



The Greater Dover Historical Society Inc.

AUGUST 2009



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

- August 20 - Regular meeting
- September 5, 7-12 Display at Dover Carnival
- September 17 - Regular meeting
- October 3 - Refreshment stand at Family Fest at Lehr Park
- October 15 - Regular meeting
- November 19 - Regular meeting
- November 27 - Tree lighting in Dover Square
- December - no meeting

All meetings are held at Calvary Lutheran Church on the square in Dover at 7:00 PM. Please come and show your support for preserving our Dover history.

HYSTERICAL HISTORICS

Submitted by Gayle Heagy

The following article was found in a scrapbook compiled by Mildred Senft and donated to the Society by Donna Senft. Most of the articles in the scrapbook are circa 1940's, so it is assumed that this article is also from that time period. Y.T. and T. represents York Telephone and Telegraph.

Another example of the Y. T. and T's. "take our service or none" attitude:

If there is sickness in your family, and you would like to inform a relative or friend who lives in or around Dover, don't telephone after 10 or 11 p.m. If you find that you must, just ask the Dover operator for the number you want and then stick cotton in your ears.

Why? Because for the next five minutes she will go to great length to tell you that she closed the switchboard long ago, was perhaps even asleep, the exchange won't be open until morning, why don't you call then, what do you want to talk about, anyhow, etc., etc., etc.

Don't dare, above all things, to try to interrupt (that's impossible anyway) to tell her that you thought telephone exchanges had to be open 24 hours per day. That will only serve to let loose a verbal storm like you have never heard before.

Finally, however, if you shout long and loud enough, and perhaps threaten to commit a murder, she will ring the number you ask. All the while, though, she will be murmuring, loud enough for you to hear, about people who make calls at that unearthly hour of 11 p.m. or so). Sometimes she just won't make the call.

Those of us who lived in Dover at that time remember the party lines with each home assigned a certain number of rings for incoming calls. With this system, it was not necessary to leave your home to find out the news, you just listened in on the other subscribers on your line.

Kniselleys and Date Stones

By Jo Ott

Historical editor John Gibson, writing in the *History of York County*, discusses “THE BIG BARN AND THE SECOND HOUSE”. In the early days, he says, there were no large barns as we see today throughout the county and original homes were either stone or log. It was not until later immigrants arriving from Pennsylvania’s eastern counties had established sawmills along the streams and began sawing the “huge trunks of the oak and the walnut into scantlings and boards,” that larger buildings were constructed.¹

Among farmers, Gibson notes, it was always the custom of the owner when building his “mansion” to honor his wife by placing her name beside his own, with the date of the [building’s] erection on a tablet at a conspicuous place on the building.

And so it is, that the Greater Dover Historical Society has such a date stone, or “tablet” in its possession, donated by former township residents, Vince and Kathy Rice. The large stone presently sits in the Society’s Blacksmith Shop, awaiting a permanent placement. It reads:

1786
JOHN KNISELLEY & MARY
HIS WIFE, JULY 28
ONE THOUSAND SEVEN
HUNDRED AND EIGHTY SIX

Curious about John and Mary and the history of the stone, I began my research in late summer, 2008.

As is customary, I start my search in ancestry.com but find little useful information. Whatever I did discover that might lead to further research areas was regarding a Samuel Kniselley and many, many John Kniselleys, several Marys, Anthonys and more. Not only was there duplicity in first names, but the spelling of the last name was as varied as the individuals who had reason to write it.

The name on our date stone is spelled KNISELLEY, but in census and other records it often was Knisselly, Knisely, Knisilly, Kniesilley and other variations. Over time, many families dropped the “K,” and it might have been Nissily, Nisely or Nicely. I reached the point where the majority of possibilities were eliminated, so I could stay with as close to the spelling on the stone as possible.

Samuel proved to be the pivotal individual on which to focus the direction of my research.

Samuel Knisselley had a will, I discovered, and a copy was obtained from the county archives office. One interesting note about his will—he was dictating it to Isaac Stoner, a scribe hired for the job, became tired, and asked to stop. Samuel died a few days later on February 12, 1790, without finishing or signing his will. Trusted friends, or deponents, as the will refers to them, spent that last night with him at his request. These men knew of his wishes and completed the will under oath several weeks after Samuel’s death.

Samuel’s wife was Mary Knisselley, and the will makes mention of a son, John, and a daughter, Elizabeth, and states, “the widow is to keep her son John until he is fourteen years of age.” It further states that daughter Elizabeth “is to be kept until she is sixteen and a half old....”

The will was probated April 29th, 1790, and at the time, Jacob Barnitz, the county’s Registrar, noted on the document the names of individuals present at the probate proceedings. In addition to Mary Knisselley, the widow, and John Knisselley, a brother, there was an attorney whose name is illegible and who is described as the “guardian of Elizabeth Kneisslley only child of said deceased,” was also present. There’s no further mention of son John.

Two other parties are mentioned in the will.

Samuel’s wish for John Knisselley, his brother, is for him to have his land “according to his Bargin (sic) and the right of the water corse (sic) the way it goes now for his use.” A provision in the will outlines also the repayment of a debt Abrahan (sic) Kniselley owes to the estate.

Both John, whose wife’s name is Mary, and Abraham (correct spelling) are brothers to Samuel Kniselley. The will and other documents searched confirm this information. Both were landowners in the same Dover Township area in which Samuel’s farm was located, along what later became known as Davidsburg Road. One document describes the location of Samuel’s farm to be midway between Davidsburg and Locust Point.² The farm later was home to Claude May. A stone dwelling, built on the north side of the road in 1771, was torn down by William Spahr.

Most of the documentation reviewed and verified by other sources is sufficiently convincing to make the call that the John and Mary Kniselley names engraved on the Society’s date stone are of the brother and sister-in-law of Samuel Kniselley.

Samuel, incidentally, it is pointed out in his will, was a mason. Is it possible he was the engraver?

¹*History of York County Pennsylvania*, ed. John Gibson. (Chicago: Battery, 1886), p. 352.

² Charles F. Kauffman, *A History of Dover Township York County Pennsylvania*, Vol. II, (1961), p. 343.

Additional source referenced: *DOVER AND CONEWAGO TOWNSHIPS YORK COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, ORIGINAL PENNSYLVANIA LAND RECORDS SERIES (VOLUME 13)*, NEAL OTTO HIVELY, var. pp, map 31, YCHT.

President's Column

By Madelyn Shermeyer

It's hard to believe that we are in the second half of 2009. I suppose when a group keeps busy, the time goes by much too rapidly.

In March the Society had the pleasure of hosting Scott Mingus, local historian, who spoke on the Civil War and J.E.B. Stuart's time in Dover Borough and the environs. The attendance by members and non-members of the Society was nothing short of fantastic. There were approximately 80+ attendees at this event. Needless to say, Mr. Mingus was very pleased with the attendance as was the Society.

The Blacksmith Shop reopened to the public in April and will continue to be open the second Saturday of each month through October. There have been many attendees and questions according to Jo Ott, a Society member who volunteers at the Blacksmith Shop visitor days.

The annual Historical Walk was held on June 16. The attendance was less than last year but the weather played a part - it was cloudy and cool. Kay Stitley does a great job of narrating the tour and pointing out all the homes and their historical significance.

Melanie Green, Chair of the Adopt-a-Highway program for the Society, reported the first clean-up went exceptionally well and another was scheduled for June 6.

On July 16th the annual GDHS picnic was held at Lehr Park. This event translates into good food, good friends and a good time for all. Attendance was less than in some previous years, but I believe the hot, humid weather played some part in a lower attendance. Naturally the food was excellent, and in looking around, I could see many conversations and hear much laughter. I thought, "How amazing, an organization formed by long time acquaintances and 'strangers' (those new residents of the area), and yet all of these members make such valuable contributions to the GDHS."

Once again the GDHS will be responsible for the refreshment stand at the Family Fall Fest at Lehr Park on October 3. This Fest is sponsored by the recreation department of Dover Township and ties in with the Dover Township Volunteer Fire Department's open house. There are fire engine rides, carnival rides, face painting and 'goodies' for the children.

At the Society's October or November meeting, Ron Botterbusch will speak on the topic of 'muzzle loaders', how they were used in the early days and how they transitioned to the present time. Mr. Botterbusch will have a display of his private collection.

Once again we are asking for articles to be submitted for the Newsletters. Those wishing to write an article for inclusion in the Newsletter must send it to Lucia Hrinyak for editing. Once the editing process is complete, the author may then forward the article to Lori Koch. Lucia Hrinyak's e-mail address is loosh45@comcast.net. Lori Koch's email is jkoch8@verizon.net. Norma Botterbusch and Lois Slothower will also 'gather' articles for the Newsletter, but before inclusion these articles MUST be edited by Lucia Hrinyak.

G.D.H.S. LITTER PICKUP

The Dover Historical Society 2009 litter pickup is going very well. The first pickup was April 4, and 12 bags of trash were collected on our two mile stretch north of Dover on Carlisle Road. The second pick up was June 6, and 6 bags were collected. It takes about 1-1/2 - 2 hours each time. A big thank you to all of the workers! There will be at least one more pickup date, probably in October. Any questions, call Melanie Green at 717-292-5133.

GREATER DOVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Carl & Marian Sowers, Ramon & Harriet Langione, Sherry C. Young,
David M. Leppo

PRESERVING OUR HISTORY FOR OUR FUTURE