



Knapp Notes

MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Unwelcome Irish

Editor's Note: Immigration is a hot topic in American political discussion these days. And while we are fond of calling ourselves "A Nation of Immigrants," through most of our history, large waves of immigration were perceived as threatening to the American way of life. As we look toward St. Patrick's Day, now a festive celebration of all things Irish when "everyone is Irish for the day," it's instructive to remember that there was a time when being Irish meant you were viewed with suspicion and even hatred by "native" Americans (i.e. Europeans whose families were here for only a few generations.) Here are a few facts about the early years of Irish immigration.

☘ There were Irish immigrants in America from pre-Revolutionary days, but the greatest influx occurred after 1840 when, driven from their homeland by the great famine and repressive British laws, the Irish filled up the port cities of America's east coast.

☘ Between 1846 and 1851, more than 1 million people left Ireland for the United States, with over 800,000 more arriving between 1860 and 1880. By 1860, 95,000 Irish men and women were living in Philadelphia, making the Irish the largest single immigrant population in the city.

☘ Desperate for work, many Irish turned to domestic service. 70% of servants in Boston were Irish immigrants, two-thirds of them women who were derisively nicknamed "Biddies" after the popular Irish name, Bridget. (Bostonians also scornfully called potatoes "Murphies.")

☘ "As for many other immigrant groups, it was common for Irish men to go to America ahead of their family members to find work, then send money to their relatives to help pay for their passage. Unique to Irish immigration, however, was the large number of young, single women who made the transatlantic journey on their own."

☘ The life of many Irish servants was described as melancholy and lonely, and Irish women suffered from high levels of mental illness. As a result, by 1908, there were more Irish than any other nationality in American mental hospitals.

☘ The Irish were viewed suspiciously for being Catholic and stereotyped as heavy drinkers and bad-tempered. (The saying, "Don't get your Irish up," stemmed from this belief.)

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Annual MTHS General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

7:00-9:00pm

Montgomery Twp Community & Recreation Center
1030 Stump Road, North Wales



The Long Road to Women's Suffrage

Presented in Conjunction with the

Business & Professional Women's Club of PA- District 11

The 19th Amendment to the US Constitution insures that, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."



Today, Americans often take these words for granted, but the struggle for women's suffrage played out over decades and was fraught with disrespect and danger. Please join us on March 19th as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment. A special dramatized lecture will showcase both national and local events in the suffrage movement, and introduce you to some of the determined women who insured the right we have today.

Also: Updates on MTHS Activities & Election of New Board Members

Free & Open to the Public
Refreshments ♦ Students Welcome

Have You Renewed Your Membership?

MTHS is a grass-roots organization. Our primary funding sources are membership dues and donations. We rely on YOU to help us continue to do the important work of preserving local history for future generations. Please do your part and renew online at www.knappfarm.org today!

Meet the Candidates for Board of Directors (2019-21)

The board members listed below are seeking re-election for a two-year term; Any MTHS member who is interested in being nominated to the Board should contact Rich Roller at 215-699-7687.



Lisa Knapp Siegel—Current MTHS president, Lisa was born and raised in Montgomery Township. The daughter of the late C. Howard "Bud" Knapp, Jr, she enjoyed countless hours growing up at

the Knapp Farm, and provides the society with first-person descriptions, insights and understanding of Knapp Farm life and its history. Formerly a product manager with CSL Behring, and prior to that, a special education teacher, Lisa lives in Lower Gwynedd Township with her husband Brian. She has three grown children and two grandsons. Lisa has been a board member since 2010.



Deborah Cummins— Deb moved to Montgomery Township in 1988, just one year after our society was founded. She joined MTHS in 1991, and was first

elected to the board in 1995, and held the position of secretary for more than a decade. Deb is an experienced travel agent with a deep interest in American history. In 2003, she earned a certificate in Historic Preservation from Bucks County Community College. Debbie and her husband, Dick, have three grown children and four grandchildren.

David Levin, DO— David grew up in Montgomery County and has lived in a historic property in Montgomery Township since 2008 with his wife and two sons. He is

a history buff and became involved with the historical society in 2008 while researching his own property. David, a radiologist on staff at Grand View Hospital in Sellersville, is the past president of the Bucks County Medical Society. He also takes time from his busy professional and family life to serve as MTHS Vice President, manage the society's website, and administer our Facebook page.



MTHS 2018-19 Board of Directors

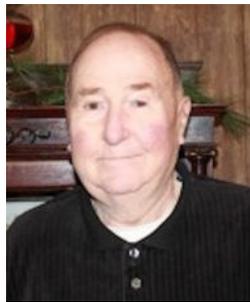
Lisa Knapp Siegel, President
David Levin, DO, VP
Joan Hurd, Treasurer
Richard Roller, Secretary
Ginny Bailey
Debbie Cummins
Susan Gordon
Trish Graham
Jesse Hurd
Roy Rodriguez
Srinivas Srikoti

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Jesse Hurd— Long time township resident, Jesse lives with his wife, Joan, (also a board member) on one of the few remaining historic farm properties in the township. Jesse

has been an active MTHS board member for more than two decades. His interests include local history, collecting antiques, researching deeds, visiting Cape May, and spending time with his grandchildren.



Ginny Bailey— Ginny has lived in Montgomery Township since she was 2 years old. Her father was former township Police Chief Bruce Bailey, and Ginny has watched the Township grow from a rural crossroads to the

thriving suburb it is today. Ginny works in the Montgomery Township Recreation Office, is a member of various women's organizations and enjoys traveling, reading, knitting and spending time with her niece, Ellie.

The Unwelcome Irish cont.

☘ Employers would often place signs in their windows with NINA (No Irish Need Apply) scrawled across the front.

☘ In the mid-19th century, the anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic Know-Nothing political party was formed by Nativists who hated the immigrant influx, particularly the Irish. "Fueling anti-Irish attitudes was the belief that the Irish were a non-white, racially inferior group, a view informed by existing British attitudes that saw Irish physical and social attributes as dangerous and subhuman."

☘ Between 1828 and 1844, anti-immigrant sentiment in Philadelphia

erupted in several major riots in the predominantly Irish Catholic neighborhood of Kensington. The worst violence occurred in 1844 when thousands of Nativists burned the Seminary of the Sisters of Charity and several Catholic Churches. The military was brought in to subdue the attack. At least 15 people were killed and another 50 wounded.

☘ During the Civil War, the Irish became useful as conscripts in the Union army, but service during the war did not change the opinion of the Irish for most Americans until the early 20th century.