



Knapp Notes

MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Annual General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, March 17, 2015 - 7:30-8:30pm at Knapp Farm

Updates on MTHS Activities ❖ Election of New Board Members

Open to All Members and Prospective Members

R.S.V.P.s Encouraged ❖ 215-699-7687



How Old is the Knapp Farmhouse?

That's the first question people are likely to ask when they visit our historic home. And like so many questions about older properties, the answer is never simple.

According to research done by local historian and author, James A. Williams, for *An Erudite Little Township, A History of Montgomery Township to 1900*, when the first Knapps moved to the farm that now bears the family name, the property may have been occupied for more than 125 years. Williams

states that an (Edwards) "deed of 1707 giving 200 acres to Alexander Edwards, Jr. refers to the neighboring property of Thomas Edwards," which we know included the land later owned by the Knapps. We can also confirm from a later deed that when Thomas Edwards sold 80 acres of his farm to Samuel Miles in 1718, that portion contained a house, which Williams concludes is, "the Knapp home."

However, documentation prepared in 1974 when the home was nominated for the National Register of Historic Places indicates, "The present stone home is known to have been in existence prior to the Revolutionary War. It was built, very probably, by John Roberts, Jr." who owned the property from 1756-1768.



Interior restoration of the small room in the east corner of the Knapp farmhouse revealed this small window which had been covered with plaster. The discovery indicates that at one time this was an exterior wall.

In addition, an Historic Structure Report commissioned by MTHS and prepared by the architectural firm, Ford Farewell Mills and Gatsch says that, "The oldest portion

of the building is presumed to date to circa 1760, although there is some historical and physical evidence that an earlier (18th century) structure may have been present at the site, with portions possibly incorporated into the northeast corner of the building."

If there was a house constructed on the property between 1707-1718, it was most likely log; and if not incorporated into the corner of the current stone structure, as the architects' report speculates, it may even have been burned down to salvage the nails, a common practice of the era when nails were the most valuable part of any log building.

Because the architectural style of the Knapp farmhouse (a combination of Welsh and German vernacular) is consistent with other area homes constructed in the mid-1700s, society members have adopted the "average" date cited in the Historic Structures Report: c. 1760. However, when asked, we always smile and add, "... but it could have been built much sooner."

Top 8 Reasons to Join MTHS

#8 – YOU NEVER NEED TO ATTEND A MEETING, UNLESS YOU WANT TO!

Most of the work of MTHS goes on behind the scenes. Members maintain the Knapp Farmhouse, do genealogy and historical research, give tours to school and scout groups, participate in township events like Autumn Festival, manage our organization's website and Facebook page, and maintain the society's archives. The MTHS Board of Directors meets the first Tuesday of every month at 7:30pm at Knapp Farm. All society members are warmly welcomed to stop by and join in the discussion. There is a general membership meeting once a year in March, and one or two special events throughout the year. That's it! You can feel good about helping to preserve the history of your community, while participating as little or as much as you choose.

#7 – YOUR MEMBERSHIP \$\$ REALLY MATTER TO US.

We are a hyper-local, all volunteer organization with a small but loyal membership base. Over the years, Montgomery Township has made helpful annual gifts in recognition of the value of MTHS to our community. However, the bulk of our operating funds come from memberships and donations. Your membership money literally pays for heating oil, buys archival supplies and keeps the lights on.

Meet the Candidates for Board of Directors (2015-17)

The board members listed below are seeking re-election for a two-year term; however, there are **currently 2 additional open positions**. Any MTHS member who is interested in being nominated to the Board should contact President Rich Roller at 215-699-7687.

Deborah Cummins - Deb, a seasoned travel consultant, has been a Society member for almost two decades, including multiple terms as Secretary of the Board. Deb holds a certificate in Historic Preservation from Bucks County Community College and has a special interest in research and the architecture of historic houses.



Jesse J. Hurd - Long time township resident Jesse joined MTHS shortly after it was founded in 1988. Jesse and his wife Joan (also a board member) live in an historic township home. Jesse enjoys helping with the restoration of the Knapp Farm, and collecting maps and deeds to trace the family history of other old houses in the township.

David Levin, DO - David, a radiologist at Grand View Hospital, is a 3-term member of the MTHS Board. Dave and his family live in an historic property in Montgomery Township, and the busy doctor also works a double shift as content manager and webmaster for our society's website, KnappFarm.org



Lisa Knapp Seigel - As our organization's current Vice President and a proud member of the Knapp Family, Lisa has been instrumental in guiding the restoration of the farmstead, as well as sharing "inside" information about family history and lore. Lisa's interest in local history and knowledge of the North Penn area are invaluable assets as MTHS seeks to establish an education program that will help us interpret our National Register property.

MTHS 2014-15 Board of Directors

Rich Roller, President

Lisa Knapp Siegel, ViP

Joan Hurd, Treasurer

David Levin, DO, Secretary

Debbie Cummins

Susan Gordon

Jesse Hurd

Roy Rodriguez

Srinivas Srikoti

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Top 8 Reasons ... cont. p. 1

#6—YOU ARE HELPING TO PRESERVE A NATIONAL REGISTER PROPERTY. Our headquarters, Knapp Farm, is the only township property listed on the National Register of Historic places. It is also mentioned in the Guinness Book of World's Records for being the long-time home of Florence Knapp, who died at age 114 after having lived her entire life in one home.

#5—WE THROW GREAT PARTIES. Our (free) annual Holiday Open House, held each December at Knapp Farm, is eagerly anticipated by members and guests alike. In 2015 we are planning at least one additional "friend-raising" event to raise awareness of MTHS activities, gather some new members and, maybe even add some change to our coffers.

#4—YOU GET THIS GREAT QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER. Whether you are a long-time resident or relative newcomer, it's always great to learn something new and interesting about the place you call home. Our newsletter is designed to keep

DID YOU KNOW?
You can now join or renew your membership online at www.KnappFarm.org

members updated on society activities and offer insights on life in the North Penn region and how Montgomery Township became the busy commercial and industrial hub it is today.

#3—WE OFFER INTERESTING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES.
(See Reason #8)

#2—YOU'LL MEET LIKE-MINDED FRIENDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY. Sure, MTHS members care about local history, but many other things besides, like community involvement, preserving the beauty of our neighborhoods and promoting education.

#1—WE OFFER GREAT LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES! Our working Board of Directors is the heart and soul of our organization. Many current members have served the society for a decade (or more), and are ready and willing to step back so that new members with creative new ideas can lead MTHS forward. If you've looking for a way to give back to your community without the need to make a huge time commitment, please e-mail us at info@knappfarm.org or call President Rich Roller at 215-699-7687.



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