

Places In Time

LAWRENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2008

The Lawrence Historian Presents...

By Dennis Waters

The Lawrence Township of two generations ago was a very different place. Our population was just a fraction of its current size. The great suburban build-out had not yet begun. Rider University (then Rider College) was still in Trenton. The south end of town had as much open farmland as the north end. Telephones were still on party lines with a live operator running a local switchboard. If you wanted to shop or see the doctor, you went to Trenton. Maybe you took the trolley.

Fortunately there are still a few seniors with deep roots in Lawrence who remember those days and can share their memories and stories with those of us who know only the Lawrence of today. Capturing and preserving those memories has been the focus of an oral history project being hosted by the Lawrence Township Public Schools in cooperation with the Township Historian.

Oral histories have been taken in Lawrence periodically since the 1980s and many of those audiotapes are archived in the Lawrence Room at the Mercer County Library on Darrah Lane. What makes the current project interesting is that the seniors ("informants" in oral history-speak) are being videotaped, which adds a new dimension of color and character to their stories.

As you may be aware, the recent renovations to Lawrence High School included a new state-of-the-art television studio, and that is where the oral history conversations are taking place. The operation is staffed by high school media students under the supervision of their teacher, Kevin Monaghan. (One happy side effect of the project is bringing the high schoolers face-to-face with our seniors and letting them hear these amazing stories in person.)

The project was born in early 2007 as a result of conversations between Lawrence School Superintendent Philip Meara and former Township Historian Robert Immordino. A few pilot tapings were done, and then the school district applied for and received a small grant from the Mercer County Local History Regrant Program. The grant covers supplies and Mr. Monaghan's time.

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Tara Henn wins Nash award



Each year, the Winona Nash History Award is awarded to the Lawrence High School senior demonstrating excellence in history, as determined by the faculty. This year's winner is Tara Henn, left, shown receiving the award presented by board member John Halvorsen on Senior Awards Night. Tara begins her freshman year at Dartmouth this fall.



The late Marie Meseroll serves home-made colonial apple cookies to visitors during Apple Day 2008. The LHS lost a dear friend when she passed away in July.

Volunteers Needed/Community Service Opportunities

LHS is looking for a few good volunteers. We have many opportunities for people with various interests and talents. Time requirements are reasonable and flexible so just let us know what you would like to do and how much time you have to give to us. There is currently a need for volunteers to help out at various events, work in the shop during monthly tours, serve as house tour docents and to help work on fundraising and grant applications. We also need individuals who are interested in researching and writing short articles for the newsletter, website and society publications. We will also work with students who are looking to fulfill community service requirements, scout projects or just want a volunteer opportunity for their resumes.

Mary Tanner Lecture

Harold Tanner, a professor of history at the University of North Texas, will be the 5th Annual Mary Tanner lecturer. The lecture will take place on Sunday, October 12th at 2:00pm in the Fireside Lounge in the Bart Luedeke Center at Rider University. The topic of the lecture will be "The United States, China, Taiwan: the Historical Background of a Potential Conflict."



Tanner is a renowned Chinese history scholar and the author of *Strike Hard: Anti-Crime Campaigns and Chinese Criminal Justice, 1979-1985*.

Call for display items

In conjunction with township historian Dennis Water's oral history project, the society is setting up a display at the Brearley House that illustrates life in Lawrence Township during the period immediately following World War II, before the housing boom. If you have photos or other items that pertain to life in Lawrence from roughly 1945-1955 and would like to share them for the display, please contact us. If you have reservations about sharing irreplaceable photos, we can make arrangements to scan your originals.

LHS Annual Meeting

The annual membership meeting was held on February 24, 2008 at the Lawrence Municipal building. Martha Leigh Wolf was the guest speaker, talking about the work of the Princeton 1783 Committee and the activities they have planned for this year's celebration of the 225th Anniversary of Congress in Princeton. Many of the events are yet to come, so please view the group's website at www.revolutionaryprinceton.org.

The society also thanked outgoing president Bill Agress for his dedication to Lawrence Township history. Agress was presented with a plaque from fellow board member Bruce Bitcover.

The membership approved a set of amendments to the constitution, allowing for the creation of an executive committee and clarifying some vague language regarding committees. A list of the changes appeared in the Winter 2008 *Places In Time* and are also listed in the 2008 Annual Meeting section of the website.

All of last year's Board of Trustees return for 2008 and were approved by the membership. In addition, Chris Turnbull and Janet Hubbard were added to the slate and approved by the membership. Mayor Mark Holmes performed the swearing-in ceremony.



Tom Ledwith (driver) Danny Haun and Emily Nagle toss treats during the Lawrence Memorial Day Parade

Flickr photo album launched

Society event photos can now be found online at Flickr. Photos are arranged by event. To see the photo album, either click the Flickr logo on the society website or go to flickr.com/photos/thelhs.

Student Submission

The following was written by Lawrence student Kiara Ott as a school project. The students were asked to write a modernized version of an historic text. If you know a student who would like to share a poem, article or art work related to history, contact us.

A Poem ...**In Congress, July 4, 1776**

The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America

If there ever is a point in time
when a nation of people feel inclined
to separate from their current legislature
it is respectful to explain the causes to all of human nature.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are
created equal,
that they are endowed by their Creator with certain
unalienable rights,
that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of
happiness.

Governments are formed to ensure that these rights are
protected and will get their power from the people that
respect it,
however, if the government is not protecting these rights
the people are allowed to put up a fight
and change or replace the government
in a way that will keep people safe and content.

The government should not change
for problems that are only in a short time range
because it is easier to wait out bearable problems
than to establish whole new systems.
It's the peoples [sic] duty to fix the mistakes
that the government repeatedly makes
and make the future of the nation free of follies.
This is the case in our colonies.
The King of Britain is treating us badly
and is a tyrant over the colony.
To show the world, the facts will be explained.

He will not allow his governors to pass urgent amendments
unless they have received notice of his agreement
and when there is a law that is imminent
he has often decided not to take care of it.
He refused to pass laws for the larger cause
of many people unless they consent
not to build another government
which is unfair; if he was not a tyrant,
he would not be so scared.

He is right now, sending over armies
To make war against these colonies

To continue the impure
punishment he has already made us endure.
His actions make him unworthy of being a leader.

He has tried to prevent immigrants
from entering in any event
our colonies and live in the western [sic] region.

He has been picking random places
For representatives to see each other's faces
It is hard for them to obtain
Information from their colonies without strain.

Throughout this mess,
we have petitioned the King and tried to address
the need to repeal
the punishments but he only puts us through more ordeal.
Every aspect of his rampant
rule defines King George III as a tyrant.

We have tried explaining to our British friends
that the causes for our original rends
were to expand our inhabited region
and pursue religious freedom,
still, they have ignored our reason.

As a result of their choice to neglect
us we have decided to disconnect
and treat them with the same discretion
as we have for the rest of the world;
as friends in peace and enemies in war.

We declare that these colonies are now free and independent
states
as the United States chosen delegates
With the world as our witness
We are no longer allied with the British
We now have all the powers of independent states
Such as declaring war, rendering peace, and determining tax
rates.

We can ally ourselves with other nations
and decide from now on all other such actions.
We write this with prudence
And belief in the Divine Providence
Together we pledge to each other our lives,
our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

John Hancock John Adams **Benjamin Franklin** *Kiara Ott*

Monthly Brearley House Tours:

Saturday, 10:00 am-noon
August 2nd, September 6th, October 4th,
November 1st, December 6th

See full event calendar on-line at www.theLHS.org



(L to R) LHS Co-President Laura Nawrocik, Past President Janet Bickal, Linda Ridgley and Past President/Current Treasurer Ruth Barringer enjoy Cold Stone Creamery. A percent of the nights sales were donated to the LHS.

The Lawrence Historian Writes... (continued from p.1)

On many days this spring, when the final bell sounded marking the end of the school day, students would appear at the TV studio to begin a taping session. The interviews were conducted either by me or Robert Immordino. Most lasted the better part of an hour. In due course the tapes and transcripts will be made available in the Lawrence Room, with the ultimate goal of making them available on a township history website.

So while the Lawrence of horse-drawn ice wagons and teenagers taking the trolley to Trenton to go to high school and neighborhoods sharing their very first telephones or televisions seem like distant memories, let's bear in mind that they are very real memories for some who are still among us. And thanks to oral history programs like the one at the high school, those memories can be preserved for future generations.

Places in Time is published four times a year by the Lawrence Historical Society. Back issues and color editions of our award winning newsletter are available at the LHS website—www.TheLHS.org.

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