

Day of Remembrance

Before the advent of cemeteries, the first being Harvard University's Mount Auburn established in 1832, families buried their dead in churchyards or in plots behind their homes. Cemeteries originally were created as recreational areas filled with "public statements" of death which included headstones, mausoleums and epitaphs. These early cemeteries were usually well landscaped with defined walkways making them popular places for families to visit. It was not uncommon for a family to pack a picnic lunch and make the visit to the cemetery an all day outing.

Here at St. Thomas we have designated a special day to honor the memories of our departed relatives and friends who are buried in our churchyards. Are your family members or friends buried in one of them? (St. Thomas is in the front and St. Mary's is located behind the old church). FOST invites you to attend the second annual Day of Remembrance service on Sunday, April 13 at 2:00 pm in the Old St. Thomas Church. There will be Benediction, song and prayer, and at the end of the service participants will have the opportunity to place a flower on the grave of their loved one and spend time in silent prayer. At the conclusion of services, light refreshments will be served in the social hall.

Research

As part of our continuing research FOST is looking for pictures of the interior of the old church. Very often photographs taken during a religious ceremony such as a First Communion or a wedding will include interior portions of the church which can be very helpful in documenting changes that occurred through the years. If you have photos taken in the old church and would be willing to let FOST view or copy them, please call Trish Glessner at (610) 459-3151.

We are interested in interviewing current or past parishioners about their recollections of St. Thomas parish. Please call Mary Archer at (610) 459-5345 if you would like to share your memories for the record with FOST.

In Recognition

The Friends of Old St. Thomas thank Estelle O'Connor for her generous contribution toward the preservation and restoration of the old church. Ms. O'Connor's name has been added to the plaque that hangs in the rear of the old church. This plaque recognizes significant donations made to the work of The Friends of Old Saint Thomas.

We also appreciate the many donations made to The Friends of Old St. Thomas through the Honor and Memorial Gift program. The Honor and Memorial enrollment book will be on display in the back of the old church on Sunday,

April 13 in conjunction with the Cemetery Day of Remembrance.

Thank You

In the course of each year many weddings take place in our parish. Last year over twenty five couples were united in marriage. This is an important day and everyone anticipates a "perfect wedding". John Stephano generously volunteers his time on weekends overseeing details and making sure our churches are in perfect order for this joyous occasion. John also helps in preparing for funerals. His care and concern for the new church and our historic old church is certainly appreciated. Thank you, John!

FOST Appreciation Dinner

On November 10, 1996, The FOST Appreciation dinner was held at "Hamanasset", a lovely Bed and Breakfast on Darlington Road. This historic home was the headquarters of the Lima Hunt at the turn of the century. In addition to enjoying the gracious rooms and pleasant grounds, FOST members and guests had the opportunity to socialize. The Committee thanked members for their continued support and acknowledged those who contributed to the success of FOST during the past year.

Genealogical Information

For those interested in genealogy, the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania will host the National Genealogical Society 1997 Conference in the States on May 7-10 in Valley Forge. Please call Trish Glessner for program and registration information. Trish can be reached at (610) 4593151.

Do you remember the Roe family? Connie Roe Miller has asked if anyone can help her with information about her family. James Frederick Roe was born in Concordville, PA in 1882 and died in 1951. Margaret A. Roe was born in Concordville in 1876 and died in 1958. Connie would also appreciate information on Catherine Roe Civial. If you can help, please call Rose Ann Mohn at (610) 431-7178.

Because you asked

From time to time we receive mail and inquiries whose answers we think would be of interest to all, such as:

Q. As long time parishioners we are interested in preserving the historic and spiritual significance of the old church complex. As part of our estate planning we may consider making a future contribution. How can we be

assured our gift will be used for the purpose we stated?

A. Donations made to "The Friends of Old St. Thomas" (FOST) or to the "Historic Ivy Mills Church Project" (HIMCP) are used exclusively to preserve and restore the old church, its surroundings and grounds. HIMCP (an IRS designated 501(c) 3 organization) is an independent but closely related FOST support group.

Q. I enjoyed the FOST dinner this past November, but are donations ever used to pay for this type of event?

A. Absolutely not! We are glad for the opportunity to clarify the point. All donations to FOST and HIMCP are used only for maintenance, preservation and restoration of the old church, outbuildings and grounds. We raise funds for operating expenses by sponsoring craft workshops. Peg Mulqueen was the master planner for this dinner. All food and beverage purchases, preparation and service was volunteered. We are glad you enjoyed the dinner. It is our way of thanking members for supporting FOST.

Repairs and Parking

Recently FOST found it necessary to contract an electrician to repair some outlets and install a new outlet by the lectern in the sanctuary of the old church. This should eliminate the problem of overloading the system.

Parking continues to be a problem in our parking lots, especially for those attending early Mass in the old church. If you plan to remain in church after Mass has concluded, it may be helpful if you park in the far left lanes. This should help those who must leave right after Mass to exit the premises without delay. We thank you for your consideration and cooperation.

FOST Craft Classes

Thank you to all who attended our two fall craft classes. We expanded the class size and are pleased at the overwhelming response to these fund raisers. The proceeds enable FOST to meet annual expenses and other miscellaneous costs. Due to scheduling problems we were unable to have a spring craft class, but plan to resume in the fall. Call Kathy McNichol (610) 558-0182 with your craft suggestions.

Reminder

Food Certificates are an easy way to help raise funds for FOST. Remind the seller to credit FOST (#1400) and two percent of your food certificate purchases benefits Friends' programs.

Join the Friends of Old St. Thomas Church

The legacy of St. Thomas Church is profound. It is traditionally thought to be the first parish of the Philadelphia Archdiocese. William Penn's "Holy Experiment" was founded on the principle of religious toleration. The small group of Catholics living among various Protestant sects were permitted to gather and worship at Ivy Mills (often referred to as the 'Concord Mission') without incident. William Penn's policy of religious freedom eventually became commonplace in the new nation of the United States. What happened at Ivy Mills 266 years ago has had a significant influence on all of our lives. In 1983, The Delaware County Planning Department described the Old St. Thomas Church complex as a historic district worthy of a listing on the National Historical Register.

The Friends of Old St. Thomas have quite along way to go to achieve our goal of restoring/refurbishing the old church by the year 2002. We need the support of all parishioners to accomplish this worthy endeavor. We urge you to become a member of The Friends of Old St. Thomas. Attend a FOST meeting on the second Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the annex. All are welcome!

Join FOST today! It's easy ...simply fill out the form below and mail with your check to the address on the membership application.

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The Friends of Old Saint Thomas At Ivy Mills

Membership Dues

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....Zip.....

Family: \$10.00 _____

Individual: \$ 5.00 _____

Donation: _____

() Yes, I am interested in volunteering

() I would like more information about FOST

Phone:.....

Please mail completed form and your check to

**The Friends of Old St. Thomas
P.O. Box 19
Chester Heights, PA 19017**

THE FRIENDS OF OLD SAINT THOMAS
at Ivy Mills

Volume 4, No. 2

Fall, 1997

NEWSLETTER

Coming soon...FOST Notecards

The Friends decided an appropriate way to raise funds and share the beauty of our historic old church was to produce a series of note cards. John LaRosa and Joe Dragon, talented photographers, spent a great deal of time taking various photographs of the interior and exterior of the church. Our committee had to narrow its choices to four photographs. We feel the final selection captures the timeless beauty of the old church and stained glass windows. These unique cards are perfect for any occasion. The inside is blank so you may personalize it with your own special message. Your purchase enables the Friends of Old St. Thomas to continue their effort to maintain and preserve the historic church complex. When the cards are available we will supply further details in the parish bulletin.

The Friends and the Fair

The St. Thomas Country Fair celebrated a landmark anniversary this year. The Fair Committee approached the Friends to see if it would be feasible to put together a historical exhibit for the 1997 fair. The old rectory was the perfect setting for this wonderful collection of memorabilia and historically significant artifacts. Many of the articles are in fragile condition so it was necessary to display them under glass. Old record books, parish announcement books, old maps and photographs stirred many memories! Displayed in the "parlor" was an original canvas panel depicting one of the four evangelists. It originally had been a companion piece to six other panels which at one time were part of the ceiling decorations in the old church.

FOST members spent many evenings researching old records for fair information. We garnered most of what we found from an incomplete set of parish "Announcement" books spanning the years 1903-1954. We would like to share some of our findings.

At St. Thomas, the impetus for the first festival was the turn-of-the-century refurbishment of the church building, by then almost fifty years old. In 1897 Fr. Joseph Monville was sent to the parish as the curate to assist the elderly Fr. William Cook (who was pastor from 1877 until his death in 1900). The church was almost fifty years old and in need of refurbishment. As far as we can tell Fr. Monville spearheaded the renovation project.

To pay for it, he encouraged parishioners to hold a festival the very year he arrived. Although no direct records of the fair can be found, it must have been a success that improvements were made to the church in the following years.

The "festival," as it was called at first, was held in "The Grove," the area now occupied by the school and annex buildings.

In 1903 some of the activities included a Merry-Go-Round, Games, Dancing, a Band Concert by the band from "The House of Refuge", Horse Jumping Contests, a Fish Pond, Ice Cream, Soft Drinks and "Tables" such as the Cake Table, Supper Table, Candy Table and a Fancy Articles Table. In 1903 the profits came to \$1527.39

In 1937 the fair had a new location! "The Summer Festival and Country Supper" was held "on the lawn beside the Post Office at Glen Mills." (In 1937 the Glen Mills Post Office was located at the present site of Miller's Deli at the corner of Glen Mills and Stony Bank Roads).

FOST would like to hear from you if you know why the fair was moved in 1937 or if you would like to share your memories of past fairs.

Remembering...

Many of our parishioners, their families and friends joined together in the old church on Sunday, April 13 to honor deceased relatives and friends who are buried in our cemeteries. Father Williams led the congregation in prayer. After the service light refreshments were served on the old rectory porch.

FOST has an information sheet available for anyone who has loved ones buried in our cemeteries. It is a simple form that requests basic information about the deceased. We are keeping completed papers in our archives because the histories of deceased members are historically important. The fact sheet would be a valuable aid in future years for families conducting genealogical research. Please let us know if you are interested in completing a family profile for the record.

FOST receives many inquiries from people tracing their ancestry. The most frequent requests are for verification of burial in our cemeteries and dates of birth and death. We try to assist anyone who is seeking this type of information but researching this material is often

a time-consuming task. The Friends are in the process of creating a computer-generated data base that will eventually allow us to retrieve pertinent information in a timely manner.

Gifts From the Friends

The Friends of Old St. Thomas recently donated four updated copies of Father Louis Ciaudelli's book, "St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, 1729-1992" to the school library. We would eventually like to implement a program for our grade school that would incorporate the history of the parish and the surrounding area. St. Thomas Parish is the cradle of Catholicism in the Philadelphia Archdiocese. We have a wonderful legacy to pass on to our students. If you enjoy historical research and/or if you have experience developing lesson plans on an elementary level we would like to hear from you.

Old Saint Thomas Church is the setting for many weddings. The Friends present each couple with a brass ornament depicting the old church. We hope this symbolic gift will remind the couple of the sacred place they chose to commit themselves to each other in the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony.

Annual Social

It has been the tradition these past few years for the Friends to hold their annual social event in November. Unfortunately, many of our members were swamped with prior commitments this November. We hope to have our gathering of "Friends" in the spring of 1998.

The Friends Need Your Help

We need you! The Friends of Old St. Thomas encourage each family to complete a FOST membership form. A family membership is only \$10.00 a year. Your donation will be used exclusively to maintain and restore the historic church complex. The year 2002 is drawing close and we need to raise a great deal of money in order to restore and refurbish the old church. Parish support is crucial if we are to raise additional funds from outside sources. Future potential donors pay a great deal of attention to the number of parishioners who financially support the Friends' goals. Please take time to complete the form. Your contribution will make a difference.

Another way to help and to be a part of the Friends is to participate in the **Honor and Memorial Gifts Program**. See our brochure (available in the narthex of the old and new churches) for further details. The Honor and Memorial Book, a permanent part of our archives is displayed at FOST events.

And also, please continue to buy **Food Certificates** and ask the seller to credit #1400 (The Friends of Old St. Thomas). A portion of your purchase will be donated to FOST.

New Meeting Place for FOST

The Friends of Old St. Thomas cordially invite you to our meetings. We meet in the old rectory at 7:30 p.m on the second Thursday of the month.

Craft Fundraiser

The Friends sponsor seasonal craft classes to raise money for operating expenses. The next workshop on Thursday, November 20 features a painted wooden country snowman. Our thanks to all who registered

Contacting FOST

If you would like to respond to any of the articles appearing in this newsletter or have any questions regarding FOST you may contact Trish Glessner (610)459-3151 or Kathy McNichol (610) 558-0182.

**The Friends of Old Saint Thomas
at Ivy Mills**

Membership

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....Zip.....

Family \$10.00 _____

Individual \$ 5.00 _____

Other _____

- () Yes, I am interested in volunteering
- () I would like more information about FOST

Phone.....

**Please mail completed form and your check to
The Friends of Old St. Thomas
P.O. Box 19, Chester Heights, PA 19017**

Thank you for your support.