



MASON-DIXON STARGAZER STONE

# NEWLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2, no. 1

## **PRESERVING THE HISTORY OF THE NEWLIN TOWNSHIP AREA OF THE BRANDYWINE VALLEY**

**Executive Committee -- President: RoseLynn Malarek, Vice-President: Muriel George, Secretary: Diane McGowan,  
Treasurer: Sandy Reber, Members: John O'Neal, Kate Roby, Kathy Conway**

*From the President's Desk*

Greetings, NHS Members,

The Newlin Historical Society is making slow but surely steady progress in becoming a fully functional and operational organization, and I am happy to report on the progress gained during our last Executive Committee meeting.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: We are pleased to welcome Diane McGowan and Kathy Conway to the EC. Diane has agreed to serve as NHS Secretary. They join present Committee Members -- President RoseLynn Malarek ([roselynn831@gmail.com](mailto:roselynn831@gmail.com)), Vice-President Muriel George ([georgefarms@verizon.net](mailto:georgefarms@verizon.net)), Treasurer Sandy Reber ([cowslip@verizon.net](mailto:cowslip@verizon.net)), and Members John O'Neal ([JAOARM@aol.com](mailto:JAOARM@aol.com)) and Tolly (Kate) Roby ([tollyroby@gmail.com](mailto:tollyroby@gmail.com)). If you have comments or questions, contact any of us. (Please don't share our emails. Thanks.)

WEBSITE: It's official! We have a website up and running, <https://www.newlintwphistory.org>. Of course, it's brand new and under construction at the moment. None of us has much experience running a website, so it's a learning curve. John and Muriel have agreed to serve as Co-Web Masters. If anyone would like to assist them, please contact them.

GENERAL MEETING: We are presently scouting out a new venue for our general meetings. Cheslen charges us a rental fee and requires we buy insurance, and with the added expense of running a website, we simply can't afford it. As soon as we finalize a venue, we will inform you of the place, date and time for our next General Meeting in April. We are planning on another informative guest speaker and a business portion where we will launch our research project. Because space is an issue with all the venues we're looking at, this meeting will be RSVP only with members given first opportunity to attend.

RESEARCH: Research to preserve and protect Newlin's historic integrity is the reason NHS was formed. With input from members, the EC has identified Early Industrial Development as the first subject NHS will research. Included areas are the Forge which operated along the Brandywine in the western section of the Township, various mining operations, early train and trolley transportation, and any other related topics that come up. If you have an interest in or information about any of these topics, please contact us and, of course, attend our next general meeting where we will develop procedures and process information.

ORAL HISTORY: History is about stories, and our greatest resources are those people with stories to tell. We will soon be interviewing our oldest and highly revered member, Ruth Thompson, to hear her interesting and valuable recollections. If you or someone you know would like to be interviewed to share recollections, please contact us. This is all about saving Newlin's historical heritage, and this is a great way to do it.

ARTICLES: Our featured article this month is a fascinating vignette of Indian Hanna as told by Sandy Reber. Next month's article will introduce you to an intriguing story written by Tolly Roby about the mysterious and sudden deaths in 1732 of many able-bodied men in their prime throughout Chester County, including Newlin.

Enjoy Sandy's article.

As always, thank you for your interest and support,

*RoseLynn*

### Indian Hannah

Indian Hannah was born on the old Webb Farm property around 1730 and spent her entire life in Chester County. Her tribe, the Lenni Lenape inhabited the region in and around Newlin Township for centuries before white immigrants began their settlement of the land. During her lifetime, the majority of the Native America people in southeastern Pennsylvania left the area, moving farther west. Hannah remained close to her roots until her death in 1802. She continued the itinerant ways of her people throughout her life,

which brought her into contact with the early colonists, who were her neighbors. She has often been called the last of her people. Other Lenni Lenapes also remained in the area but are not well known as Hannah.

In her adult years, she moved between a cabin in Northbrook and the former Webb farm part of the current Longwood Gardens property. The Northbrook location offered access to the Brandywine River. She was well known for her knowledge of medicinal plants and for the baskets she created from local grasses. A few baskets attributed to her are in the collections of the Chester County Historical Society.

During her senior years, Hannah became infirm and was cared for by neighbors in Newlin and East Marlborough Townships. Both the Webb and the Peirce families cared for her at various times. In Newlin, the Harlans, Marshalls and Barnards cared for the aging woman. By the fall of 1800, she became too frail to be cared for by her neighbors and was moved to the new county poor house in present day Embreeville. She was the first resident of that facility.

Hannah died in 1802 and was likely buried in the pauper's graveyard on the grounds of the poorhouse. After her death, many of the families who had cared for Hannah erected memorial graves to her on their properties. She was widely recognized as the last member of her tribe to live in the area at that time although other members of the Lenni Lenape tribe lived in the area and continue to live in Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, their ancestral lands.

George Washington Peirce began the use of a memorial wooden cross around 1850 at what was known at the time as Peirce's Park (now Longwood Gardens). The tradition still continues as a replica of a wooden cross can be found in the woods at Longwood.



On the poorhouse grounds there are two stone markers that were placed in her honor. One is visible from Rte. 162 and the other is located on the hill above in a restricted area. Over the years, others who became familiar with her story had markers placed in areas she lived.



In 1925, Pierre du Pont had a large boulder along the original Rte. 52 north erected through the Pennsylvania Historic Commission dedicated to Indian Hannah to commemorate her birthplace on the Webb farm property. When Rte. 52 north was closed in 2011, the marker was restricted from view by most travelers to the area. The original marker was moved to the grounds of the Longwood Progressive Friends Meeting House, overlooking the land that Hannah would have known.



The Pennsylvania Historic Commission and the Chester County Historical Society placed one of their familiar blue and gold bronze markers on Indian Hannah Road close to the Northbrook location of her cabin.



For further information about Hannah, Dawn C. Marshal's book [A Lenape among the Quakers, the Life of Hannah Freeman](#) is a good source. Thanks to Longwood Gardens Digital Archives for the use of the photograph of the Indian Hannah memorial cross.

**Sandy Reber** was born in Boston, MA and lived with her family in several states including CT, MI, PA, and NJ. She graduated from high school in Westfield, NJ, received a BA from Cedar Crest College in Allentown, and a BSRN from the U of PA in Philadelphia. Her work resume includes teaching 8<sup>th</sup> Grade English in Downingtown and working as a pediatric nurse at Children's Hospital in Philadelphia, a maternity nurse at Jefferson Hospital, and a public health nurse in Wayne. After leaving nursing, Sandy began working in 1986 at Longwood Gardens holding various positions, primarily as an archivist, before she retired in 2016.

Sandy is married to Martin Reber. They have 2 children (twins) Tom and Meg, 4 grandchildren, and 2 cats. In addition to serving as Treasurer of NHS, Sandy belongs to the London Grove Friends Meeting where she serves on many committees and assumes many leadership responsibilities. She is also on the Board of the Kennett Underground Railroad Center and volunteers at the Tyler Arboretum and the Chester County Historical Society. Her hobbies include knitting, gardening, baking bread and making pickles during summer harvest. (She's willing to share recipes!). She and Martin live in a historic house in Embreeville, which once was a general store and post office. They have been residents since 1983.