

# Sharon Hill Historical Society

## Newsletter

Vol. 6 No. 5

AUGUST 2010

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Kathleen Clarke**

The station project continues to move forward slowly but surely. At the same time we are working on the insurance coverage for the county, borough and historical society which may be required in the long term lease with Amtrak. The borough will have the long term lease and the historical society will manage the historic station as a museum which will be used for displays, research, education programs for children and adults and for public tours.

This historic site will tell the history of Sharon Hill and its people and will be a valuable historic asset to the community.

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### SEPTEMBER MEETING

Please join us for our September meeting. Judy Anastasi of the Norwood Historical Society will explain the Civil War Road Show that will be hosted by her organization.

This event will be an opportunity for us to learn the story of Pennsylvania's role in the great conflict to all 67 counties and Judy will explain details of the program.

The project is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

We hope to see you there and please bring a friend.

Refreshments will be served.

### UPCOMING DATES

General Meeting  
September 9<sup>th</sup> 7:30 PM  
Christmas Tea  
December 9<sup>th</sup> . . . . . 12:30 PM  
Borough Hall  
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### FOURTH OF JULY

We were fortunate to have another good weather day for the Fourth. Our trolley ride along the parade route brought out thirty members and friends to celebrate the Society's 23<sup>rd</sup> year of participation in the Fourth of July.

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### IMAGES OF AMERICA

The only thing inviting about thoughts of Christmas in August is the weather. A bit of respite from our exceptionally hot summer might feel good for a change.

However, it's not the weather we want to remind you about, but Christmas gifts. Our pictorial history of Sharon Hill would be a nice surprise for someone on your gift list; a brother or sister, high school friend or former neighbor, or perhaps for you, if you never got around to ordering one!

If you decide to order, send a check to our mailing address on the back of this Newsletter. The price is \$25.00 if you need the book mailed and \$22.00 if you live nearby and the book can be picked up.

Keep us in mind!

### RAILROAD INFORMATION

### From Our Files

Excerpts from a Guide Book and Industrial Journal of the Philadelphia, Wilmington Baltimore Railroad printed in 1877:

#### **Sharon Hill**

*The station building here is a very pretty design and shows how a depot can be made to adorn a landscape, instead of being a blot upon it. It is constructed of serpentine stone, and the interior is finished with hard wood, highly polished, and the waiting rooms are models of comfort and elegance.*

*The Sharon Land Association, With Wm. Ward Esq., of Chester and W.D. Serrill Esq., of Darby at its head has done much to improve and embellish the place with pretty residences.*

*They own a large tract of land here which has been surveyed and laid out into streets and lots, with a view to up-rearing a pretty village and already a great many lots have been built upon by a good class of owners.*

*The location is an admirable one, and has been advantageously laid out affording many choice selections for villas and cottages. The gentlemen owning these lots are liberal, intelligent and enterprising who gladly welcome and cooperate with any judicious plan of improvement. They have seen*

*this locality grow and prosper in their hands until Sharon Hill has become one of the prettiest, if not the prettiest, suburban village along the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Rail Road.*

*Almost a suburb of the city, its contiguity places it in immediate access, while in character it is thoroughly rural and walks through lanes or rides between fields and pastures are pleasures much appreciated here after returning from the city or in the morning before going out to business.*

The Guide book continues and notes some of the mansion owners who had taken up residence. Among them, were Samuel Bunting of the firm of S & J Bunting, auctioneers, Clement M. Biddle, President of the Permanent Exhibition at Philadelphia, Isaac H. Clothier, who was a member of the dry goods firm of Strawbridge & Clothier. Each settled along what was then known as the Philadelphia and Chester Turnpike.

Not everyone lived in mansions; there were many lesser homes mentioned; with their cost ranging from \$2,000 to \$10,000. Holders of land were noted by the number of acres they owned.

Altogether this article proved to be a very informative guide to the formation of Sharon Hill as it took its place among the towns along the path of the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore railroad line.

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**ARCHIVE DONATIONS**

We enjoy getting packages from member, Joe Walker. The package we

received recently was especially exceptional.

Along with his folders of memorabilia, Joe also sent a facsimile copy of George Smith's History of Delaware County published in 1862. He also sent a two-volume set of Palmer's History of Delaware County; the second volume being excerpts of the important people of the day (1932).

These books are important volumes and give an excellent background of the settlement of Delaware County including maps, explorers, settlers and notable buildings, etc.

We also received an interesting packet of papers from member, Kay McKone, concerning a local property. The documents included several deeds to land which showed it was purchased in 1883 and contained 5,150 sq. ft. of ground. The deed states that prior to the 1883 purchase, the land was part of a tract of ground owned by the Ridley Park Association in the year 1875.

At that time, Sharon Hill was still a part of Darby Borough but a Plan of the Town had been laid out and this particular land was noted as Lot #48.

An amazing and notable fact about all early documents is that they are handwritten in beautiful script which time has not faded, smeared or otherwise damaged. Even the paper has maintained its durability.

And since it is tax time again, it seems timely to note a receipt dated September 27, 1884 (while we were still part of Darby Borough).

Borough taxes were \$1.80, County taxes were \$1.40

and the school tax was a mere \$1.60 !.....total tax for the year was \$4.80.

A later receipt dated August 1896, which was after Sharon Hill had been incorporated and had its own school, showed a walloping increase of school taxes to \$8.00.

If you owned a dog back in the 1890's and early 1900's, there was also a dog tax which was \$1.00.

It sounds wonderful until you realize there were few public services. There were no sewers, no street lights, the streets were paved with oyster shells and the fire company was not chartered until 1906. One policeman paroled the town.

We like to refer to those times as the "good old days", but few of us would want to return to them!

Thanks to Kay for allowing us to have a peek at the "times that were"!

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For questions or suggestions regarding the Newsletter, please contact Jean Shiber @610-583-9246 or on the internet: JShib@aol.com

**Sharon Hill Historical Society**

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President . . . . Kathleen Clarke

V. President . . . . . Sue Finn

Treasurer . . . . . Ginger Cain

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