

The Friends of Old Saint Thomas at Ivy Mills

Vol. 1, No. 1

Newsletter

June 1993

What is FOST?

Marianne Squyres

FOST is the acronym for The Friends of Old Saint Thomas, a parish group formed in the Fall of 1990 with the encouragement of Father Richard Williams. With the impending move to the new church building, we, and others, were concerned about the future of the old building. We received letters of concern and support from individuals and groups, both from within the parish and from the wider community.

FOST was formed to achieve several purposes:

1. to restore the old church building;
2. to collect, preserve, and research parish historical records, photos, manuscripts, and memorabilia.
3. to preserve and restore the outbuildings: the barn (now a garage), and the one remaining horse and carriage stall.
4. to carry out educational programs for the parish and community.
5. to hold special events celebrating over 250 years of parish life.

Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic parish holds a special place in the history of William Penn's "Holy Experiment." It is our task to make that place known to parishioners and to other interested persons, through our research, building restoration, educational programs, and social events. Later in the summer look for our brochure, which will be used to spread awareness of FOST in the parish and beyond.

The Friends meets on the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 P.M. in the Annex. The ambitious projects listed above and described in the Newsletter will require much teamwork by willing team players. We welcome your participation. Please join us. Trish Glessner and Marianne Squyres co-chair the group. Please call Trish at 459-3151 for more information.

The Saint Thomas Bell

Adam Sawicki

In November of 1992 a FOST team of Fred Glessner, Pat McFadden, and Adam Sawicki inspected the steeple bell. Approximately 20 feet above the choir loft we found an intact bell about the size of the Liberty Bell, engraved with the following information: "JOS BERNHARD No 120 NTH 6 ST PHILADA ST THOMAS CHURCH IVY MILLS APRIL 8TH 1860 PASTOR REVD N WALSH GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO." We are researching the bell and its origin further.

Do You Know of

U.S. Veterans Buried at Saint Thomas?

Fran Ward

Just as our old church has a history, so our cemetery has a history. The Friends of Old Saint Thomas are researching the founding and growth of the parish cemetery. Our first major focus is on military veterans. We would like to honor those who have served in our country's wars who are now buried in St. Thomas' (in front of the old church) or St. Mary's (in back of the old church) cemeteries. At present we know of five veterans from the Civil War and some from World Wars I and II.

We are appealing to parishioners to please help us and tell us what you know about veterans, whether from your family or not, who may be buried here. We need your information on the form overleaf in order to complete the records. It is fitting that we recognize these men and women to whom we all owe so much.

If you have any information, call me at 459-3343 or 459-8051; or put the form into an envelope marked Friends of Old Saint Thomas and drop it in the Sunday collection basket, or mail it to the Friends of Old Saint Thomas, P.O. Box 19, Chester Heights, PA. 19017. Thank you.

The Stained Glass Windows

Trish Glessner

On April 1, 1993, Jean Farnsworth from the Census of Stained Glass project in the Philadelphia area visited Old Saint Thomas church. The project offers free assistance to help identify the type of windows and their historic and artistic context. The goal of the census is to research, catalogue and disseminate information on stained glass as a major art form and to encourage its preservation.

Mrs. Farnsworth conjectured that the Gothic arch windows are German antique stained glass of the late 19th century, possibly produced by the Franz Meyer Co. in Munich or by Zetler, Meyer's son-in-law. She observed that the ornamental windows in the narthex are American-made, opalescent style, from the early 20th century, and the windows in the front doors were made in the 1930s to match the narthex windows. FOST hopes to complete the detailed window documentation soon in order to be part of the Census.

Food for Thought

Kathy McNichol

A simple recipe to help restore our old church: Food Certificates. Two percent of your food certificate purchases may be

designated for specific parish ministries. Ask the seller to credit The Friends of Old Saint Thomas (Number 1400). Thank you!

Maintenance & Restoration Report

Patrick J. McFadden, AIA

One of the first things to do prior to looking for funding to preserve and/or restore an historical structure such as our old church building is to determine the current condition of the building, the extent of necessary preservation/restoration work, and the cost of the work. So, in October of 1991, I was asked to conduct a survey of the old church building to inspect its structural elements.

I was impressed with the condition of all structural elements, including the foundation, wood beams and joists, and the roof truss system, as well as the steeple structure housing the bell. Parishioners should be pleased to know that in the mid-19th century our predecessors took every measure then known to see to it that this 3,327 square foot (1st floor) structure remained sound for future generations.

The building is comprised of several interesting spaces: the two basement areas (one in the original building under the pews; the other, under the rear addition, houses the boiler, which also serves the rectory); the nave (pew area), sanctuary, sacristy, and confessional areas on the main level; the choir loft; an attic over the rear addition, an attic over the nave.

During this initial inspection, also attended by fellow FOST members Fred Glessner and Mike Squyres, I was able to take field measurements in order to produce scaled survey documents of the building. These documents not only record the condition of the building as of October 1991, but will serve as contract documents for future bidding and construction.

Though generally sound, the building is not without problems. I have recorded all those that could be visually identified, and produced a Priority List of Repairs. The list separates Urgent Maintenance, Semi-urgent Restoration, Non-urgent Restoration, and Landscaping items. Since the most destructive problem is water infiltration, no work should (or can) be done without first solving it. Other urgent items include Electrical Inspection and Evaluation and Fire Protection System Installation.

Since our initial inspection, FOST members have conducted the following maintenance projects: 1. Repair

of stained glass in main door. Special thanks to stained glass artist *Linda Toth*, Chadds Ford. 2. Gutter and downspout unclogging and cleaning. 3. Major tree branch trimming around the front of the building. Special thanks to *the Halpin family*, Concord Twp. 4. Thorough inspection of the bell and its support members, including the entire steeple structure. 5. Cleaning of the southwest interior corner of the nave to remove mildew. 6. Preliminary inspection of stained glass windows.

FOST intends to prepare bid packages of the "Urgent" items to determine costs and to select qualified contractors. This information will then allow the group to plan for funding through our own efforts and to seek outside grants to complete the costly yet necessary repairs.

An Historic Mass at Saint Thomas

Mary Archer

The Friends of Old Saint Thomas arranged for a Latin Mass to be celebrated on October 14, 1992 by Father Louis Ciaudelli, formerly assistant pastor here. The purpose of this special Mass was to remember the historical experience of the parish. Latin - the universal language of the Church - was used in all Masses at Saint Thomas and throughout the Church until 1962. Hearing the Mass in Latin again commemorated part of the spiritual experience of Saint Thomas parishioners who came before us, and was a unique experience for all present. The event was very well attended, and we hope to have another one in the future.

A Visit to Our Roots

In August 1992 several FOST members visited Old Bohemia in Warwick, MD. This English Jesuit mission was the home base of travelling priests who came to the Willcox home at Ivy Mills in the 1720s. Thus began the parish of St. Thomas the Apostle.

Other FOST Activities

- Tour of old & new churches for high school CCD from St. Pius X parish, Broomall.- *Kathy McNichol & Pat McFadden.*
- Flower planting, outside cleanup, Fall 1992.
- Attendance at the Fall '92 Delaware County Heritage Commission seminar, "For Want of A Nail, II."
- Visits to the Archdiocesan Archives - *Steve Lowry.*
- Trip to Old Saint Joseph's parish, Philadelphia
- Trip to Partners for Sacred Places, Philadelphia (national help group for historic churches and other religious places)
- Visit to FOST meeting by J. Randall Cotton, director of Historic Religious Properties, Philadelphia.
- Planning publicity - *Peggy Mulqueen.*
- Planning informational brochure, including original artwork.
- Research in parish records & other sources.

The Friends of Old Saint Thomas Cemetery Project

U.S. Veteran Records Information

Name of Veteran _____

Last Address _____

Date of birth _____ Date of Death _____

War served _____ Cemetery Lot No. _____

Your name _____ Phone _____

*Return form to the Friends of Old Saint Thomas, P.O. Box 19, Chester Heights, PA 19017
or place in an envelope marked FOST Cemetery Project and place in the Sunday collection.*

THANK YOU.

The Friends of Old Saint Thomas at Ivy Mills

Volume 1, No. 2

Newsletter

September 1993

Evans Foundation Gift

The Friends of Old Saint Thomas are pleased to announce the receipt of a \$5000 grant from the Evans Foundation, Media, to benefit the renovation program of the old church building. The funds will be put to immediate use: the exterior trim will be painted, caulking applied where necessary and general exterior building spruce-up will take place. Interior repainting will also be scheduled soon.

The Evans Foundation supports general charitable works in Delaware County in education, arts, literary, and historical projects. The Friends of Old Saint Thomas are grateful for its support of our efforts.

The Saint Thomas Bell

Adam Sawicki

Research into the origin of the steeple bell has continued. In November 1992 we discovered that the bell was manufactured in 1860 by the Joseph Bernhard Company of Philadelphia. Further research has found that the Bernhard Company existed between 1845 and 1880, specialized in the manufacture of bells for churches, factories, courthouses and steamboats, and accepted orders from all over the United States. We've learned that in the 1800's it was traditional for a church bell to be blessed as the metal was formed, and we will attempt to determine whether records of such blessings exist in the Archdiocesan archives or elsewhere.

Fall Calendar of Events

- **Lecture Series** (All lectures in old church, 7:30 P.M.)
 - *September 9:* Dr. J. Joseph Edgette on Delaware County Cemeteries (We had an interesting time)
 - *November 11, 1993:* The Honorable Karl J. Parrish on "Old Saint Thomas and Old Bohemia - The Jesuit Connection."
- **Craft Night** (In the Social Hall, 7:00 P.M.)

October 7, 1993 - A Christmas wreath. \$15. Look for the sample and registration form at the K of C/Women's Club Pancake Breakfast Sept. 26th. Or call 558-0182 for more information.
- **Antiques Appraisal Night** (In the Social Hall, 7:30 P.M.)

Thursday, November 18, 1993 - Bring an antique (jewelry included) for informal professional appraisal (no written appraisals). \$5 per item. On display that evening: Saint Thomas memorabilia. Antique raffle.
- **Regular FOST meetings** are held the second Thursday each month in the Annex at 7:30, except for the months when lectures are held, when business meetings will be rescheduled. Watch the Bulletin or call 459-3151 for current information.

Join FOST

Kathy McNichol

If you are asked whether preserving an old church is worthwhile, you might respond as did John T. Reily in 1886 when asked about restoring the Chapel at Conewago, PA in 1741. He said: "Guard it as best you may, and at any cost from every influence of dilapidation. Count its bricks as you would jewels of a crown; set watches about it as of the gates of a besieged city, bind it together with iron where it loosens; stay it with timber where it declines; do not care about the unsightliness of the aid; better a crutch than a lost limb; and do this tenderly, and reverently, and continually, and many a generation will still be born and marry and pass away amongst its shadows."

Although these words were spoken over a hundred years ago they echo in large part the sentiments of the Friends of Old Saint Thomas. Our old church is a reminder that old and new can co-exist comfortably, that we must look forward to the future but not forget the past. Old Saint Thomas church is unpretentious in appearance, reflecting the simplicity of its earlier parishioners. As times changed, the building was changed to accommodate the needs of the people, but the spiritual mission of the church has been a constant source of inspiration for the community; We are a caring community, and it is important that we continue to honor the memory of our forerunners here by preserving the legacy which they have entrusted to us.

There are many ways you can help. Are you interested in researching and helping to care for our old cemeteries? Do you like to search libraries and books for forgotten stories and facts? Perhaps you'd like to help us research St. Thomas history. Or join us to plant flowers and maintain the area around the church. Can you spare an hour or so to help clean the old church? Help with the newsletter or take photos for our archives? Do you have stories to tell of life at St. Thomas before the 90's? Have you a special competence useful for a restoration project? Come to a FOST meeting and share your interests. For more information, please call Trish Glessner, 459-3151, or complete the form below and mail to FOST, P.O. Box 19, Chester Heights, PA 19017.

The Friends of Old Saint Thomas

9/93

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Particular interest? _____