

# THE FRIENDS OF OLD SAINT THOMAS at IVY MILLS

Volume 17, No.1

Spring/Summer 2010

## NEWSLETTER

### Discover Your Catholic Roots

Free, guided tours of the Ivy Mills Homestead and grounds and the St. Thomas Historic District are offered on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month, June through October from 1 to 4 pm (last tour starts at 3:45). Make it a family outing!

At the Ivy Mills Homestead, tour the interior of the manor house including the room designated as St. Mary's Chapel where early St. Thomas parishioners worshiped. Enjoy trying the kinds of toys children played with so long ago. Step into a kitchen that dates from the 1700s. Ivy Mills was once a working farm, so be sure to note the barn and chicken house, and explore the root cellar and woodhouse. A short walk leads to the family cemetery where many members of the Willcox family are buried.

When visiting the St. Thomas Historic District the first stop is the 1852 church. Climb the stairs to the balcony and sit in the original pews. The church bell, acquired in 1860, is almost the size of the Liberty Bell! Note the architectural changes that took place when the church was expanded in 1898. Examine the beautiful carved chest in the Priest's Sacristy that doubled as an altar when daily Mass was said in this room. View the pictures that chronicle the alterations made to the church interior through the years.

Two major rooms in the 1874 rectory have been restored to re-capture the architectural elements of the Victorian era. On display during the tours are the original hand made wooden tabernacle and candle holders from the 1850s and the **FOST** Honor and Memorial Books.

Outside, only one horse shed remains; find out why so many were built on the church property. The barn was originally a structure of necessity, but its purpose changed over time. The first burial took place in the cemetery in 1856, and burials continue to this day.

At both sites you will be greeted by enthusiastic, **FOST/Ivy Mills Guides** who have a wealth of information to share with you.

**Reminder: Free, guided tours of the Ivy Mills Homestead and St. Thomas Historic District are offered on these Sundays in 2010: June 27, July 25, August 22, September 26, and October 24.**

### Ivy Mills/St. Thomas Guides Emeritus

The Ivy Mills/St. Thomas Guide Program began in 2002 in preparation for tours and programs commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of old St. Thomas Church. A small but enthusiastic group came to training sessions, studied the Guide Notes, and thus became guides and interpreters at the old Church and at Ivy Mills that year. Later, Ivy Mills and St. Thomas were part of the area-wide "Hometown History Rambles", and our guides were great contributors to the success of that program. Since then, our own tours have taken

place one Sunday afternoon each June through October. The program is entering its 9<sup>th</sup> year in 2010.

Among the first to join were Anne Fox and Pat Spangler. Their service at Ivy Mills over the next six years was especially critical to the tours' success. Their example for new Guides was a key factor. While they have now retired from active service, their influence and help with the program stands as an example for all those who follow. The title "Emeritus" is in honor and recognition of their great service over the years. We heartily thank each of them, and will continue to welcome them at all **FOST** and Guide events.

### A Mystery!

While organizing archival records, **FOST** came across architectural renderings for a possible renovation of the altar area of the 1852 church. The proposed changes would have entailed the removal of the upper portion of the main altar and behind the altar installation of a large crucifix with a cloth background and overhead canopy. Paneling would have been added to the back walls and the Communion Rail replaced with a more modern design.

No dates were indicated, but the style reflects the trends that were popular in the sixties and seventies. Although the project was never implemented, does anyone recall a time when such a renovation was proposed or discussed? Can you help solve the mystery? Call: Kathy McNichol @610-558-0182

### Snow Damage

A great thank you to Eagle Scout Cole Brown and his family for repairing the snow plow damage done to the Belgian blocks beside the chapel and the damage done to the new basement doors. Cole was responsible for the original installation of this project and stepped right in to rectify the situation as soon as the damage was apparent.

**FOST** also appreciates the wonderful job Boy Scout Troop #154 did cleaning up the cemetery. They removed all holiday decorations and the fallen limbs that came down during the winter storms.

### Visit the FOST Website

There is a great deal of information available on the **FOST** website. All **FOST** Newsletters are on line. You can also find a listing of all the priests who served in our parish. Discover pertinent historical information, check the monthly calendar of events and find links to other related sites. Details for volunteer opportunities, memberships and donations can also be accessed on line. Be sure to visit us at [www.fost.us](http://www.fost.us).

### It Bears Repeating

Humidity and moisture are detrimental to the 1852 church. When visiting, if you open windows or notice windows that are already open, please be sure to close them when leaving. Your cooperation is appreciated.

**The Friends wish to thank the following for their financial support from May 2009 through April 15, 2010**

- |                           |                            |                            |                             |
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| M/M Charles B. Carabello  | M/M Alfred Glessner        | Ms. Linda P. McNichol      | St. Thomas Eighth Grade     |
| Mr. Joseph Carazola       | Mr. Alexander Guidotti     | M/M James Meikle           | M/M Michael Squyres         |
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| M/M Joseph Casino         | M/M Robert W. Hartje       | M/M Richard Misturak       | Mrs. Patricia Sulek         |
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| Ms. Susan B. Crowe        | M/M Daniel Kasper          | M/M M. A. Palmowski        | M/M Mark Willcox, III       |
| M/M A. J. DeAngelo        | M/M Charles Kramaric       | M/M Walter W. Picher       | M/M Joseph Wrzesniewski     |
| M/M Harold DeNenno        | M/M Charles P. Kennedy     | M/M William Pietrangelo    | M/M Peter V. Zekonis        |
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| M/M James DeSandro        | M/M Samuel Lewis, III      | Mr. Raymond W. Purcell     |                             |
| Mr. Joseph DeSantis       |                            |                            |                             |
| Mrs. Anne Docherty        |                            |                            |                             |
| M/M Daniel Donovan        |                            |                            |                             |

**Do You Happen to Have Old Church Bulletins?**

**FOST** is in the process of cataloging Church Bulletins for our Archives. We are seeking any bulletins prior to 1994 and those listed below. If you have any of these bulletins and are willing to part with them, please contact Kathy McNichol at 610-558-0182.

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|--|---|
| <b>1994:</b> Feb. 6, 13, Mar. 27, April 17, May 29, June 26, July 3, Aug. 7, Sept. 4, 25, Oct. 3, 9, 16, 31, Nov. 20, Dec. 18. |   |
| <b>1995:</b> Jan. 1, Mar. 26, May 14, June 25  | <b>2006:</b> May 28, Nov. 5   |
| <b>1996:</b> Jan. 7, May 19, 26  | <b>2007:</b> Mar. 18, Apr. 22, May 27, June 11, 18, 25, July 1, 8, 15     |
| <b>1997:</b> Feb. 2, Mar. 25, May 4, 11, 18, Oct. 19, Nov.23   | Aug. 5, 12, 19, 26, Sept. 2, 9, Oct. 14, 28, Nov.4                        |
| <b>1998:</b> July 5  | <b>2008:</b> July 13, 20, 27, Aug. 10, 17, 24, 31, Sept. 7,14, 28, Oct. 5 |
| <b>2001:</b> June 24, July 23  | <b>2009:</b> Feb. 22, Apr. 12, July 12, 26. Aug. 16, 23, 30, Sept. 6, 13  |

**YOUR MEMBERSHIP AND CONTRIBUTIONS 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 1852 church, 1874 rectory and outbuildings. Why not join **FOST** today? Fill out the membership form and mail with your check to the address listed below. Participating in the Memorial and Honor programs honors or memorializes individuals. For donations of \$25 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 which is 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 \_\_\_\_\_ Individual Membership \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

*For donors only: Please check one: Receipts sent to all members and donors.*

\_\_\_\_\_ The donation is in **MEMORY** of \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_

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Acknowledgement card to \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make checks payable to FOST and mail to address above. Thank you. 5/2010*

# THE FRIENDS OF OLD SAINT THOMAS at Ivy Mills

Volume 17, No.2

Fall/Winter 2010

e-mail: [fost@fost.us](mailto:fost@fost.us)

NEWSLETTER

[www.fost.us](http://www.fost.us)

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## Thank you Villanova!

Villanova University has a wonderful program in which approximately 4,500 volunteers donate their time and talent on a specific day to help a variety of organizations. FOST was chosen as one of their "in service" destinations. On Saturday, September 11, twelve Villanova students arrived ready to work, and work they did!

Cleaning two rooms on the second floor of the 1874 rectory was the first order of the day. The plan is to use one room for office space and the other for archival storage. Some students removed all unnecessary items from the area and then proceeded to wash walls, windows and woodwork and vacuum the carpets. All artifacts were cleaned and returned to new shelving assembled by the students. File cabinets were put together and moved to designated areas. The rectory porch was scrubbed and loose paint on the wood trim was scraped in preparation for painting at a later date.

In the 1852 church another group spearheaded a major cleaning of all areas, including the nave, altar area, sacristies, vestibule and balcony. Pews, woodwork and statues were treated with special attention and the carpets thoroughly vacuumed.

Students working outdoors in the St. Thomas Historic District spent long hours removing the overgrowth of vegetation along the cemetery borders and picking up debris. Other volunteers completed some necessary preparatory painting on the barn/carriage house.

At the Ivy Mills Homestead another group of 15 students helped with outdoor projects, and they also assisted in sifting through soil in the ice house looking for items and fragments that would be valuable aids in documenting time periods and life styles.

The significant amount of work accomplished by these energetic, enthusiastic students is greatly appreciated. Our thanks to **Michael Benas, Gregory Celano, Louis DeCesare, Brian Dudzinski, Joe Kelly, Mark Lattanzio, Corey Moy, Charles Pepe, Dan Sacchetta, Daniel Sexton, Gregory Smith and Claire Corsey.** FOST members **Fred and Trish Glessner, Marianne and Mike Squyres, Bette and Phil Popiel and Kathy McNichol** were present and worked along with the volunteers.

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## What Happened?

The FOST Spring/Summer Newsletter included in a May church bulletin was printed out of sequence making the contents difficult to comprehend. It was not the format submitted by FOST. For your information, all FOST newsletters, including the correct Spring/Summer 2010 edition, can be read on line at [www.fost.us](http://www.fost.us).

FOST apologizes for inadvertently omitting the names of the following donors in the spring newsletter **M/M M/M Richard Hyde, Mr. Walter Kaniefski, Mrs. Joan B. McNeal, Elizabeth Mullen, M/M James Murphy, M/M Joseph P. Brooks, M/M Richard Murray, III, M/M Fred Reichle.** We regret the error and thank these and all donors for their financial support of FOST.

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## Tours

This past summer was one of the hottest on record and the thermostat was hovering in the nineties on some of our tour dates. We were pleasantly surprised the heat did not deter folks who wanted to visit the Ivy Mills Homestead and St. Thomas Historic District. The Ivy Mills/St. Thomas Guides do a wonderful job educating visitors on the history and importance of these two significant sites.

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## What If....

At one time or another many of us have encountered a predicament where we used the "what if scenario" to help us assess a particular situation. FOST is a parish ministry whose **main goals include raising funds for the care and maintenance of the 1852 church and the historic campus, promoting Ivy Mills/St. Thomas history through research, tours, exhibits, and other appropriate events, the collection of artifacts and maintaining archival records.**

FOST has been committed to preserving the unique history of St. Thomas the Apostle at Ivy Mills, the oldest Roman Catholic parish in the state of Pennsylvania. We value the opinions of experts who determined the St. Thomas Historic District is a unique treasure. FOST has spent almost twenty years laying the groundwork and establishing this ministry, that we hope, will endure for future generations.

**What if** we are unable to recruit new members who will continue the work? What happens? Does the ministry end? Does the history of St. Thomas become a forgotten story? Do tours stop? Are buildings left to deteriorate? Difficult questions, but for long range planning, we must address them.

Over the years, many of our original members and benefactors have passed on, left the area or are no longer able to be active participants. To continue to be a viable and meaningful ministry **FOST must recruit new members.** FOST has a variety of volunteer opportunities and many tasks can be done at your convenience. The fact remains that in order to successfully carry on, **FOST needs people who will help this ministry move forward and continue the Ivy Mills legacy.**

Please call Bette Popiel at 610-358-4835 or e-mail [fost@fost.us](mailto:fost@fost.us) for a listing of volunteer opportunities and to share your ideas, talents and suggestions.

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### How Catholicism Grew in Western Delaware County

The Ivy Mills congregation started in the 1720s when a few Catholics worshipped in the home of Thomas and Elizabeth Willcox. By the early 1840's there was a significant population shift in this region when large numbers of European immigrants, many of whom were Catholic, settled in the Rockdale area. In order to attend Mass and receive the sacraments, these Catholics had to travel quite a distance to the Ivy Mills mission.

By 1842, the Catholic population in the Chester vicinity was quite large and a decision was made to petition the Bishop to organize a parish in Chester. James Mark Willcox of Ivy Mills was one of the promoters who favored this idea. Bishop Kenrick gave his consent for a parish and a church to be established under the patronage of St. Michael the Archangel. He assigned the Rev. Patrick F. Sheridan to the parish, and on September 8, 1842 a plot of ground was purchased for \$300. Later that month, Bishop Kenrick laid the cornerstone for St. Michael the Archangel Church.

The new church was designed in the Gothic style by architect Napoleon LaBrun (he also designed the Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul in Philadelphia) and was built of stone from Leiper's Quarries on Crum Creek. Much of the labor was donated by men of the parish. When finished, the building measured 42 x 72 feet and had a square tower rising 105 feet above street level with a cross on top.

The liturgical blessing of the new church took place on Sunday, June 25, 1843. The first order of the day was the blessing performed by Fr. Sheridan, followed by Mass where Rev. Edwin F. Sourin, Vicar General, preached. At afternoon Vespers, Rev. Patrick Moriarity, O.S.A., General Superior of the US Augustinians spoke. At the time, this solemn occasion drew the largest crowd ever assembled for any event in Delaware County; it was estimated that approximately 15,000 persons were in attendance, including many from Philadelphia who arrived on the steamships **Bolivar** and **Clifton**.

For approximately seven years, St. Michael's parish was without a permanent pastor. Visiting priests, including Fathers Sheridan, Lane, Sourin, Walsh, Amat, Rossi and O'Hara ministered to the parishioners. Many of these priests also said Mass for the Ivy Mills congregation. An unfortunate incident occurred in August of 1846 when the church tower was seriously damaged during a violent storm. A large stone on the tower was loosened and it fell through the roof, spiraling down into the church proper, damaging pews and flooring. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

Rev. Arthur Haviland was ordained a priest on June 29, 1850 and appointed permanent pastor of St. Michael's two weeks later. From his arrival at St. Michael's until August of 1856, Father Haviland was also in charge of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish at Ivy Mills. In 1856 Father Charles Maugin was appointed first permanent pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, thus allowing Father Haviland to concentrate on the needs of St. Michael's parish. In 1854 Father Haviland built St. Michael's first rectory, and that same year Father Charles McEnroe was sent as his assistant. In September of 1858, Rt. Rev. James Frederick Wood, Coadjutor Bishop of Philadelphia, arrived at St. Michael's to preside over the blessing of the new church bell. In 1866, St. Michael the Archangel parochial school was established, the first in Delaware County

In the early 1870s it was determined the church was no longer adequate for the needs of the parish and plans were made to replace the original building. There were many setbacks before the new church was completed in 1882.

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**Memberships & the Honor and Memorial Programs are the primary sources of income for FOST**

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

Family Membership \$15 \_\_\_\_\_ Individual Membership \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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*For additional donations only: Please check one: Receipts sent to all members and donors*

The donation is in MEMORY of \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_

The donation is in HONOR of \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_

Acknowledgement card to \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

11/2010