



Notes from the Academy

MARCH 2021 | VOL. 3 NO. 1

Middletonians Celebrating St. Patrick's Day

A St. Patrick's Day

The March meeting of the Queen Esther Circle of Bethesda M. E. Church was held at the home of Miss Mary Richards on Main street, on Tuesday evening. The decorations and refreshments were appropriate to St. Patrick's Day, and progressive games were a feature of the evening's entertainment. The circle which now has thirty-one members will give a play during the spring. Those present were: Mrs. S. J. Brockson, Mrs. D. W. Stevens, Mrs. W. T. Pearce, Jr., Misses Lena Weber, Anna Denny, Lottie Jolls, Lillian Melvin, Ada Scott, Lulu Vinyard, Mary Richards, Mary Culver, Emily Allee, Edith Spry, Edna Brynes, Marion Vinyard, Irene Reed, Mildred Freeman, Hannah Kirk, Orah Spry, Viola Weber, Bessie Doolittle and Mrs. Philip Short, of Georgetown.

St. Patrick's Day Celebrations in Middletown, March 28th, 1914,

Middletown Transcript

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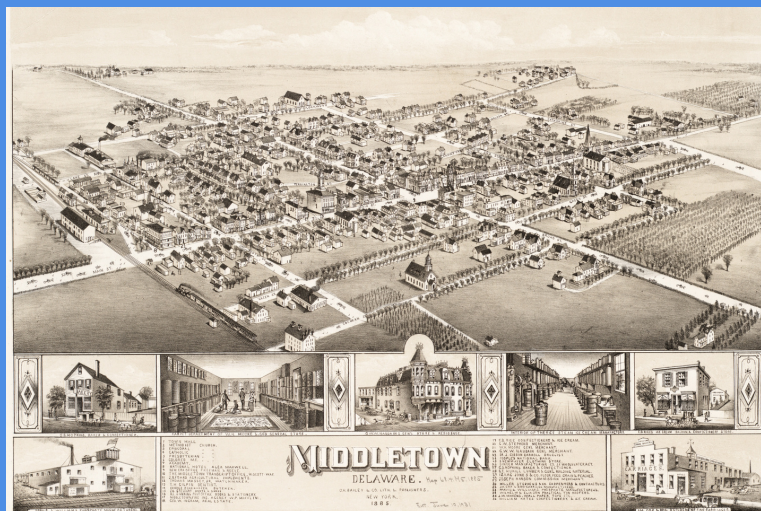
Big Shebang Exhibition Opening

Wiggins Mill (aka Harmon's Mill), c. 1935

This oil on canvas by Denman Fink is on loan to the Middletown Historical Society in our art gallery upstairs. It shows the old grist mill, which was known as Murphy's Mill as of the 1820's, a mile north of



Townsend on what is now called Wiggins Mill Road. The MOT area had lots of grist mills and saw mills in the 18th and 19th centuries, but it is believed that the mill on Noxontown Road is the only one still in existence. Denman Fink (1880-1956) was a professional artist who created advertising pictures for Cream of Wheat cereal and worked as a WPA artist during the Depression. He was born in New Jersey, but moved to Coral Gables, Florida, in the 1920's where he was the artistic advisor to the planned community there.



Map, Middletown, Delaware, 1885, MHS Collection

From the Desk of the Presidents

Dale Wyatt, outgoing Board Chair:

It has been my privilege to serve as the Historical Society's Board Chair for the past year and a half. When I became Board Chair no one could have predicted the historic times we have lived through. It's been a year of Zooming and Social Distancing, and pivoting and changing plans. It has been no different for the Society. During lockdown, we produced a historic architecture [coloring book](#) and a [cooking show](#) based on recipes from a 1919 edition of the Middletown New Century Club cookbook. In the months since lockdown, the organization has completed a number of projects. These have included: a new [driving tour](#) of the northeast quadrant of Middletown, hosting Collections Intern Charlotte O'Shaugnessy, the redesign and reorganization of collection storage, virtual exhibitions for "[People and Peaches](#)" and "[The Big Shebang](#)", awarding multiple scholarships for the annual Research Paper Contest, a self-guided [walking tour](#), and collaborating with Appoquinimink High School art students on "The Big Shebang: Who and What they Fought For"—an exhibition celebrating the 100th anniversary of women getting the right to vote in the United States and the opening of that exhibition. I look forward to seeing where the organization continues in the future.

Linda Harting, Incoming Board Chair:

I am delighted to again be serving the Society as its board chair. We have lived through challenging times and I am grateful for the leadership of Dale Wyatt this past year and a half. I want to thank all who have worked so hard to bring Middletown's history to life with some sense of normalcy as we've been socially distanced from each other. My hope is that in the coming months the Society will again, following the guidance of the governor's recommendations, be able to welcome visitors regularly, gather for our monthly public programs, and host our flagship event, the Olde Tyme Peach Festival, in August. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or suggestions at mhistoricalsociety@gmail.com. I look forward to collaborating with all those who love Middletown history!

Items from the Collection

By Alison Matsen, Museum Coordinator

We all remember the solid brick school on South Broad Street that was built in 1929 and torn down in 2020. But did you realize that that school was built on the site of a dairy farm? It was called Middletown Farms and was run by the Fred Brady family. Some of you might recognize the house in the background as “Arcadia”, the Brady house, which was later used as Broadmeadow School. (Arcadia Parkway is the entrance street to Sharondale.)



*Group of Guerneys,
Property of Middletown Farms, Middletown, Del.*



*Interior View showing Stable Construction,
Middletown Farms, Middletown, Del.*

GEORGE A. WOLF, WILMINGTON, DEL.

Photos from Middletown Historical Society's Collections

Back in the early 20th century, there was a problem of cows contracting tuberculosis, and if a human drank unpasteurized milk from an infected cow, the human could contract the disease also. Veterinarian Dr. Louis Levinson of Middletown was instrumental in getting new laws enacted in Delaware to mandate the testing of cows and to improve the cleanliness of dairy operations. So lots of Delaware farms gave up their dairy operations entirely, if they couldn't afford to modernize and follow the new Delaware guidelines for cleanliness. Some farms like this one went to the expense of modernizing, and wanted the public to know that. They even had these postcards made up to show what a modern operation they ran. The barn might not look modern to our eyes, but having lots of ventilation and light from the high windows, a cement floor, and easily cleanable trough for waste were all healthy improvements over dark, dank ones with dirt floors.

Research Paper Award Winners



1st place winner, Faith Skinner and Board Chair, Dale Wyatt



Garima Bagdi receiving award



Research Paper Contest Chair David Matsen,
Maddie Moyer, and Dale Wyatt

Research Paper Awards

On Nov. 17, 2020, nine students who reside in the Appoquinimink School District were given cash awards in the historical research paper contest. The topics of the research papers were individuals and families for whom various Middletown streets are named. The prizes ranged from \$200 for honorable mention to \$1,000 for first prize. This year's \$1,000 first prize was named for Helen Garton, a Cochran descendant, who had generously donated the funds for the prize. First place winner, Faith Skinner, interviewed several people who had known Eddie Fields Sr., for whom Fields Terrace is named. He was chairman of the board of the school which eventually became Redding School.

Other winners included Garima Bagdi, Madeline Moyer, Eddie Cierniak, and Billy Metten. Honorable mention prizes were awarded to William Wehmeyer, Adrianna Massio, Ella Trembanis and Caitlyn Davis. This year's finalists represented Appoquinimink High School, Middletown High School and MOT Charter School.

Some interesting facts from the papers include:

- Robert A. Cochran served in the Seminole Wars of the 1830s.
- John J. Hoffecker's mother hadn't learned of her son's death in World War One until five months after he died.
- Wood Street is named for William Wood, born in 1818, a local store owner and postmaster.
- Bessie Anderson's sister married a New Yorker and moved to Montana with him. She died shortly after giving birth to a son who was then raised by Bessie in Middletown.
- Berkman Street was named for Harris Berkman, son of a Russian Jewish immigrant shopkeeper. Harris was the fire chief in Middletown for 28 years, and raised money for the fire company by having annual carnivals.

Opening Big Shebang

On November 14th the Society had the pleasure of our first collaborative exhibition opening with the Gibby for the exhibition "The Big Shebang: Who and What They Fought For".

The artwork for this exhibition was created by students at Appoquinimink High School. The students had been introduced to the history and artwork of the American suffrage movement over the course of the school year. The opening started at the Old Academy where we welcomed reenactor Gale Wagner, pictured below, as well as members of the public. At the Gibby there were light refreshments and a first person suffrage presentation by Chan Cosans.



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The Middletown Historical Society collects, preserves, educates, and encourages the development of Middletown's history in order to foster historic awareness and pride in our community.