



MANSION NOTES

CENTRE FURNACE MANSION

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 30, Number 2

Spring 2008

Centre Furnace Mansion Gardens

by Mary Sorensen

At this writing, there is still snow on the ground and temperatures seem to be undecided; one day in the 20s and then the 40s or 50s the next. The signs of spring at the Centre Furnace Mansion are noticeable only upon close inspection; dogwood buds swelling, daffodils just barely visible at the soil's surface, the warmth of the springtime sun (even on a cold day) and the unmistakable smell of spring in the air!

Beginning our 8th year, the Centre Furnace Mansion Garden Committee volunteers have already started planning, meeting, spring cleaning in the gardens and potting plants for the spring Plant Celebration, and weekly gardening times have resumed on Thursday evenings. A committee for seed starting led by Pam Calkins this spring, for the first year, will start several annuals from seed to help color the gardens between perennial bloom times. Jan Villastrigo will continue to add plant identification labels, a project she started last season, to make the gardens an educational as well as aesthetic experience. Several CFM Garden Committee volunteers are currently working on completing the plant list reference in the Gardens section of the CCHS website to represent the plants that currently exist in the gardens.

Later in the season, we will be featuring a 'Local Gardens' section on the website that will document

gardens of particular interest so there will be historical documentation for gardens of interest in our region. Susan Evans, of the CFM Garden Committee, researched and created an extensive questionnaire that will help us to acquire consistent information about the gardens and gardeners that we will interview. Our

hope is to start with two or three gardens and add to this section each year.

In addition to the 'Local Gardens' project, we will be doing some detective work to document common plant names for plants that would have been grown in this area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, following a format designed by CFM Garden Committee volunteer, Judy Heberling. This information will also be featured on the Gardens section of the website.

Early to late spring is peak bloom time at Centre Furnace Mansion. One thousand early, mid and late season bulbs were planted last fall alone during the United Way Day of Caring, including English Bluebells and a variety

of Victorian period tulips, daffodils and alliums. To see a more complete list of bulbs planted, please refer to: <http://centrecountyhistory.org/gardens/volunteers/doc.htm>. Spring at the Centre Furnace Mansion also features Virginia Bluebells, clematis, primrose, over 30 lilacs, peonies, fragrant viburnum, roses, and iris just to name a handful.



Spring Gardening Schedule

🕒 **Thursdays from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.** are regular CFM Garden Committee gardening times. Stop by and say hello any time and we, of course, will not stop you from pulling a weed or two! Anyone with an interest in gardening and volunteering can join this committee. To receive garden volunteer e-mail announcements, please contact Rhiannon McClintock at (814) 234-4779 or rhiannon@centrefurnace.org.

About the Centre County Historical Society

Centre County Historical Society
Centre Furnace Mansion
1001 East College Avenue
State College, PA 16801
814.234.4779
info@centrecountyhistory.org
http://www.centrecountyhistory.org

The Centre County Historical Society operates the Centre Furnace Mansion as an historic house museum. The Mansion is open to the public for tours and library use on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and by appointment. The Society's hours of operation are Mondays through Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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Founded in 1904, the Centre County Historical Society (CCHS) is the oldest and largest history organization in the county, serving as the official historical society of Centre County. It is a community and volunteer based non-profit educational organization that works collaboratively with local, regional, county, and state organizations in helping to preserve and promote the area's historic, cultural, and natural resources.

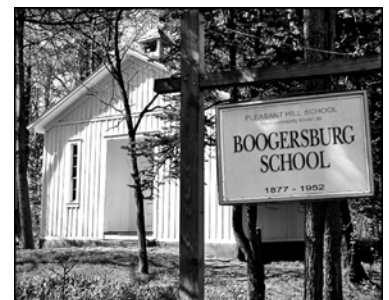
CCHS is headquartered in the Centre Furnace Mansion, a restored and furnished ironmaster's home listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This historic mansion and nearby iron furnace stack represent the 18th century beginnings of the charcoal iron industry in this area, and the 19th century beginnings of Penn State University, originally located on furnace lands. The site offers more than eight acres of landscaped grounds and gardens.

CCHS disseminates historical information about Centre County; offers programs and exhibits of historical and cultural interest for children and adults; marks and helps preserve and protect the Centre Furnace Mansion property and grounds, our newly acquired Boogersburg School, and other historical sites and landscapes in Centre County; maintains a collection of artifacts, books, manuscripts, maps and photographs; and publishes and promotes interest in historically significant publications relating to Centre County.

Society members and others in the community are invited to support these activities by contributing to the Centre County Historical Society Endowment Fund, managed by the Centre County Community Foundation.

Mansion Notes is published as a benefit of membership in the Centre County Historical Society, which is made possible through the Keatley Fund.

The Centre County Historical Society (CCHS) is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, under Section 501(c)(3) of the I.R.S. Code. Donations are tax deductible. Official registration and financial information about CCHS may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.



Upcoming Events

April

🐼 Barnes & Noble Bookfair

Friday, April 4 from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

When you purchase your books at the State College Barnes & Noble (365 Benner Pike), just mention to the cashier that you support the Centre County Historical Society, and they will donate a portion of your purchase to our organization (excluding gift cards and membership cards)!

🐼 Master Gardeners' Workshop on Dividing Perennials

Tuesday, April 22 at 7:00 p.m.

Penn State Master Gardeners will be on hand to help you and answer your gardening questions. This 'hands on' workshop will have an informal format, provide take home plants and offer practical advice about simple ways to propagate new plants.

May

🐼 Plant Celebration at the Mansion

Saturday, May 10 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.



See page 5 for more information.

🐼 Centre Furnace Mansion Closed for Memorial Day

Monday, May 26

President's Corner

When CCHS began the restoration of the Centre Furnace site in 1983-84, the challenge was not only to renew the structurally sound but visually wanting mansion house, but to recover and reinterpret the mansion grounds. What gardens still existed had been neglected, crowded out by invasive shrubs; blacktop covered earlier walkways; and the historic trees that dominate the landscape were in need of pruning, and in some cases major attention.

Several Society members rose to the challenge. They combined their knowledge of garden history, design expertise, and the green thumb skills of knowing plants and how to plant them, and together set the framework for the future development of the grounds.

Research began on how best to take on the interpretation. Guidance came from landscape preservation publications, and from nineteenth century garden writers. The writings of Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852) were a major source. Downing, a horticulturist, landscape gardener, and prolific writer, more than any other individual shaped middle-class taste in the United States during the last half of the nineteenth century. He was the author of four important and widely read books that advised on domestic architecture as well as landscape design.

Downing wrote about the importance of an "improved" country house. The structural changes made to the Centre Furnace Mansion in the 1860s by Moses and Mary Irvin Thompson indicate that they were reading Downing. As Downing recommended, the Thompsons changed their large Georgian "common" house by placing Italianate bracketing under extended eaves, enlarging the dormers with Gothic peaks, and adding a large front porch or verandah with a balcony and gingerbread trim. They turned their "common country house" into one that was "improved". But they didn't stop there. The Thompsons also appear to have followed his advice for the grounds.

The house should be the focal point. Trees should cluster around, or form a backdrop for it. The Mansion, sited on a knoll, certainly is the focal point of the property, with trees clustered behind it.

Landscape elements added 'for richness' might include a long curving gravel drive; long, curving gravel walks for strolling around the property; and natural water features. A long curving driveway and at least some walks for strolling seem to be suggested in the early photographs. And Thompson Run once meandered through the front of the property.

The property should be made to appear larger, more grand . . . The house should be approached from its most impressive side. The entrance and view from East College Avenue certainly offers its "most impressive side".

Landscaping should be in accord with the architecture. A Gothic house should have wild, picturesque surroundings; an Italianate house should have graceful, gentle ones. Occasional touches of the picturesque or the beautiful heighten their opposite. The use of evergreens, combined with specimen trees of sycamore, maple, locust, and black walnut, seem to offer "a landscaping in accord with the architecture" - a combination of the picturesque and the beautiful.

We hope you will visit Centre Furnace and its beautiful grounds this spring. And when you do, please tip your hat to the influence of Andrew Jackson Downing, America's first landscape gardener.

~ Jackie Melander

Recent Acquisitions

Civil War Letters

Our exhibit Centre County and the Civil War closed in February of this year after six months of enjoyment by visitors and colleagues. We are fortunate that donors have supported our continuing interest in the Civil War by contributing to our collections through recent gifts.

On July 30, 1864 Confederate troops burned a significant portion of the town of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. Six months later clergyman and editor, Benjamin Schneck described the events of his life during that time in a letter to his nephew, Daniel Schneck Keller. "We are living on the frontiers of town in the half of a little cottage house which I built last year... We are thankful to God for this and other mercies and are content and happy." While the Reverend's tone was upbeat, he later reflected on the loss of his manuscripts and library, which seem to have been his most valued possessions. He explained that his office had moved to Philadelphia, which lead to his resignation and left him without prospects of employment. He authored a "little book" *The Burning of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania* that was already in its 4th edition and also published in German at the time of his writing.

This letter is part of a collection of Keller family (of Boalsburg) correspondence, which was given to CCHS by Mr. Gene Stocker at the end of 2007. Also included in this gift are five ledgers from Howard which span over 40 years (1840-1880s).

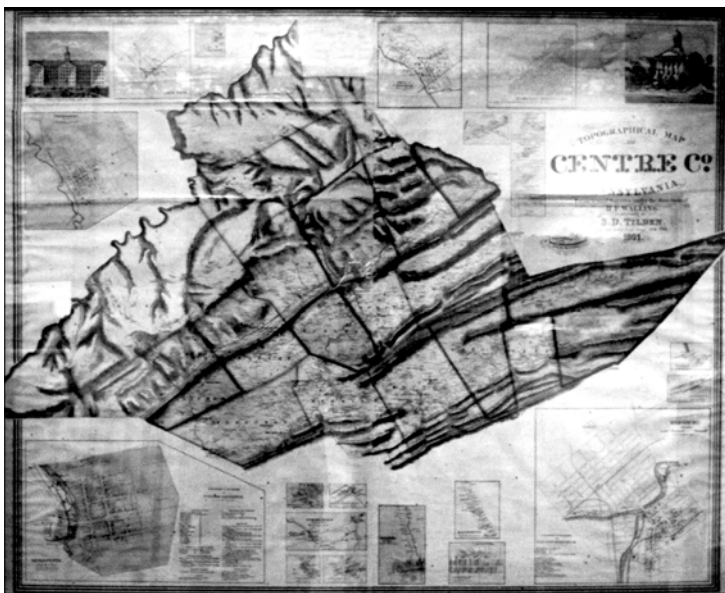
My dear Nephew—
Chambersburg, Jan. 4th 1865

Your very welcome letter of the 30th ultimo, was received yesterday and afforded me much pleasure. Since the burning of our town, our own house & all its effects among many others, I have of course been more or less in confusion in regard to all my correspondence. Then the removal of our Publication affairs to Philadelphia required my going there often — and last and not least, perhaps, the publication of a little book on the "Burning of Chambersburg" by myself — a copy of which I send you — has had to interrupt a circulation, that a second edition was called for in 10 days — then a 3^d & now a 4th, and a German edition is just out now. This has of course, taken up a good deal of my time & in connection with other duties absolutely enveloped me for four months past. But I have just resigned my editorship, finding I could not get along with it whilst here & the publishing in Philad^a — and we have finally decided, fully, to stay here, altho' with scarcely any reasonable prospect at hand to have our living. But at our time of life to be deprived of exercise & fresh air, as we would in a city, would be depriving us, we feared, of our health. And then it would require a large salary to enable us live there. This the Publication Office could not in justice to itself give when only half the time (as was the case with my duties) was given. And yet they were willing to do this. But I felt constrained to decline their generosity. Altho' the two first two editions have yielded me but a trifle of pecuniary advantage (having been put at too low a price) yet from this 3^d onward, I hope to others at least a reasonable benefit.

We are living on the "frontiers" of the town in the one half of a little cottage house which I built last year & which was rented out to two small families. We are thankful to God for this & many other mercies & are contented & happy.

Benjamin Schneck's letter from January 4, 1865

Ms. Gloria Ward Griffith also donated a Civil War letter that was written by Thomas McBath of Company C, 148th Regiment. Addressed to his cousin Mary A. Baker of Boalsburg from Camp Hancock on April 12, 1863, McBath lamented the waning support of the war in the North stating that "the war would be over if it weren't for northern traitors." McBath was 28 years old at the time and was wounded a year later in Deep Bottom, VA. He was released from service in 1865.



1861 Tilden Map

The 1861 topographical map of Centre County published by S.D. Tilden is a staple for researchers of Centre County history. The three-color map contains the names of property owners, business, and detailed street maps of larger towns like Bellefonte and Mifflintown. John M. Bryson, Marty Jo Fleck, and Martha Jane McIntyre recently gave a pristine example of this map to CCHS in honor of James E. Bryson. Its provenance can be traced to a schoolteacher from Centre Hall, and has been so well cared for that it has few creases or wrinkles, making it a fine and useable example of this popular primary resource. The framed map is on view in the Hearth Room of the Centre Furnace Mansion, where it will remain for the viewing pleasure of all visitors to CCHS.

13th Annual Plant Celebration

Saturday, May 10, 2008 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The Centre County Historical Society is holding their Plant Celebration at the Mansion on **Saturday, May 10**, the day before Mother's Day.

This weekend the hundreds of newly planted daffodils will be blooming, as will the many lilacs in Laura's Lilac Bower. Besides highlighting the extensive work of the Centre Furnace Mansion Garden Committees, the sale will greatly contribute to the continuing development of the Centre Furnace Mansion gardens, with the emphasis on historic plants.

The day's activities will include a plant sale of native and non-native plants from local growers and the Centre Furnace

Mansion gardens. Garden enthusiasts will be able to choose from annuals, perennials, trees, herbs, shrubs among many others. A Silent Auction of garden-related items and artwork will also be held.

The Centre Furnace Mansion is located at 1001 E. College Avenue in State College (our parking lot is off of Porter Road, and overflow parking is off of College Avenue). Admission to the Plant Celebration is free.

Please visit the website for updates on vendors and plants for sale:



<http://centrecountyhistory.org/eventsexhibits/plantcelebration.html>

Volunteers needed!



The Centre County Historical Society is seeking garden enthusiasts, vendors and artists to participate in the Plant Celebration at the Mansion on Saturday, May 10.

The Plant Celebration focuses on the sale of plants (both native and non-native), garden related items, and nature-inspired artwork.

There will also be a silent auction of garden related items, and we would greatly welcome donations!

A core committee spends months organizing, planning and preparing plants, but we still need the help of our members and friends to create a festive and organized event. Our success depends on all of the committed people who are willing to donate their time.

Please consider volunteering for a shift or two:

General set-up and take-down:

Friday afternoon, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon

Plant sale staffing/information:

9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Food - donating baked goods; staffing food table:

11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Silent Auction:

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

Contact Rhiannon if you can help by calling (814) 234-4779 or emailing rhiannon@centrefurnace.org.

Upcoming Exhibit

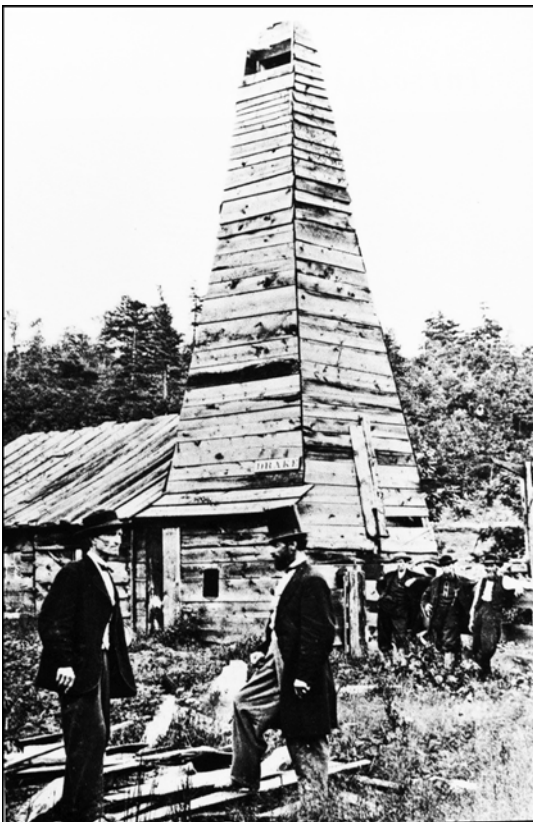
Oil and the Pennsylvania Valley That Changed the World

Perhaps now more than ever, we are aware of the impact that oil has on our lives. From gasoline, to pharmaceuticals, to cosmetics, we depend on this natural resource and its byproducts to provide us with many of the necessities and conveniences of modern life.

On August 27, 1859 Edwin Drake (1819-1880) drilled the first successful oil well in Titusville, Pennsylvania giving it the distinction as the birthplace of the modern oil industry. The Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry, and Tourism located in Oil City has developed a small temporary exhibit that uses text and images to briefly tell the story of the Pennsylvania oil boom. It has been traveling across the Commonwealth for many months, and the Centre County Historical Society is thrilled to welcome the exhibit to our area this spring. It will be on view **April 28 through June 4** at the Centre Furnace Mansion, during regular tour hours.

For more information about the upcoming 150th anniversary of Drake's well, please go to <http://www.oil150.com>.

This exhibit was funded through a DCNR Pennsylvania Heritage Grant with additional funding provided by the Pennsylvania Humanities Council.



Drake's well

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI at Penn State)

Spring Term Courses: April 14 - May 25, 2008

OLLI at Penn State - where learning never retires!
We are offering 70 courses this term.

Spring Trips

🌳 **Penns Valley - From a Very Different Perspective**
Monday, May 5, 2008

Explore the geology, history & ecological beauties of Penns Valley lead by Douglas Macneal, author of the book *A Penns Creek Companion*.

Cost is \$40/OLLI members or \$45/Guest. Transportation, driver gratuity & lunch at the Water Street Grill are included.

🌳 **Tip Toe Through the Tulips in Ottawa**
Monday, May 12 - Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Attend the 55th Annual Tulip Festival (the world's largest!), Canada's most celebrated flower event, with more than three million tulips blooming throughout Canada's Capital Region. Included in this trip will be a guided tour of Ottawa and a boat ride along the Rideau Canal, one of the engineering marvels of the nineteenth century. Ample time will be provided to visit many of Ottawa's major cultural and historical attractions.

Cost is \$355/OLLI members or \$370/Guest. Includes transportation, driver gratuity, motel, city tour, boat ride, two breakfasts, a box lunch and two buffet dinners.

🌳 **Gettysburg National Military Park - Revisit the Turning Point of the Civil War and See the New Museum & Visitor Center**
Wednesday, May 28, 2008

Join us to learn more about the Battle of Gettysburg, as we return to the summer of 1863 and tour the Gettysburg National Military Park. Jim Dungan and Douglas Donovan will be leading an in-depth tour of the battlefield and present a detailed history of the event.

Cost is \$70/OLLI members or \$75/Guest. Includes transportation, driver gratuity, Battlefield tour, muffins and juice, a box lunch and buffet dinner at General Pickett's Buffet.

For more details about OLLI's courses, trips and other activities, visit our website: <http://www.lli.psu.edu> or call (814) 238-2368.

Continuing Education . . .



At the Boogersburg one room schoolhouse on Fox Hill Road, school days of yore come to life for children as well as adults - sans paper, sans computers, sans trash cans! While the ol' schoolhouse might be missing a few modern education amenities, it is certainly not lacking in spirit and fun! That spirit is provided by our outstanding docents, many who are retired schoolteachers, who enjoy sharing the past adorned in the garb of school mistresses and masters from the turn of the century.

Thanks to the Beckwith woodstove and donations of firewood, educational programs are available any time of the year and can be tailored to the interests of your group. School groups are free, and private groups are charged a nominal fee.

Many thanks to all of the special people who continue to make Boogersburg School a memorable living history experience for children of all ages.

Docent opportunities are always available: Must enjoy teaching and the game of pretend.

For more information, please contact Sharon Childs by phone: (814) 861-6953 or email: boogersburg@centrecountyhistory.org.



Special thanks to Kolhepp's Bald Eagle Valley Stone Center for their donation of paving stones for the paths to the woodshed and the outhouses.

Firewood donated by Dave and Chena Hart and Rich and Cindy Lorenzo.

People for Better Pennsylvania Historical Records Access

People for Better Pennsylvania Historical Records Access (PaHR-Access), a grassroots organization started in the Lehigh Valley in August of 2007, are asking for help in an effort to make older Pennsylvania state death certificates available online.

Currently, all death certificates recorded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since 1906 have restricted access regardless of how long ago a person died.

Pennsylvania Division of Vital Records regulations require the requester to have a direct relationship to the deceased in order to obtain a copy of a death certificate. The problem is that many times a requester doesn't know if the person is related and needs the death certificate to find out.

PaHR-Access believes that genealogists, historians, professors, scientists and researchers would be able to utilize the considerable amount of data contained in these numerous historic records in a way that would be far more efficient than the current limited access system.

For more information about the group, their mission and relevant issues, please check out the website: <http://users.rcn.com/timarg/PaHR-Access.htm>

Music at the Boal Mansion Celebrating Boalsburg's Spanish and Scottish Ties

Music at the Boal Mansion in historic Boalsburg will open the season on **Saturday, May 3, 2008** with champagne, fine hors d'oeuvres and music evoking the Spanish and Scottish heritages of the Columbus Chapel and Boal Mansion Museum.

Performing at the annual concert/reception will be Kenneth Bé of Cleveland who will play the Spanish pieces on the vihuela, a plucked string instrument of the Spanish renaissance, and Scottish music from the early 17th century on the lute.

There will be two special performances at 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$50 per person. For reservations, contact the Boal Mansion Museum at (814) 466-6210 or office@boalmuseum.com.

The Boal Mansion will also be participating in the annual Memorial Day celebration. The Village of Boalsburg will celebrate Memorial Day for the 144th time with a day of activities and a ceremony of remembrance on **Monday, May 26**.

For a complete list of events, please visit <http://www.boalmuseum.com/memorialday.village.htm>, or call (814) 466-9266.



CENTRE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CENTRE FURNACE MANSION

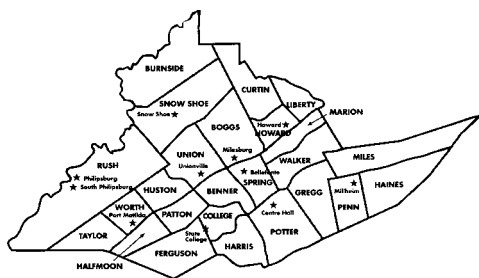
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Return Service Requested

Membership



Your membership supports all aspects of the Historical Society's operations. Membership benefits include: quarterly issues of *Mansion Notes*, the Society's newsletter; *Centre County Heritage*, the Society's journal; advance notice of programs; and a 10% discount on all Society publications.

Thank you to all of our new and continuing members. We hope you value your membership in the Centre County Historical Society as much as we have valued having your support and participation. We invite you to return your membership renewal, if you have not yet renewed for this year. Make checks payable to CCHS.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

_____ Annual (08)	\$35
_____ Friend (F)	\$60
_____ Business (Bus)	\$100
_____ Patron (P)	\$100
_____ Life (L)	\$350
_____ Benefactor (B)	\$500

☐ In addition, I also want to make a contribution in the amount of \$ _____

☐ I am interested in becoming a CCHS volunteer.