

HAYCOCK HISTORICAL NEWS

The Newsletter of The Haycock Historical Society • Summer 2004

HAYCOCK'S KISSING BRIDGE

by Beth Kerdock

Next time you're traveling on West Thatcher Road, slow down and watch for Covered Bridge Road, and take the time to make this turn. On this byway lies the last remaining covered bridge in Haycock (there used to be two).

Crossing the Tohickon Creek, the 130-foot long one lane bridge has white entrances

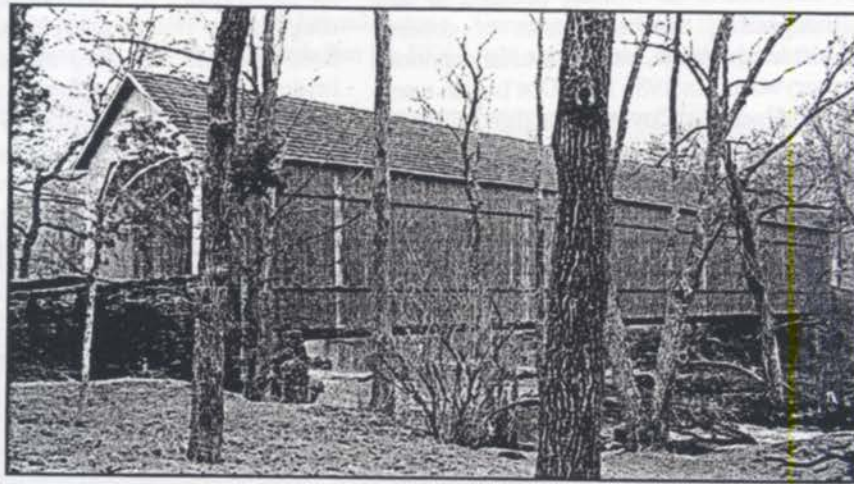


Photo by Heather Radick

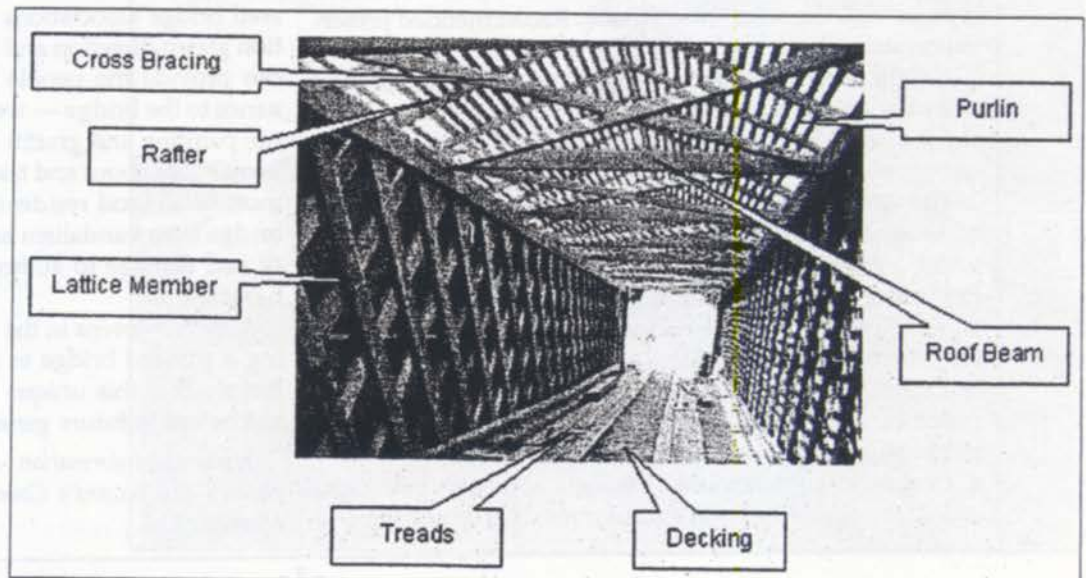
and red painted sides. Built in 1873, the bridge was first known as Sheard's Bridge after the adjacent mill complex, which was owned at the time by Levi and David Sheard. The bridge provided a connection between the mill located in East Rockhill Township and the crossroads village, which was in Haycock, later named Thatcher Village.

LET'S LOOK INSIDE...

Some of the most interesting parts of a covered bridge are on the inside. It may look from the outside that the bridge was built to be picturesque, but the inside of the structure reveals that covered bridges were built for their usefulness, not their beauty. The cross bracing under the roof added to the strength of the side and allowed the bridge greater support in high winds. The side trusses supported the bottom decking of the bridge which kept it from sagging under heavy traffic and wear. The bottom decking in the Sheard's Bridge is horizontal (side to side) rather than linear (back to front); this makes the ride across bridge delightfully bumpy.

The most distinctive feature of the inside of the bridge is the graceful lattice patterned side. This is known as the Town Truss, after the bridge designer Ithiel Town. Earlier designs for covered bridges required large trusses made of big timber and/or complicated arch

supports. These methods were too expensive for the small country community too afford. In the Town Truss method, the builder would criss-cross planks in a diagonal lattice work. The planks would be secured with treenails or wooden pins. The Town Truss design was simple enough for the country builder to follow purchased plans. Just as small rural communities came together for barn raising and church building, Ithiel Town's patent made it possible for humble villages to build their own covered bridge.



COVERED BRIDGE PRESERVATION

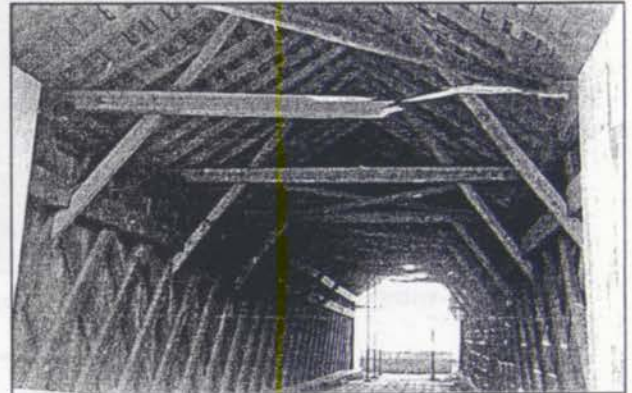
by Beth Kerdock

In the early 1980's, Sheard's Covered Bridge looked like it wasn't going to survive the century. The bridge had become dilapidated; the paint had worn off, the sides were weathered and boards were missing, as were shingles on the roof. A worse danger than neglect however was the viciousness of vandalism. Side boards had been kicked out, graffiti was a constant plague and the bridge had become a hangout for partying youths, making the threat of fire by arson or accident a constant worry.

It was then that state and local officials decided to take action. PennDot, recognizing the importance of covered bridges in terms of historic heritage and the tourist economy, prioritized their preservation. In 1984 PennDot began a renovation program for Sheard's Covered Bridge. Covered

bridge craftsmen were brought in, side boards replaced and the roof re-shingled. Sheard's was repainted with its signature red sides and white entrance. Now that the state had renovated Sheard's, it was up to the townships of Haycock and East Rockhill to protect the bridge.

During the late 80's vandalism at the bridge was still a problem. Although East Rockhill tried to increase police protection of Sheard's, vandals and partying youths would simply scurry to the Haycock side of the bridge to avoid arrest. So supervisors in Haycock and East Rockhill agreed to a cooperative police surveillance proposal that allowed the East Rockhill police to make arrests on both sides of the bridge. In addition, East Rockhill's Park and Recreation Board looked into ways to maintain both Mood's and Sheard's Covered Bridges after the county lost another covered bridge to fire in Newtown Township in the early 90's.



A BFI truck damaged Mood's Bridge this winter. The bridge, located off Blooming Glen Road in East Rockhill Township, was repaired at the same time as Haycock's bridge. Both are similar in design. Photos by Heather Radick.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE PRESERVATION

Fire, flood, vandalism and vehicular accidents are the four main threats to covered bridges. Although there is not much the community can do to prevent damage by floods, there is much that can be done to protect covered bridges from the other three threats. Recommended preservation steps should include:

- 1. Height Restriction Bars** - Depending on drivers to read and obey height signs is not enough, height restriction bars should be placed at appropriate location (such as street entrances).
- 2. Fire Retardant Timber** - Currently the engineering firm of Keast & Wood in Philadelphia is conducting a study under a contract by the National Historic Covered Bridge Preservation Program administered by the FHA to find ways to protect covered bridges from fire. The results of this study should be available soon.
- 3. Police Surveillance** - Municipal funding of adequate police surveillance must continue to get a top priority and public support if vandalism is to be prevented.
- 4. Community Preservation Efforts** - Although municipal and state government plays a major role in the protection of

these historic bridges, members of the local community are the ultimate stewards of these treasures. A Friends of the Bridge Society should be formed. Membership in the Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Society of Pa and other covered bridge associations can help to give a local preservation group direction and information. The local community can provide the people power to do the routine maintenance to the bridge — weed and brush removal, trash clean up, painting and graffiti elimination. Those efforts say that people care about and take pride in this covered bridge. But most of all local residents need to watchdog their covered bridge from vandalism and arson. Report suspicious activity and damage to authorities; don't assume someone else has done so.

Very few towns in the country have the privilege of having a covered bridge to protect. It is our responsibility to history that this unique example of Americana landscape not be lost to future generations.

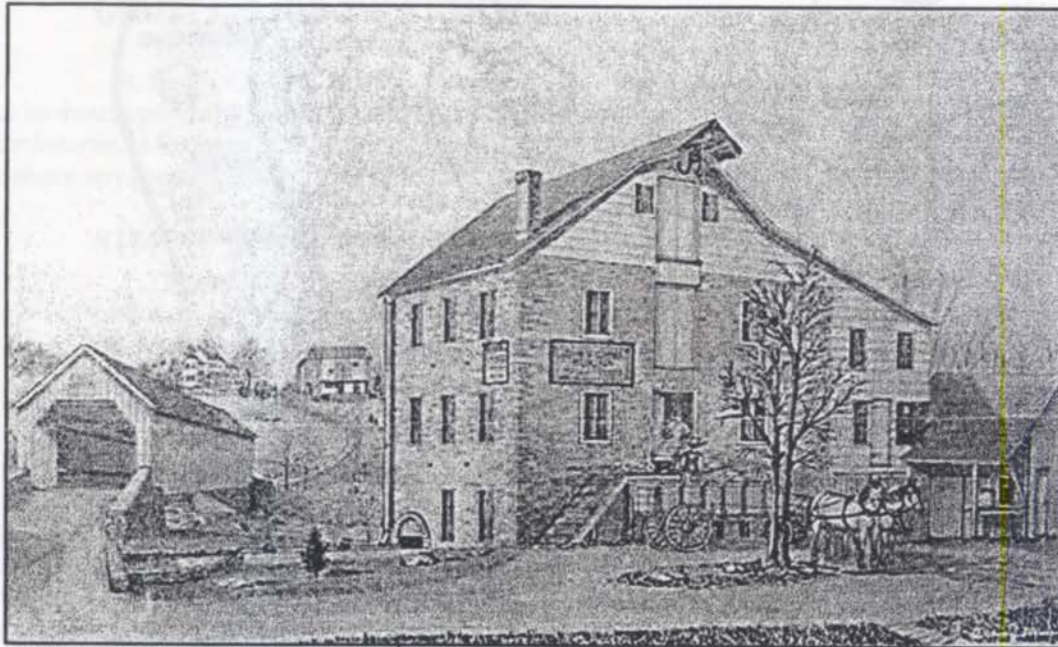
Historical Information on the rebuilding and preservation of Mood's and Sheard's Covered Bridges from the archives of the Morning Call.

THE ARTIST OF COVERED BRIDGE ROAD

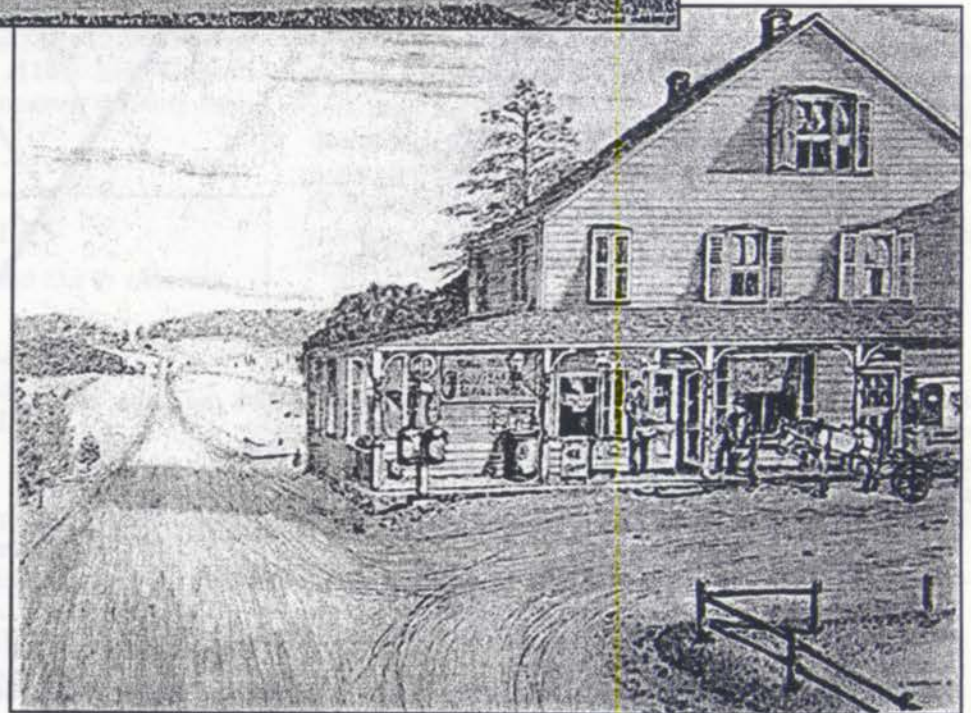
by Beth Kerdock

A quarter century ago a retired milkman and his wife lived in a small cottage off Covered Bridge Road. It was a quiet and secluded spot with a lovely view of the millpond and its gracefully cascading spillway. A perfect spot for Charles Wehmeyer to reminisce on his working days, delivering milk across the countryside by horse and wagon and dream of lost times and landscapes. But as they say, still waters run deep and talent buried deep inside a man may bloom at anytime of life. One evening Charles's wife decided to take an art class and rather than make him go to the bother of driving back and forth just for her sake alone, she convinced Charles to join the art class. Although into his 80's,

Charles Wehmeyer, who had never drawn or painted before, began to produce line-art images of the bygone days of his past. An amazing accomplishment, which required a sharp memory, artistic ability and a steady hand. Prints of Mr. Wehmeyer's drawings hang in the Haycock Township municipal building, giving us a glimpse of how the area once appeared- the Old Carding Mill, Thatcher Store, the Covered Bridge at Sheard's/Clymer Mill and other local landscapes all return from the past. Mr. Wehmeyer and his wife passed away within weeks of each other, but the legacy they left us will never be forgotten. Because sometimes it takes a good woman, to get a good man, to do a good thing.



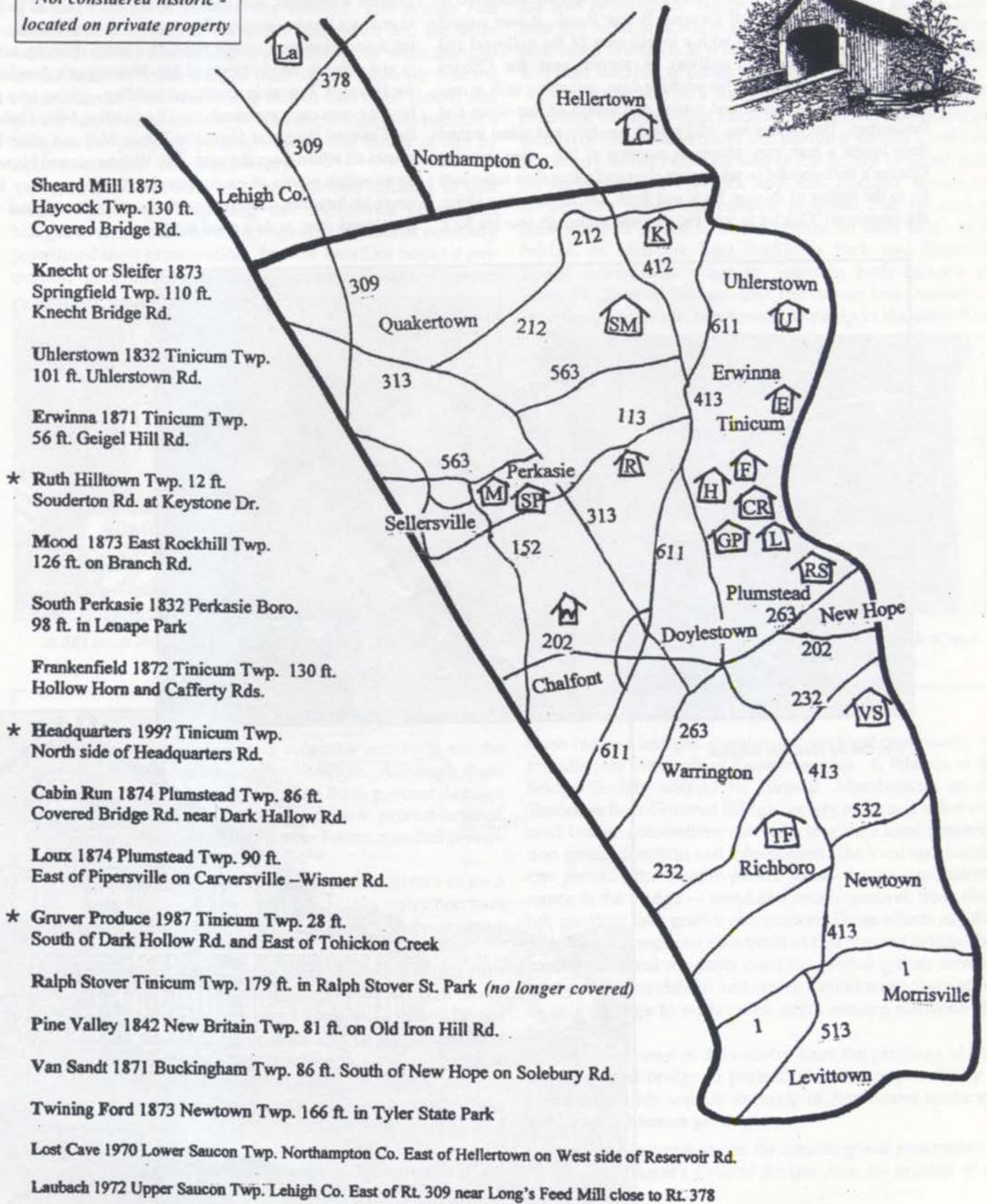
Photos by Heather Radick



COVERED BRIDGES OF BUCKS COUNTY

by Jane Nase

**Not considered historic -
located on private property*



SOCIETY NEWS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY COVERED DISH PICNIC

Bring your favorite dish & join us.
Sun., June 27th • 1 to 5 pm • Lake Towhee Park
Wagon rides provided by Greg Seifert,
Mountain Pride Farms, 3-5 pm.

HISTORY OF ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSES

Thurs., Sept 30th • 7:00 PM
St. Paul's Church- Applebachsville
Guest Speaker -Dr. Robert Leight

GHOSTS & GRAVESTONES

Thurs., Oct. 28th • 7:00 PM
St. Paul's Church, Applebachsville
An in -house presentation on the history of graveyards & tombstones. Members of the audience will be invited to share any local legends or Ghost Stories they know.

SIMON SINGER POTTERY

Thurs., Nov. 18th • 7:00 PM
St. Paul's Church- Applebachsville
Guest Speaker -Mr. Webster Singer

What is the RESEARCH COMMITTEE?

The Research Committee meets several times a year to informally examine interesting historic information about Haycock and the neighboring area. You never know what is going to come up- local legends, early township maps, old newspaper stories or Indian Artifacts. If you are interested in joining this fun and eclectic group please contact Diane Kelly (215) 536-4297 or rdrdk@juno.com or sign up at the next General Meeting to find out Research Committee meeting location and dates.

NEW MEMBERS

The Haycock Historical Society would like to welcome the following new members:

Kenneth and Kathleen Appel (Family)
Kay [Applebach] Bader (Individual)
Dorothy Barwis (Individual)
Ivan J. Belac (Individual)
Charles Fite (Individual)
Hearth and Hedgerow-Corporate Sponsor
Harry & Peggy Hinkel (Family)
Howard L. Kressler, Jr. (Individual)
Lawrence LaFevre (Individual)
Fay Oeltjen-Bruns (Individual)
Randall and Karen Page (Family)
Edie Reiss (Individual)

SHEARDS/CLYMER MILL PRESENTATION

The talk on the Sheards/Clymer Mill that was cancelled due to the snowstorm in March, was finally presented on April 15th despite still being weather challenged. High winds and a felled tree caused a power outage, but thanks the efforts of Henry DePue, a generator kept the meeting going until the electricity came back on. The proud milling tradition of the Haycock/Rockhill area was discussed, as well the technology of the grist mill. Of the numerous mills which once dominated the 19th century landscape of the Tohickon and Kimples Creek Watersheds, only Sheards/Clymer Mill remains standing. Efforts are now underway to preserve this historic structure. Anyone interested in joining the GristMill Society should call Jerry Deegan at 215-536-7951 or Gristmill@fast.net



COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All of the Committees WELCOME NEW MEMBERS- If you are interested in participating in one of the Committees contact the following:

Newsletter Committee - Beth Kerdock.....215-538-1807
bjsninpa@worldlynx.net
Research Committee - Diane Kelly.....215-536-4297
rdrdk@juno.com
Social Committee - Chris Handschin.....215-536-0364
chandschin@netcarrier.com

Governing Committee Meeting - The Officers of the Society met for governing meetings on Jan. 11th, Feb. 2nd, and May 3rd. Cancellation policies of general meetings due to inclement weather; revisions to membership affiliations allowing a couples lifetime membership and review of financial statements were discussed. On March 1st a nominating committee meeting was held to nominate officers for next year, those nominated were:

Ralph Rosencrans-President
Beth Kerdock and Chris Handschin VP I & II
Greg Seifert - Ad Hoc
Dick Landgreen, Diane Kelly and Henry Depue are to continue in their positions of treasurer, secretary and ad hoc.
The Governing Committee of the Haycock Historical Society meets the first Monday of the month at 6:00 pm at the Haycock Township Building.

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