

# The Concord School Bell

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

Fall-Winter 2010-2011  
Vol. 2, no. 2



The Concord School House and Upper Burying Ground of Germantown

6309 Germantown Avenue  
Philadelphia PA 19144

<http://www.concordschoolhouse.org>

## 2010-11 Officers

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## Back to School—at the Old Schoolhouse

In cooperation with the 6300 Block Alliance, Concord/Upper Burying Ground proudly hosted a back-to-school donation event on September 11, 2010. Block business leaders and friends along with Concord volunteers donated funds and assembled colored backpacks with pens, pencils, and paper for enthusiastic children in the neighborhood.



Michael Schweisheimer, volunteer Melissa Wayne, and visitors

We estimate that 45 children attended, many accompanied by parents and grandparents. Our young visitors were invited to tour the schoolhouse and grounds after receiving their back-to-school packs. We look forward to more successful back-to-school collaborations with the 6300 Block Alliance!



## A Busy Season . . . Marred by Break-Ins

A summer and fall season full of visits to the schoolhouse and burial ground was sadly interrupted by three serious crimes on the site this past year. The first, in June, involved a break-in of the schoolhouse through the building's basement. The basement doors at the front of the building were seriously damaged. Stolen property included a lawnmower and tools; the schoolroom was also rifled and the donation box taken. What police believe to be the same thief returned in late July and broke a window on the schoolhouse first floor, seriously damaging the window frame. Again, petty cash from the donation box was taken. In the third episode, during the week of July 4, the site's lawnmower (a newer model) was stolen from the cemetery yard.

The Board and site volunteers have stepped forward to meet these challenges. We have installed a new, monitored burglar alarm on the premises. Preservation Contractor

Andrew Palewski undertook an emergency repair of the basement entry doors for a moderate fee. Caretaker David Mitchell was able to repair the broken window frame, and it and an adjacent window were stripped, puttied, and primed before the winter season began in earnest. With a grant from the Mount Airy Business Improvement District, new security lighting will be installed in 2011.

The resulting expenses stretched but did not break the Concord budget. We will be considering planning and fundraising for a more permanent (and historically suitable) repair to the bulkhead basement doors.



View of the broken window, July 25, 2010

## Learning from our visitors (young and old)

One of the ongoing challenges at Concord is that of site interpretation. What stories do we tell our visitors about our history? What details do we want them to focus on?



The schoolhouse, for example, was probably arranged in its current layout during the 1950s by Germantown historian Doris Ritzinger, and it has remained largely unchanged since her time. Many of the objects in the schoolroom were also installed during that time. So to claim that visitors are looking at “an intact nineteenth-century schoolroom” may be to stretch the truth a bit. There is also a conspicuous lack of museum-style signage anywhere on the site, outdoors or in.



In some ways, this lack of conventional visitor guidance may be part of Concord’s appeal: our visitors can make their own way through schoolroom and graveyard, and ask us questions if they have any, or not. But on the other hand, without any signage, many visitors miss key elements of what is around them. Aspects we most want them to notice can go entirely ignored.

In December 2010, seventh-grade students from Germantown Friends School visited Concord and the Upper Burying Ground over two days, and their observations and questions were highly instructive. Here are a few examples:

- How many students really studied in the schoolroom at any one time?
- Did they stay all day? If so, where did they eat? (and what?)
- How could a teacher have kept order in a small room with students of many different ages?
- Did older students teach younger ones?
- Did boys and girls study side by side in the room?
- When and why did Concord cease being a working school?
- How far did students actually come to get to school?
- Did the same teachers return year after year?

We have only partial answers to some of these questions at present: these are items for us to ponder as we continue our own reinterpretations of the histories of Concord and the Burying Ground.

## News from Historic Germantown



A generous two-year grant of \$175,000 from the Barra Foundation will enable the Historic Germantown (HG) consortium to hire its first Executive Director, as well as a Director of Visitor Experience. The searches to fill these positions will take place during the first quarter of 2011. This impressive step forward for the consortium is sure to bring even more energy and attention to all HG sites.

Under the leadership of current President Dennis Pickeral (Director, Stenton), the consortium has been active on many fronts over the past

year, including: preparation of a new HG collective business plan; revision of bylaws; joint fundraising and development efforts; and increased coordination on event and tour planning. Concord Treasurer Michael Schweisheimer participated in HG business planning; he along with President John Pollack and board members Emily Cooperman and Connie Ragsdale have represented Concord at HG board and staff meetings. All sites will be represented at the Great Day festival (April 16, 2011) in Vernon Park, the unofficial kick-off of the season.



Battle of Germantown Day  
October 2, 2010  
Photographs by Ron Tarver



## Second Sundays move— to Saturdays

In 2011, Concord School House and the Upper Burying Ground will be open to the public this year on the second *Saturday* of each month, May-October, from 1pm to 4pm. After the success of our monthly “Second Sunday” public openings over the last two years (last year in partnership with the Hood Cemetery), we have agreed with our Historic Germantown partners on a time when most of the sites can be open at the same time. HG will be organizing thematic visits around many of the open Saturdays. More information will be available on our website or at <http://www.freedomsbackyard.com>.

## *Civil War Veterans in the Upper Burying Ground*

2011 marks the beginning of commemorations of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, and we remember the four Civil War veterans laid to rest in the Upper Burying Ground:

- John Crout, 158th Pennsylvania
- Marcius Crout, 95th Pennsylvania
- Solomon Nittrouer, 58th Pennsylvania
- George Scheuermann, 202 Pennsylvania

This information is courtesy of Eugene Stackhouse, author of *Germantown in the Civil War* (The History Press, 2010).

## July 4: Ringing out Freedom and Independence—In the News

We welcomed nearly seventy-five visitors to our annual bell-ringing ceremony on July 4, 2010. Vice President David Young presided, announcing to the crowd before the 234 rings (one for each year since Independence), “Downtown, they only tap the Liberty Bell. Here in Germantown we ring it.” The event received news coverage and a photograph in *The Germantown Chronicle*, and historian Kenneth Finkel (American Studies, Temple University) wrote movingly about the ceremony on his Redbricker blog on [philly.brownstowner.com](http://philly.brownstowner.com) (“A Fourth With Feeling”). A link is on our website.

## Second Saturdays 2011

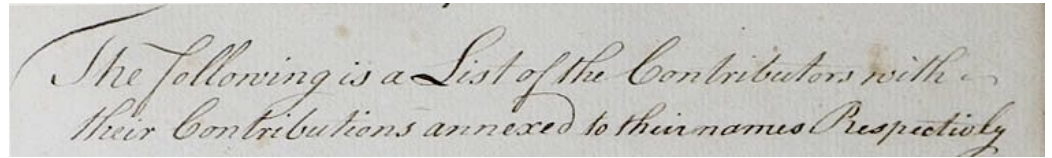
Visit our site during our 2011 public open houses. On the second Saturday of each month, May-October, we are open from 1-4pm. Stop by, and bring your friends.

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

Proud member of:



<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. Our site is a non-profit organization, and your donations are tax-deductible.

## Annual Public Meeting & Open House

We invite the public to attend the board meeting of Saturday, June 11, beginning at 4:00pm. This ceremony will mark the inauguration of the organization's board for the upcoming year. According to the bylaws, board members officially take their positions on Whit Monday (the seventh Monday after Easter Sunday), which falls this year on June 13. This is an opportunity to celebrate our achievements, discuss goals, thank our contributors, and look forward to another busy year. Spread the word!

## Volunteer thanks



...raking the leaves, November 2010...

Thanks to volunteer Melissa Wayne for assisting with the Back-to-School event and to volunteer Lynne Farrington for leaf raking through the fall season. Paint for the front windows was purchased thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, and two of the first-floor windows were scraped, puttied, and painted by site caretaker David Mitchell and Lynne. We welcome volunteers; for more information, please contact us.



Battle Day 2009

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## 2011 Schedule of Events and Public Openings

[check website for updated times and details]

Saturday, April 16, 1-4pm, Vernon Park  
A Great Day on the Great Road festival (Historic Germantown sites)

Saturday, May 7, noon-5pm  
Mount Airy Day

Saturday, May 14, 1-4pm:  
First "Second Saturday" opening

Saturday, June 11  
1-4pm: Second Saturday opening  
4-6pm—Annual Public Board meeting and bell ringing

Saturday, June 18, 11am-4pm  
Juneteenth celebration,  
6300 block Germantown Ave.

Monday, July 4, noon-4pm:  
Ring Out Freedom and Independence in Germantown:  
Bell-ringing ceremony, 2pm

Saturday, July 9, 1-4pm  
Second Saturday opening

Saturday, August 13, 1-4pm  
Second Saturday opening

August (date to be announced)  
"Back to School" event  
6300 Block Alliance, Germantown Ave.

Saturday, September 10, 1-4pm  
Second Saturday opening

Saturday, October 1, 11am-5pm  
Revolutionary Germantown Festival  
Ceremony and bell ringing, 2pm

Saturday, October 8, 1-4pm  
Second Saturday opening