As we approach the holiday season, I am reminded that it is a time to share stories of hope and redemption, and this year is no exception. This is my wish list for this holiday season:

Wish #1 - I wish that in 2018 we would have enough members to sustain society expenses. You know, we survive almost entirely on the generosity of our membership. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if the thousands of people who follow us on Facebook each week would take the time to support us and insure that we will continue to be there to keep our rich local history alive.

Wish #2 - I wish we had a place for our Archive and Special Collections. Our collection of local history artifacts, manuscripts and photographs is growing rapidly, and to do our job effectively we need a place to keep it. Right now, it is spread far and wide, and will never be curated until such time as we have a place to work on it. I can’t believe that there isn’t somewhere in Upper Merion that we could call home.

Wish #3 - I wish we had volunteers to fill the needs of our society. Right now, we need someone to prepare and send the monthly newsletter and meeting reminders. We also need someone to research and prepare our “Friday History Fact” for Facebook, which reaches thousands of people. We also need someone to maintain and update our membership list. Each job is simple and fun, and we would love to have some help.

In order to maintain the quality of our monthly presentations, and in order to preserve our meetings as being “free to the public”, we need your help. Please take a moment to help grant our wishes.

GHOST-WRITTEN PLEA ABOUT REBEL HILL

Concerning the proposed apartment building at Rebel Hill, many voices from the past speak about what is happening and what may happen to the terrain where we encamped 182 years ago on our way to Valley Forge?

We see historic memorials rising from the ruins of a Williamsburg we never knew; we see the familiar hills of Valley Forge carefully tended in memory of the bitter winter that we spent there; and the story of our Christmas Crossing in 1776 is vividly alive in your December of ’59.

But here at Gulph Mills, where we forged the link between these two events, the ominous note of progress is being sounded and the promise of a modern monster building may come true. We, the ragged soldiers of 1777, speak, and ask that our voices be heard above that of progress and that a lovely park be laid out here, where all may come to read the story of what we did here to forge one of the links that gained for you the freedom that you so happily enjoy today!

—Soldiers of 1777.

(From The Evening Bulletin, December 24, 1959 and reprinted in THE PICKET POST, February 1960, the quarterly formerly published by the Valley Forge Historical Society)
**The Town Crier—**

updates from the Society...

**OUR 2017 CHARTER MEMBERS**

We acknowledge our Charter Members for 2016 and thank them for their support: Emma Carson, Dave and Marianne Furman, John and Shirley Funkhouser, Michael Morrison, Frank Luther.

The Society is also pleased to honor Ed Dybicz (1923-2015) as an honorary member for his many contributions to the Society and for his untiring efforts to preserve the history of Upper Merion.

**INTERESTED IN WRITING?**

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

**SPECIAL EVENTS**

Check the back page for the listing of our upcoming meeting dates and our special programs.

**INFO ABOUT UPPER MERION**

Is there a question you have about some aspect of the township’s history? You can submit your question to us at info@kophistory.org and we will provide an answer in a future issue.


**MEMBERSHIP**

Our membership campaign for 2018 is underway! New memberships and renewals will be accepted at this time. Looking for a unique gift? Why not present a family member or friend with an annual membership for the King of Prussia Historical Society! We supply a gift card for you to present to the recipient.

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

The Society accepts PayPal for dues and donations.

**NEW LOOK OF THE WEBSITE**

Our thanks to Dave Montalvo and Shirley Funkhouser, Society Board members, for their continuing work to create the new look for our website. Check it out at [www.kophistory.org](http://www.kophistory.org).

**OUR MAILING ADDRESS**

Please note that our mailing address is King of Prussia Historical Society, PO Box 60716, King of Prussia, PA 19406-0716.

**SPECIAL THANKS**

The Society expresses appreciation to David Montalvo, Society Board member, for his excellent presentation on the history of the Upper Merion Area School District at our September meeting and to Matthew Mitchell, Society member, for his excellent presentation on the Eastburn Plantation at our October meeting. The time and effort they put into their preparations were evident and resulted in memorable programs. Both presenters are faculty members at Upper Merion Area High School.

You can view the Timeline of Upper Merion and Bridgeport Schools 1930-2020 on our website, [www.kophistory.org](http://www.kophistory.org), under the History heading.

**The Officers and the Members of the Board of the King of Prussia Historical Society extend “Best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!”**
1777  240th Anniversary of the Army's March through Upper Merion to Valley Forge  2017

FROM THE DIARY OF A SURGEON
AT VALLEY FORGE 1777
as written by Albigence Waldo

December 6
The Enemy forming a Line from towards our right to the extremity of our left upon an opposite long height to ours in a Wood. Our men were under Arms all Day and this Night also, as our Wise General was determined not to be attack'd Napping....

December 8
All at our Several Posts. Provisions and Whiskey very scarce. Were Soldiers to have plenty of Food and Rum, I believe they would Storm Tophet...

December 11
At four o'clock the Whole Army were Order'd to March to Swedes Ford on the River Schuylkill, about 9 miles N.W. of Chestnut Hill, and 6 from White Marsh our present Encampment. At sun an hour high the whole were mov'd from the Lines and on their march with baggage. This Night encamped in a Semi circle nigh the Ford. The enemy had march'd up the West side of Schuylkill - Potter's Brigade if Pennsylvania Militia were already there, and had several skirmishes with them with some loss on this side and considerable on the Enemies....

I am prodigious Sick and cannot get anything comfortable - what in the name of Providence am I to do with a fit of Sickness in this place where nothing appears pleasing to the Sicken'd Eye and nauseating Stomach. But I doubt not Providence will find out a way for my relief. But I cannot eat Beef if I starve, for my stomach positively refuses to entertain such Company, and how can I help that?

December 12
A Bridge of Wagons made accross the Schuylkill last night consisting of 36 waggons, with a bridge of Rails between them each. Some skirmishing over the River. Militia and dragoons brought into Camp several Prisoners. Sun Set - We were order'd to march over the River - It snows - I'm Sick - eat nothing - No Whiskey - No Forage - Lord - Lord - Lord. The Army were 'till Sun Rise crossing the River - some at the Waggon Bridge and some at the Raft Bridge below. Cold and uncomfortable.

December 13
The Army march'd three miles from the West side of the River and encamp'd near a place call'd the Gulph and not an improper name neither, for this Gulph seems well adapted by its situation to keep us from the pleasures and enjoyments of this World, or being conversant with anybody in it. It is an excellent place to raise the Ideas of a Philosopher beyond the glutted thoughts and Reflexions of an Epicurian. His Reflexions will be as different from the Common Reflexions of Mankind as if he were unconnected with the world, and only conversant with immaterial beings. It cannot be that our Superiors are about to hold consultations with Spirits infinitely beneath their Order, by bringing us into these utmost regions of the Terraqueous Sphere. No, it is, upon consideration for many good purposes since we are to Winter here - There is plenty of Wood and Water - There are but few families for the soldiery to steal from - tho' far be it from a Soldier to steal...

December 14
Prisoners and Deserters are continually coming in. The Army which has been surprisingly healthy hitherto, now begins to grow sickly from the continued fatigues they have suffered this Campaign. Yet they still show a spirit of Alacrity and Contentment not to be expected from so young Troops. I am Sick - discontented - and out of humour. Poor food - hard lodging - Cold Weather - fatigue - Nasty Cloaths - nasty Cookery - Vomit half my time - smoak'd out my senses - the Devil's in't - I can't Endure it - Why are we sent here to starve and Freeze - What sweet Felicities have I left at home; A charming Wife - pretty Children - Good Beds - good food - good Cookery - all agreable - all harmonious. Here all Confusion - smoke and Cold - hunger and filthyness - A pox on my bad luck. There comes a bowl of beef soup - full of burnt leaves and dirt, sickish enough to make a Hector spue - away with it Boys - I'll live like the Chameleon upon Air. Poh! Poh! Poh! cries Patience within me - you talk like a fool. Your being sick Covers you mind with a Melancholic Gloom, which makes every thing about you appear gloomy. See the poor Soldier, when in health - with what cheerfulness he meets his foes and encounters every hardship - if barefoot, he labours thro' the Mud and Cold with a Song in his mouth extolling War and Washington - if his food be bad, he eats it notwithstanding with seeming content...
The book which did not layed and took eight days. Valley Forge. It was a thirteen mile march that was de-
Whitemarsh to the west bank of the Schuylkill River at
on December 12, the troops began the move from
the First National Thanksgiving at Gulph Mills. Martin recorded his observations of
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IN HIS OWN OBSERVATION
ECDOTES OF INCIDENTS THAT OCCURRED WITH-
VENTURES, DANGER AND SUFFERING OF A REVO-
Maine published
At the age of 70, the venerated veteran then living in
winter at home proved too dull for the teenage veteran.
Thus, much to the chagrin of his grandparents, Martin
enlisted and Martin was under peer pressure to join his
friends.
At a time when less than half of all Americans were literate, Joseph "Plumb" Martin, was an exception. Though young and penniless, Private Plumb could read and write. Very well, in fact, having received a free education while growing up in Massachusetts, the most progressive of the colonies.
In June of 1776, at the age of 15, Martin, though wary of a long enlistment, decided "to take a priming before I took upon me the whole coat of paint for a soldier." Thus, much to the chagrin of his grandparents, Martin enlisted for six months as a private in the Connecticut state troops. After serving at the Battles of Brooklyn and White Plains on the side of the Patriots, the farm boy decided not to reenlist in December 1776. But a long winter at home proved too dull for the teenage veteran. He enlisted again in 1777, this time in Washington's Continental army, and served for the duration of the war, seeing action at a number of major battles.
At the age of 70, the venerated veteran then living in Maine published A NARRATIVE OF SOME OF THE ADVENTURES, DANGER AND SUFFERING OF A REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIER, INTERSPERSED WITH ANECDOTES OF INCIDENTS THAT OCCURRED WITHIN HIS OWN OBSERVATION. The book which did not sell particularly well fell into obscurity until rediscovered in the 1960s when it was republished with the title Private Yankee Doodle. Martin recorded his observations of the First National Thanksgiving at Gulph Mills.
On December 12, the troops began the move from Whitemarsh to the west bank of the Schuylkill River at Valley Forge. It was a thirteen mile march that was delayed and took eight days.
- blesses God for a good Stomach and Whistles it into digestion. But harkee Patience, a moment - There comes a Soldier, his bare feet are seen thro' his worn out Shoes, his legs nearly naked from the tatter'd remains of an only pair of stockings, his Breeches not sufficient to cover his nakedness, his Shirt hanging in Strings, his hair dishevell'd, his face meagre; his whole appearance pictures a person forsaken and discouraged. He comes, and cries with an air of wretchedness and despair, I am Sick, my feet lame, my legs are sore, my body cover'd with this tormenting Itch - my Cloaths are worn out, my Constitution is broken, my former Activity is exhausted by fatigue, hunger and Cold, I fail fast I shall soon be no more! and all the reward I shall get will be - "Poor Will is dead." People who live at home in Luxury and Ease, quietly possessing their habitations, Enjoying their Wives and families in peace, have but a very faint Idea of the unpleasing sensations, and continual Anxiety the Man endures who is in Camp, and is the husband and parent of an agreeable family. These same People are willing we should suffer every thing for their Benefit and advantage, and yet are the first to Condemn us for not doing more!!

December 15
Quiet. Eat Pessimmens, found myself better for their Lenient Operation. Went to a house, poor and small, but good food within - eat too much from being so long Abstemious, thro' want of palatables. Mankind are never truly thankfull for the Benefits of life, until they have experienc'd the want of them. The Man who has seen misery knows best how to enjoy good. He who is always at ease and has enough of the Blessings of common life is an Impotent Judge of the feelings of the unfortunate....

December 16
Cold Rainy Day, Baggage ordered over the Gulph of our Division, which were to march at Ten, but the baggage was order'd back and for the first time since we have been here the Tents were pitch'd, to keep the men more comfortable. Good morning Brother Soldier (says one to another) how are you? All wet I thank'e, hope you are so (says the other). The Enemy have been at Chestnut Hill Opposite to us near our last encampment the other side Schuylkill, made some Ravages, kill'd two of our Horsemen, taken some Prisoners. We have done the like by them....

December 18
Universal Thanksgiving - a Roasted pig at Night. God be thanked for my health which I have pretty well recover'd. How much better should I feel, were I assured my family were in health. But the same good Being who graciously preserves me, is able to preserve them and bring me to the ardently wish'd for enjoyment of them again

December 21
[Valley Forge.] Preparations are made for huts. Provisions Scarce. Mr. Ellis went homeward - sent a Letter to my Wife. Heartily wish myself at home, my Skin and eyes are almost spoil'd with continual smoke. A general cry thro' the Camp this Evening among the Soldiers, "No Meat! No Meat!" - the Distant vales Echo'd back the melancholy sound - "No Meat! No Meat!" Immitating the noise of Crows and Owls, also, made a part of confused Musick.

What have you for your dinner boys? "Nothing but Fire Cake and Water, Sir." At night, "Gentlemen the Supper is ready." What is your Supper Lads? "Fire Cake and Water, Sir." Very poor beef has been drawn in our Camp the greater part of this season. A Butcher bringing a Quarter of this kind of Beef into Camp one day who had white Buttons on the knees of his breeches, a Soldier cries out - "There, there Tom is some more of your fat Beef, by my soul I can see the Butcher's breeches buttons through it."

Our Division are under Marching Orders this morning. I am ashamed to say it, but I am tempted to steal Fowls if I could find them, or even a whole Hog, for I feel as if I could eat one. But the Impoverish'd Country about us, affords but little matter to employ a Thief, or keep a Clever Fellow in good humour. But why do I talk of hunger and hard usage, when so many in the World have not even fire Cake and Water to eat....

It is not in the power of Philosophy...to convince a man he may be happy and Contented if he will, with a Hungry Belly. Give me Food, Cloaths, Wife and Children, kind Heaven! and I'll be as contented as my Nature will permit me to be.

This Evening a Party with two field pieces were order'd out. At 12 of the Clock at Night, Providence sent us a little Mutton, with which we immediately had some Broth made, and a fine Stomach for same. Ye who Eat Pumkin Pie and Roast Turkies, and yet Curse fortune for using you ill, Curse her no more, least she reduce you Allowance of her favours to a bit of Fire Cake, and a draught of Cold Water, and in Cold Weather too.
The army continued at or near the Gulf for some days, after which we marched for the Valley Forge in order to take up winter quarters. We were now in a truly forlorn condition—no clothing, no provisions and as disheartened as need be.

On arriving at Valley Forge at the start of that famously long winter, Martin wrote: "Our prospect was indeed dreary. In our miserable condition, to go into the wild woods and build us habitations to stay (not to live) in, in such a weak, starved and naked condition, was appalling in the highest degree....But dispersion, I believe, was not thought of, at least, I did not think of it. We had engaged in the defense of our injured country and were willing, nay, we were determined to persevere as long as such hardships were not altogether intolerable..."

On the 6th of January 1777, George Washington wrote to Dr. William Shippen Jr., ordering him to inoculate all of the forces that came through Philadelphia. He explained that: "Necessity not only authorizes but seems to require the measure, for should the disorder infect the Army..."
single regiment. With few surgeons, fewer medical supplies, and no experience, Washington conducted the first mass inoculation of an army at the height of a war that immeasurably transformed the international system. Defeating the British was impressive, but simultaneously taking on Variola was a risky stroke of genius.

The Letitia Penn schoolhouse in Valley Forge served as a camp hospital.

SIX DAYS IN DECEMBER: GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THE CONTINENTAL ARMY’S ENCAMPMENT AT REBEL HILL, DECEMBER 13 – 19, 1777

by Sheilah Vance and reprinted with her permission.

My next novel is called BECOMING VALLEY FORGE (February 2013). In short, it’s about how people in the Valley Forge area reacted when the Revolutionary War came to their backyard. It’s also about the different types of people who came together to become a part of and to support the Valley Forge encampment. The novel covers the period from September 11, 1777—the Battle of Brandywine—to the Paoli Massacre later in September, to the Battle of Germantown in October, to the Valley Forge Encampment, beginning in December, and to the Battle of Barren Hill, on May 20, 1778.

One of the reasons I became interested in writing this novel is because everywhere I’ve lived in Pennsylvania as a child growing up and since I returned to Pennsylvania in 1984 after graduating from law school, has a connection to Valley Forge and the Revolutionary War activities called the Philadelphia campaign.

One of the places I’ve lived has special significance to me and to Valley Forge—it’s my home, where I grew up, a place called Rebel Hill. Rebel Hill is part of a larger community called Gulph Mills, and it is a part of Upper Merion Township. It is about six miles southeast of Valley Forge.

Rebel Hill today is a large hill that rises about 400 feet high and that is near the Gulph Mills exit on Rt. 76, the Schuylkill Expressway, about 45 minutes west of Philadelphia. Today, Rebel Hill is just thought of as that street called Rebel Hill Road, where I grew up, and the various streets that intersect it and that are on the Hill. Those streets are Supplee Lane, Lincoln Avenue, Gulph Avenue, and the various streets in the Rebel Hill townhouses at the top of the hill. Rebel Hill Road forms an arch that runs from Matson’s Ford Road on one end to Upper Gulph Road on the other.

Growing up, my Mother always told us that George Washington and his army were on Rebel Hill during the Revolutionary War and that the only reason they left the hill to go to Valley Forge was because Rebel Hill was too close to Philadelphia, which the British had captured. As usual, Mom was right. George Washington and his Continental Army came to Rebel Hill and the area surrounding it, called Gulph Mills, or “the Gulf” in Washington’s daily journal, on December 13, 1777. They stayed there until the morning of December 19, when the army made its famous march to Valley Forge, past the Hanging Rock, down Gulph Road.

The army was cold, tired, and barely clothed when they got to Rebel Hill. They had just skirmished with the British at the Battle of Whitemarsh on December 11, and they were marching to the Rebel Hill area for what some historians thought would be the army’s winter quarters. But, while there, the decision was made to make Valley Forge the winter quarters.

There are several versions of how Rebel Hill got its name. One is that British General Cornwallis, who led the British in the nearby Battle of Whitemarsh, called it Rebel Hill because the British Army found that the hill was full of rebels—or what we call patriots. Another is that it was called Rebel Hill because Continental Army General William Alexander “Lord Stirling” commanded an outpost on the hill during the Valley Forge encampment. While on Rebel Hill, General Lord Stirling stayed at the home of Jonathan Rees. Joining General Stirling on Rebel Hill was his aide-de-camp, James Monroe, who later went on to become the 5th President of the United States. No matter how Rebel Hill got its name, it has a proud history in the founding of this nation. As one historian noted, “These grounds were the threshold to Valley Forge, and the story of that winter—a story of endurance, forbearance, and patriotism which will never grow old—had its beginnings here, at the six days encampment by the old Gulph Mill.”
A Commitment to Preservation