

THE FRIENDS OF OLD SAINT THOMAS
at Ivy Mills

Volume 11, No. 1

Spring, 2004

NEWSLETTER

A Tour Back in Time

Concord Township Historical Society with assistance from the Brandywine Conference and Visitors Bureau are jointly promoting the 2nd annual **Home Town History Rambles**. Concord Township has more than 200 recognized historic buildings so it is very gratifying that the historic campus of St. Thomas the Apostle was one of the twelve sites on the tour. The first tour took place on April 25. Future tours are scheduled for August 22 and October 24, 2004

The **Home Town History Rambles** allow us to share our unique story with the community at large. The historic buildings, with the 1852 church as the focal point, generate much interest and many questions.

Many people wonder what life was like in the earlier days of the parish. In 1729 there were only a handful of Catholics, and as late as 1819 twelve parishioners comprised the Ivy Mills congregation. By 1852 there were 600 parishioners, but those numbers declined significantly by the turn of the century. Through the years many neighboring parishes were formed from St. Thomas. In 1946, the parish boundaries covered 64 square miles.

A walk through the parish Historic District gives us great insight into bygone days. In 1852 construction of the church was started with the help of both Catholic parishioners and non-Catholic neighbors. The building was completed in 1856. Some of the original pews are located in the choir loft; when it comes to comfort they contrast greatly from the cushioned pews in our new church.

Worshippers either walked to church or came by horse & carriage using the one available road to access the property. In the early 1900's parishioners, at their own expense, were permitted to erect individual horse sheds on church property, of which only one remains.

The carriage house was transformed into a garage when Father Munyon, assigned here in 1915, acquired a car.

Father John Crossan was named pastor in 1932 and had a tennis court installed in front of the rectory. "Tennis, anyone?" Not for Father McCarthy who arrived in 1938. According to long time parishioners, one of the first items on Father McCarthy's agenda was the removal of the tennis court so he could move forward with his plans to renovate the church and grounds.

Wanted

This Fall, the Friends are planning an exhibit on parish life. We need all types of photos, such as those marking the reception of sacraments, student & class pictures, athletic events, fairs, dances, dinners, graduations, parish organizations and their activities, priests, teachers, parish and grounds. Any other type of memorabilia is also welcome. All items will be returned to donors. If you have items to lend us or need more information call Kathy McNichol at 610-558-0182.

Stained Glass in Old Saint Thomas Church

On March 7, Jean M. Farnsworth, a nationally known stained glass historian and co-editor of *Stained Glass in Philadelphia* (2003) spoke in the 1852 church on the stained glass windows installed in 1898.

Franz Mayer and Company, founded in 1847-48 in Germany, produced more windows for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia than any other studio, including for Saint Thomas. The vast majority of 19th and early 20th century Mayer windows imported from Germany are in the Munich pictorial style as seen in our 1852 church. Ms. Farnsworth pointed out that the window depicting St. Thomas may have originated in another studio even though the style is similar to Mayer's.

Slavery in Pennsylvania

and at Ivy Mills & in Concord

Randall M. Miller, Ph.D, Professor of History at St. Joseph's University spoke in the 1874 Rectory in March on "An 'Unholy' Experiment in Penn's Woods: Slavery in Pennsylvania." Though we often associate slavery with the South, it was not uncommon here. An outbuilding at the Willcox' Ivy Mills Homestead is known even now as the "Slave Quarters/Woodhouse".

The first commercial sale of slaves in Pennsylvania took place in 1684 when the British merchant ship, *Isabella*, landed at Philadelphia with a cargo including 150 African slaves. They were immediately purchased by local Quaker settlers who needed manpower to help clear the land in the three year old colony. The 1780 Pennsylvania Act of the Gradual Abolition of Slavery deemed that children of slaves, referred to as 'term slaves' were in bondage until their 28th birthday. Thus, by 1808, slavery was no longer legal in PA.

Carpets Needed for the 1874 Rectory

To be ready for ministry use, the first floor front rooms of the 1874 Rectory need carpets. We are seeking two oriental-type carpets at least 9'x 12'. They will be put to good use protecting the original, wide-cut pine floors. Please call Bette Popiel at 610 358-4835 if you might have one or a pair to donate. Thank you.

✠ **Stop in & visit the 1852 Church anytime.** ✠

Help Fix the Kneelers!

If you know about tools and wood, and have time, your help would be greatly appreciated with the Kneeler Repair Project and other projects. Phil Popiel has worked out a technique to repair all the kneelers. The experimental repair has worked well, so that the full project can now move forward. But Phil needs help to complete the job. Can you help? Contact Phil or Bette Popiel at 610 358-4835. Thanks.

FOST wishes to thank the following donors for their financial support from May, 2003 through April, 2004.

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***The Friends meet on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm in the 1874 rectory.
All are invited to attend our meetings.***

Your Membership and Contribution make a difference!

Memberships and the Honor and Memorial Programs are the **PRIMARY SOURCES OF INCOME** for the Friends. The monies derived from these programs enable FOST to continue to care for and maintain the old church and the historic campus. Why not join FOST today? Fill out the membership form and mail with your check to the address listed on the form.

Participating in the Memorial and Honor Gifts Programs honors living or memorializes deceased individuals. For donations of \$10 or more individuals or groups may enroll the name of a living or deceased person in the Old Saint Thomas Memorial Book, a part of our permanent archives and displayed on special occasions. Recipients are notified by mail and donors receive a receipt.

**The Friends of Old Saint Thomas at Ivy Mills
PO Box 19 Chester Heights, PA 19017**

Family Membership \$15.00 _____ **Individual Membership \$10.00** _____ **Donation \$** _____

Name _____ **Address** _____

Phone _____ **e-mail** _____

Please check one:

The donation is IN MEMORY OF _____ **from** _____

The donation is IN HONOR OF _____ **from** _____

This is a GIFT from _____

Please make checks payable to FOST and mail to the address above.

Thank you!

THE FRIENDS OF OLD ST. THOMAS at Ivy Mills

Volume 11, No. 2

Fall, 2004

NEWSLETTER

Mission Statement

The Friends have modified the original mission statement, editing it so that all who read it will immediately understand the purpose of The Friends of Old St. Thomas. It now reads:

The Friends of Old Saint Thomas at Ivy Mills are dedicated to preserving both the physical and spiritual heritage of Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish and to leading others to an appreciation of nearly three hundred years of parish history.

In particular, the mission of The Friends is to support and organize:

- **preservation of the historic church, rectory, and outbuildings**
- **educational programs for the Parish and the community**
- **collection and preservation of relevant historical records and artifacts**
- **research into the role St. Thomas the Apostle Parish has played and continues to play in William Penn's pioneering vision of religious toleration and in the history of Pennsylvania and the nation**

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Pennsylvania's Oldest Catholic Parish

Not only is St. Thomas the Apostle at Ivy Mills the oldest parish in our diocese, it is the oldest parish in Pennsylvania. If the Willcox family had not been Catholic, if the Jesuits from Bohemia, Maryland had not visited the Concord area, and if William Penn had not implemented a tolerance for diversity of religion, the history of Catholicism in America may have been quite different. English Jesuits who resided incognito in Maryland were aware that Catholics (often referred to by others as "Papists") were banned from worshipping in almost every colony. William Penn's policy of religious toleration in Pennsylvania was the impetus for the Jesuits to take advantage of an opportunity to legally establish a Catholic presence in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania offered a greater measure of security for Catholics but the "test oath" required in all the colonies from 1693 until 1775 was particularly hostile to Catholics. In essence, it claimed that one must profess and testify that there is no transubstantiation of the elements of the bread and wine into the body of Christ at or after the consecration by any person. Invoking or adoration of the Virgin Mary or any Saint was deemed superstitious and idolatrous. It was only with the adoption of Article VI of the Constitution in 1787 that religious tests were abolished.

Knowing the daunting task he faced, Father Joseph Greaton, S.J. set out from Bohemia, and established mission stations (including the Concord/Ivy Mills Mission) to serve the small number of Catholics he encountered. The Ivy Mills Mission (ante-dates 1729) was in existence for at least sixty years prior to the founding of the Baltimore Diocese in 1789.

This diocese included the entire Catholic population in the United States. In 1808 the Philadelphia Diocese was created.

Father Greaton and several other priests who ministered to the Ivy Mills congregation went on to find new mission stations in other parts of Pennsylvania.

Through research, The Friends were able to ascertain that St. Thomas the Apostle Parish at Ivy Mills is the oldest Roman Catholic parish in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania contains eight Dioceses. The oldest parish in each is listed below:

1729	St. Thomas the Apostle	Philadelphia
1730	Sacred Heart (Conewago Chapel)	Harrisburg
1741	Most Blessed Sacrament	Allentown
1790	St. Vincent Basilica Archabbey (Sportsman's Hall)	Greensburg
1799	St. Michael	Altoona/Johnstown
1808	St. Patrick	Pittsburgh
1830	St. Francis, Clearfield	Erie
1853	St. Vincent (St. Peter Cathedral)	Scranton

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Eliminating the Confusion!

After our new church and parish center were completed, St. Thomas had a unique situation: one location with two churches and two rectories.

Although never official, "old" church and "old" rectory became part of the parish lexicon. FOST has encountered many perplexed visitors, especially those attending weddings and funerals who weren't sure where the service was taking place. After much deliberation, the Friends think it would be appropriate to refer to the old church as **"THE CHAPEL"**. This designation is appropriate considering the circumstances and does not diminish the importance of this historic building. In the future we plan to come up with a fitting name for the 1874 rectory.

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Have You Noticed?

Our gardening committee, Eileen Cimcotta, Bette Popiel and Mia Campbell designed and planted the gardens around the church and rectory so that we can enjoy beautiful flowers every year. Thanks to Lowe's Home Center for donating a portion of the mulch.

Thanks to Nick LiCalzi, a master carpenter, who was able to duplicate on the 1874 rectory porch the lattice trim commonly found on Victorian homes built in the late 1800's. New shrubbery was planted in front of the recently painted porch.

The chapel front steps have been re-grouted and cleaned and the railings throughout the property were painted.

A new roof and ventilation system is to be installed on the chapel vestibule in preparation for the repainting of the vestibule interior.

New security lights have been installed on the exterior of the chapel and emergency lighting in the chapel interior.

The original pine floors in the rectory meeting rooms have been repaired and refinished. The hallway and foyer walls were repaired and painted. The hall is now illuminated with a sconce wall fixture.

After much work, The Friends are pleased the 1874 rectory is being utilized as a parish resource. New chairs and table coverings in the 1874 rectory make these rooms an ideal place for the small ministry groups who are meeting there and for special events.

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Redecorating?

If you are planning to redecorate or are thinking about downsizing, you may want to keep FOST in mind. We are looking for two oriental type rugs (approximately 9 x 12 or larger) for the 1874 rectory meeting rooms. If you have period furniture that you no longer want or use (perhaps it is sitting in your basement or attic) FOST can provide a good home for it! Just call Bette Popiel at 610-358-4835 if you have any items to donate or need additional information.

We want to thank Faye McManus for giving FOST a period sideboard and Joe De Santis for the framed photograph of St. John Neumann and a period Victorian frame.

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Help Wanted

Volunteers are always needed and we have a variety of projects available for those willing to lend a hand. You do not have to attend meetings and you can schedule the work to be done at your convenience.

Currently, FOST is in need of a few volunteers to help with gardening around the Chapel and the 1874 rectory. Tasks involve light weeding, seasonal clean ups, leaf raking and general maintenance of shrubs and flower beds. Grass cutting is provided by the parish landscaper. Please consider donating about two hours a month to help us maintain the beauty of our grounds. Why not call Bette Popiel (610-358-4835) to volunteer?

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NEW Parish Historical Exhibit

To celebrate 275 years of parish life, FOST assembled a NEW exhibit of parish artifacts and memorabilia in the 1874 rectory. Displayed were many newspaper articles, old publications, pictures, and photos. Parishioners and visitors were invited to view the display; it was also featured as part of the Concord Township Historical Society's "History Rambles Tour". We would like to thank all who loaned or donated items for this exhibit.

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Family Membership \$15.00 _____ Individual Membership \$10.00 _____ Donation \$ _____

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

Please check one:

The donation is IN MEMORY OF _____ from _____

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Please make checks payable to FOST and mail to the address above. Thank you!