

PORT PENNINGS

Spring 2014

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 2014, I think of a quote from Mahatma Ghandi, *"If we are to make progress, we must not repeat history but make new history. We must add to inheritance left by our ancestors."*

Our inheritance is the photos, memories, stories and artifacts from the early days of Port Penn. Our new history is what we can do to improve our community and draw us together.

We are beginning a new membership year and I want to 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.

We will remember 2013 as a busy year in Port Penn:

- We continued our oral history project, interviewing Cornelia Haman Ross about her life growing up near Port Penn. We are working on getting these interviews up on our website. Thanks to Theresa and John Haman, Laura Lee and Linda Orr for conducting the Ross interview and to Emily Irwin for transcribing the interviews.
- We purchased a computer to be used by Parks personnel at the Port Penn Interpretive Center.
- As I'm sure you have heard, the Alrichs House (Kux Farm) has been slated for demolition. Our Board has taken the position that the house should be preserved. The Historical Society has been working with Delaware Wild Lands, the owner of the house; the University of Delaware; and the New Castle County Historic Review Board. We are having an engineering company study the house for recommendations on preserving it in place or moving it.
- We held our Marsh Feast at Kelly's Restaurant, featuring fried muskrat for the brave. Thank you to all who enjoyed the traditional marsh fare with us and helped with our fundraising efforts. Special thanks to Helen Reader and Arthur Nost. Bill Gumbrecht won the week-end get-away chance and enjoyed his time in St. Michaels, MD.

As we move into the new year we will be busy in Port Penn:

- The new Cabelas store at Christiana Mall will feature a photo of sturgeon fishing, drawn from our collection of old photos.
- We are working with the Division of Parks & Recreation to secure a grant to replace the roof and repair the windows of the Interpretive Center.
- We will be working with Port Penn's Troop 626 which includes Daisies, Brownies, Juniors and Cadettes to maintain the trees we planted at Augustine Beach several years ago.
- We will have a new intern from the Delaware Division of Parks & Recreation working at the Interpretive Center this summer. The intern will be developing new programs for the center in addition to greeting and guiding guests.
- Members' Event – Sunday, April 13 from 1 to 3 PM at the Fort Delaware Society building at Fort Dupont in Delaware City. Keep your eyes open for the invitation.

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 302-834-7525 if you are interested, or check out our website at www.portpenn.org

Regards, Wes Jones
President



2014 Dates To Remember:

Annual Member's Event
"Spring Fling",
Sunday, April 13th
1:00-3:00 PM

at the Fort Delaware Society
headquarters in Delaware City

2014 Historical Society Marsh Feast Fall Fundraiser

More information will be
forthcoming or go to
www.portpenn.org

Historical Society Quarterly Meetings

Port Penn Interpretive
Center @ 7:00 p.m.

- August 7th •
- November 6th •

Open to the public.
PLEASE JOIN US.

2013 Spring Fling
Port Penn Interpretive Center



Stewart Cemetery
2013



Handmade Easter Eggs

The members of the First Presbyterian Church of Port Penn are again selling Easter eggs as a fund raiser. In the past few years we have been able to raise enough money to keep the church open.

The church is located at 8 E. Market Street in Port Penn. We will be selling homemade 1/4 lb eggs for \$5.00, Butter Cream, Coconut and Peanut Butter.

If you would like to place an order call Mary Lou Reynolds at (302) 834-2272 or e-mail Pat Schaffer at sally4712@verizon.net.

You will be called to pick up the eggs when they are ready, around April 10th or later.

Listening to Another Time and Place: Discussing the Past

By Dr. David Orr

Oral History is probably the most immediate as well as the most intimate way to understand the most recent past. It presents the feelings of the participants of culture as they remember it. They, the informants being interviewed, become the actors on the historical stage. Their voices are critical to our knowledge of their past.

As we build these records in the next few years we hope to more completely understand the world of the African-American communities in southern New Castle County Delaware. By comparing the verbal record with the material record (archaeology, objects, landscapes, architecture) we will also arrive at a more accurate account of what up until now, has largely been an “Untold Story”. We can also compare these records with similar efforts being undertaken at Marshalltown and Timbucktoo, New Jersey. These are just two examples of a fast growing field which is seeking out the records of many other similar communities. There are many more to discuss.

We are currently interested in the records of Polktown (near Delaware City, DE) and Congo Town (on the western outskirts of Port Penn, DE). Unlike Polktown, Congo Town has no surviving structures. But both sites have intact archaeological resources to survey. Both communities have preserved their cemeteries and these are valuable resources indeed. Both were founded by Free African American populations in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Both were important in establishing community identity. Scholars are currently researching these communities from several different perspectives and we await their findings with great interest.

We wish to thank Cornelia Haman Ross for her interview conducted in October 2013. The interview was conducted by Laura Lee and Linda Orr. Theresa and Andrew Haman were both interviewers and informants. At the time of the interview, Ms. Ross was 102 years old.



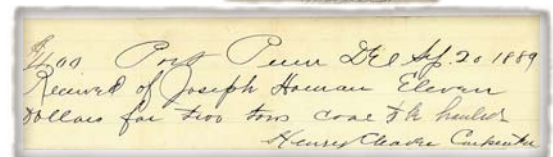
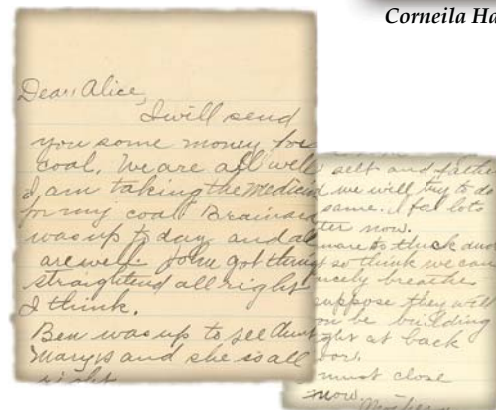
Cornelia Haman Ross



Henrietta Coursey Haman Green
Cornelia's mother
1889-1922



Wilson Haman I
Cornelia's father
1866-1922



THE ALRICHS HOUSE

When the Dutch first settled in Delaware in the late 1600s, one prominent family name was Alrichs.



Figure 1: The Alrichs House from the north side, clearly showing the three stages of construction

Jacob Alrichs and his nephew Pieter were important citizens and owned significant acreage in the Port Penn area. Pieter's grandson, also named Pieter, built a large brick house just west of Augustine Beach back in 1760. This is the house now known as the Alrichs House; Port Penn natives call this the Kux Farm.

This time period, the third quarter of the 18th century, marked the rise of a new class of people who were no longer actively engaged in farming, but rather in administration and management. They purchased land as investments, often renting out the land to tenants or individual farmers. The Pieter Alrichs who built this house was a gentleman farmer. Pieter's status is shown by an inventory of his household when he died: oxen, sheep, horses, cows and pigs in the farmyard; a silver watch and silver spoons in the house.

The house consists of three sections. The eastern section is perhaps the oldest, built circa 1760. There is a shorter wing added around 1780, and a kitchen addition added later. The house faces south with a dramatic view of the Delaware River. The south façade, originally the main entrance to the house, is hidden by a porch.



Figure 2: The south face of the Alrichs House

Currently the house and land are owned by Delaware Wild Lands, an organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the natural beauty and unique character of Delaware's natural resources and working landscapes. As maintaining a house is not part of their mission, they have applied for a demolition permit.

In early February several members of the Historical Society visited the Alrichs House, along with Mike Miller from URS Engineering, who was hired by the Society to evaluate the condition of the house. Also present were representatives from Delaware Wild Lands, and the Center for Historic Architecture and Design (based at the University of Delaware).

What the investigators found is fascinating. The middle section of the house has hand-hewn floor joists visible in the cellar, while the eastern (the tallest) section has sawn floor joists. The small size of the cellar in the middle section suggests that this section was built in two stages, with some of the original brick wall removed to enlarge the first floor. The roof rafters in the both the eastern and middle sections are joined at the peak with mortise and tenon joints, with pegs holding them together.

There are lots of unanswered questions about the building. Where did the brick come from – was it carted south from New Castle, or was there a local brick yard? How about the sawn wood – was there a local sawmill back in the late 1700s? Where were the outbuildings located – the smokehouse, privy, barns, brewery?



Figure 3: Members of CHAD measure and record the dimensions of the Alrichs House

Thanks to Bernie Herman and Mike Miller for permission to quote from their work. Story & photos courtesy of Wes Jones.

2013 Marsh Feast Kelly's Tavern in Port Penn



Port Penn Programming 2014 Season

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

Program Information 302.834.7941

e-mail: DNREC_FortDelawarePrograms@state.de.us

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

Programs are free to the public.

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

The Center's opening day is Friday May 23, 2014

Family Wetlands Walk

2 p.m. May 24, June 15, July 20, August 24

Join our park naturalist on a wetlands scavenger hunt for furry and feathered creatures, insects, and much more!

Historic Town Tours

2 p.m. on **April 12**, June 29, July 27, August 17

Join us in a walk through town to learn about the buildings that shaped the Port Penn community. A kid's scavenger hunt makes it fun for all ages.

MarshTails Story & Craft Time

for kids preschool to 2nd grade

Fridays at 10:30a.m., followed by a craft activity

June 27	Box Turtle at Long Pond
July 18	Come Out, Muskrat
August 8	Henry the Impatient Heron

Evening Program Series (all at 7 p.m.)

June 27 "Miss Jackie Sings for Adults Only" (Folk singing program)

"Miss Jackie", children's librarian Jackie McCabe, takes an evening break from kid's songs! It's a one-hour musical performance of her favorite humorous, slightly bawdy folk and tavern songs.

July 25 "Delaware's Best Ghost Stories" by Ed Okonowicz

Hear ghost stories and legends from Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore, including Bigg Lizz, Patty Cannon, Woodburn (Delaware's haunted governor's mansion), Fiddler's Bridge, Fort Delaware, Phantoms at the Cape May-Lewes Ferry . . . and many more.

August 16 "Birds in Flight- Behavioral Adaptations" by Conservation Connections

This unique free-flight education program features native and exotic birds, interacting with the audience while skimming just inches over your heads. Learn about conservation programs to protect our avian friends and our earth.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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2014 Membership Application

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

