



THE HILLTONE

HILTONIA ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER
Fall 2003

Hiltonia's Historic Neighbor, *Andrea Spillman*

Living in Hiltonia, you've doubtless passed the Trenton Psychiatric Hospital more times than you can count. By now, you're probably familiar with the imposing fences around the forensics building and the older, ivy-covered, deserted stone structures. How did this institution come to be, though?

To answer this question, we must travel back to 1837. New York had just led the nation in providing for the establishment of a mental health hospital, and other states were beginning to follow suit. In New Jersey, Dr. Lyndon A. Smith set forth a proposal for a psychiatric asylum. It would take two years before the New Jersey legislature would pass a resolution merely to establish a committee to investigate the problems facing the state's mentally ill. Two more years and a joint legislative committee would explain the need for a psychiatric hospital to a tight-fisted legislature unwilling to allocate the large sum necessary. Over the next three years, it seemed that the idea of opening a psychiatric hospital in New Jersey had been all but abandoned.

Enter Dorothea Dix. Born April 4, 1802, she had escaped a tumultuous home life (alcoholic father and sickly mother) to live with her grandmother in Boston. With the aid of the house's ample library, she taught herself all she could. At age fifteen, she opened her own one-room school, establishing herself in the teaching profession.

Little did she know then what a profound impact this career would have on her life. In 1841, Ms. Dix took on a teaching job at an East Cambridge jail. While there, she discovered the "lunatics," stuffed together in a cold, dirty cell with only a bit of straw to cushion the stone floor. So aghast was she to discover the wretched conditions that Dorothea vowed to do all she could to improve the life of the mentally ill. She set about researching

First, the land had to be picked, according to guidelines set forth by Dr. Thomas Kirkbride, of Philadelphia. Titus Farm satisfied all of Kirkbride's specifications.

W. Philips and J. Whitaker, best known for building the state house, constructed the buildings of the hospital, following a slightly modified version of Thomas Kirkbride's plans. Landscaping fell under the scrutiny of J. Dowling, landscape architect for the

White House gardens. The final cost, including land, building, furniture, and initial salaries totaled \$146,513.58, and the institution admitted its first 86 patients in 1848.

Dorothea Dix always felt a special fondness for this, her first of more than thirty hospitals. When, in her 80s, she became too ill to travel any longer, she moved into an apartment on the hospital's



the plight of the insane around the nation, presenting her findings to the appropriate state legislatures. Which brings us back to where we left off earlier in New Jersey.

Six years after the initial proposal for a psychiatric hospital, and three years after that idea had been abandoned, Dorothea Dix picked up the fight and gave it new life. She met with politicians in her home, petitioned the government and, on January 23, 1845, gave Sen. Joseph Dodd a "memorial" of her findings to present to the state legislature. That same day, a new hospital was approved, and plans quickly moved forward.

grounds and remained there for four years until her death in 1887.

The hospital has continued to serve New Jersey's mentally ill more than 150 years after its founding. In that time, some buildings have been demolished, some abandoned, and others newly built. It has changed names twice (from "New Jersey State Lunatic Asylum" to "New Jersey State Hospital at Trenton" to the one we're most familiar with, "Trenton Psychiatric Hospital") and employed a variety of cutting edge treatment methods, yet has always stayed true to its founder's deep concern for the care of the mentally ill.

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary Season at Ellarslie

Sept 4 - October 26, 2003
Second Floor Galleries
Churchills in Chambersburg
Opening Reception Sept 5, 6 - 9 PM

Sept 12, 2003
Wine tasting to benefit children's art program

Sept 20 - November 9, 2003
Photography by Ricardo Barros and Phil McAuliffe
Sculpture by G. Frederick Morante
Opening Reception Sept. 27, 6 - 9 PM

November 1 - Feb 15, 2004
Second Floor Galleries
Puppets from the collection of Dr. Henry Ahrens

November 15 - January 4, 2004
Painting by Thom Lynch and Jeff Epstein
Sculpture by Helena Lukasova
Opening Reception November 15, 6 - 9 PM

January 10 - Feb 22, 2004
Artwork by the Children of the Trenton Public Schools
Opening January 17, 6 - 8 PM
Feb. 21 - April 24

Second Floor Galleries
Seldom Seen – Highlights from the Collection

February 28 - April 11, 2004
Murals by the Bogside Artists of Northern Ireland,
Sculpture by Joan Giordano
Opening Reception March 6, 6 - 9 PM

April 17 - June 6, 2004
Ellarslie Open XXII
Opening Reception April 24, 6 - 9:30

May 21 - Sept 19, 2004
Second Floor Galleries
Trenton Collects – Displays from Private Collections

The first hour of most opening receptions is for members only, catering by Utopia. So, if you're not a member, now is the time to join! Individuals may join for \$45, families for \$65, and seniors and students for \$30. To join, go to the Ellarslie website or contact Gail Szenes at 989-8134 or szenes@mindspring.com.

www.ellarslie.org
Museum Office: 989-1191

Cadwalader Park and Its Friends, *Catherine Paci*

For 23 years, Friends of Cadwalader Park has cared for six specimen trees on the 100+ acres of Trenton's Olmsted designed park. In 1980, Bob Makla, a member of the Greensward Foundation, a group of Friends of Olmsted designed parks, spoke at Ellarslie at the invitation of Ben Whitmire, then director of the city museum. The speaker, who lives near Brooklyn's Prospect Park, impressed on his audience the need for care for our old trees. With proper pruning and deep root feeding, our park's trees should live another hundred years, he stated.

Early leaders in Friends of Cadwalader Park, Red Olsen, Peter Yull, Betty Bradshaw, and Catherine Paci, selected the four coffee beeches near the Roebling statue for selective pruning and that has been done every three or four years since 1980. At various times, pruning has been suggested on other trees – those near the Parkside Avenue entrance and one along Cadwalader Drive near the paddock fence also were done.

All money received in donations is spent on tree care, not tree planting. The thinking is that trees planted today will probably not grow as tall or as well as those planted 100 years ago because of environmental factors, car exhaust among them.

Walk through the park soon, before leaves begin to fall in earnest, and observe any trees you think may need some help. Let us know by dropping a note to Friends of Cadwalader Park, P.O. Box 7406, Trenton, NJ 08628-7406. Donations paid by check made out Friends of Cadwalader Park are also accepted at that address.

Bartlett Tree Experts has been doing the pruning work for Cadwalader Park's treasured trees for the past ten years. The city does fine work with routine maintenance, but elder care for trees is expensive, so friends help.



Your Neighborhood Association at Work

Children's Activities

The Hiltonia Children's Activities Committee has a full slate of activities planned for the fall.

In September, the committee plans to host the neighborhood's first teen party, a back-to-school barbecue. Other upcoming events for the fall include

Halloween Parade, last weekend in October, TBA

Holiday Party, December 7, 3-5 p.m., 16 Kensington

Keep an eye out for fliers with details in the weeks leading up to each event. Many thanks to Mike McGrath, acting chair of the Children's Activities Committee, and all of the committee volunteers.

Worthy Projects

The June Food Drive was a great success. Over 12 bags of food were delivered to the Trinity Cathedral food pantry. Hiltonia was acknowledged and thanked in the Cathedral newsletter. Thanks to all who gave so generously.

Upcoming

November: New sock drive – socks to be donated to the Rescue Mission will be collected until November 20, 2003.

December: The City of Trenton's Annual Children Christmas Party donations. The requested \$10.00 per child donation will be collected until December 5, 2003. Donations can be dropped off or mailed to Melinda Chance, 7 Cadwalader Drive, 393-2715.

Committee Update

We continue to search for someone to chair the children's committee. This person will help to coordinate 3 to 4 children's events throughout the year with a well established working committee. If interested, please contact Michael McGrath, acting chair on behalf of the executive board.

Two New Neighborhood Committees have been formed:

Hiltonia Neighborhood Park Committee

Chaired by Linda Reid, the committee will re-address issues with Cadwalader Park and monitor development of the Master Plan for Cadwalader Park.

Hiltonia Help Committee

Whenever you have the question "What can the neighborhood do to help?" or "Can the association help me with...?", contact Michael McGrath, 394-3660, or Melinda Chance, 393-2715.

Hiltonia Events Calendar

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| September Potluck at Ellarslie | Sept 16 |
| Back to School Barbecue for Teens | TBA |
| Children's Halloween Parade | TBA |
| November General Meeting at the Palmers' | Nov 11 |
| Children's Christmas Party | Dec 12 |
| Adult Holiday Party | Jan 10 |

Hiltonia Association Board

Officers

President

Cathe Frierman, 394-3556
mcfrierman@comcast.net

1st Vice President

Helen Dudar
394-1074

2nd Vice President

Michael McGrath
394-3660, 462-7988 (cell)
mikecrdg@aol.com

Recording Secretary

Andrea Lehman
392-1562

Corresponding Secretary

Raiisa Walker, 392-8137
rwalker636@aol.com

Treasurer

Constance Anderson,
695-7292
idabwells@aol.com

Committee Chairs

Crime Watch

Pat Rodeawald, 599-9567
Patrode@comcast.net

Civic

Don Wallar, 695-8711
dwallar@aol.com

Fundraising

Andrea Lehman
392-1562

Hilltone

Cathe Frierman, 394-3556
mcfrierman@comcast.net

Hospitality

Tricia E. Reimer Parks
462-3677
tereimerparks@aol.com

Membership

Constance Anderson
695-7292
idabwells@aol.com

Nominating

Linda Reid, 394-2314
weidellinda@aol.com

Program

Bill Graff, 393-4437
willigraff@aol.com

Welcome Wagon

Jean Harbach
392-6380
Jeanharbach@aol.com

Worthy Projects

Melinda Chance
393-2715
bethanyrob@msn.com

The Hilltone Publishing Committee

| | |
|--|---|
| Cathe Frierman 394-3556 mcfrierman@comcast.net | Jennifer Leynes 656-9565 jbleynes@yahoo.com |
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| | |
|--|--|
| Melinda Chance 393-2715 bethanyrob@msn.com | Gail Szenes 989-8134 szenes@mindspring.com |
|--|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| Noreen Duncan 278-9515 noreenduncan@att.net | Sylvia Weir 656-8211 brentandsyl@earthlink.net |
|---|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| Amy Hellickson 393-9998 ahellickson@bloomberg.net | Maris Williams 396-1138 vmwms@concentric.net |
|---|--|

Andrea Lehman
392-1562

Book Review, *Noreen Duncan*

Inside Out: Fifty Years Behind the Walls of New Jersey's Trenton State Prison

Harry Camisa and Jim Franklin

Windsor Press (www.windsorpress.com)

This is not creative non-fiction — no *Seabiscuit* material with box office promise here, although there are images so raw and so graphic they could be scenes from a Discovery channel trailer. Harry Camisa spent fifty years behind the walls of New Jersey's Trenton State Prison, the first thirty as a corrections officer, and later, armed with a college degree, as an instructor. Jim Franklin, a Mercer County College English professor, also taught in the prison system where he met Camisa. The creation of *Inside Out* was the culmination of years of talk and eventual collaboration between the two.

In Camisa's voice we hear often sympathetic stories of incidents and inmates and of the parallel universe behind the walls with the Trenton Thunder murals on Cass Street. The book is a description of the notorious prison, our neighbor, but it is perhaps more importantly a riveting social history of New Jersey's criminal justice system and a twentieth century American story. Told simply and chronologically from the opening "I loved my job," which he started in 1950, Camisa introduces us to the very human connections between prisoners and staff in this often bizarre world.

Interspersed with the text are black and white photographs of the prison complex and clippings of headlines, many of them from the archives of *The Times*, Trenton: "Condemned Killer Dies During Escape Attempt"; "Gun battle Rips NJ State Prison"; "Police Capture Black Militant in Turnpike Trooper Slaying"; "Con Held in Slaying of Guard." But Camisa's dispassionate recounting of the "inside" details puts another face on the titillating headlines: "I was 1-left wing officer at the time of Van Scoten's escape and first thing Monday morning before the first shift headed out to their posts, Warden Yeager had everybody go to an area behind center where he had the dummy, bed and all set up. He had every officer on every shift come and look at "Van Scoten" so they could see how easy it was to make a mannequin that could fool everyone in the jail. Even though I knew it was a dummy, I could have sworn it was a real person . . . Van Scoten had a big jump on the pursuing cops because of the dummy, and he managed to stay out a long time — almost five years."

There are the usual and expected tales of prisoner escapades, but the ones about the staff are stranger than fiction. The prison psychiatrist, Dr. King, fainted when he was arrested by state police and detectives in his office and charged with plotting to kill his ex-wife, her husband and her sister. Dr. King had himself been arrested twice before, had been a prison detainee, had never passed his boards, and while at the prison had processed about 400 parole applications, all of which had to be reviewed in the early 1970s.

Why did I pick up this non-fiction story in the summer (and a guy book to boot!), apart from the fact that Jim Franklin is a colleague and friend? Before moving to Trenton four years ago, I had no sense of the state capital, its historical place, and, I must confess, no interest whatsoever in the New Jersey State Prison, any prison. I started the book because Jim over the years has told me stories of people he had befriended while teaching in the prison, Hurricane Carter, for one, and I thought I'd just skim for some of those stories. But I almost immediately found that this work is more than one man's narrative of his work life; it is a story of New Jersey's cultural history and of a capital city that, like others in the roaring 60s, combusted and rose slowly from the ashes. When Camisa started at the prison, "Many of the older Anglo guards resented guys like Vic Vittorio and me....because so many of the inmates we were guarding were of Italian descent. Now I found myself feeling the same way about Blacks." Camisa does not apologize for the realities of his upbringing and learned racial attitudes in the 'Burg, but as we witness his personal growth, we see New Jersey and Trenton change, and we evolve with them.

Camisa, with remarkable recall, provides vivid word pictures of prison cells and fights and recounts details from his first state execution to his conversations and friendships over the years with some of America's most wanted (Beigenwald, for instance) to the Megan Kanka case. Franklin evidently did the library research that supports the stories, ferreted out most of the newspaper clippings, and included an extensive six page index. Reading *Inside Out*, I took a fascinating history course, and I have come to a deeper understanding of my city as a result.

***Neighborhood*, continued from page 4**

ers for the summer of 2003.

Association meetings educated us about Ellarslie and the police department and took us on a field trip to the new West Ward firehouse. For the first time, the annual potluck in September will be open to other nearby neighborhood associations to foster camaraderie in our community.

For many residents, that's what living in Hiltonia is all about. Please think about joining the Hiltonia Association and becoming an active partner in all that we do. And thanks to all of you for making Hiltonia a wonderful, growing place to live.

***Endangered*, continued from page 4**

the site as single-family townhouses. City preservationists believe that the property can be saved through adaptive reuse as loft apartments and point to the success of the nearby Cigar Factory as proof that this type of development is viable in the neighborhood.

A representative of the Trenton Preservation Committee, which is part of the Trenton Historical Society, will be making a presentation at the November meeting of the Hiltonia Association. If you are interested in learning more about the other properties on Trenton's most endangered buildings list, visit the society online at www.trentonhistory.org.
