

PORT PENNINGS

Spring 2018

Serving the Port Penn Area Community since 1981. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, care for, maintain, instruct and encourage public interest in all matters, facts and things of any nature relating to history.

Dear Friends,

As we head into 2018 I think of a quote from Isaac Asimov: "Until the Industrial Revolution came along, people weren't aware of change or a future. They assumed the future would be exactly like it had always been, just with different people. It was only with the coming of the Industrial Revolution that the rate of change became fast enough to be visible in a single lifetime. People were suddenly aware that not only were things changing, but that they would continue to change after they died."

In our lifetimes we've gone from party lines and rotary dialing to cell phones that have more computing power than all of NASA when they sent men to the moon. It is important to recognize and explore our history, not to hold us back, or to romanticize those long-gone days, but to appreciate our predecessors, and to understand how they thought and lived.

We are beginning a new membership year and I invite you to attend a membership meeting or contact us so that we can hear your ideas for projects and events. As always, your dues help support our annual budget used for our projects and events; it would be impossible to carry on without your help.

During the past year:

- The Society continued to maintain the Stewart Cemetery. The Delaware State Parks Department facilitated the removal of a dead tree within the cemetery walls.
- We held our 2017 Members Event at the Thousand Acre Farm. I know everyone enjoyed seeing the place. Thanks again to our hosts Mike and Susan Hynson.
- We planted 16 more trees at Augustine beach with the help of Girl Scout Troops 149 & 530, our own board members and Jeff Reed with his backhoe. Funding for this project was provided by the Delaware Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program.
- New veterans banners were installed in Port Penn. They were all sponsored by local families. The banners will be rotated with our summer and winter banners.

As we move into 2018 we will be busy in Port Penn:

- Our 2nd Wetland Festival will be held on May 19, 2018. The event will again be at Grass Dale Center south of Delaware City. We will be featuring demonstrations of traditional marshland life, local crafters and vendors and of course selling our famous turtle soup.
- We will continue to work on the Stewart cemetery this spring. Projects will include: improving the gravel driveway and installing an informational box that contains handouts. The Division of Parks will provide improved signage.
- Please mark your calendars for our annual Members Event, which will be held on Sunday, September 16, 2018. – More information to come and look for upcoming details on our website.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank you for your continued support, and invite you to become a hands-on member. Throughout the year there are opportunities to volunteer. Please call 302-836-5880 if you are interested, or check out our website at www.portpenn.org.

Regards,
Wes Jones, President

2018 Dates To Remember:

Wetland Festival
Saturday, May 19th
11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Historical Society Quarterly Meetings

Port Penn Interpretive Center @ 6:30 p.m.

- June 7th •
- December 6th •

Open to the public.
PLEASE JOIN US.

Annual Members Event

"Fall Fling",
Sunday, September 16th
1:00 - 3:00 PM

More information to come
Visit:

www.portpenn.org
for upcoming events and
more information
302.836.5880

The Middletown Transcript.

VOL. XXV.—NO. 49.

SIX PAGES

MIDDLETOWN, DELAWARE, THURSDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 15, 1892.

SIX PAGES

PRICE, 3 CENTS

THE DELAWARE GRANGERS
THEIR ANNUAL MEETING AT WILMINGTON THIS WEEK.

A NEW ORGANIZATION.
The Peninsula Cereals Association Formed in Middletown To-Day.

A BIG JUMP
THE TRANSCRIPT'S UNPRECEDENTED SUCCESS.

TERPSICHOE HOLDS SWAY.
THE LADIES' COMPLIMENT TO THEIR GENTLEMEN FRIENDS.

PLEASANT SURPRISE PARTY.
Tendered to Miss Mary Pool at the Academy Wednesday Evening.

THE RURAL DISTRICTS.
TRANSCRIPT PENCILINGS BY OUR CORRESPONDENTS.

election of John H. Layton of Frankford, to the office of Clerk of the House of Representatives. E. W. Dancy, a partner in the mercantile business with Mr. Layton, has positively declined to be a candidate.

THE "OBJECTOR."
NO PLACE FOR HIM IN MIDDLETOWN.

By: Laura Lee

The last story I wrote for the Port Pennings of the tale of the 1800's monster shark captured in Port Penn got me hooked on the Library of Congress' *Chronicling America* web resource. Hundreds of old newspapers from all fifty states are digitized, easily accessible and the source of some very interesting information. For this issue I set out to see what I could find about early Port Penn schooling. The current schoolhouse-turned-interpretive center was constructed in 1886, however the information in this article pertains to older school buildings.

Using the keyword search for "Port Penn School" I was surprised that the bulk of information that popped up was not about schools, but about enterprising local residents applying for tavern licenses. Taverns in Port Penn were once as abundant as the ships that pulled into the busy wharf - unlike today with Kelly's as the sole village tavern. Evidently to apply for a license to serve alcoholic beverages you needed to publicly post in a newspaper distributing within your school district, along with a list of "respectable citizens of said school district" that "recommend the said application". Each advertisement listed 14-20 citizens who happily approved of the establishment; potential proprietors were many and included Albert Bandler, Simeon Lord, Thomas Beard and Elam Page. Of note: Simeon Lord was also the President of the Port Penn Debating Society, according to the 12/15/1892 Middletown Transcript. I suppose even today, alcohol stokes many a debate. It stated "Port Penn also has a debating society of which Simeon Lord is President and Elmer Egee, Secretary. Their meetings are held on Tuesday evenings in the school house." The same article went on to mention that "The Port Penn Literary Society has recently been reorganized with Mr. Henry Price, Chairman and Mr. P.P. Vanheckle Secretary. The first meeting is at the residence of Dr. Stuart (Stewart?)." The newspaper reported that "the members find it both an instructive and pleasant winter evening pastime, and if the present organization is equal to those of former years the little hamlet will have some musical and literary treats". Who knew?!

As is usual with my historical research, I am often sidetracked with tidbits of information but tried to refocus on the schools and eliminate the myriad tavern adverts. Articles on the white school showed up but conspicuously absent in my search was any information on segregated African American schools, commonly referred to as 'colored' in the time period. The November 1883 Middletown Transcript cited the poor condition of the school house. It stated "Port Penn badly needs a new school building. The one in use is very discreditable to the district. The school is well-attended. It is in charge of Miss Ida Howell, a graduate of the Middletown Public school and is an excellent teacher." In March of 1884 the Transcript reported "the following pupils have averaged 90% in attendance, deportment, and recitations for the month ending February 28: Harry McNelly, Mary Conard, Martie Zacheis, Jennie Webb, Edna Kirk, Elisha Bassett, and Klesson Yearsley."



It is not clear from the newspapers when a new building was constructed or obtained, but it is pretty clear that by July of 1891 they were in new digs. The Transcript reported that "The Port Penn school is now one of the best in the county, and the children attending take great interest in the commencement exercises which are looked forward to with much pleasure by both parents and children." A big fete took place in June of 1892- "There was a flag-raising at the school house Friday 16th. Rev. Mr. Given, pastor of the M. E. church made the prayer. Frank Brockson teacher at the school presented the flag and Supt. H. P. Griffin received it. Rev. Jacob Wiedman was the orator of the day. The flag fluttered bravely in the breeze scattering small banners as souvenirs. It was a very pleasant affair."

At least one teacher was considered a hero of sorts when, as a boarder with Mrs. Aldrich (Aldrich?), he chose to continue living with her and her smallpox-ridden son not wanting to abandon them. The Delaware Gazette and State Journal of November 1894 reported on the death of Jefferson Davis Darlington "who back in 1884 became a teacher at the Port Penn school and went to board with Mrs. Aldrich, a mile from the school house." The reporter stated "While there his nobility of character was put to a severe test...her son was attacked by smallpox and had the disease in its most loathsome form." It went

Continued on page 3

Meet Mike Hitch ~ New Park Superintendent



Mike Hitch is the new Park Superintendent at Fort Delaware State Park, Fort DuPont State Park, and Port Penn Interpretive Center. Mike has been in this position since May of 2017.

Mike started his State Parks career in May of 2013 when he was hired as a Seasonal Park Ranger at Trap Pond State Park in Laurel, DE. In September of 2015, Mike became the Seasonal Assistant Park Superintendent at Trap Pond. He was in this position until being transferred to Lums Pond State Park in January of 2017. He was in this position until being hired Full-Time as Park Superintendent at Fort Delaware.

Mike graduated from Wilmington University with a Bachelors Degree in Criminal Justice. He also has a Minor in Natural Science.

Port Penn History Detective ~

on to say “Neighbors refused to go near the house, the school was closed, and the teacher advised to seek another boarding place. He refused to desert the woman and her invalid son.” The unfortunate son did perish of the disease, and “Darlington prepared the remains for burial assisted by the bereaved mother.” Did he contract the illness, you ask? “The plucky teacher also contracted the hideous disease and for several weeks his life was in peril. He did recover and moved to Altoona.”

Articles between 1895 and the early 1900s report on ordinary school business such as regular reports of honor roll students that read like a who’s who of Port Penn - Bendler, Collins, Eaton, Johnson, Ringgold, Yearsley, Zacheis, Webb, and Vanhekle. The February 1920 issue of the Middletown Transcript reported on Washington Birthday Exercises. “The building was crowded by an appreciative audience, and the program consisting of appropriate recitations, songs, dialogues, and drills were rendered in a manner that showed that the pupils had received careful training

from their teachers, Miss Collins and Miss Yearsley.

The newspaper record past the 1920s is not yet completely digitized so information on later Port Penn school history is not included in this article. The information is available from the Delaware Public Archives. There you will find the 1941 Insurance Valuation for many of the one-room school houses constructed in the 1920s. These include both the “Port Penn Public School” (valued at \$2,312.04 plus two outhouses at \$30) and the “Port Penn Colored School” (valued at \$2,660.74 plus a \$25 wood shed and two \$30 outhouses).

Take the time this summer to visit the ‘newer’ former Port Penn School, now the Port Penn Interpretive Center. Within the walls you’ll find not only exhibits on wetland life but also reminiscences of former students including some report cards, photos and artifacts.

“Spring Fling” 2017...



The Society expresses thanks to The Thousand Acre Farm for allowing us to hold our event at their beautiful facility!

Handmade Easter Eggs

Orders will be taken

March 4th - March 10th

The members of the First Presbyterian Church of Port Penn are again selling homemade Easter eggs as a fundraiser.

The church is located at 8 E. Market Street in Port Penn.

1/4 lb eggs for \$5.00, Butter Cream, Coconut & Peanut Butter.

To place an order call Mary Lou Reynolds:

(302) 834-2272 or

e-mail Pat Schaffer:

sally4712@verizon.net

Call Mary Lou Reynolds

(302) 834-2272 to arrange pick up & Please pick up by Sat. March 24th!



PORT PENN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2018

Wetland Festival



SATURDAY, MAY 19TH

11:00 AM - 4:00 PM

AT GRASS DALE CENTER

108 NORTH REEDY POINT ROAD

DELAWARE CITY, DELAWARE 19706

◆ Voices of Tradition ◆

On the Marsh: Hunting, Proggers & Trappers
Crafting Traditions: Nets, Traps, Calls & Decoys
River & Bay: Fishing, Crabbing & Eeling

Free Admission - Free Parking

Food Trucks • Music • Beer & Wine
Crafters & Delaware Artists •
Children's Activities
“Jungle John”



Traveling North or South in Delaware on DE-1, take Exit 152 onto DE-72 South towards Delaware City. Travel 4.9 miles - 8 minutes to Wetland Festival. Go past the refinery and continue straight onto DE-9 South through Delaware City. At the foot of the Reedy Point Bridge, take a slight right onto North Reedy Point Road. Festival at State Park's Grass Dale Center at 108 North Reedy Point Road, Delaware City.

FOR INFORMATION CALL:
PORT PENN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
302.834.7525
P.O. BOX 120
PORT PENN, DE 19731

WWW.PORTPENN.ORG OR INFO@PORTPENN.ORG

Sponsors:

The Bailey Charitable Foundation



This program is partially funded by a grant from the Delaware Humanities, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Port Penn Programming 2018 Season

Port Penn Interpretive Center Rt 9 and Rt 2 (Port Penn Road), Port Penn, Delaware 19731 • 302.836.2533

All programs are offered free of charge & meet at the Port Penn Interpretive Center.

Call (302) 834.7941 for more information *or* e-mail: Jacob.miller@state.de.us

The Port Penn Interpretive Center tells the story of the historic wetland communities along the shores of the Delaware.

The Center is open from 10am to 4pm Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.

The Center's opening day is Saturday May 26, 2018 • The center will be open for the special events listed below!

Waterfowl Walk

Saturday, March 10, 9:00 A.M.

Delaware has the benefit of a great location along bird migration routes. This makes it an excellent place to see birds as they fly through the region. For this program, we will catch the end of waterfowl season as well as the beginning of the shorebird migration. Come along and experience the natural wonders of the First State! No birding experience is required. Bring your own binoculars.

Knife Safety 101

Saturday, March 17, 2 :00 P.M.

Knives are tools, not toys, and knowing how to use them safely is important. This program goes over the most common types of knives and how to use them safely, as well as how to maintain them. For kids 7-12. Please call 302-834-7941 to register at least one week in advance. Cost is \$10, and all participants will be given a wooden practice knife to keep!

Historic Town Tour

Saturday, April 14, 11:00 A.M.

Join us for a walk through historic Port Penn. Learn about the buildings and their historical significance, and how the people living in them helped shape the community. Kids, answer the questions on our scavenger hunt sheet to win a prize!

Explorers' Walk (NEW)

Saturday, April 14, 3:00 P.M.

Kids, did you know adventure waits in your own backyard? Let's go exploring! Who knows what natural treasures we might find!

Family Wetlands Walk

Saturday, May 5, 10:00 A.M.

Join us for a walk through the wetlands of Port Penn! Participate in an animal scavenger hunt for furry and feathered friends, insects, and more. We will also be learning about why wetlands are important.

May 19th the center is open during the Wetland Festival!

Lantern Tours of Port Penn

Saturdays, August 25, September 8 and 22, 7:30 P.M.

Visit Port Penn by lantern-light! Come hear the stories of the town and the people who built it and make it special.

Port Penn Christmas Open House

Friday, December 7, time TBD

Celebrate the holidays at the Port Penn Interpretive Center! The museum will be open for visitors, and we will have light refreshments. The Center will be all decked out for the holidays.

Private Town Tours

Can't make it to any of our scheduled town tours or wetland walks? Call our office to schedule a private tour for your family or group. See the picturesque village of Port Penn at a time that is convenient for you! Cost is \$2 per person. The maximum is 15 people per tour. Call 302-834-7941 to schedule a time!

Check out our program guide and our website for other programs!

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2018 Membership Application (annual membership)

Please return this form and check to:

Port Penn Area Historical Society • P.O. BOX 120 • PORT PENN, DE 19731-0120

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-Mail _____

Membership Categories: Individual \$15.00 _____ Joint \$20.00 _____

Family \$25.00 _____ Life Membership \$200.00 _____

_____ I/We would like to volunteer to help with PPAHS events.

The Port Penn Historical Society is interested in your comments and ideas.

Please contact us at the above address or send us an e-mail: info@portpenn.org

