

The Concord School Bell

Newsletter of The Concord School House and Upper Burying Ground of Germantown

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The Concord School House and Upper Burying Ground of Germantown

6309 Germantown Avenue
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Opening Up, Looking Forward

It may be difficult to remember, but just a few months ago Germantown was snow-covered and chilly. As we move into midsummer, here is a review of a busy few months and a look forward to our most active part of the year.

One of the most notable developments in recent months has been our increased work with school groups and student researchers, along with our partners in the Historic Germantown consortium. In the fall of 2009, Concord was one of the sites studied intensively by students enrolled in a Temple University undergraduate seminar on Public History. In mid-January, just before one of our big snowstorms, two large groups of 7th graders from Germantown Friends School filled the Upper Burying Ground,

listening as students performed roles relating to the histories of our site. Other schools that have visited recently include Miquon School and Terre Haute Mennonite High School, from Lancaster County, as well as a group from Elizabethtown College in New Jersey.

As our public role expands, so too do our challenges. We are working to create a long-term strategy for preservation and interpretation of the site. Needs to be addressed outside include, for example, tree care, site drainage, and wall repairs. The schoolhouse will need window restoration, joist repairs, and improved signage and labels. But these are good challenges to have, and we look forward to meeting them in the months and years ahead.

--John Pollack

Whit Monday 2010

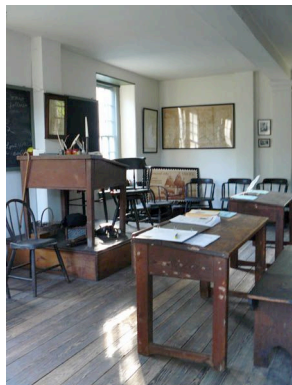
By tradition, as recorded in the original Concord School minute book, Whit Monday (the Monday following Pentecost, the seventh Sunday after Easter) is date of Concord's annual public meeting and election of board members. In recent years, we have revived this tradition as a public opening house and a moment to look forward. We are delighted to welcome two new board members this year: Dorothy Krotzer, an architectural conservator, and Sandra Chaff, a lawyer and archivist.

Cultural Fund grant

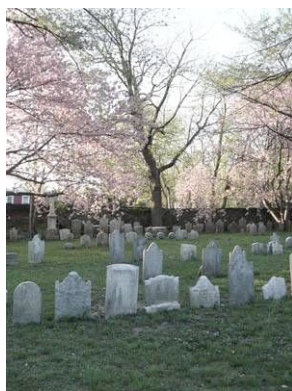
For the fourth straight year, we have received a grant from the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, which supports arts groups and historic sites through the city. The mission of the Fund is to provide "general operating support funds to serve Philadelphia-based arts and cultural institutions and organizations." This year, Concord will receive \$3,758. The site reviewer was positive about the continuing efforts of the board to promote the site and attract neighborhood interest and support, and our responsible budgeting practices.

Now on the web! Look for our new site: <http://www.concordschoolhouse.org>

Thoughts from Juneteenth to July 4



Research on the Concord School House and Upper Burying Ground is an ongoing process, and a fundamental part of our mission. For the last several years, we have collaborated with the Johnson House, Cliveden of the National Trust, and the Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust to celebrate Juneteenth (June 19), the date of the announcement of the abolition of slavery in Texas in 1865, now a day to commemorate African American heritage. After this year's event, and in honor of Independence Day, it is worth examining what we know and do not yet know about the history of African Americans at our site.



The Minutes of the Concord School House (at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania) contain an intriguing reference: in 1814, one of the Trustees paid \$2.65 for “my Black Boys Tuition.” We do not know who the Trustee was, nor if the African American youth in question was actually enslaved (still possible at that time in Pennsylvania, although unlikely) or a servant. What this reference does imply, though, is that Concord was, at least for part of its history, integrated—to a degree. A second piece of evidence comes from the reminiscences of Charles Haupt, who

attended Concord in the mid- or late-nineteenth century, and whose memories were recorded by Edwin C. Jellett in 1906 (Jellett's notes are at the Germantown Historical Society). Haupt recalled that, “The first-floor of the school was used by the Boys, and one bench was reserved for colored boys. The upper floor was used by the girls.” We know from the early Treasurers' Accounts that in 1857 a group of “colored people” rented the schoolroom—we are not sure for how long, or for what purpose they did so.

A similar story of integration and segregation may be told about the Upper Burying Ground. Some blacks were buried in the Upper Burying Ground in the early to mid-1700s: for example, in 1758, “Leonhart Steinbrenner's Negro,” likely an enslaved person, was laid to rest. However, in 1766, the Trustees of the Burying Ground rejected a request by Christian Warner to bury his “Negro child” (likely a slave) and passed a regulation stating that all “Strangers and Negroes and Molattoes” had to be buried in a separate ground on Bowman's Lane in Lower Germantown.

As we seek to tell our site's many stories, we hope to examine these discoveries further and learn more about African Americans at Concord.

The Expert's Eye



The Upper Burying Ground and the Hood Cemetery recently received a visit from Dennis Montagna, Director of the National Park Service's Monument Research and Preservation Program. Dennis evaluated the condition of gravestones throughout the burying ground and offered some preliminary advice on site maintenance and on restoration do's (and don'ts).

Such expertise is particularly important to us as we evaluate future projects to maintain and restore parts of our site's landscape. Many historic cemeteries have often considered their landscape and their monuments separately—but we ought to think of them *together*. Dennis also urged us to work to preserve as much *information* about and from our gravestones as we can, even if the stones themselves cannot or should not be restored.



Summer camps, coming up!

A new initiative for Historic Germantown this summer will be organized half-day and day visits for area summer camps. Concord is delighted to be a partner in this exciting effort to bring new regional visitors to our sites. At Concord, HG guides will teach quill-pen writing (which can be messy!), hand out “rewards of merit” for campers who answer questions correctly, and send campers out into the burying ground to search for our oldest, and newest, gravestones. Guides will also teach young campers about our history and how to understand and respect our artifacts and landscape.



Tree daredevil: high above Concord, arborist Paul Freda trims the trees, November 2009



Germantown Friends School students in a chilly schoolhouse, January 2010

Historic Germantown News

The Hood Cemetery (Lower Burying Ground), 4901 Germantown Avenue, is the latest addition to the (now fifteen) member sites which make up Historic Germantown (HG). The Lower and Upper Burying Grounds were formed at the same moment in early Germantown (1693). Both are important surviving examples of public, civic (not church-affiliated) burial sites in the region. Hood Cemetery and Concord have been collaborating on programming and look forward to working together in the future.

Remember to check the HG website frequently for event updates:
<http://www.freedomsbackyard.com>,

In summer 2010, HG will have its first summer intern to be sponsored by the Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships at the University of Pennsylvania. Penn student Rachel Tashjian (Class of 2011) will be working at Concord along with the other HG sites and helping us with programming and research. Welcome, Rachel!

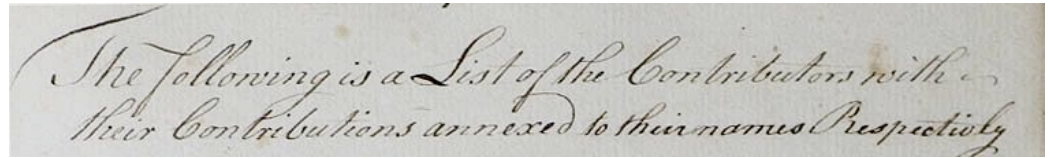
Second Sundays

Visit our site during our 2010 public open houses. On the second Sunday of each month, May-October, we are open from 2-4pm. Bring your friends; spread the word!

Full information on our website:
<http://www.concordschoolhouse.org>

For more on Concord's partner sites in Historic Germantown, plus a full calendar of events, see:

<http://www.freedomsbackyard.com>



Concord School House minute book, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Become a Subscriber!

Since the eighteenth century, the Upper Burying Ground and the Concord School House have relied upon the support of the community for their survival.

We welcome donations and support. Our site is a non-profit organization, and your donations are tax-deductible. We also welcome volunteers to help at our site. If you would like to participate, wish to make a contribution, or want to learn more, please write to John Pollack, President: jpollack@upenn.edu, or call 215-746-5825.

Proud member of:



Battle Day 2009

Events for everyone

June 19, 2010 (Saturday): Juneteenth celebration, 11am-4pm

July 4, 2010 (Sunday): Independence Day celebration, noon-4pm; Bell-ringing, 2pm

October 2, 2010 (Saturday): Revolutionary Germantown festival, 11am-5pm; Burial Ground ceremony, 2pm

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