

NEWSLETTER

The 1852 Church Is Air-Conditioned!

Great thanks to all who contributed to the 1852 Church Air Conditioning Fund. The old Church is ready for summer now. Thanks especially to Mary DeNadai, FAIA, historic church preservation specialist of Chadds Ford, whose *pro bono* consultation early on was very helpful in planning the project.

The sale of old Saint Thomas Christmas ornaments last December and the considerable generosity of donors in January and February of this year raised the necessary \$25,000, which was matched by the parish contribution of another \$25,000.

Installation began on March 3rd, and was completed on April 30th. Attic insulation and landscaping improvements will finish off the project in the next few weeks. Not only will the old Church be more comfortable in summer, but climate control will help a great deal to preserve the building from the ill effects of condensation, mold and mildew. And because the new system includes a heat pump, reducing the need for oil heat, significant savings are expected in winter.

In late March several FOST members gently swabbed all washable surfaces, and thoroughly vacuumed, polished and dusted everything else. Great thanks to them and to the committed volunteers who clean on a weekly basis.



Historical Notes: The Rôle of the Laity

The laity placed an essential rôle in preserving the Catholic faith in the English colonies. Without neighborhood parishes, and with only infrequent visits by missionary priests, Catholics were on their own for great stretches of time. Historians tell us that common practices brought from England encouraged piety. The faithful used a “manual of prayers” for daily morning and evening devotions. They often recited litanies and psalms. Further, mothers “occupied a special place in the Catholic community. Not only was the mother the principal instructor in religion, she was also the chief cook, who saw to it that fast days were observed”, along with the no-meat-on-Fridays rule. Life at 18th century Ivy Mills likely followed the same pattern.



Mark Willcox, Jr., Esq., 1913 – 2013

Mark Willcox, Jr., Esq., seventh-generation descendant of Thomas Willcox, died on February 18. A steadfast supporter of the Friends of Old Saint Thomas, Mark was a charter member and never wavered in his willingness to aid this ministry in a variety of ways. His participation consisted of making financial donations, offering historical information, answering endless questions about Ivy Mills and his ancestry, and sharing his personal recollections of the people of Ivy Mills.

Mark was instrumental in restoring and preserving the historic Willcox home at Ivy Mills and grounds and in opening the property for public tours and special events. Always a gentleman and gracious host, Mark’s personal involvement in the tour program was remarkable: on many a Sunday afternoon in the summer he would be on hand to chat with touring visitors. Mark especially enjoyed the visits of the Saint Thomas 4th and 8th grade students on their yearly trips to Ivy Mills.

A capacity gathering of family and friends attended Mark’s memorial service in the 1852 church. His legacy of generosity and kindness will long be remembered.



2013 Tours

The St. Thomas/Ivy Mills Guides will be on hand at St. Thomas the Apostle Historic District and at Ivy Mills on the 4th Sunday of the month, June through October. These **free guided tours** will take place 1:00 to 4:00PM, **June 23, July 28, August 25, September 22 and October 27**. (Last tour begins at 3:45PM.)

The main house, grounds and outbuildings at **Ivy Mills** give you an idea of what life was like here in the 18th and 19th centuries. For much of its history, Ivy Mills was a rural outpost, a day’s journey from Philadelphia. We can assume Benjamin Franklin was not deterred, since he was a business colleague and friend of Thomas Willcox.

The **St. Thomas Historic District** saw many changes through the years. Oil lamps were used to illuminate the church interior until electricity became available in the 1930s. Mass was sometimes said in the priest’s sacristy. Artifacts and photographs displayed in the 1874 Rectory chronicle the changes instituted in the parish through the years. Both sites are family friendly, and are “*Passport to History*” locations. If you enjoy photography, be sure to bring your camera.

Opportunities for You

Short term! (or not) – At your own schedule! (or not) – In a group! (or not) (Varies with tasks)

Tour Guides – No prior guide experience is necessary, just a friendly attitude and a willingness to share the story of our parish. Training is provided and schedules can be arranged to meet your needs.

Gardening – In the historic district. About 2 hours a month will help keep the grounds looking great. This can be an individual task or is a good family or group project.

Kid Stuff – Tours, activities, producing age-appropriate materials.

Publicity – Getting the word out. Lots of ways to do that, these days.

Hospitality – Events 2 or 3 times a year where refreshments are served. Coordinate food selection and purchases and/or work with others for tasks including set up and clean up.

Information Table Staff – Two or three times a year such as at Ministry Sunday, Chester Heights Day, etc.

Church Cleaning – In the 1852 church. A volunteer project. Each person is asked to clean once a month for about an hour and a half. It includes dusting, vacuuming and making sure the church is tidy.

Maintenance – A continuous process when dealing with old buildings. Simple labor help or specialized skills are needed.

Special Skills – If you have a talent or skill not mentioned, and want to help, please contact us. There are other areas where special skills are helpful!

For more information please call Bette Popiel at 358-4835 or e mail fost@fost.us

To join FOST or to participate in the Honor/Memorial program, please see the FOST brochure, available in the narthex of the church, or visit www.fost.us



The Friends thank the following donors for their financial help from April 16, 2012 through April 15, 2013

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NEWSLETTER

Famed Stained Glass at Old Saint Thomas

Reflecting the faith of parishioners, basic Catholic beliefs are obvious to anyone who enters old Saint Thomas church at Ivy Mills. Life scenes of Jesus (right side) and Mary (left side) are shown in striking colors and detailed, full-form figures. The larger "Doubting Thomas" window above the entryway is especially impressive at night. Installed 115 years ago, almost 40 years after the church was built, most of the windows were produced by the Franz Mayer Company, Munich, Germany, then an ecclesiastical supplier of building components.

Beginning in the late 19th century, Mayer produced more windows for the Philadelphia archdiocese than any other stained glass window maker. The firm, which advertised their windows as "Christian art", was awarded the status of "Royal Bavarian Art Establishment" by King Ludwig II in 1882 and ten years later was named a "Pontifical Institute of Christian Art" by Pope Leo XIII. It supplied windows for Saint Peter's in Rome and many churches throughout Europe.

Along with the Carrara marble altars installed at the same time, the windows bear witness to Saint Thomas' parishioners' strength of faith, understanding about the role of art in fostering faith, and willingness to spend treasure to proclaim it.

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2013 Tours

Over 200 persons visited Old Saint Thomas and Ivy Mills this year during private, free public, or school tours. This year's theme of Religious Freedom emphasized Ivy Mills' unique part, along with Concord Friends Meeting and Saint John's Episcopal church, in making the idea of religious toleration succeed in Pennsylvania.

Another theme will be chosen for next year's tours, such as the Local Community, Catholicism, or Family Life.

Private group tours for 6 or more persons may be arranged, requested donation of \$5 per person. Contact FOST at fost@fost.us, or 610 459-8392.

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Proclaiming Liberty

On July 4th, 2013, the bell in the 1852 Church of Saint Thomas the Apostle rang out thirteen times, along with thousands of outdoor bells across the nation to "Proclaim Liberty" through all the land. The purpose of the national program, begun in 1963 by joint Congressional resolution, is to observe and celebrate the birth of the United States as a free and independent nation, as expressed in the 1776 Declaration of Independence.

The Saint Thomas Bell Ringers carried out the task. Mass immediately followed the bell-ringing.

The Saint Thomas bell was installed in 1860, and with brief interruptions has been in service ever since. Saint John's Episcopal, 576 Concord Road, Glen Mills, also participated in the program.

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Weddings in the 1852 Church

Parishioners planning weddings have a unique opportunity to celebrate their marriage in the parish's historical treasure.

Old Saint Thomas Church is well suited for celebrating the sacrament of marriage for parishioners. Over the course of its almost 160 years, the historic church building has hosted countless couples and their guests. Now air conditioned and seating up to 200 persons, it is still available for that purpose. The adjacent 1874 rectory provides a preparation room and restroom.

To prepare, FOST volunteers spring into action! Members of the Wedding Committee are ready to assist, the Cleaning Team cleans the buildings, and the Gardening Committee clears the grounds. A Saint Thomas Bell Ringer rings the 1860 steeple bell at the recessional.

Contact the parish Rectory for details.

Maintaining the Historic District

Thanks to volunteers for refurbishing the front doors of the church. The doors were sanded, cleaned, and sealed.

A new red sanctuary lamp was purchased to replace the broken green glass fixture.

A small table containing a guest book has been placed in the rear of the church. Be sure to sign in when you visit.

New road barriers have been purchased by the parish to make our drives and parking areas safe. **Please observe parking and directional signs!**

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College Sendoff

In early August old Saint Thomas hosted the Freshman Sendoff of the Notre Dame Club of Philadelphia for about 20 Philadelphia area students beginning their studies at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana. The Mass in the historic church provided an especially fitting experience for the students and their parents, connecting their Philadelphia Catholic roots with the wider Catholic world beyond.

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Saint Thomas Bell Ringers

For more than a century the ringing of the bell in the 1852 church alerted people that a Mass or a special service was about to take place, or that a wedding or funeral had ended. In the 1980s the practice ceased for a time, replaced by an electronic bell system.

The bell has been in regular use again for a number of years, but now it is more official: the five-member team of Saint Thomas Bell Ringers take turns ringing it before the 4:30PM Thursday Masses, held in the 1852 church, and for weddings.

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Christmastime Memorial & Honor Remembrances

A special way to remember loved ones at Christmastime is to make a donation to the FOST Memorial/Honor Program. For donations of \$10 or more, honorees' and donors' names will be inscribed on the 2013 Christmas List. The List will be displayed in the 1852 Church from Christmas Eve through Epiphany Sunday. The listings will then be entered into the Memorial/Honor Book, a permanent part of the FOST Archives. Use the adjacent form. All Memorial/Honor donations received from now until December 31 will be included. Thank you!

FOST Membership Honor & Memorial Program

1. For donations of \$10.00 or more individuals and groups may enroll the name of living or deceased persons in the Old St. Thomas Memorial and Honor Book, displayed on special occasions. The Friends of Old St. Thomas will notify a designated recipient by mail.
2. All those remembered and all donors are included in the monthly FOST prayer remembrance.
3. Donations of \$1000 or more are recognized on the donor plaque in the old church. Donations may be cumulative.

Return the form below to:

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

Please make checks payable to
Friends of Old Saint Thomas

Living _____ Deceased _____

My gift of \$ _____

Receipt to be sent to donor:

Name _____

Address _____

_____ zip _____

Notification card to be sent to:

Name _____

Address _____

_____ zip _____

Join!

Individual yearly Membership: \$10.00 _____

Family yearly Membership: \$15.00 _____

Additional donation: \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

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