

# The House Log

Volume 2, Number 1

Winter 1997

A Publication of the Downingtown Historical Society

## A Message from the President, by Bill Walton

The fall issue of the *House Log* ran a picture of the Downingtown High School Junior History Club which produced the book *Our Town*. The photo was a mystery from several different perspectives. None of the students in the picture were identified and we wondered why the picture's caption said "The Original Thirteen" when 24 students were pictured. We also wondered how many of them would be recognized, after about 50 years. The book dates to about 1947. All our questions were answered two days after our mailing! Bill Woodward called saying he could identify 23 of the 24 students from memory! A few days later he brought a list of all 24 students. After speaking with Agnes Ponanto DiEuliis, he had obtained the last name and found that "the Original Thirteen" referred to the 13 colonies, which the group studied. The photo is reproduced on page 2 with the names.

Needless to say, we were amazed that Bill remembered as many of the students as he had and that our puzzle was solved so quickly. Speaking personally, I

know that I could not recognize so many students from my class, which was 1974. Bill attributed his memory to smaller classes where everyone worked closer together. This is part of the answer but his memory is still remarkable. The Society thanks Bill Woodward and all the others that called to identify students. We will be contacting the students that are still in the area and hope to have their recollections of *Our Town* in the spring *House Log*.



Bill Woodward and 'Our Town'

The Society is pleased to announce that former Downingtownian Robinson McIlvaine will be in town to lecture in March. We thank Bill Woodruff and all his luminaria volunteers and customers whose interest in this candle display not only brightens our town on Christmas Eve but also contributes greatly to funding the Society's activities. We are also pleased to announce that the Archives Room in the Municipal Building basement is near completion and will soon be open to the public. Volunteers are needed to help staff the room. Can you help? For more information, please call me at 269-8590 or write to the Society.

## McIlvaine Returns to Downingtown to Lecture

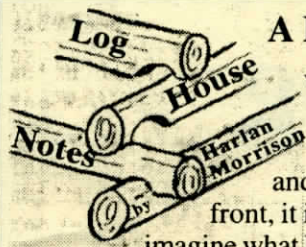
Robinson McIlvaine, former editor of the *Downingtown Archive* from 1946 to 1953, will speak at the Downingtown Historical Society's monthly meeting, Monday, March 10, at 7:30 p.m.

A Downingtown native, Robinson McIlvaine did graduate work in international law after graduating from Harvard. He commanded a destroyer in World War II and returned to Downingtown in 1946, when he purchased the *Downingtown Archive*. When he and his wife, Jane, purchased the four-page newspaper, it had 60 paid subscribers. By 1949, the newspaper had

increased to 12 pages and 2300 subscribers. Jane, wrote a book about the enterprise, *It Happens Every Thursday*, later turned into a film starring Loretta Young and Robert Forsythe. Robinson left active participation in the newspaper in 1953 and joined the U.S. Foreign Service. As a career officer in the State Department, he has served in many posts. His first full ambassadorship to Dahomey was awarded by the Kennedy administration. Africa then became his area of expertise and Robinson served as ambassador to several African nations as well as being as advisor to many presidents.

-- by Roger Grigson





## A Farm In The Park

With Kerr Park in the background, commercial establishments to the east and busy Route 30 passing in front, it is very difficult to imagine what life was like in a small frontier log house almost three hundred years ago.

With few exceptions the house looks very much as it did when the Hickmans moved in about 1705. But there was more — much more. There would have been a beehive oven not far from the front door. There was probably a smokehouse for preserving meat. The Hickmans would have had a cow or a couple of goats, sheep and chickens. There would have been a horse and wagon for periodic two or three day trips to the seaport town of Philadelphia for supplies such as cloth, thread, buttons, nails, hardware and tools. The animals and wagon would have required weather and winter protection and so there was a barn.

By midsummer the Hickmans could stand at the back of their house and look across rows of corn, peas, beans, potatoes, squash and tobacco. Meat would have made up a large part of their diet, particularly during the winter months. The Brandywine could be fished the year round.

Hickman could ill afford to slaughter his few farm animals for food except perhaps a chicken for a special occasion. The area abounded with deer, wild turkey, rabbit and squirrel which, in the summer and

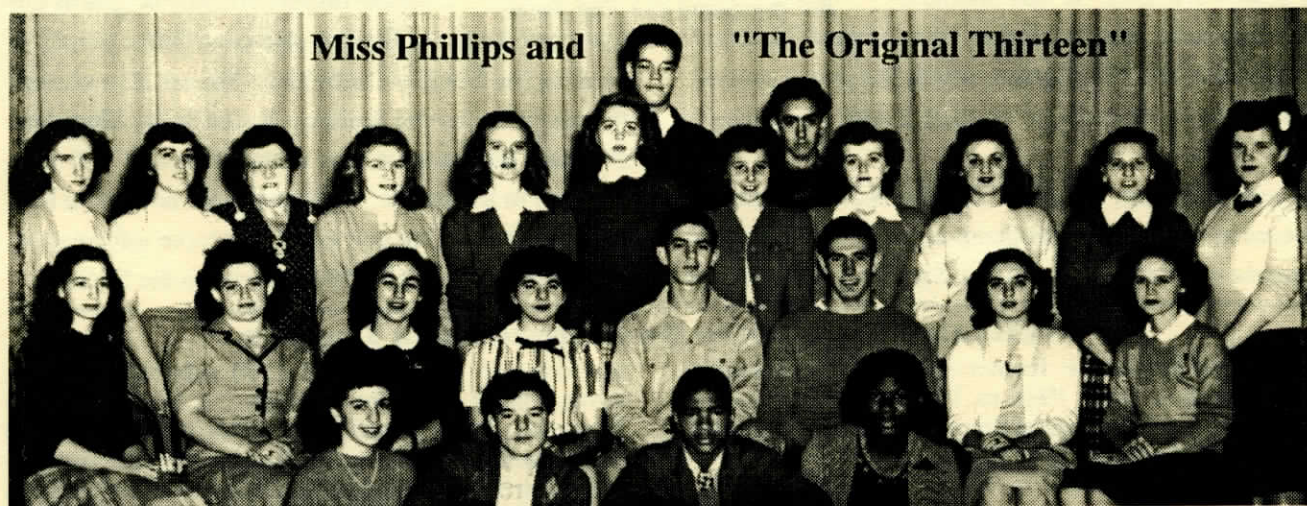
fall, would have been attracted to the crops behind the house.

Whether it was hindsight or foresight, Hickman installed a small opening on the north side of the house. It has been suggested that the Log House had served as a trading post during some period and that trade items were passed through this "window". This may have been the case but not during Hickman's time. He would have been too occupied scratching out an existence in what was at that time the western frontier of Pennsylvania. Also, with less than a half dozen families living in the area and only a small band of migratory Indians in the vicinity of Glenmore, a trading post would not have been a profitable undertaking.

A more likely scenario would be that Hickman used the small window to keep an eye on his crops and if an unsuspecting deer, turkey or rabbit wondered into the area, the small window became a gunport and the Hickmans would have fresh meat for several days. In the winter he may have baited the area with dried corn or table scraps.

In 1713 the Hickmans sold their house and property and moved to Pequea (now Lancaster County). It is possible the next occupant of the house, recognizing the potential of the location, made them an offer they couldn't refuse. Whatever the case may be, Thomas Moore became the owner of the Log House and the accompanying 375 acres.

-- Harlan Morrison  
(part of an ongoing series)



People identified by William Woodward from Fall 1996 *House Log* photo (left to right)

Front Row: Marie Cozzone, Clarence Camp, Kenny Thomas, Francis Sweeney

2nd Row: Siberia Caporale, Rose Formica, Genevieve Donofria, Florence DeLuca, Frank Pomanto, Dennis Farnsworth, Florence Allen, Clarabelle Fisher (deceased)

3rd Row: Betty James Fisher, Agnes Pomanto (Di Euliis), Miss Phillips, Nancy Wagoner, Ruth Schrupf, Caroline Matthews, Marjorie Emory (Hickey), Bettie Moore, Clare Cavanaugh (deceased), Helen Pappas, Shirley Habecker

Rear: William Titus, John McWilliams



# Lil Zook, Teenage Civil-War Nurse, Writes Home

The Summer 1996 issue of the *House Log* featured an article by Gail Kunkel about Elizabeth Zook, a young woman of remarkable courage who, at age 16, left the security of her Quaker family in Exton to become an army nurse during the Civil War. For three years she worked at hospitals in the Washington D.C. area, before dying at Hampton Hospital on September 4, 1865, probably of dysentery. Most of what is known of her experiences during this period is contained in five letters which she wrote to her brother Jacob between 1862 and 1865. These letters are in the possession of the Chester County Historical Society, to which we express our appreciation for permitting us to publish them. The first letter appears in its entirety below. Editorial notes appear in square brackets and a few paragraphs have been subdivided to aid the reader. -- Jim LaDrew

\* \* \* \* \*

Georgetown, Nov. 26 1862

Dear Brother:

I had intended for some time to have answered your part of a letter which I received from home but owing to the many duties which I find to employ my times, delayed doing so and now, ere I lie down to rest, will do so.

I told the home folks I was on night watch, consequently, I've the whole day to myself either to sleep, work or pleasure, whichever I've a mind to. I usually sleep a while in the forenoon and go on the ward in the afternoon and do whatever the boys have for me. Sometimes one thing and sometimes another, but always plenty.

I get along very well, about as well as the others, but in my way, find many things which are not just so sweet but I think in time, I can have my way with any of them. I find now they are becoming somewhat different toward me. I do not find the Matron a pleasant woman. Consequently, I've little to do with her, and some of the nurses are very disagreeable but I also have little as possible to do with them.

The Day Nurse in my ward is very disagreeable. The boys all hate her and when I go in, every man has his complaints. I do my best to sympathize with them and that goes a great way and whenever they have sewing and writing [I] often find paper and do it for them, which goes far with them.

**It is all very well to talk and be patriotic. I've done it myself but I tell you, such a place as this is where the beauty is taken off. You see the dread reality of the case. ...**

What thinks you of the prospect of the times? Don't you think there will be a compromise yet? Indeed when one hears the complaints of the poor boys who have been in the service so long and wishing to get back to their families, one can hardly help wishing there could, as anything to save life. One hears nothing but the same sentiment throughout -- heartily sick of the war. The Press and people of the North can say what they've a mind to but such a place as this is where you find the true sentiments of the Army. I've talked with very many since I'm here and never have I heard one say they would enlist again did they know what they do now. I do not blame them either. It is all very well to talk and be patriotic. I've done it myself but I tell you, such a place as this is where the beauty is taken off. You see the dread reality of the case.

When I last wrote, I was not very well and perhaps a little home sick. [her underlines] but whenever you see them, tell them I'm getting on very well, not to worry about me, that when I wish to come home, I'm coming, it don't make any difference what it looks like, I'm only on trial. I shall make out to bear it for a while. I know I can because I'm doing good and 'tis only that which would lead me to stay. If I only keep well is the greatest matter. I will try to take care of myself and do not any of you worry about me. I'll get through, no danger.

I must stop and go to bed awhile. How are the little folks? Kiss them for me and also much love for yourself and family. Farewell and write again back if you have time. I'm always so glad to hear from you.

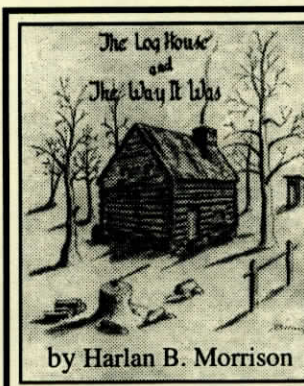
Yours always, Lil

## Books of Local Interest

*The History of Dowlin Forge*, by Susannah Brody. This publication, featured in the summer 1996 *House Log*, is available from the Uwchlan Twp. Admin. Offices (send check for \$15 indicating which publication is requested to 715 N. Ship Rd., Exton, PA 19341 (postage included).

*Please Mom, Let Me Go*, Downingtownian Paul Di Matteo's WWII experiences; available at the Chester County Historical Society.

**Historic Downingtown Bed & Breakfast:** The Glen Isle Farm, contact Tim Babbage or Glenn Baker, 610-269-9100 or 800-269-1730



## The Story of the Downingtown Log House

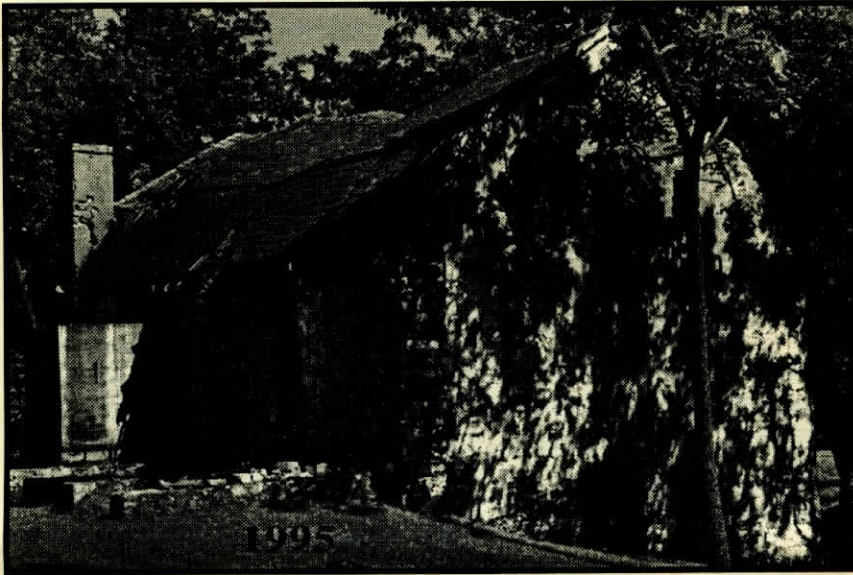
(Downingtown Historical Society Occasional Papers, No. 1.)

Available at the Log House when open (1st Sunday each month, 1-4), and by mail (send check for \$4.25 to the Society; price includes postage).



## Before and After at the Roger Hunt Mill

In his book, *Travels With Charley*, John Steinbeck remarked, while driving across America, that he wondered why progress looked so much like destruction. But sometimes they can be one in the same. The work currently being done on the Roger Hunt Mill is an example. Also known locally as Pollock's Mill, for the family that operated it for more than fifty years, this structure was built ca. 1739 and is one of the most historically significant mills in Chester County. Unfortunately, it was allowed to fall into such a state of deterioration in recent decades that by the time the Borough of Downingtown acquired it in the 1990s it was a hazard and potential legal liability. An ad hoc committee was formed and, spearheaded largely by Jane Davidson and the Downingtown Historical Commission, combined funding from the State, County and Borough was obtained to begin phase one of its restoration.

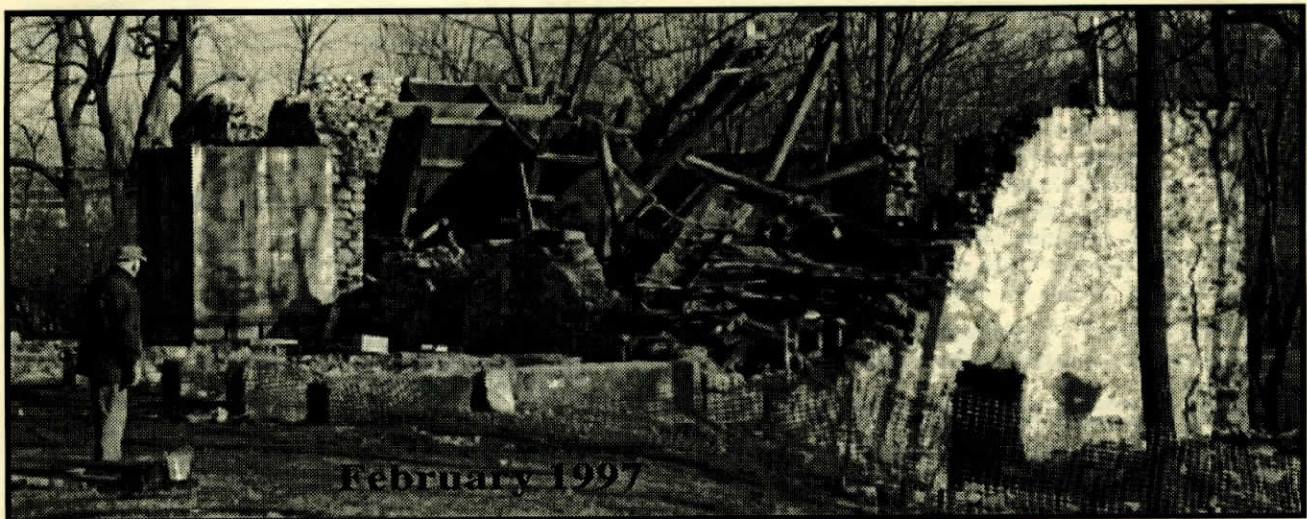


Dale Frens of Frens and Frens, an architectural firm specializing in historical restoration, was extremely generous in donating his time in drawing up the specifications for this initial phase. Frens explained that collapse of the roof and wooden interior had resulted in destabilization of the rubblestone masonry walls and that it was necessary to remove those features down to the first floor. The east and west gable ends of the walls also had to be removed down to a level with the north and south walls and all door, window and race openings will be sealed with cement blocks. The remaining rubblestone walls will be repointed to stabilize them. Unfortunately, with the roof removed and

no funds allocated to replace it, many artifacts associated with the milling operation will remain inside, exposed to the elements.

Frens stated that the work, currently being done by Ted Nickles Construction, had to be temporarily halted because a portion of the wall in the northwest corner has been determined to be far less stable than was originally believed and some additional funding will have to be acquired before work can continue. But Frens is confident that, no matter how much of the structure has to be taken down at present, it has been so systematically measured and photographed that it could be fully restored in the future, should funding become available.

And although to the casual observer, what is happening to the Roger Hunt Mill may look like destruction, to those of us interested in its history and preservation, it is real progress. -- Jim LaDrew





# Whippets' Football on Display in Municipal Building



All of Downingtown is proud of the Whippets' victory on December 7! The Downingtown Historical Society is displaying the football used in the game, which has been specially painted in commemoration, in a case in the Municipal Building. The Society congratulates Coach John Barr and the team for its great achievement:

James Kucera, Fran Gregor, Joe Ziegler, Jay Willis, Tony Gracia, Matt Barr, Mike Mize, Brad Helm, Matt Ellis, Nick DiAngelo, Justin Proctor, Dan Ellis, Bob Zimmerman, Carlos Meeks, Malik Muhammed, Brad Mercer, Vic Sudano, Brian Hunter, Jon Bortree, Justin Alexander, Jeff Reinert, Nate Sims, Arlen Harris, Chris Gaitens, Mike Welsh, Brian Thomas, Steve Maas, Andy Cichon, Chad Ammon, Steve Menzel, Jim Witmer, Sean Chipman, Ben Clift, Mike DiNorscia, Chris Kendall, Omar Montalvo, Eric Erdmann, Rich DeRafelo, John Campenni, Bill Sterett, Joe Wagner, John Pennington, Brian Sims, Dave Dunn, Dave Eisenhart, Trent Chandler, Jim Larer, Brian Faust, Wim Maaskant, Ty Jones, Mike Castelein, and Mike Millard.



## Downingtown Historical Society

*The House Log*. Volume 2, Number 1. © 1997 Downingtown Historical Society. The Society's quarterly publication, *The House Log* welcomes submissions of articles and information on events of community or historical interest. All contributions are subject to approval by the Society and editorial revision. Please send articles to the Society c/o Jim LaDrew.

**Officers:** Bill Walton, president; Ann Gee, secretary; Doris Keen, treasurer. **Board Members:** Dave Benfer, Joyce Benfer, Jay Byerly, Ann Gee, Don Greenleaf, Roger Grigson, Jim LaDrew, Harlan Morrison, Bill Woodruff, Mike Young

*The House Log* Editor: Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew

**Annual Society Membership:** \$10 individual; \$15 family; \$5 senior, \$3 student.

*Photo credits: p. 1, Bill Walton, p. 2 unknown, p. 4 Jim LaDrew, p. 5 graphic design and photo, Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew*

**Society Calendar:** General Meetings, second Mondays of March, September, and November, 7 p.m., Central Presbyterian Church, Downingtown. Guest lecturers on topics of local interest; free and open to the public.

**March 10:** Lecture by Robinson McIlvaine, Central Presbyterian Church, Downingtown, 7 p.m.

**Downingtown Bibliography In Progress:** *The House Log* would like to publish an ongoing bibliography of Downingtown history. Our goal is to supplement, not replace, such excellent existing sources as Jane Davidson's 1982 *A History of Downingtown*. We encourage readers to send us recent references or additional references from existing works, and are especially interested in topics such as architecture, the Underground Railway, oral history, and the accomplishments of Downingtonians abroad (i.e. outside Downingtown!). Please be sure to include *complete* pagination, volume and issue number for journals and place and publisher for books. We would appreciate your comments or annotations on the entries' usefulness. Our first entry follows: Sheppard, John. "Downingtown" in *Chester County: Town & Country Living*. Vol 2, No. 3 (Fall 1996) pp. 54-61, 74-76. [Includes photos of the Zebulon Thomas House, the Roger Hunt Mill ruins, the Downingtown Diner replica, and the Log House, among others, and cites comments by Society member Roger Grigson concerning the patrolling of the trestle bridge, a potential strategic site, during World War II by local high school teachers in their World War I uniforms. Copies of this issue are for sale in the Log House when open.]

**Downingtown Historical Society**

**P. O. Box 9**

**Downingtown, PA 19335**



# The House Log

Volume 2, Number 2

Spring 1997

A Publication of the Downingtown Historical Society

## President's Message: McIlvaine Back in Downingtown, by Bill Walton

As advertised, the March General Meeting featured Robinson McIlvaine. "Featured," in the dictionary, is defined as "giving special prominence." This best describes Mr. McIlvaine's role in the meeting, from my perspective.

Robinson McIlvaine has lived a full life. Born and raised in Downingtown, he went away to Harvard. Following graduation, Robinson enlisted in the Navy, with World War II on the horizon, and served as a Commander in the Pacific. Next he returned to Downingtown, bought the *Downingtown Archive* and increased its circulation tenfold. (It's interesting to me how many people remember this paper fondly and still have copies today.) After selling the paper, Mr. McIlvaine helped a friend by campaigning for Eisenhower. He was in the "right place at the right time" and became manager for much of the campaign. Following the election, he was named an Ambassador to one of the emerging African countries. Before this phase of his life ended, he had been Ambassador to Kenya and four other African countries and now is regarded as one of the country's foremost experts on that continent. Since his retirement, Robinson has sailed to many exotic locations and has plans for more.

The 100 or so people who attended the meeting enjoyed Mr. McIlvaine's commentary on Downingtown and the world. He remembers the Downingtown of his youth as divided. The "west enders" stayed, for the most part, west of the Brandywine, the "east enders" to the east. He recalls fights between schoolmates for no other reason. As a "west ender" he was not sure why this was so, but it continued until Borough Hall was built right on the dividing line. This brought the "east and

west enders" together to pick up their mail. This common chore, in time, united the community and the term "east and west ender" was no longer heard. Mr. McIlvaine feels there is a lesson here that deserves repeating and stands true today.

A sample of Mr. McIlvaine's humor was shown when he told a story about his first command in the Navy. After training, his first mission was to take the vessel south along the coast for refitting. Because of fear of U-boats no radio contact was allowed and the coast was blacked out. With a new captain and crew, the boat became lost. This was rectified at dawn when the ship encountered a fishing boat. With a bull-horn Robinson inquired, "WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?"

When the frightened fisherman responded "Two miles off Cape Hatteras, Sir," Robinson ordered, "There are Naval operations ongoing, be on your way." The fisherman never knew how grateful the captain was for that response.

Another story was about an incident which occurred last year on the Chesapeake Bay. Robinson had taken two land-loving friends sailing in the late

fall. He was knocked overboard and was shocked by the bay's cold waters. His first thought was: If I drown, how will they get this boat back to shore? His second was: If they do make it to shore, how will they get home? I have the keys to the car in my pocket. Thankfully, Robinson was able to get back to the boat and was rescued.

These three stories alone do not do Mr. McIlvaine justice. Listening to his commentary, it became evident to

*continued on p. 4*



Francis Brown, Roger Grigson, and Robinson McIlvaine

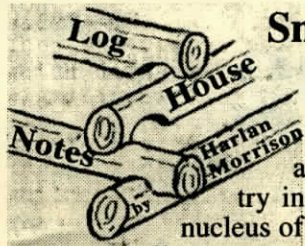
Photo: Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew

## Dale Frens, Restoration Architect To Give Slide Show at Annual Dinner

Restoration Architect Dale H. Frens will speak at the Downingtown Historical Society's annual dinner on May 31st at the Peddler Inn. Frens, whose impressive resume includes work on numerous historically significant structures in New York City, Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Valley Forge Park as well as Ches-

ter County Historical Society's beautiful new complex, will talk about some of his recent projects. He has also donated a great deal of his time to the Roger Hunt Mill stabilization project here in Downingtown. His presentation will include slides and will follow the dinner which begins at 6:00 pm.





## Small Log House For Rent

By 1717 Thomas Moore had his trading post, tavern and grist mill, the first industry in the area. These were the nucleus of a settlement that was eventually to grow to become Downingtown. Moore died in 1738 and by 1739 Thomas Downing had acquired the land on which the Log House stands today. The house remained in the Downing family for the next 200 years. Very little is known about the occupants during that period but it apparently was occupied by a succession of tenants.

The 1798 Direct Tax List shows that John Baldwin was living in the house at that time. Eugene Downing, the son of William W. Downing and the great-great-grandson of Thomas Downing was living in the house in 1870. He was a carpenter who owned no real estate and only \$250 in personal property. In 1880 the occupants were Sallie Kirk and her two sons, and in 1900 James Boggs, his wife and their six children were living there. In 1907 the occupants were Amos Smith, his wife and four children and in 1926 Roxanne Remy said she had been living in the house since 1911. There is no documentation that anyone lived in the house after 1927. In 1931 the

Sanborn Insurance Map described the house as being "vacant and open," indicating that it had become a virtual derelict.

Thomas W. Downing's will of 1937 left the Log House and adjacent property to the Borough of Downingtown. After his death in 1940, the Borough's plans to restore the house were interrupted by World War II and the restoration was delayed until 1947, after which it was occupied by the Downingtown Chamber of Commerce from 1950 to 1988.

Prior to its recent restoration, the Log House was 18 inches below street level and was receiving water runoff from the street and the adjacent parking lot. Vibration from the heavy traffic on Route 30 was adversely affecting the structural soundness of the building and the logs on the east side were severely deteriorated.

In 1984 the Downingtown Historical Society undertook a fund-raising program to finance (1) the removal of the house to a safer location, (2) a thorough restoration of the house and (3) a program of limited archeology in the area. The House was moved to its present location in 1988. Following restoration, it has served as a museum for the Downingtown Historical Society and is open to the public at specified times and by appointment.-- Harlan Morrison (part of an ongoing series)

## Lil Zook, Teenage Civil-War Nurse, Writes Home, Letter 2

*The following letter is chronologically number two of a series of five letters in possession of the Chester County Historical Society. These letters were written by Elizabeth Zook to her brother Jacob between the years 1862 and 1865 when she was a Union Army nurse in and around Washington D.C. Elizabeth and her family resided in Exton and were members of the Downingtown Friends Meeting. The first of this series of five letters appeared in The House Log, Vol. 2, No. 1 and an article about Elizabeth Zook was included in The House Log, Vol. 1, No. 3. We thank the Chester County Historical Society for granting permission to publish these letters. -Jim LaDrew*

Georgetown

Dec. 19, 1862

My Dearest Brother

I this morning came into possession of your and Bethe's letter. I was very glad indeed to receive them and to hear you were well. Sorry to hear you still continue to have those nervous headaches. No wonder though, dear brother when one thinks of all the care and trouble resting upon you, nothing can be expected to save these things. I too, often have them since being here, but I hope soon to have many of the trials removed and the crooked places made straight. Truly a kind providence watches over all and when we rely and trust to his goodness, our thorny way is smoothed, which I hope soon to have in my own case.

I was ordered to report to Miss Dix this morning. I did and have just returned, and I think it remains now with myself in a great measure, my own happiness. And that only by constant prayer and watchfulness. She had me removed to Columbia College, a new building entirely and no other female nurse except myself. She said perhaps one other there might be. "And now Miss Zook," she says, "it remains for you to establish the reputation of that house, which you can only do by constant watchfulness, discretion and a constant desire to do good with

a firm reliance upon a divine providence." I hope, trust and pray that I may be enabled to perform my duties in every sense of the case. I need, dear brother, all the prayers of my good people as well as my own to sustain me in the undertaking. She (Miss D) thinks I'll find it very pleasant. I'm sure I shall.

I took a look at the place, found a neat little room with a fine large closet and nice good bed, and also a warm coal stove. The surgeon in charge appears very kind. I hope I shall be able to give satisfaction. Miss Dix is exceedingly kind to me.

You speak, dear brother of the lot of the poor soldier. Yes! Indeed it is hard and many, many a time I deeply sympathize with them. There are two poor fellows I was talking with last night. One has been knocked around in different hospitals for eight months. The other, for longer than that. Both were wishing their sufferings were ended. One, a boy about sixteen, has lost all he has, father and two brothers in the army and the other, a brother. They both wept as though their hearts would break. It's sad indeed to realize these things. I'm mistaken. The boy has a little brother and sister in Iowa. Another singular occurrence happened a day or two since. Two brothers met who had not seen each other for nine years and nei-

*continued on p. 4*



# Downingtown State Champs Again!

Congratulations to the Lady Whippets team! The girls captured the 1997 PIAA State Basketball Championship in Hershey. The Whippets defeated Woodland Hills 55-52 in a very hard fought game. Ironically, Woodland Hills is the same school Downingtown defeated to win the State Football Championship, in December.

## **Seniors:**

Leigh Dawson, Tracey Lewis

## **Juniors:**

Karen Cook, Tracey Kling,  
Janeka Lopp, Beth McFadden, Heather  
McFarland, Teresa Tarquinio,  
Sally Williams

## **Sophomores:**

Leann Grayson, Jody Greaney, Michelle  
Mellon, Brandi Pete, Shelley Redding,  
Jamie Rosenberger, Jen Wedo

## **Head Coach:**

Robert Schnure

## **Assistants:**

Dave Johnson, Allison Long

This is the fourth State Championship for Coach Bob Schnure and the sixth time one of his teams have reached the championship game. His coaching skills are the common ingredient in all these teams. Congratulations to Coach Schnure, his assistants and the Lady Whippets 1997 State Champions!

P.S. The post-game celebration featured over thirty trucks from every township in the School District. With sirens blazing, the parade snaked from the Turnpike, through the Borough, and back to school. The girls had the lights on in their bus and were waving to everyone who had come out of their homes to welcome the team home. It was a fitting tribute to the Champions, one they will remember for a very long time.



*The House Log*. Vol. 2, No. 2. ©1997 Downingtown Historical Society. *The House Log* welcomes articles and information on events of historical interest; all articles subject to editorial revision and approval by the Society. Send articles to DHS c/o Jim LaDrew. Officers: Bill Walton, president; Ann Gee, secretary; Doris Keen, treasurer. Board Members: Dave and Joyce Benfer, Jay Byerly, Ann Gee, Don Greenleaf, Roger Grigson, Jim LaDrew, Harlan Morrison, Bill Woodruff, Mike Young. *House Log* Editor: Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew. Membership: \$10 indiv.; \$15 family; \$5 senior, \$3 student.

***President's Message***, continued from p. 1

me how he could make any story interesting just by the way he told it. I would like to thank Mr. McIlvaine and hope he enjoyed his visit as much as we enjoyed having him. He stayed the night at Glen Isle Farm, which was his family home and is now a bed and breakfast. I would also like to thank the following: Roger Grigson for contacting Mr. McIlvaine and coordinating his visit. Jim and Roslyn LaDrew for the *House Log* which led Mr. McIlvaine to contacting us and becoming a member. Dorothea Parker and my wife for help with refreshments, and Central Presbyterian for letting us use the Sanctuary. It should also be mentioned that Bill, Madeline and the Woodruff family were given small gifts as thanks for their annual efforts with Luminarias. My sincere thanks to all of you.

-- by Bill Walton ●

***The Story of the Downingtown Log House***, by Harlan Morrison (Downingtown Historical Society Occasional Papers, No. 1.) Available at the Log House when open (1st Sunday each month, 1-4), and by mail (send check for \$4.25 to the Society; price includes postage).

**Downingtown Historical Society**  
**P. O. Box 9**  
**Downingtown, PA 19335**

Society General Meetings, 2nd Monday of March, Sept., & Nov., 7 p.m., Central Presbyterian Church, Downingtown  
**May 31: Annual Dinner and Lecture by Dale Frens,**  
Peddler Inn, Reception 6 p.m, Dinner 6:30 p.m.

***Lil Zook***, continued from p. 2

ther knew the other were in this place, and both had enlisted under assumed names. Often such things occur.

How glad I am to leave this hospital. Such a miserable [sights?] as there is around here. The surgeon in charge wished me removed. I don't suit them. I see too much. Miss Dix knows it all and says she had too much resting on her to remedy the evil now. One thing, there are some being improper persons employed here do anything save nurse with the right spirit — find the closeted with the ward master more frequently than attending the wants of the men — I have seen very much since I'm here.

Richard Thomas called to see me yesterday. Was glad to see him — for once. Frank Painter also. I hope some of the dear home folks may come to see me when I get established in my own domicile. Goodby Jacob and forget not to remember me in your daily devotions. I'm weak you know.

Remember me to all the folks home — when they write, direct to Columbia College, Washington. Give love to all the family. I will write to Bethe and Mary. ●

***Historic Downingtown Bed & Breakfast***: Glen Isle Farm,  
Tim Babbage/Glenn Baker 610-269-9100 or 800-269-1730



# The House Log

Volume 2, Number 3

Summer 1997



A Publication of the Downingtown Historical Society

## **President's Message: Good Neighbor Day, by Bill Walton**

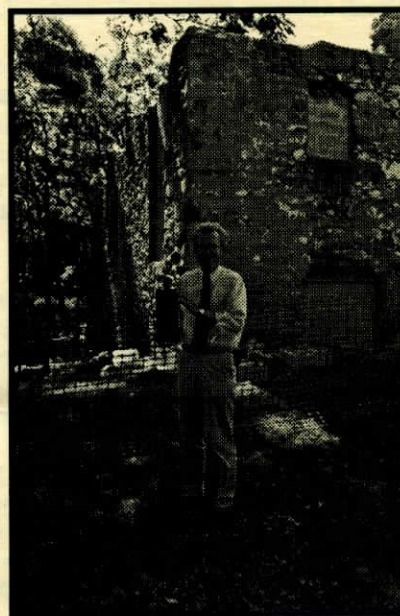
Last year, for the summer issue of *The House Log*, I wrote an article on Good Neighbor Day. Rather than repeat that article, with similar comments, this year I asked other volunteers for their impressions of the day.

Dorothea Parker enjoys the people who come through the Log House. She feels it is essential to have it open on Good Neighbor Day. Dorothea mentions that this year two families from Minnesota were touring the house at the same time. They had not met before but were from nearby towns. One of them commented that they had nothing back home of similar age and expressed how lucky we are to have the Log House. Dorothea says many local people also comment that this is their first time through or mention it is their first since they saw Santa there as a child. Dorothea thinks everyone who comes through finds something new each time. She would like to see more Historical Society members on the Fourth.

Doris Keen likes to talk with the curious visitors. Many comment on how much larger the house is inside than it looks from the outside. She says many are surprised at the articles that are on display. Doris likes to see the girls' interest in the porcelain dolls and the boys' interest in the marbles. The children cannot believe all this was found by digging in the ground only a few feet away. Doris thinks everyone who comes through finds something interesting. She is at the Log House almost every time it is open throughout the year. The Good Neighbor Day crowds are her favorite because all are enjoying themselves in the park. Doris Keen feels that every town has something of which it is most proud. She thinks two of Downingtown's are the Log House and Good Neighbor Day.

*continued on p. 5*

## **Dale Frens Honored by Downingtown Historical Society**



***Dale Frens with Plaque at Roger Hunt Mill***

Restoration architect Dale H. Frens was honored by the Downingtown Historical Society at its annual dinner on May 31st for the donation of his services on the Roger Hunt Mill project. He was presented with a plaque set on a finished piece of original timber from the mill. The plaque, created by Jim LaDrew, acknowledged his volunteer efforts on behalf of the stabilization of the mill.

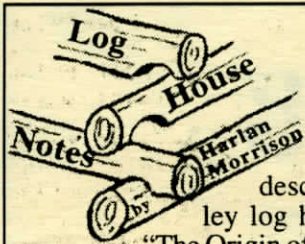
Following this presentation Frens gave an interesting slide lecture on his recent projects showing the unique problems associated with such renovations as the Memorial Arch at Valley Forge, the Chester County Historical Society and the Mercer Museum.

## **Sissy Whitaker Presents Chester County Day Slides in September**

The next Downingtown Historical Society general meeting will feature Sissy Whitaker presenting slides for this year's Chester County Day which focuses on the Phoenixville area.

The meeting will begin at 7 pm with refreshments and the lecture will begin at 7:30 at the usual location, the Central Presbyterian Church in Downingtown. There is no admission charge.





## "Temporary, Careless and Makeshift"

"Temporary, Careless and Makeshift" -- thus did Dr. Henry C. Mercer describe early Delaware Valley log houses in his 1924 paper "The Origin of Log Houses in the United States" (see bibliography). Wesley Sessa and Norman Glass, restorers of the Log House, agree that the house was a temporary structure expected to last "for a generation or two".

For those interested in numbers, the outside dimensions are twenty one feet, eight inches by twenty five feet. The walls are made up of fifty logs of which seventy percent are original.

The stone foundation and massive stone fireplace and chimney are anomalies for a house that can otherwise be described as being crude and temporary in its construction. Most early log houses were either directly on the ground or supported above the ground by large rocks around the perimeter.

A root cellar was located beneath the northwest corner of the house, probably accessed by a trapdoor. At some point in time this became a trash pit as indicated by the number and variety of artifacts recovered by the 1989 excavation.

Over the years both the first and second floors underwent several renovations. A wall, removed in 1947, originally divided the back room into two rooms. The large east window was not original but appears in the 1870 photograph.

The side door was most likely added by Thomas Moore as an entrance to his back room tavern. A wall from the west end of the fireplace to the front door was added at one time, creating a hallway to the back room and appreciably reducing the size of the kitchen. The large front room on the second floor which now extends the width of the house was originally divided by a wall.

The small 10 by 20 inch window in the north wall at the northeast corner of the first floor remains somewhat of an enigma. Why so small? Was it original or added later? In 1988 Norman Glass suggested the house may have served as a trading post with trade and sale items being passed through the open window. It is well documented that Thomas Moore, who lived in the house from 1713 to 1729 had a tavern "in the house where he lived", but there are no records indicating the house was ever a trading post.

Nevertheless, the second floor hatchway directly over the small window permitting items stored on the second floor to be passed down and out through the window, makes the trading post theory a plausible one.

There is yet another question for which we have no satisfactory answer. Why is none of the lumber - flooring, joists or rafters - hand hewn? We know of no recorded sawmills in the area at the time the house was built and so we wonder at the incongruity of sawed lumber in a house so crudely constructed

Since the removal of the Log House to its present location and the restoration that was carried out in 1989, we have found no clues to a number of alterations that were made over the years as well as interesting and meaningful features that had not previously been recognized or considered.

Mercer believed the early Delaware Valley log houses were temporary and "soon discarded by the builders". Today we know of at least one that wasn't!

This is a brief account of some of the features of the Log House. A more detailed discussion of these and other features of the house will be found in the booklet *The Log House and the Way It Was: The Story of the Downingtown Log House*, available at the Log House when open and at the Chester County Historical Society.

-- Harlan Morrison (part of an ongoing series)

### Bibliography

Mercer, Henry C. (1924) 1976. *The Origin of Log Houses in the United States*. Doylestown: Bucks County Historical Society. Reprint with additions from a *Collection of Papers Read before the Bucks County Historical Society* (5), pp. 568-583.

Morrison, Harlan B. 1996. *The Log House and the Way It Was: The Story of the Downingtown Log House*. Downingtown: Downingtown Historical Society (Occasional Papers No. 1).

Sessa, Wesley T., and N.T. Glass. 1990. "Downingtown Log House." in *Chester County Historical Society Antiques Show Program*. pp. 35-43.



## Lil Zook, Teenage Civil-War Nurse, Writes Home, Letter 3

*The following letter is the third chronologically of a series of five letters which today survive in the possession of the Chester County Historical Society. They were written by Elizabeth Zook, a Union Army nurse, to her brother Jacob between 1862 and 1865. Elizabeth and her family were members of the Downingtown Friends Meeting and lived in the Zook House located on what is now the Exton Square Mall.*

*The second of this series appeared in **The House Log**, Vol. 2, No. 2 and the first in Vol. 2, No. 1. An article by Gail Kunkel about Elizabeth Zook appeared in **The House Log**, Vol. 1, No. 3. Punctuation has been slightly adjusted here for the readers' convenience and editorial comments or queries appear in square brackets. Readers may also be interested to know that Dorothea Dix (1802-87) was a social reformer, especially concerned with mental health, and served as superintendent of Union Army nurses during the Civil War. Her accomplishments were numerous, as were the descriptions of the abrasiveness of her personality, Zook's account is but one of many in this regard. Our thanks again to Chester County Historical Society for granting their permission for us to publish these letters.*

-- Jim LaDrew

Sanitary Commission [letter head]

Dec. 17, 1863  
My Dear Brother

I rec'd your welcome letter this morning. It found me busy preparing dinner for some of our poor suffering men. We have the house nearly full now from the last fight on the Rapidan, several with arms and legs off. I just left Dr. Page (surgeon in charge) on Ward 1 examining a man's leg. Gun shot wound. [He] appeared to be getting along very well until Sunday Eve. [when] he was taken very sick, since when he has been growing worse. I believe the artery took to bleeding. We had a wounded rebel in the same ward. The reb. women brought in a lot of stuff and he [man with gun shot wound] thinks they gave him something to poison him - says he never had such feeling in his life before. I should not be surprised for I believe they would do anything to our men. Dr. Stuart would not admit them unless they gave to our men too. One North Carolina man died. Amputated leg looked as though some dog had chewed it off. Such a poor amputation. We have had several deaths lately. The men were nearly gone when they came in from the front. Several cases of "Diphtheria" and sore throat has gone through the hospital. Almost everyone in the place had a touch of it. We have many very distressing cases though not one eighth part of last winter. While we had the last lot so sick I felt very much worried but they are all doing well now.

Miss Dix was over yesterday and scolded me tremendously. I have tried very much to please her and have until now. She sent a nurse over the

other day to assist for a couple of weeks and Dr. and I myself concluded it unnecessary, it being considerable trouble to get fixed for her (and then run the risk of her being a disagreeable one and making trouble) so he sent her back. Oh! My but she scolded "She did not expect such a thing from me." "She did

**Oh! My but she scolded "She did not expect such a thing from me." "She did from the others and Drs. but I she expected better of." "But she was sorry to see that I was getting like the others." The truth of the matter, she cannot bear to see Dr. pleased and satisfied and thinks he's so dreadful bad, and because I please him she gets vexed.**

from the others and Drs. but I she expected better of." "But she was sorry to see that I was getting like the others." The truth of the matter, she cannot bear to see Dr. pleased and satisfied and thinks he's so dreadful bad, and because I please him she gets vexed. I never make any complaints of him simply because I've none to make. I respect him and always have and I don't care for her. It worried me considerable at first but he told me I suited him and not to give myself a second thought about her. She could not remove me and she was not worth minding. Dr. Page sent a requisition to Surgeon General Barnes to have his nurses retained and stewards. Mrs. Leach and myself are included. The surgeons hate "Dix" so much they will not honor her to ask her for nurses and if the Drs. wish a nurse and is

granted by Dr. Barnes, she has no power to remove them. I just intend to do my duty right straight along as far as I am able and I don't mean to say any more to please her.

She won't allow anyone to like her if they wished to. My but she did law. [her underline] I feel perfectly independent about the matter now. I expect to get a dreadful name anyhow. So I'll bear it.

I was very glad! to hear from thee today. I was thinking yesterday I would write before very long. Is Mary Sharpless married? I'm so so sorry to

*continued on p. 5*





*Courtesy of Jay Byerly*

It is with sadness that we note the demolition of the East Ward School this summer. Built in 1922 of local cut limestone, it was the place of early learning for many of Downingtown's current residents and the source of many fond memories. One cannot help but question the wisdom of destroying a building that was structurally sound, aesthetically appealing, and historically significant. An appreciation for history should be cultivated at an early age and should be one of the goals of every school system. This goal is severely undermined when a school system needlessly destroys a valuable piece of its own history.



*Photo by Jay Byerly*



## ***Lil Zook, Teenage Civil-War Nurse, Writes Home, Letter 3,***

*continued from page 3*

hear of Lillie's sickness. I know all about this choking. I've seen men choke to death and nothing could be done for them. I can't tell you what a dread I have of this "Diphtheria". They don't seem to understand it here and just as sure as a man takes it he's gone. I doctor a good deal in my simple way for sore throat. The men often come to me to doctor them with a bowl of some kind of tea or something - hot bricks and, you know my kind of nursing. I received a nice present the other day from the men in No. 3 house in the shape of a gold pencil case, pen and chain. I was telling Dr. about it last evening. He seemed as much pleased as I. Said he was real glad to hear it. Such things make one feel kind of pleasant. There are men around here who would do anything for me. I always find plenty of orderlies to build my fires and empty slops if I need it.

I was sorry to hear that Uncle Wm. Trimble was sick. I should not wonder if it went hard with him. It's a miserable disease. I hear they talk to moving to Downingtown. Do they intend keeping up three establishments? I should judge it would take a considerable income if they do. Strange how Anna goes on. I should think by what Rachel writes me she does not care about much but Phil E. I don't think if I were Elmira and Rachel I should care about troubling her much.

And Elhanan (?) leaves in the Spring. That will be a change to his family too. Wonder how they like it. I too think he will be a benefit to his family with them. Worse - I often wonder if I will ever be home again to live. I sometimes think I will never be. It's strange how a home feeling will wear off when one is comfortably situated, knowing that they are living a life of duty. I should love to see the home folks very much but I don't think I'll see home before May or April perhaps. Elmira, I believe gets on prosperously. I'm glad she is so pleasantly situated and likes her business so well. May a kind providence watch over her as He does over me. I feel his watchful care every day of my life and try hard to live a life worthy of the crown when my days on earth are ended. My prayer is constantly that He may ever protect and guide me.

I must stop. Farewell, with love to thyself and family

I remain thy affectionate sister,

Lil

Write soon and often and tell the children too  
Love also to R.B.A.

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## ***President's Message: Good Neighbor Day,***

*continued from page 1*

bor Day and likes to be part of both.

Harlan "Reds" Morrison was upstairs in the Log House all day on Good Neighbor Day. He was there by choice because he enjoys the visitors and likes answering their questions. Reds says many of the people who come upstairs are very knowledgeable and are interested in the rooms that are arranged as they would have been when the house was young. The trading door in the floor of the one room upstairs interests many visitors who are not aware of the Log House's history of trading with the Indians. Reds knows of no house west of the Brandywine dated as early as the Log House. He states that for sometime this was the westernmost boundary of the Colonial frontier. We think of the wild west as being in Wyoming or Colorado and don't realize it was right here first.

Ann Gee works as a volunteer for the Library's exhibit and at the Log House on Good Neighbor Day. She likes the children's "wide eyes" when they come in the front door and she thinks they

learn from the things they see. Ann says people are very complimentary, enjoying the flowers in front and everything inside. They are patient, waiting to go upstairs, and polite. She enjoys answering their questions. Ann would like to see Borough Hall also open for tours on Good Neighbor Day. She thinks people would enjoy seeing the renovated facility. Ann hopes the Archives Room will be completed soon and open to the public.

Over three hundred and fifty people signed the visitor's book in the Log House on Good Neighbor Day. That many and more visited as well but did not sign. Every person saw at least three of these volunteers. Their enjoyment of the Downingtown Log House was, in large part, due to the volunteers' efforts. I think Doris Keen is right. Downingtown should be proud of Good Neighbor Day and the Log House. Both are a special part of what is good here. I would like to thank these volunteers and all those who went out their way on July Fourth to make it that way!

-- by Bill Walton



*The House Log*. Vol. 2, No. 3. ©1997 Downingtown Historical Society. *The House Log* welcomes articles and information on events of historical interest; all articles subject to editorial revision and approval by the Society. Send articles to DHS c/o Jim LaDrew. Membership: \$10 indiv.; \$15 family; \$5 senior, \$3 student.

**Officers:**

Bill Walton, president; Ann Gee, secretary; Doris Keen, treasurer. Board Members: Dave and Joyce Benfer, Jay Byerly, Ann Gee, Don Greenleaf, Roger Grigson, Jim LaDrew, Harlan Morrison, Bill Woodruff, Mike Young. *House Log* Editor: Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew.

Society General Meetings, 2nd Monday of March, Sept., & Nov., 7 p.m., Central Presbyterian Church, Downingtown.  
**Next event (Sept. 8):** Sissy Whitaker: Chester County Day slides; refreshments: 7pm, lecture 7:30 pm, admission: free

***Downingtown Bibliography (part of an ongoing series -- contributions by readers welcomed)***

This entry is really a query as to why Downingtown, famous in film history as the site of the shooting of *The Blob*, is not mentioned in William A. Gordon's fascinating *Shot on This Site: A Traveler's Guide to the Place and Locations Used to Film Famous Movies and Television Shows* (New York: Citadel Press, 1995). The book describes the shooting locations of about 900 films, and while it emphasizes the period 1980-1995, it does include pre-1980 classics ... but not *The Blob*. While Gordon admits that, for rea-

sons of space, he could not include all sites, Downingtown's absence is conspicuous. Gordon welcomes readers' ideas and suggestion -- perhaps if enough Downingtonians wrote to him, the Home of the Blob might appear in a second edition. Gordon's address is: P.O. Box 1463, El Toro, California 92630 or c/o: Citadel Press, Carol Communications, Inc., Editorial Offices, 600 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10022.

-- Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew

***The Story of the Downingtown Log House, by Harlan Morrison*** (Downingtown Historical Society Occasional Papers, No. 1.) available at the Log House when open (1st Sunday each month, 1-4) or by mail (send check for \$4.25 to the Society; price includes postage).

***Historic Downingtown Bed & Breakfast:***

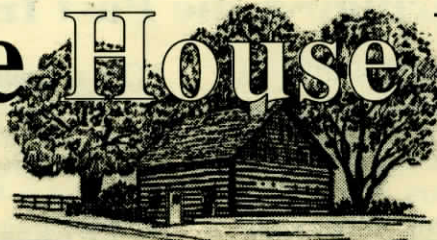
Glen Isle Farm, Proprietors: Tim Babbage/Glenn Baker. For further information, please call: 610-269-9100 or 800-269-1730. Glen Isle Farm can also host your picnic or special event.

**Downingtown Historical Society  
P. O. Box 9  
Downingtown, PA 19335**



# The House Log

Volume 2, Number 4

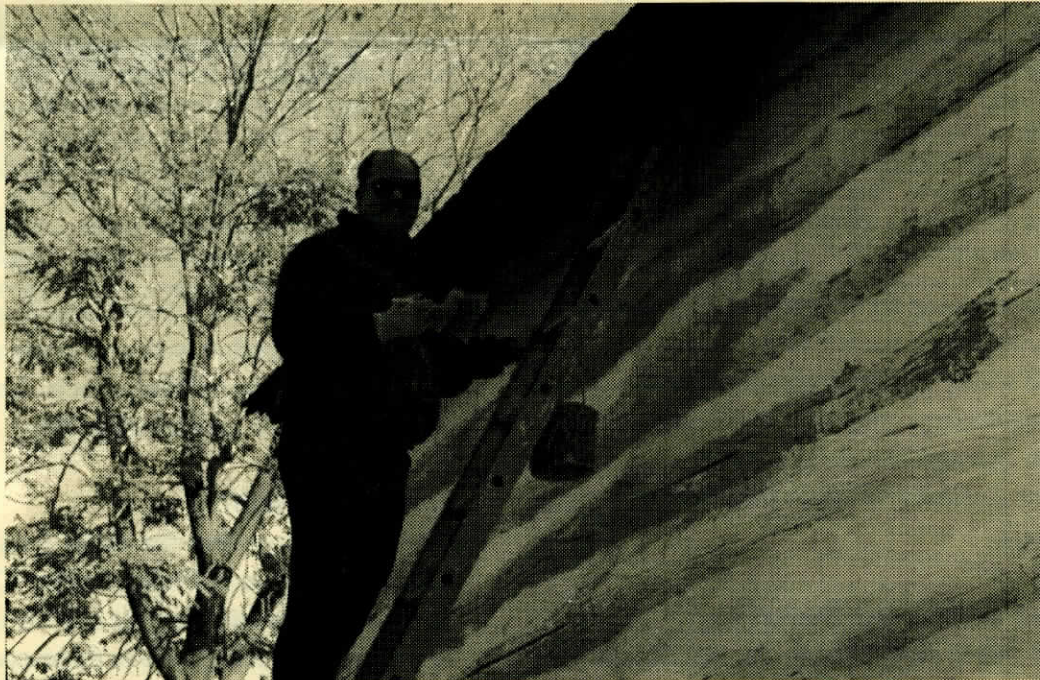


Fall 1997

A Publication of the Downingtown Historical Society

## Walton Resigns as Society President

*The House Log* is sad to announce the resignation of Bill Walton as President of the Downingtown Historical Society. Bill served on the board for the past ten years. During that time, he served as president for two separate terms totaling four years and dedicated a great deal of his time in the furtherance of history in Downingtown. Bill cites differences with the Borough over use of the Log House along with the need to spend more time with his family as his reasons for resignation. His services to the Society is greatly appreciated and he will be missed. Harlan Morrison, as vice president, has temporarily taken over presidential duties until a new president is elected.

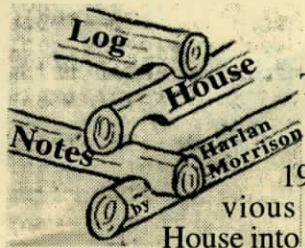


Bill Walton helping to whitewash the Log House in 1996

Society General Meetings, open to the public: 2nd Monday of March, Sept., & Nov., 7 p.m., Central Presbyterian Church, Downingtown. Free admission.



## Bringing the Past Into the Present



The title of this article is a simplistic definition of archeology and in 1988 we brought the previous 250 years of the Log House into the present. While monetary restrictions permitted only 20% of the area in and around the original site of the house to be excavated, over 16,000 artifacts were recovered. History tells us who did what, where and when, but archeology provides us an insight into how the people lived -- their tools, their weapons, their ceramics, food, toys, money and various other articles used in their daily living.

Many items were found scattered around the house on what would have been the original ground level, indicating neatness was a minor concern of the residents. The area designated E-6, just inside the northwest corner of the foundation, was perhaps the most revealing. It is believed this area was originally a root cellar which was later used as a trash pit.

Most of the redware sherds, some of which have been partially reassembled and are on display, came from E-6 as well as sherds of whiteware and creamware. Any evidence of vegetable and fruit remains disappeared long ago but there were numerous oyster, clam and mussel shells as well as bovine and porcine bones. A few of the bones exhibit cut marks caused by the knife cutting into the bone when the meat was sliced -- and there was clear evidence that some of the bones had been gnawed by rats! That there were several jaw bones but no skulls in E-6 remains a mystery.

One partially assembled bottle known as a "case bottle" and dating from between 1771 and 1781 is identical to one recovered from the well behind Shield's Tavern in Colonial Williamsburg. The term "case bottle" refers to their square shape which facilitated efficient packing.

The number of artifacts on display in the Log House is too numerous to discuss here, however, a few of special interest are worth mentioning. Among these are a handmade clay button with a wire loop on the back, handmade clay marbles, a fragment of a clay pipe made in St. Omer, France, and a brass button from a French naval uniform. There were two Indian spear points, one of which dates to 8000 - 6000 B.C.E., and a gold plated cuff link with the initials C.E.D. It is not unreasonable to conclude that the cuff link belonged to a Downing. The Historical Society archives lists a Charles and a Charles R. Downing. However the records are far from complete and there very well may have been a C.E. Downing.

Possibly the most surprising find was the well which was uncovered 6 feet west of the northwest corner of the house. Unfortunately the well was not excavated due to lack of funds. Eighty % of the area was not excavated and so there are probably fifty to sixty thousand artifacts from the past waiting to be brought into the present. This is the last of a series on the Downingtown Log House. Further information can be obtained in *The Story of the Log House*, available by sending check for \$4.25 to DHS, PO Box 9, Downingtown PA 19335; price includes postage) or at Chester County Historical Society. - Harlan Morrison

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### ***Blob Threatens to Swallow Colonial Log House ... Not! (con'd from page four)***

Does history repeat itself? And is it that subset of teens who today are ecologically conscious and forward-thinking who will be conscientious enough to salvage the earth's future and save it from ozone depletion or other forms of man-made destruction?

#### **"There's a Blob in the Bucket"**

Instead of being delivered to the Arctic, the real blob, a Union Carbide silicone product, is actually owned by local film enthusiast Wes Shank. While Shank was visiting the movie's "studio" location in Chester Springs, years after the movie was made, he noticed a five-gallon black can, home of the blob, hidden in the corner and negotiated its purchase. Shank brings the blob to spe-

cial events, together with one of the miniature sets used to create the special effects. Let's hope there is no hole in the bucket, dear Wes!

#### **A Colonial Blob?**

Blob fans know that the other local site was the Colonial Theater in Phoenixville. Curious choice of names! One can imagine a rewritten Blob script in which Steve McQueen in three-cornered hat and linsey-woolsey britches cowers at the bottom of the Log House stairs while local teens ride past in their convertible Conestoga wagons. After all, meteors have fallen throughout the centuries and there is no reason why the story could not have happened 300 years ago. CO2 extinguishers might be a problem though! -- Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew



## Lil Zook, Teenage Civil-War Nurse, Writes Home, Letter 4: "Yellow as a Seared Leaf, Idle, Listless"

*The letter below is the fourth, chronologically, of a series of five letters in possession of the Chester County Historical Society, which Elizabeth Zook, a U.S. Army nurse, wrote to her brother, Jacob, during the Civil War. Elizabeth grew up with her family in what is now the Zook House in the Exton Mall. They were Quakers and were members of the Downingtown Meeting. In 1862 when she was barely eighteen, "Lil" as she was affectionately known, became an Army nurse and served through the end of the war. The first three letters appeared in *The House Log*, Vol. 2., No. 1, Vol. 2, Nos. 2 and 3, and an article about Zook appeared in Vol. 1, No. 3. Our thanks to the Chester County Historical Society for granting permission to publish these letters. -- Jim LaDrew*

Hampton, Hos. June 28th, 1865

My Dear Brother,

I must beg you to excuse my paper, the filth upon it. It's a leaf from the prescription book. My paper is in another ward. I'm kind of turned topsy turvy this week owing to their cleansing the ward and filling up with coloured men. I had thought I should leave when the patients were removed from my ward but they were taken to 27 and I ordered to report there with them. Some are old standbys, been on my ward since I came and one man [has] been in the same ward more than a year. So I guess I shall remain a little longer. Nearly all the matrons are leaving. Soon I hope the hospital will be closed and I shall then bid a lasting adieu to all hospital life. God grant I May leave honorably and as pure and with an unblemished a character as I entered. So far I have and I believe clean from idle gossiping tongues. I assure you brother there are but few of the women who can leave with a clean conscience. Some commit one kind and some others, all detrimental to characters. One old lady, a widow with married children, left some two weeks since after purloining various boxes of hospital clothing and sanitary stores and was discovered by Dr. McClellan. She took with her a drunken lad of some twenty summers. I heard yesterday she married him. Such a woman casts a stigma o'er the whole class of female nurses.

I was very glad! to receive your letter. They are always interesting and welcome visitors and always make me feel better and try harder to live as one should. You can see the large blots which deface my paper. The pen caused it. It's very hot today. The sun is almost unbearable. Generally we have a sea breeze [in] the middle of the day but today is an exception.

One old lady, a widow with married children, left some two weeks since after purloining various boxes of hospital clothing and sanitary stores and was discovered by Dr. McClellan. She took with her a drunken lad of some twenty summers. I heard yesterday she married him. Such a woman casts a stigma o'er the whole class of female nurses.

You speak of hay making in this part of the country. People make no hay and their wheat crops are already gathered and oats fit in some localities to harvest. Their stock during the winter become very thin and you seldom see any native horses or cattle in a good condition. The people, improvements and stock are all on the same footing, people tall [?] and gaunt, [?] boney [?], straight [?] backs [?], yellow as a seared leaf, idle, listless. And, when you see them in their homely cottages, [you] will invariably see them with a

comb in their hands combing the creepers, [her underline] sitting in the door in front - always - in their old gray suits, homespun.

I am sorry to hear Lesse's [?] have so hard [a] time getting along. I believe I'm much better off today than M. I feel sorry for them. I'm also glad! to hear Ell has once more regained her usual health. How is Wm.[?] And Frank is soon to become a benedick. [newly married, long-time bachelor - ed.] Well! I hope they may enjoy a domestic life. I supposed as much. He told me last fall such would be the case. I wish I could hear the same of Eliza and Mary Ann. I hope they won't live [as] old maids, [her underlines] though I believe they are the best off in the end.

About the teaching. I yet think of doing so, yet I shall be governed by circumstances. I only live from day to day. Dr. Cosking [?] was asking me yesterday what I intended doing when I left. I could not tell him. He's my ward surgeon -- kind of a child.

Well! Jacob, I must close with much love to all family, home folks included and half doz. kisses for Jake and Jane.

I remain, Yours Always, Lil



*The House Log*. Vol. 2, No.4. ©1997 Downingtown Historical Society. Articles and information on events of historical interest welcomed, subject to editorial revision and approval. Send articles to DHS c/o Jim LaDrew. Membership: \$10 individual; \$15 family; \$5 senior, \$3 student.

**Officers:** Harlan Morrison, acting president and vice president; Jay Byerly, secretary; Doris Keen, treasurer. Board: Dave & Joyce Benfer, Ann Gee, Don Greenleaf, Roger Grigson, Jim LaDrew, Bill Woodruff, Mike Young. *House Log* Editor: Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew.

## **Blob Threatens to Swallow Colonial Log House ... Not!**

(Reprint of October 18, 1997 Special Issue of *The House Log*)

Today's events at the Downingtown Diner remind us that history is not just the distant past, but also the recent past, or even yesterday's events. Among the most recent events which *The House Log* featured were the sports victories of the Whippets and the Lady Whippets. In our article on the booklet *Our Town*, we presented the "history of history" and were delighted when Bill Woodward was able to identify members of the school club which produced that publication and provide background information on the piece (*House Log* 4).

### **Local Participants**

Today honors a special date in local history, 1957, the year the Diner almost became dinner (or was it a midnight snack?). Many area residents may remember the event and *The House Log* would be pleased to publish their reminiscences. Local participants included the Rev. Thomas Ogden of the Downingtown Methodist Church and a crew of firefighters (Bob Pollock, Elmer Schrupf, Jr., Al Petermen, Richard Keers, Harry Flinn, Jr., Gerry

Williams, Bill Dawson, Paul Backenstose, George Dowlin, Sonny Sciarretta, Charles O'Neill, Leroy Clarke, Earl Gillespie, Wes Pannebaker, Kenny Walton Bill Lamdrum, and, once again to the rescue, Bill Woodward, driving a firetruck).

### **Teens to the Rescue!**

Hot-rod-sporting teens in the show included Richard and Don Cabott, John Walker and Lou Rambo. Isn't it thought-provoking that in an era which today is characterized by poodle skirts, hula-hoops, roller-skating waitresses, and endless cruising in convertibles, it was the teenagers who rescue the town by suggesting that the monstrous blob be frozen with CO2 extinguishers. According to the movie, the blob was then flown to the Arctic and dropped into the ice for eternal preservation. Our only fear, more vivid now than in the 1950s, would be the Polar icecaps melting and the blob returning.

*con'd p. 2*

**Downingtown Historical Society**

**P. O. Box 9**

**Downingtown, PA 19335**