, which would be aired in March, 2013, as the season premier of his Emmy Award winning PBS show, "A Taste of History".

We will co-sponsor a very special Civil War History Day with the Upper Merion Township Library, the Upper Merion Tricentennial Committee, and Society for the preservation of the historical site at Christ Church – Old Swedes Upper Merion, planned for Saturday, June 29, 2013 at Christ Church (Old Swedes). This will be a fundraising event to benefit the preservation of the Church that is in need of maintenance and repair. If you have never visited this historic site, I urge you to join us and help this support this priceless treasure. You will experience reenactor Pat Jordan as Anna Holstein (an Upper Merion resident and Civil War nurse) at 11:00am, the story of Sarah Priest (also a CW nurse), tours of the graveyard highlighting prominent citizens, and tours and information about the church and its stained glass windows, which are quite a treasure. If you have ever wondered about the history of the church, this will be the perfect day to visit Christ Church (Old Swedes) with your family.

In the book, "History of Christ Church (Old Swedes), Upper Merion 1760-1960", it is suggested that "wherever the Swedish settlers went, the Church was not long in following, for they were a deeply religious people, intent upon preserving their religious heritage, and extending it to all about them."

The first service of record for Christ Church (Old Swedes) was performed by Rev. Samuel Hesselius in 1733, and held in the home of Gunnar Rambo. It was suggested that services could be more frequent if a schoolhouse-church were built. The people took his advice and completed a simple log cabin in 1735 on land donated by Gunnar Rambo.

There is also an indication that the Rev. Andrew Sandel, second pastor of Gloria Dei Church was here from 1702 to 1719, and sometimes came up to hold services, so you can see there is a rich history to be explored.

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The "History of Christ Church (Old Swedes), Upper Merion 1760-1960" also states that "In this period of the Civil War, Mr. William H. Holstein and other members of the parish were active in collecting supplies to be sent to army camps as special treats for soldiers from Montgomery County. Mrs. Holstein made several trips to such camps to distribute them." Both rest in the cemetery outside the church.

(Continued on Page 7)

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the King of Prussia Historical Society is to preserve and interpret the history of Upper Merion Township as relevant to its various neighborhoods of Gulph Mills, Gypsy Hills, Croton Woods, King of Prussia, Valley Forge, Abrams, Belmont, Town Center, Swedesburg/King Manor, Henderson, and Swedeland, as well as the areas of Rebel Hill, Port Kennedy, and Hughes Park. The Society's goal is to stimulate public interest and to support the township's heritage through educational programs and public events focusing on preserving the past and shaping the future.

MEETINGS

Members and friends of the King of Prussia Historical Society are invited to regular meetings nine times a year. No meetings will be scheduled in July, August, and December. A topic dealing with local history will be presented following a brief business meeting. Meetings will be held at 2:00 in the Upper Merion Township Building.

An "Annual Meeting" will be held each January. The purpose of this meeting will include the election of Directors and Officers, the reporting of the business of the Society, and for any other objectives that may be deemed necessary.

During this Tricentennial year, the Society's meetings are being coordinated with the Speakers Series meetings scheduled for the township's 300th anniversary celebration.

VOLUNTEERS

The Society benefits greatly by the knowledge and expertise of dedicated and capable volunteers whose efforts enable all of our varied activities, from coordinating our public programs to working with our archives and managing our publications and our website.

We are always looking for new people to step up and to take on new projects. If interested, please come to a meeting and talk to us or contact us by electronic or conventional mail.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Student/Senior (65+)	\$35.00
Individual	\$40.00
Family Household	\$50.00
Patron	\$125.00
Charter	\$250.00

The Town Crier—updates from the Society

OUR CHARTER MEMBERS

We acknowledge our Charter Members and thank them for their support: Emma Carson, Father James Evans, Dave and Marianne Furman, Frank Luther, Dr. Carl Schultheis, and Van Weiss.

INTERESTED IN WRITING?

The Society welcomes articles prepared by its members. Frank Luther if you might be interested in writing and sharing an article for our publication.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Civil War Commemoration...The King of Prussia Historical Society is partnering with Christ Old Swedes Church, the Library, and the Tricentennial Committee to honor the Upper Merionites who made significant contributions during America's Civil War. This year, being the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War, it is most appropriate to remember those who sacrificed so much for the country. The event is planned for Saturday, June 29 at Christ Old Swedes Church. In the planning are presentations, reenactments, and tours of the graves of the veterans and citizens who supported the War. Refreshments will also be available in the Church Hall. Look for forthcoming details about this special event!

Mark your calendar for a Society special event at the Inn on Saturday, September 28 and Sunday, September 29: The Publick House at the King of Prussia Inn. Also during the day, a two-hour program at the Old Roberts Schoolhouse is being planned.

AS IS: SELECTED POEMS OF JOSEPH DORAZIO

Joseph Dorazio, featured in this issue of THE GAZETTE, informed us in January that his latest volume of poetry, As Is: Selected Poems of Joseph Dorazio, is available wherever books are sold. At Amazon.com, you can download As Is for your Kindle®. If you have a Nook® As Is is available at Barnesandnoble.com. Of course, you can always order a printed copy of the book at Amazon, B&N, or your favorite indie bookstore. You can also order directly from iUniverse.com where As Is has earned an "Editor's Choice" award.

OMISSION

The story, Christmas at Valley Forge, by Suzanne Vincent in the Winter 2012 issue of THE GAZETTE should have been identified as a work of historical fiction. We regret the omission.







THE KING OF PRUSSIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY SALUTES TWO LOCAL HISTORIANS



ED DYBICZ, MR. UPPER MERION HISTORY

In 2013, Upper Merion Township is celebrating its Tricentennial. Go to the Local History Collection in the Township Library and one is amazed by the number of newspaper articles filed there about Upper Merion, most being the work of Ed Dybicz. He has certainly helped to preserve Upper Merion's history to enliven its future.

Ed Dybicz, a lifelong resi-

dent of Upper Merion Township, has lived in the village of Swedesburg all of his life. A graduate of Upper Merion High School in 1941, he served in the U.S. Army during the Second World War, European Theatre Operations.

Ed is a member of the Swedesburg Volunteer Fire Company, served as the secretary there for twenty-seven years, and is among the life members of the Fire Company. On October 4, 2012, Ed was recognized by the Upper Merion Township Board of Supervisors for his seventy years as a volunteer with the fire company.

As a *news clipper*, he has had articles published in the **POLISH AMERICAN JOURNAL** and the **POLISH-AMERCAN NEWS**. Over the years, local residents have read his articles in **THE NORRISTOWN TIMES HER-ALD** and **THE KING OF PRUSSIA COURIER**.

On a visit to the Arch at Valley Forge, Ed checked the names of the Generals who were with Washington at Valley Forge. Pulaski's name was omitted from the Memorial Arch erected at Valley Forge in 1910. Historian and journalist Ed Dybicz of Swedesburg, Pennsylvania noticed the error in 1950. He called the omission to the attention of Pennsylvania Governor James Duff, who in cooperation with the State Legislature promptly added Pulaski's name to the available space at the end---out of alphabetical order.

Ed has been known to quip about there being somewhere in Montgomery County be an ancient family Bible with a crumbling receipt, bearing the red seal of the United States government, tucked among its pages.

JOSEPH DORAZIO, ARCHIVIST

As a young high school student in Upper Merion, Joseph Dorazio developed a keen interest in history and especially local history. He began collecting articles and filing them in a reasonable order. Going to the Local History Collection in the Upper Merion Township Library, one can find the work that Joe had done and develop an appreciation for his efforts.

Modestly, Joseph noted that as far as background info goes, "I'm afraid it's not very exciting: I was somewhere between junior high and high school when I took an avid interest in the history of King of Prussia and Upper Merion Township. I think it started during a summer job I had as a library page at the Wolfsohn Memorial Library. As I recall, I remember seeing a flyer about-town

regarding a spring cleaning of the King of Prussia Inn. That's how I became associated with Dr. Schultheis, Jr., and the KofP Historical Society. So the two endeavors kind of merged: my work at the library, and the Historical Society. There was a Reference Librarian at Wolfsohn at the time, Julian Grossman. It was his idea/efforts that led to a grant from the Albright Founda-



tion in Norristown that employed me to assemble the library's local history archive collection."

Joseph noted that he was amazed that he recalled all of this information and remembered visiting the library as an adult and going over the collection; how I was struck by what an *enthusiastic* young man I must have been! He imagined that he might have made a sound scholar or professor or museum curator.

Joseph had written a poem about the King of Prussia Inn. However, he noted that he was not satisfied well enough with it and so it will have to wait for another time.

Joseph Dorazio is a prize winning poet whose poetry has appeared in numerous print and online literary magazines, including: *The Spoon River Poetry Review, Boston University's Clarion Journal, The Maynard, Sleet Magazine, Poiesis, Nerve Cowboy, Turk's Head Review, Philadelphia Poets, Concise Delight, Chest: The Journal*

ED DYBICZ, continued

offered ten percent of whatever that receipt would bring. That would make him one very rich historian if a certain young Texas lawyer has her way. The lawyer, Jo Beth Kloecker, has revived the 140-year effort of the heirs of Jacob DeHaven to collect on a \$450,000 loan old Jacob made to George Washington's army while it was suffering through the winter of 1777-78 at Valley Forge.

During History Week in 2005, the Upper Merion Township Board of Supervisors honored Ed Dybicz as "Mr. Upper Merion History."

In 2007, the Upper Merion Township Library honored historian Ed Dybicz. The Library Board presented its "2007 Library Friend of the Year" award to Ed at ceremonies in the Township Administration Conference Room. The award was presented by Chairlady Susan Lomax and Library Director Carl Helicher in recognition and appreciation of Dybicz's service to the library. The library is the depository for hundreds of articles written by Ed, thirty-five years as a correspondent for **THE NORRISTOWN TIMES HERALD** and **THE KING OF PRUSSIA COURIER**. The collection of Ed's article can be found in the Local History Cabinets in the Reference Section of the Township Library.

More recently, Dybicz was awarded the Distinguished Service Award of the Upper Merion Park and Historical Foundation and the Legion of Honor of the Chapel of the Four Chaplains of the United States.

Dybicz is a member of Sacred Heart Church, Swedesburg; Veteran of Foreign Wars Post 840, Bridgeport; DAV Post 24 of Norristown; 44th Infantry Division Association; Historical Society of Montgomery County, PA; Valley Forge Historical Society; Life Member Swedesburg Fire Co., and the Mlotkowski Brigade Society of Fort Delaware.



JOSEPH DORAZIO, continued

Chest: The Journal of American College of Chest Physicians, Apiary Magazine, Avocet, The Found Poetry Project, The Schuylkill Valley Journal, Mad Poets Review, Big Hammer, Pilgrimage Magazine, Pedestal Magazine, and elsewhere. His first collection of poems, "Poems of the Fifth Sun" was a finalist in Gertrude Press' 2009 Poetry Chapbook Competition, and in 2010, "Remains to Be Seen" was a finalist in Bright Hill Press' Poetry Chapbook Competition. In 2009, his poem, "The Tree of Life" was set to music by the composer, Eleanor

Aversa, in response to the *Dialogues with Darwin Poetry Project* at the American Philosophical Society Museum in Philadelphia. In 2009, Mr. Dorazio's poem, "Read Between the Lines" won BCTV's *Poets' Pause* poetry contest, hosted by Doug Arnold. "Marche aux Puces" (Flea Market) was awarded an honorable mention by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* during National Poetry Month, April 2012.

Mr. Dorazio lives and writes in Wayne, PA..



PICTURE THIS!



When built in 1852, this mansion was the focal point of the village. A fine example of the Italian Villa Style, it retains many of its exterior and interior features. The first floor rooms, large and well-proportioned, still possess their elegant details and the door and window enframements, which narrow, reflect the Egyptian Revival Style. The elaborate plaster ceiling decorations in the principal rooms are superb. They represent the ultimate in craftsmanship in a now almost lost art. Surrounding the main block of the house is a graceful porch with a concave roof supported by cast-iron trellises in a grapevine-and-morning-glory design. A balcony ornaments the second-floor façade of the tower.

The mansion sits on a knoll, which originally overlooked the community and is one of the few structures to survive the decline of the lime and blast furnaces in Upper Merion.

(Check answer on page 7)

UPPER MERION ABOLITIONISTS

by Dr. Hiram Corson

This group, if group so few can be called, consisted of Jonathon Roberts and wife, of whom I have already spoken elsewhere, their This group, if group so few can be called, consisted of Jonathan Roberts and wife, of whom I have already spoken elsewhere, their tour sons and their only daughter, Mrs. Sarah Tyson, William Jones and his wife, Rachel, and the two sons of William (by a former marriage), John and Rowland, the family of Rees Thomas of the Gulf, his son, William B. Thomas, who was an active member of our society in its very first year and as long as he lived, and his four daughters, who were all active in the cause, annually bringing the work of their hands as contributions, to be sold at the fair of the anti-slavery society, held every year in Philadelphia, to swell the funds of the society, and to be used to continue the crusade against slavery.

To the names of these few I may add that of Mr. Morde-cai Moore, nephew of Jonathan Roberts; also Thomas Read and family, who resided for a while in that township, but who, like Mr. Moore, took part with the Norristown group on many occasions, as well as did the Robertses, and all of them might be added to that group, were it not that Upper Merion well deserved a group of its own fearless and ardent advocates for the right, so ardently did they labor in the cause, wherever and in whatever way they could be useful. But even in this band of conspicuous workers Mrs. Eliza Roberts, the wife of Jonathan, held a most conspicuous place. Well do I remem-ber how our sympathies were aroused when, in a public meeting, she recited the case of a poor slave mother, who, with her four children, were about to be sold, and how she plead for help to rescue them from the block of the slave auctioneer, ready to sell them to a life of bondage, separated for all time from each other. As I have, through the half century that has since passed, shared the common fate of old people---forgetfulness---I requested Mrs. Tyson to write me a brief account of the successful efforts of her mother to rescue them from the horrible fate which was threatening them. This she has kindly done in the following letter to me:

In 1847, Mrs. Eliza H. Roberts visited friends in Virginia, the home of her early life and one much cherished by her, had the blast of slavery, with all its environments and heart-rending appeals been extinguished from her soil. It was her misfortune to find among her friends the sad, sad story of accumulated debt, to such an extent that the poor, suffering slave was the first to answer to the auctioneer's hammer one little girl was to be the first

victim. With harrowed feelings, they sought to find a remedy. No response carne to her but to pay the price and bring her to Pennsylvania, where she could be reared under the influence of freedom; otherwise her fate would have been to be sold to the far South and separated from all that was dear to her. The shadow of this unjust system stilt haunted the household, and more victims were threatened with the auction block. The next was the mother of the little girl, a woman of 35 years. Letters poured in beseeching Mrs. Roberts to again put forth her hand and advance the money, and she would willingly serve her until the debt should be cancelled. She had other children; two daughters, old enough to be serviceable, and two little sons. She entreated for the deliverance of all. An appeal was made to the anti-slavery society of Philadelphia to know if any funds could be obtained for their relief; but the answer came "They could not take isolated cases, their work was for the removal of the evil." The anguished-stricken mother was almost crazed with grief, and rather than be separated from her children, deter-mined to sever her hand from her body, that she might be condemned and no longer saleable. The good angel of mercy came to her relief, and hope delayed her resolve. Mrs. Roberts consented to advance the money for the mother and the two daughters. She determined to appeal to the philanthropic hearts of the people. and found a sympathetic response, and, within the limits of this county, was enabled to make up the sum of \$300, the price asked for the two boys, she advancing \$1250 for the female portion of the family. The kind co-operation of Mr. George Corson, of Plymouth, who was ever ready to extend the cup of cold water to suffering humanity, materially aided, by calling a meeting near his house, where the case was stated and a most encouraging sum collected. The arrival of the happy family in a land of freedom can scarcely be described. They remained some time with Mrs. Roberts, but eventually settled in Norristown, where the remaining de-scendants still Jive. It is meet to say that Emma Jackson, though blind for fifteen years, never was known to murmur, but calmly submitted herself with a most trustful spirit to her misfor-The youngest son fell at Petersburg and the daughters were victims to consumption. She died at the advanced age of 82 years, respected by all who knew her."

Here we have the authentic record (not a mere tradition), by one who was a living witness of the anxiety and trials of Mrs. Roberts in her successful efforts to rescue a family from lives of great suffering---a noble work that brought to the donor the gratitude of the rescued, and the respect of all who knew the noble woman who was the benefactor of the oppressed.

Work Cited: Corson, Dr. Hiram. "Abolitionists in Upper Merion." *Historical Society of Montgomery County*, vol. II (1900): 38-40. Print. CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

ED DYBICZ, MR. UPPER MERION HISTORY

Some dreamers think the receipt is worth \$98.3 billion! Historian Ed jokes that he was once casually offered ten percent of whatever that receipt would bring. That would make him one very rich historian if a certain young Texas lawyer has her way. The lawyer, Jo Beth Kloecker, has revived the 140-year effort of the heirs of Jacob DeHaven to collect on a \$450,000 loan old Jacob made to George Washington's army while it was suffering through the winter of 1777-78 at Valley Forge.

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JOSEPH DORAZIO, ARCHIVIST

of American College of Chest Physicians, Apiary Magazine, Avocet, The Found Poetry Project, The Schuylkill Valley Journal, Mad Poets Review, Big Hammer, Pilgrimage Magazine, Pedestal Magazine, and elsewhere. His first collection of poems, "Poems of the Fifth Sun" was a

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The King of Prussia Inn

For three hundred years the Inn sat at the crossroads. Three hundred years of snow storms, three hundred Christmases—the Inn sat fieldstone-heavy and settled-in.

A selfless white oak companionably nearby witnessing. Elliott's Run babbled on mint julep lips, as loyalist spies listened-in.

Add to the weight of its massive walls, progress' prodigious heft: after centuries of welcoming the weary the Inn is in the way.

I read of their plans to lift the Inn—to float it on rubber rollers down the road. I couldn't bear to watch the eviction, so I stayed away.

And when I returned to where it had stood for so long, the Inn was gone. Einstein said that mass bends space—like the impression a body leaves on a bed. That's what I saw as I sped past the mall: the King of Prussia Inn effaced.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

(Continued from Page 1)

On the weekend of September 28, 29, 2013, we will be transforming the historic King of Prussia Inn into a Federal Period (1820's) Publik House, with our friends from the W.S. Hancock Society.

Along the many roads that crisscrossed the Pennsylvania landscape in the 18th and early 19th century, a traveler would encounter a "Publik House," also known as a Tavern or Inn. These establishments offered refreshments and accommodations to weary travelers, and also served as gathering places for locals to meet and deal in commerce. Among the many establishments throughout Pennsylvania, none is more well-known or more historic than the King of Prussia Inn, which dates back to the early 1700's, and played an important role in America's first war for independence.

Concurrently, we will be co-hosting a school session in the Old Roberts School on Saturday, September 28th, with the Upper Merion Park and Historic Foundation, who are the trustees of the school.

In 1848, Jonathan Roberts, farmer, and U.S. Senator, built a school for the use of the poor children who had to walk to the Union School from the mill workers' houses on Croton Road, and for the pupils from the Henderson, Hughes, and Roberts Farms. A ten acre site was set aside and the first school was built mostly from logs, lasting for 50 years.

The school, originally a one-story structure was later enlarged by a brick addition at the front, and still later by the addition of a frame second story, and the school was in constant operation for decades. It was abandoned in 1917, and reverted under terms of its original deed to the Roberts estate. After that it remained abandoned, and fell into decay.

With only its rear wall and foundation intact, the King of Prussia Historical Society decided it was in the best interest of the community to restore the Old Roberts School to its former glory, and a monumental fundraising began in 1957. The project also presented a marvelous opportunity to teach young people about the process, and the Historical Society called upon every friend and family member in the area to assist with the effort to restore the old school. The community responded in a very positive way to the fund raising effort, both with financial contributions and volunteers. Every volunteer was put to work on the project, no matter what age. Under the watchful eye and constant care of the Upper Merion Park and Historic Foundation, the school remains a monument to historic preservation, and should endure for generations.

My friend and fellow historian Joseph Dorazio has just published a book of his enduring poetry entitled, "As Is", and it is available through Amazon.com. Joseph was one of

the first people in Upper Merion to realize at a very early age that historic preservation was an important thing to do, and we have him to thank for many of the restored and preserved photographs in the Local History section of the Upper Merion Township Library.

When the majority of the Archive from the King of Prussia Historical Society was destroyed many years ago by water damage while being stored in the basement of the Old Roberts School, Joseph's collection is all that remains. We cannot thank him enough for his foresight and skill in saving what little evidence of our fertile past still exists. He also was gracious enough to allow us to publish his poem entitled, "The King of Prussia Inn", in our new book, "Upper Merion Township: The First 300 Years". Joseph's work is a highlighted chapter of our rich local history, and again we thank him for his involvement and his most caring ways.

Finally, each quarter I would like to mention a local historian of note, and truly we would not be here today of it were not for Ed Dybicz. He has kindled a love of history in us for many years, and from that burns the fire of truth. His dedication and diligence in telling an accurate story of our past is something we can all be very proud of.

As historians, we are primarily concerned with accurately documenting and connecting the stories of our past. However, there is often value in relating the anecdotal, for it can often enhance a story by adding flavor as it relates to the sentiment of the times, as long as it is explained as such. Ed knows the difference, and is always the first one to document his research and bring us his stories that can be enjoyed for their truth and their universal appeal, always with a heartwarming feeling thrown in. Thank you, Ed Dybicz, for all your caring words about our history.







PICTURE THIS! ANSWER

The Kennedy Supplee Mansion was constructed in 1852 by John Kennedy who was in the limestone business. The Victorian structure was done in the Italian villa style. The Kennedy family retained the residence until 1911 when the Supplees, a well-known local family, bought it. It was later turned into apartments and subsequent to that, vacant. It became part of the park in 1976, when Valley Forge went from a state park to a national one. In 1983, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1985, a local developer responding to a request for development proposals was selected by the Interior Department to renovate the building as a corporate headquarters. Those plans never went through but a year later, the lease was signed for it to be a restaurant. Its era as a restaurant was a formidable one, having received positive reviews of which one said it had "virtually no peer."

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP IS CELEBRATING ITS TRICENTENNIAL! SEPTEMBER 2012-DECEMBER 31, 2013

SPEAKERS SERIES

Sponsored by the Tricentennial Committee and the King of Prussia Historical Society.

April 14, 2013 at 2:00: Dr. Joseph Eckhardt, LUBIN AND BETZWOOD STUDIOS

April 27, 2013 from 10:00 to 3:00: NATIVE AMERICAN LENNI LENAPE CULTURAL FESTIVAL

May 5, 2013 at 2:00: Laura Catalano and Kurt Zwiki, SCHUYLKILL RIVER HERITAGE AND HISTORY

May 5 at 7:00pm at Christ Church Old Swedes: ECUMENICAL SERVICE

June 29 from 10:00 to 3:00 at Christ Old Swedes: Civil War Commemoration



Check out <u>Upper Merion Township Tricentennial</u> on Facebook and Upper Merion Township Website at www.umtownship.org for up-to-date information!

And check out the King of Prussia Historical Society website at www.kophistory.org.



King of Prussia Historical Society 175 West Valley Forge Road King of Prussia, PA 19406 Attn.: Marianne Hooper