

Historic Trappe

P.O. Box 26686
Trappe, PA 19426

HistoricTrappe.org

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
SOUTHEASTERN, PA
PERMIT #146

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Winter 2021 | Vol. 2, No. 1

Historic Trappe

Historical Society | Center for Pennsylvania German Studies | House Museums



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The past two years have been ones of tremendous challenges and growth for Historic Trappe. The pandemic forced us to cancel most in-person events and suspend tours, but we used this time to tackle many behind-the-scenes projects such as reorganizing our entire research library and archives. We are also working diligently towards sharing much of our collection online in the near future. Speaking of the collection, it has grown tremendously via donations of highly important manuscripts, furniture, fraktur, textiles, iron, and much more. We look forward to sharing these recent acquisitions with you both in our online database and in a special exhibition opening in spring 2022.

Our historic buildings continue to demand attention. Thanks to a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, we will soon be replacing the old HVAC system at the Henry Muhlenberg House with a new, energy-efficient system. Work on the Speaker's House kitchen fireplace and front door is nearing completion. Future projects there include plastering and new flooring in the kitchen as well as window restoration. At the Dewees Tavern, we are awaiting masonry and plaster repairs after a vehicle struck the front of the building as well as planning for roof repairs and replacement. Our newest addition, and oldest building, the 1745 Muhlenberg parsonage, needs more stabilization and architectural study as we plan for the exterior restoration.

We need your support more than ever to help us meet these challenges and preserve our historic buildings for posterity. Your generous donations to our annual fund drive will provide us with essential operating support to maintain our collection and buildings, provide tours and library access, offer special events and educational programs, and much more. We have also established several new donor societies to recognize varying levels and types of support. Please read the enclosed insert for more information and feel free to contact us anytime if you would like more information. Together, we will ensure that Historic Trappe has a bright future!

Sincerely,

Lisa Minardi

Lisa Minardi, Executive Director

Speaker's House Restoration Update

Much progress has been made on the Speaker's House restoration over the past year. The front door restoration is nearing completion, with a new threshold, door, frame, transom, and hood now installed. We are waiting on the completion of the iron hardware and installation of a pair of wooden benches that will flank the door. We also replaced three rotten cellar windows in the front section with period-appropriate oak frames and vertical slats. A rotten attic window overlooking the kitchen garden was also replaced. On the interior, the restoration of the cooking fireplace is nearing completion and is transforming the back room into a historic kitchen once again! This work was funded by a grant from the Daughters of the American Revolution. To complete the kitchen restoration, we need to replace the floor, install lath and plaster on the ceiling, and re-plaster the walls as needed. This work is estimated to cost \$10,000. Other projects on our wish list include replacing the Victorian windows in the front section of the house with 18th century style windows; there are twelve windows to be replaced at a cost of \$1,500 each. Donations of any size to help with these restoration projects are always welcome.



Restored front door with marble threshold and triangular hood



Restored kitchen hearth built of local red sandstone and a hand-hewn oak lintel

SAVE THE DATE

PARTY FOR PRESERVATION *Gala*

Sunday, April 24, 2022
5 - 9 p.m.

Barn on Bridge

Proceeds from our fundraiser gala benefit restoration projects in Historic Trappe.

Collections Going Online

by Jeanne Harper

We are excited to announce that our vast collections database will soon be going online! The initial launch will include over 1,800 library records along with dozens of objects from our museum collection including furniture, fraktur, needlework, and iron artifacts. This database is the result of several years of hard work to inventory and photograph all objects in our collection as well as to catalogue our library and archival collections. All of this information gets entered into our PastPerfect database, providing us with an electronic record of the entire collection. Once the data is entered into our primary database, it can then be uploaded to a secondary database and made accessible to the public online. We are currently in the process of configuring the public version of the database, uploading data and images, and reviewing the records prior to our initial launch in early 2022. We will continue to add more items as our collection grows. Keep checking our website for news on the database launch. We look forward to sharing our collection with you and welcome your feedback.

Library and Archives Update

by Danielle McCleary

One benefit of being closed due to COVID-19 is that this time has allowed us to focus on projects such as reorganizing the library and archives housed at the Dewees Tavern. Our collection has grown by leaps and bounds over the past year and now includes nearly 2,000 books on subjects such as the Muhlenberg family, genealogy, local history, American furniture, folk art, archaeology, and so much more. There is also a major focus on Pennsylvania German topics such as fraktur and quilts. The library also contains a small but significant rare book collection, including German bibles from the 1700s and 1800s, various editions of Luther's Small Catechism, and other historic treasures. The books are now catalogued and organized by call number, with rare books housed separately from the main library to keep them safe. All of the books have been entered into our PastPerfect database, which will soon be accessible to all online.

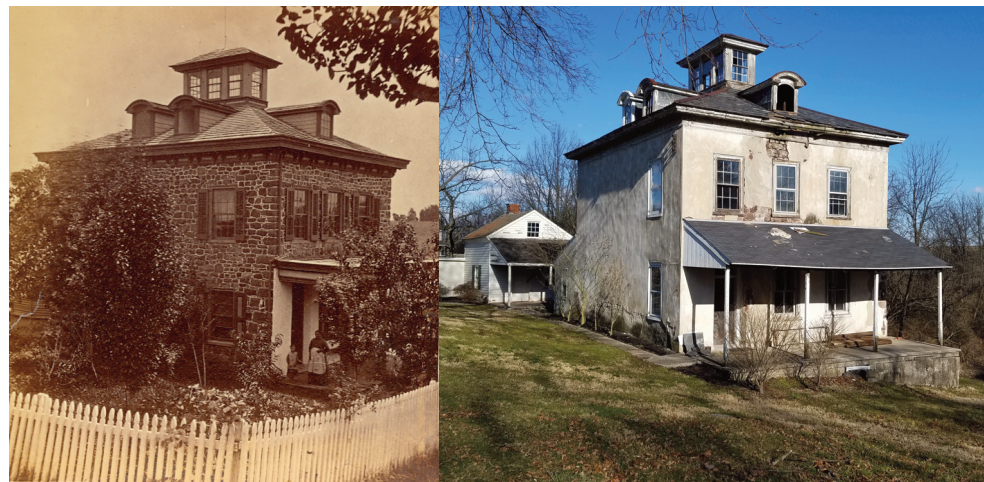
We also have sizable archives that contain personal papers and other manuscripts, account books, photographs, postcards, ephemera, local newspapers, and many other items. These collections are now being organized and catalogued. Recently, I had the opportunity to process the Rittenhouse Estate Collection. This was a really fun project to get a better sense of the family behind this famous local name. The Rittenhouse family in America began with German immigrant Wilhelm Rittenhouse (1644-1708), who started the first paper mill in the colonies. His descendants David and Benjamin Rittenhouse grew up in Montgomery County and became famous clockmakers; Historic Trappe owns a clock made by Benjamin Rittenhouse. Later generations lived in the Trappe area, and from them we have a collection of personal correspondence, farming records, WWI and travel ephemera. There are many receipts for farm equipment, grain, and livestock feed—providing a glimpse into running a family farm in the early 1900s. There are also letters to Santa Claus written by the Rittenhouse children and responses from one of their parents to keep the magic alive.

Muhlenberg Parsonage Acquired in Landmark Donation

by Eric Hundertmark, Buildings Committee Chair

Shortly after their marriage in 1745, Henry and Mary Muhlenberg built and furnished a house in Trappe with funds provided by Mary's father, Conrad Weiser. Located near Augustus Lutheran Church, the house served as both a parsonage and the Muhlenberg family's home. Eight of their eleven children were born there before the Muhlenbergs moved to Philadelphia in 1761 (when they returned to Trappe in 1776, they lived in the now-restored house at 201 W. Main Street). Although humble by today's standards, the parsonage was quite impressive in its day—built of stone, with multiple rooms, two stories, and an attic—much grander than the one-room log houses in which most early settlers lived. Thanks to a generous benefactor, former owner Jim Gesell, the parsonage was recently donated to Historic Trappe to ensure its long-term preservation. The three-acre property also includes an early root cellar, summer kitchen, and a small caretaker's house.

We are now investigating the parsonage's history and stabilizing it to prevent further deterioration while also starting to raise funds for its future restoration. Our initial efforts have focused primarily on the roof, which dates to c. 1850 and is in poor condition. A dilapidated modern lean-to was also removed and the masonry foundation patched. Temporary repairs have been made to reinforce the roof and patch holes to minimize leakage. Fragments of the original roof's oak rafters were re-used in the cellar, which indicates that it was framed in an early Germanic style (known as a *liegender Stuhl*). The original roof was steeply pitched and covered in either wood shingles or clay tiles;



The Muhlenberg parsonage prior to being stuccoed, c. 1870 and as it looks today

archaeological study will be needed to look for tile fragments. We are in the process of removing non-original plaster and drywall on the inside of the house to expose the original structure. Based on our cumulative experience in restoring both the Speaker's House and the Henry Muhlenberg House, we expect to find much more evidence in the coming months.

Determining the original roof's appearance will simplify our efforts to consolidate the current roof while planning for and raising funds to restore the original roof. Restoration will include removal of the c. 1850 slate roof, rebuilding the peaks of the stone walls on the gable ends and any missing chimneys, raising a new roof frame, and shingling it. A similar process was followed at The Speaker's House from 2015–17. Other future steps will include removing stucco from the exterior, which was added c. 1870 or later, and replacing the windows, doors, and cellar bulkhead to secure the building envelope before turning our attention to the interior. Fortunately, the structure itself is still sound, so restoration of the roof will preserve the building for many years.

Donations of all sizes are welcome to help us stabilize and restore the parsonage. Please write "parsonage" on the memo line of any checks.

Two Memorial Funds Established

BRIDGIE DALLER MEMORIAL FUND

Historic Trappe mourns the loss of Bridgie Daller, longtime board president and museum committee chair of the former Trappe Historical Society. A tireless supporter of preserving local history, Bridgie was an active member of the Trappe 300 Steering Committee and of St. Luke's UCC in Trappe. She was the recipient of the Speaker's Choice Award in 2018 due to her inspiring community leadership. Prior to her retirement, Bridgie had a distinguished career at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. We have established a memorial fund in Bridgie's honor to further her longstanding efforts to get young people involved with local history. The fund will support a paid internship for a high school or college student to get hands-on experience working with museum artifacts, exhibitions, and other special projects. Donations to this fund may be made online via Paypal or by check—please write "Daller fund" on the memo line. As a special incentive to encourage contributions, all donations before the end of the year will be matched dollar for dollar, up to \$10,000, by the Daller family.



Bridgie Daller at the Party for Preservation Gala in 2018

PHILIP BRADLEY MEMORIAL FUND

Historic Trappe lost another special member this year—Philip Bradley, a distinguished antiques dealer specializing in American furniture and tall clocks as well as the husband of our executive director, Lisa Minardi. He helped with countless restoration projects and special events at the Speaker's House since 2010. When we were refurbishing the Henry Muhlenberg House in 2017 for Trappe's 300th anniversary, Philip loaned many objects from his inventory and transported dozens more in his large van. In 2019, he helped install the exhibition galleries of our new Center for Pennsylvania German Studies. Above all, Philip was an enthusiastic cheerleader for Historic Trappe's many endeavors. A memorial fund has been established in his name to support the acquisition of important artifacts for the museum collection. Donations to this fund may be made online via Paypal or by check—please write "Bradley fund" on the memo line.



Philip Bradley and Lisa Minardi at the opening of the Center for Pennsylvania German Studies in 2019



The remodeled museum gift shop, fully stocked for holiday shopping

Gift Shop Remodeled

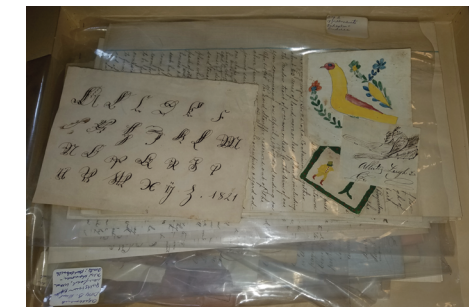
Our museum store, located behind the Henry Muhlenberg House, was remodeled over the past several months thanks to a generous donation. Oak vinyl plank flooring has replaced the dark commercial carpeting, black shelving was repainted in the eye-catching Rittenhouse Red by Old Village Paint, and the restrooms were upgraded with all new ADA-compliant fixtures. New merchandise has been added, featuring a wide range of locally made artisanal goods, vintage items, and holiday decor including German woodcarvings, Swedish straw ornaments, and festive floral arrangements. We have also added a book nook stocked with new and used books on Pennsylvania German, Lutheran, and local history. Contact us at info@historictrappe.org to schedule a shopping appointment.

Moyer Collection Donated to Archives

by Dianne Cram, Collections Committee Chair

We can all agree that 2020 was a year of misadventure, closures, and canceled events, but there was also a bright side—it was a year that Historic Trappe received some wonderful donations to the collection. The last donation of the year was an extensive grouping of manuscripts previously owned by Dennis and Linda Moyer of Zionsville, PA. This extraordinary donation includes hundreds of 18th and 19th century documents that fill some 35 archival boxes as well as modern reference books.

I have briefly gone through each box and was overwhelmed with the amount of material and its significance to our region's history. Most of the items are deeds, indentures, and land surveys with details on adjacent land holdings, waterways, roads, buildings, etc. from all around our region including Limerick, Upper and Lower Providence townships. There are also account books, day books, school books, estate inventories, and journals kept by various residents of Montgomery, Bucks, Lehigh, and Berks counties. Highlights include land surveys made by David Schultz (1717–1797), a member of the Schwenkfelder faith who lived in Upper Hanover Township, Montgomery County, and a set of journals kept by Peter Y. Brumbach



Highlights from one of 35 boxes of Pennsylvania German archival material donated from the collection of the late Dennis and Linda Moyer

from 1882 to 1898. Written in both German and English, Peter added many whimsical drawings in the margins as he detailed daily events of his farm and life.

We will be partnering with Ursinus College to digitize the Moyer collection and make it freely available online for all to access. We are very grateful to Kate Moyer Kilmer for her generous gift of this amazing archive. What a treasure trove of information it contains for future historians and what a tremendous addition to the archives of our new Center for Pennsylvania German Studies!

Museum Acquisitions to be Featured in Special Exhibition



Writing table from the Ephrata Cloister donated by the Rocky Hill Collection; photo by Gavin Ashworth



Spatterware pottery donated by Jane and Gerald Katcher; photo by Gavin Ashworth



Fraktur donated by an anonymous benefactor; photo by Michael E. Myers

Historic Trappe's collection has grown significantly over the past year thanks to several generous donors. Last fall, an anonymous donor gifted to us a painted chest made in 1799 for Susanna Wittmer of Montgomery County along with eight fraktur, including one made in 1834 by Mennonite schoolmaster Samuel Gottschall of Franconia Township, Montgomery County; a needlework; and painted candlestand. In the spring of 2021, folk art collector Jane Katcher donated to us three dozen pieces of spatterware pottery from her collection. Made in England during the early-to-mid 1800s, spatterware was popular with Pennsylvania German consumers. We know it was present in Trappe as we have excavated lots of spatterware fragments at the Speaker's House during our archaeology field school. Last but not least, we were given 56 objects from the late William K. du Pont's Rocky Hill Collection—including a rare c. 1740s writing table from the Ephrata Cloister in Lancaster County; a German immigrant's chest, dated 1744; a Moravian *Brettstuhl* or plank-seat chair from the Sisters' House in Nazareth, Pa.; iron stove plates, firebacks, and andirons; redware pottery, fraktur, and needlework. Many of these objects are key pieces displayed in the galleries of our Center for Pennsylvania German Studies; others help to furnish the Henry Muhlenberg House with a more "lived in" appearance. These transformative acquisitions will be featured in a special exhibition opening in spring 2022 that will focus on recent additions to Historic Trappe's collection. Stay tuned for more details as we plan for the grand opening.