

THE FRIENDS OF OLD SAINT THOMAS
at Ivy Mills

Volume 18, No.1

e-mail: fost@fost.us

NEWSLETTER

Spring/Summer 2011

www.fost.us

Free, Guided Tours

of the St. Thomas Historic District and the Willcox Homestead are offered on the 4th Sunday of the month, from 1:00 to 3:45 pm, June through October. 2011 tour dates are: June 26, July 24, August 28, September 25 and October 23.

Also see the new exhibit
“ST. THOMAS COUNTRY FAIR MEMORIES”
in the 1874 Rectory

We're Ready!

The St. Thomas/Ivy Mills Guides are ready for the 2011 season. We invite you to learn more about the importance of these two significant sites.

At the Willcox home, tour the manor house including the room where early parishioners worshipped. The oldest section of the house contains a kitchen from the 1700s....imagine cooking there! Be sure to try out toys that were popular in the 1800s. The outbuildings have their own stories which explain their importance when this property was a working farm. Before the advent of cemeteries, it was common for people to be buried on their own property; several members of the Willcox family are interred in the family cemetery.

In the St. Thomas Historic District, the first place you want to visit is the 1852 Church. Did you know the church bell, installed in 1860, is almost the size of the Liberty Bell? Ringing this bell is not as easy as you would think! The stained glass windows have been featured in the book, *Stained Glass Windows in Catholic Philadelphia* by Farnsworth, Croce & Chorpenny (2002). These windows are beautiful works of art created by the Franz Mayer firm in the late 1890s.

The brick Victorian style 1874 rectory replaced the original wooden one that burned to the ground in 1873. Hidden for many years, two Rumford fireplaces have been restored; note the details on the wood trim.

In the Community...

Visit the FOST table at “Dabbs Day”, June 4 at the Newlin Grist Mill. Dabbs Day is a day of fun to raise money to support history & community service projects. Dabbs Woodfin (d. 2010), Director of the Mill for 25 years, was a great friend to FOST from our beginnings twenty years ago. \$5/person for fun and games, 10 am – 3 pm. 5K Race starts at 9:30 am.

A Roof, Repairs, and Replacements

You may have noticed a great deal of work going on in the chapel area during those wintry, cold months of January and February. Between snow storms, our roofing contractor had to remove two layers of asphalt shingles, one layer of cedar shakes and a layer of insulation board before installing a new roof. The new asphalt roof actually lowered the roof line so it was necessary to install new gutters. Essential carpentry repairs to the steeple and surrounding wood molding on the upper areas of the church were done at this time.

We can look forward to a water-tight roof for many years to come. FOST volunteers are working on insulating the attic area to generate additional savings in heating cost.

Because a section of glass in one of the church light fixtures was broken, it was repaired while the building was closed. A glass artisan matched the color and curvature to replace the section. After the glass was replaced, the fixture was re-wired and re-hung.

FOST recently purchased two period replacement tables for the rear of the church. These sturdy tables provide a larger area for displaying religious material.

Completion of these projects would not be possible without the financial assistance of our members, benefactors and St. Thomas Parish. Thank you!

Civil War Commemoration

FOST (The Friends of Old Saint Thomas) is part of **Legacies and Lessons** (L&L), the 11 member western Delaware County collaborative presenting a series of programs to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War. The effort is intended to give area residents opportunities to learn about the War, and to have a voice in the national conversation about the War and its effects, then and now.

Among the lectures in July, FOST is sponsoring a talk on the Irish Brigade, the famous unit that fought in several encounters, including Gettysburg. The centerpiece of L&L programming will be the “PA Civil War Roadshow” in mid August. It will be accompanied by a History Fair and encampment of a reenactors’ unit, the Pennsylvania 97th Regiment, whose Company D was known as the Concordville Rifles.

Road Show Volunteers are needed! If you can help, contact us via e-mail or phone. For details and more information see www.legaciesandlessons.org

How Does Our Garden Grow?

We hope our garden and grounds continue to beautify the historic area, but what we need are a few more gardeners! After many years of service, three of our gardening committee members have retired. In addition to individual volunteers, this would be a great group or family endeavor. Gardeners are needed about once a month and you can choose the time that works best for you. The job entails a little weeding, raking, trimming and stick pick-up in the historic district. Help is always appreciated on the yearly Parish Gardening Day when the mulching is done. Please call Bette Popiel at 610-358-4835 for more information and help make our garden grow!

FOST is seeking Church Bulletins

The Friends are interested in obtaining any church bulletins regardless of condition or age. If you have bulletins you would be willing to part with, please call Kathy McNichol at 610-558-0182 or e-mail FOST at fost@fost.us

The Friends with to thank the following for their financial support from June, 2010 through April 15, 2011

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**Memberships and the Honor and Memorial Programs are the primary sources of income for FOST
YOUR MEMBERSHIP AND CONTRIBUTIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

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

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

THE FRIENDS OF OLD SAINT THOMAS at Ivy Mills

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Fall/Winter 2011

www.fost.us

NEWSLETTER

The 1860 Bell

Prior information indicated the St. Thomas bell, installed in 1860, was about the same size as the Liberty Bell. We now know that is not true. This past spring, when Phil Popiel climbed the belfry to photograph the bell for the FOST Civil War exhibit, he measured the bell. The circumference around the lip is 325/8" and it is 24¾" high. The Liberty Bell is 12' in circumference around the lip and is 3' in height. Thus, as significant as our bell is, it is not nearly as large as the Liberty Bell.

FOST Participation in Legacies and Lessons

FOST was one of eleven groups in western Delaware County which formed a collaborative, **Legacies & Lessons** (legaciesandlessons.org), and held joint programs through the year in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War. The highlight of the year was the coming of the Pennsylvania Civil War Road show to Garnet Valley Middle School in mid-August. For that event, the FOST display featured the St. Thomas Bell and Civil War veterans buried in St. Thomas cemetery. In July, we also sponsored a talk by Steve Wright on General Mulholland and the PA Irish Brigade, a Union military unit that served with great distinction at Gettysburg and other major battles.

Bette Popiel, with the help of parishioner Bill Vosseler, compiled as much information as possible about "our" CW men. Because records of the time are often inaccurate, misleading, or missing altogether, researching is a time-consuming but ultimately rewarding task. Great thanks to Bette and Bill for their hard work. The gravesites are now marked with Grand Army of the Republic markers and US flags, topped by blue and red ribbons. Additional white ribbons denote men killed in battle.

If you have any information regarding the CW veterans buried in our cemetery please contact FOST. The names are as follows: **John Boyle, Patrick Farnan, James Gorman, William Grannan, Samuel McClay, Abraham McNamee, Theodore Millington, Patrick Moyles, W. H. Riley, John (or Hugh) Quinn, Joseph Willcox.**

Talented photographer and parishioner Joe Dragon, took photos of the individual grave sites. Using the historical information and photos, Kathy McNichol assembled the display shown during the Road Show, to be shown again in Spring, 2012.

Many thanks to all the FOST volunteers who helped staff the display and the Road Show itself: **Mary & Bob Archer, Susan Crowe, Anne Docherty, Joe Dragon, Trish & Fred Glessner, Judith Ilika, Kathy**

& George McNichol, Sylvia Picher, Bette & Phil Popiel, Martha Shields, Mike & Marianne Squyres, Linda Tofani, Peggy & Bill Vosseler, Lisa Waldron.

Work, Work and More Work!

These past few months have been a busy time for FOST volunteers. The porch on the 1874 rectory had to be scraped, some wood repaired and the floor power washed before it could be primed and painted. Again, rain was a delaying factor but the job is finally done!

The carriage house/barn had several sections where the wood had deteriorated and needed to be replaced, a significant undertaking, so it was necessary to hire a professional, Jeff West, for the job. But FOST volunteers scraped the barn to prepare for the painting that was done by volunteer Eagle Scout Jacob Rabisz and fellow scouts of Troop #154.

If it wasn't raining, it was hot and humid, but Sylvia Picher and Bette Popiel kept our garden looking great. Our volunteers give generously of their time and work hard to maintain the historic campus but we really need more help. Please call Bette Popiel at 610-358-4835 to find out how you can make a difference in this important ministry.

Helping Hands from Villanova

Villanova University has a yearly community outreach day, and on September 24 thousands of volunteers donated their time at various locations to help with requested tasks.

Here at St. Thomas, the 1852 church and the 1874 rectory received a thorough cleaning. Sections of the exterior siding on the rectory were washed to remove algae. Some of the large bushes behind the rectory were trimmed and weeds and debris removed.

Leaves and twigs were cleared from the horse shed roof and gutters and the surrounding area cleaned. Overgrowth and weeds were pulled out along the cemetery party line and hauled away.

FOST is grateful to these volunteers whose work made a positive impact: Villanova Faculty members **Mary Angela Papalaskari** and **Mirela Damian**, with her husband **Valeriv** and her children, **Alex & Corina**, and student, **David Clark**, all of whom worked along with FOST volunteers on these projects. Four additional Villanova students helped out at the Willcox Homestead participating in a continuing archeological dig for artifacts on the property.

FOST Notes

- The Friends greatly appreciate the work of our volunteers. On Saturday, October 29, FOST hosted its **annual Volunteers' Breakfast** to thank them for their contribution of time and talent through the year. They include members of the Cleaning, Gardening, Research, and Wedding Committees, and the St. Thomas/Ivy Mills Guides.
- FOST was founded in 1991, the same year Father Williams became pastor of our parish. We appreciated his support through the years and wish him well in his retirement. The Friends extend a warm welcome to our new pastor, Father Francis Groarke.
- The Friends had to contend with heat and/or rain on some of our tour dates, but we are gratified by the number of persons who visited the St. Thomas Historic District and the Willcox Homestead. Our guides take great pleasure in sharing their knowledge and spreading the story of St. Thomas.
- One of FOST'S goals is to serve the wider community. FOST volunteers represented our organization at Chester Heights Country Fair in May and Dabbs Day in June at the Newlin Grist Mill. St. Thomas 4th grade students toured the parish historic district in October as part of the Heritage Program for St. Thomas students. 4th Graders from all over the County visit the 1852 Church as part of the Delaware County Passport to History Program.
- This past year has been an expensive one for FOST. The roof project and the repairs to the barn were costly. Air conditioning the 1852 church is under consideration, as is attic insulation, another considerable expense.

FOST and the Future

In 1991 FOST took on the responsibility for the parish's historic district and related programming. It was and continues to be a complex task, combining work and raising the necessary funds. Over these past twenty years FOST has raised approximately \$180,000 through major donations, the Memorial and Honor program, and fund raisers. The money has been spent for projects large and small. The reasons for FOST's existence and the need for its work have not changed. But now, changed circumstances require a changed approach. FOST's accounts are now significantly depleted, and though the parish will help a great deal to continue the effort, FOST will still be responsible for many expenses. In addition to financial considerations, the amount of labor involved is significant, and if it is to continue, new active members are essential.

FOST needs your support and prayers! Your help is needed. Experience is not necessary (though helpful) – just your willingness to give a few hours per month. Please consider joining FOST, using the Memorial and Honor program, or simply making a donation. Donations are tax deductible, since FOST is a parish ministry. *Thank you!*

Memberships and the Honor and Memorial Programs are the PRIME SOURCES OF INCOME FOR THE FRIENDS. 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. *Note that an on-line option for memberships/donations is available at www.fost.us.*

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

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Thank you