



The Half Moon

The Newsletter of the Newtown Historic Association



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- The Man Who Built Newtown
- Highlights From Recent Events and Information on Upcoming Events

Welcome

The Newtown Historic Association presents this newsletter to the Newtown community with the goal of providing news and information on related historic and preservation events and activities in our area. We welcome any suggestions for future articles.

Officers

Betsey King, President
Paul Gouza, First Vice President
Rick Speranza, Second Vice President
Amy Smith, Recording Secretary
Caroline Bennett, Corresponding Secretary
Lori Michelin, Treasurer

Board of Directors

Keyna Crawford
Dan Griffin
Jeff Marshall
Geno Peruzzi
Gary Pickell
Brian Rounsavill
Susan Thompson
Gina Tognini
David Walton
Honorary Life Director – David Callahan
Parliamentarian – Tim Potero

Callahan Research Center

100 Mercer Street
Newtown, PA 18940 USA
Research Center Hours:
Tuesday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Thursday, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
And also, by appointment

New Members

Mark Anderson, Honey Bellosi, Marc & Kathy Butler, Bill & Ruthann Butterfield, Patricia Curran, Anne Drennan, Andrea Dittert, Janine Fryer, Chris Platt, Debra Porter, Bucky & Rosemary Wuenschel



Upcoming Calendar

May:

- 5/16: **Newtown Wine Walk** (including the Court Inn) from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Newtown Theatre
- 5/25: **Annual Memorial Day Tribute to Local Veterans** from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Court Inn

June:

- 6/3: **Elementary School Walking Tour** from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Court Inn (rain date is June 4)
- 6/6: **Spring Garden Cocktail Party** from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Court Inn
- 6/20: **2026 Garden Club Federation of PA Garden Party** from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- 6/28: **Family Fun Day** from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Court Inn

August:

- 8/8: **Newtown Celebrates America 250** from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For the latest information and further details, visit www.newtownhistoric.org.

NHA and Social Media

The Newtown Historic Association is active on social media. Be sure to follow us on Facebook (#newtownhistoricassociation) and Instagram (@newtownhistoric). We have a separate presence for Market Day (#newtownmarketday, @newtownmarketday).

The Half-Moon Inn is Open on Sundays for the 250th Anniversary

By Betsey King

In honor of the 250th anniversary of the United States, the Half-Moon Inn is open to the public on Sundays from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. through the end of the year. Please note that the Inn will be closed on holidays that fall on a Sunday.

The Newtown Historic Association has recently completed a series of docent training sessions, preparing volunteers to highlight the remarkable artifacts and treasures housed within the Half-Moon Inn. This effort ensures that visitors will have engaging and informative experiences exploring the Inn's historical collections.

The Half-Moon Inn is located at 105 Court Street, Newtown, PA 18940. Visitors are invited to discover the rich history of Newtown and learn about notable residents such as Margaret Thorton and Edward Hicks. Guided tours are offered free of charge, although small donations are appreciated to support ongoing preservation efforts. Come visit!



Membership Renewal Reminder

The Newtown Historic Association relies on memberships for funding. Our membership year expired at the end of March.

If you have already renewed your membership, THANK YOU! If you are not a member, please consider joining us. And if your membership is lapsed, we hope you will return. Every membership is critical for sustaining the operations of the NHA. Each year, membership dues help support our preservation efforts here in Newtown as well as NHA events, resources, and facilities. You can easily renew or join from our website at <https://www.newtownhistoric.org/join-us/membership/>.

Thank you for your continued support!



The Half-Moon Inn's Open Hearth Gets Special Attention

By Susan Thompson

The Newtown Historic Association recently had the unique opportunity to host two researchers from the University of Pennsylvania's Archaeology Department at the Half-Moon Inn. The team utilized our large open hearth for a project coordinated by consulting historian and open hearth cook, Tony Shahan.



The group, which included a professional Charleston chef and two of our local open hearth cooking experts, focused on recreating meals potentially prepared by enslaved cooks at the Nathaniel Russell House in Charleston, South Carolina. This exploration was based on forensic culinary evidence, including bones and seeds discovered within the building's walls and in two separate rodent nests. The findings suggest that many of these meals were a result of a fusion cuisine,

incorporating Indigenous and European crops with a significant West African influence (White et al., 2025). It was an enlightening and educational day for everyone involved.



White, C.E., Moore, K.M., Cohen, C.M. *et al.* Food Evidence from a Nineteenth-Century Kitchen House in Charleston, South Carolina. *Hist Arch* 59, 597–633 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41636-025-00580-5>

Do You Have Historic Items to Donate?

If you have historic items to donate to the NHA (pictures, letters, research on a property or family, furniture, etc.), please contact us at (215) 968-4004.



Annual Appreciation Dinner

Photos: Neale Messina

What a wonderful evening celebrating our community!



Following a hugely successful Holiday Open House Tour—with more than 900 tickets sold in support of the Newtown Historic Association—we gathered on Sunday, February 1, 2026, at the Temperance House to thank the homeowners and public building stewards who made the December event so special.



Over 50 guests joined us for our Annual Appreciation Dinner, sharing good food, great conversation, and well-deserved recognition for the volunteers who help preserve Newtown's history. We're so grateful to everyone who continues to support the NHA and make these events such a success!



The Man Who Built Newtown: Can You Help?

By Jeff Marshall

Who comes to mind when you think of the most important people who have ever lived in Newtown? Virtually no one would probably think of Garrett B. Girton, but an argument can be made that he was one of the most influential people in Newtown's 300-year history.

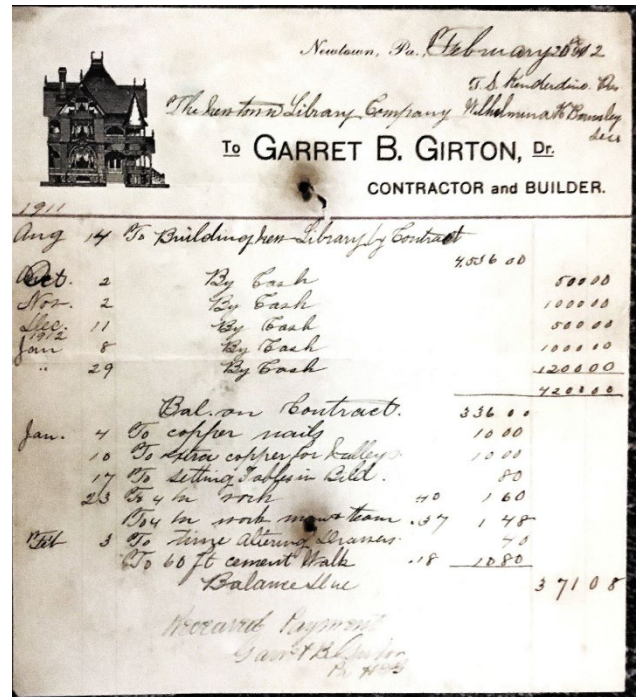
Why? Because the name Garrett B. Girton is documented as the person who was responsible for the construction of well over 100 houses, barns, churches, factories, and schools in Newtown Township and Newtown Borough. Newtown would not be the same without Girton's contributions. The vast majority of his buildings still stand today. He also built structures in Buckingham, Northampton, and Upper Makefield Townships between 1857 and his death in 1913. Girton's son, Harry, carried on with his remarkable legacy completing such buildings as the Chancellor Street School in Newtown Borough.

No comprehensive list of Garrett B. Girton's work exists today. No personal papers or photographs have been found. Because of this, members of the Newtown Historic Association have been on a mission to complete his biography and will soon take photos of many of his buildings.

The NHA has fortunately received three sources of funding that will hopefully pay for the publication of this biography, but we still need help. We are seeking someone who would be willing to help pull all the material together and get it publication ready. In addition, we are desperately trying to find a photo. If you have any desire to be part of this major documentation project or have a photo, please contact NHA Board member Jeff Marshall at JeffMarshall398@gmail.com.

New Signs of Newtown Exhibit

A new exhibit is now open on the second floor of the Half-Moon Inn: Signs of Newtown. Pulled from storage, these historic signs—with an associated placard containing the description and history of the sign—are now professionally displayed for all to enjoy. Just another great reason to visit the Inn!

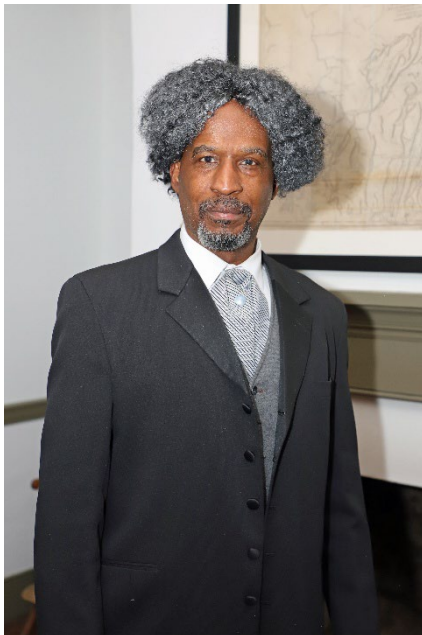


NHA Happy Hour and Frederick Douglass Returns to the Newtown Theatre

Photos: Neale Messina

On Wednesday, February 4, 2026, the Newtown Theatre welcomed history back to its stage with an unforgettable evening honoring Frederick Douglass. Exactly 162 years after Douglass spoke in Newtown, nationally acclaimed performer Darius Wallace brought his words, passion, and moral authority to life in Frederick Douglass: The Self-Made Man & The Work of Rebuilding a Nation.

Darius Wallace ("Frederick Douglass")



Guests also enjoyed a special pre-show cocktail hour at the historic Half-Moon Inn, where Wallace appeared in character as Frederick Douglass. Proceeds from the cocktail hour benefited the Newtown Historic Association,

making the night both meaningful and memorable.



NHA Logo Store

The NHA logo store is open for business!

Give the gift of Newtown pride. Shop local throughout the year with NHA-branded mugs, totes, and cozy gear. From vintage-inspired caps to classic tees, NHA logo gear lets you represent Newtown in style. Perfect for history lovers, hometown heroes, and all local yocals—near or far! Grab a hoodie, sip from a historic mug, and support the mission. Every purchase benefits the NHA. Shop anytime at:

<https://newtownhistoric.printful.me/>



March General Meeting

Thomas Lynskey presented "Titanic Around the World" at our March 16, 2026, general meeting.

The RMS Titanic sank on April 15, 1912, in the North Atlantic Ocean. The largest ocean liner in service at the time, Titanic was four days into her maiden voyage from Southampton, England, to New York City, United States, with over 2,200 people on board.

Mr. Lynskey has travelled extensively to different sites around the world relating to the Titanic - where it was built, the docks it visited, and the graves where victims were buried. His knowledge and mastery of the topic was evident from the start of the presentation to the finish.

Thomas Lynskey



The topic was informative, the presentation was engaging, and the artifacts were captivating.

Artifacts



Tavern Night

Photos: Neale Messina

The Newtown Historic Association resurrected Tavern Night at the Court Inn on April 11, 2026. Oh, what a night!



(Continued on next page.)

Tavern Night (cont'd)

Photos: Neale Messina



(Continued on next page.)



Tavern Night (cont'd)

Photos: Neale Messina



NHA Newsletters

If you would like to revisit previous newsletters, you can find them on the Newsletters page of our website:



<https://www.newtownhistoric.org/about-us/newsletters/>.



Annual Spring Cleanup

Photos: Paul Gouza, Betsey King

It was another successful Annual Spring Cleanup on April 18, 2026, at the Half-Moon Inn.

Many volunteers helped clean and polish the Inn both inside and out. Thanks to all those who participated in making our beloved Inn shine again.



Annual Business Meeting and April General Meeting

The NHA Annual Business Meeting and general meeting took place on April 20, 2026. Approximately 20 people were in attendance.

The Annual Business Meeting was conducted first. It included a review of the organization's events over the past year, the Treasurer's report, and the election of Directors and Officers for a new term.

Outgoing President Dan Griffin presented a bouquet of flowers to outgoing Board member, Mary Jo Garner. Incoming President Betsey King presented Dan Griffin with a gift to show appreciation for his service as President. He will continue to serve the NHA as a Board member.

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Annual Business Meeting and April General Meeting (cont'd)

Dan Griffin and Betsey King



The Annual Business Meeting was followed by “Show and Tell.” Led by Keyna Crawford and Mary Jo Garner, many unique and interesting Newtown antiques were presented.

Mary Jo Garner and Keyna Crawford



Lori Michelin and Dan Griffin



Newtown Wine Walk

The second annual Newtown Wine Walk will be held on **Saturday, May 16th, 2026, from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.** It begins at the Newtown Theatre, 120 N. State Street, where you'll pick up a glass and a "passport" listing each stop on the walk and any promotions the shops are offering. Photo ID will be required when checking in.

One of the stops on the walk is the Newtown Historic Association's headquarters, the historic Half-Moon Inn (Court Inn), 105 Court Street.

Each ticket costs \$58.96. All proceeds benefit the nonprofit Newtown Theatre. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit: <https://www.thenewtowntheatre.com/newtown-wine-walk>

Annual Memorial Day Tribute to Local Veterans

The Newtown Historic Association will hold its annual Tribute to Local Veterans on **Monday, May 25th, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.** at the NHA's Callahan Research Center, 100 Mercer Street, Newtown, PA 18940.



Come see over 200 pictures of local soldiers who fought in the World War II, Korea, and Viet Nam wars. This collection was created by Mike Donovan, a past NHA member and history buff. Also on display will be letters written by soldiers containing their private thoughts and

moments as they experienced war. In addition, more than 300 World War II military shoulder patches from the U.S. Army, Army Air Force, Marines, Navy and Coast Guard will be on display. They represent a variety of battles and war campaigns that took place across Europe and Asia.

This is a one-day-only event. It is free and open to the public. All are invited and you do not have to be a member to attend. If you have any questions, please contact the NHA at (215) 968-4004.

Elementary School Walking Tour

The Newtown Historic Association will conduct its annual Elementary School Walking Tour on **Wednesday, June 3rd, 2026.** The tour begins at 9:00 am and runs until approximately noon. (The rain date is Thursday, June 4th.)

About 200 children from Goodnoe Elementary School and Newtown Elementary School will take a guided walking tour through 5 historic sites in the Borough: Half-Moon Inn (Court Inn), Newtown Library Company, Newtown Fire Association, Newtown Borough Hall, and Newtown Theatre.

The Newtown Historic Association has run this tour for over 45 years. This has proved to be a very popular event with children and enables them to learn about their heritage.

If you have any questions or for additional information, please contact Dan Griffin at (215) 205-2058.



Spring Garden Cocktail Party

The public is invited to wander through the gardens of the Half-Moon Inn (Court Inn) during the NHA's annual Spring Garden Cocktail Party on **Saturday, June 6th, 2026, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.** All proceeds benefit the Newtown Historic Association.



While exploring the gardens, participants will enjoy sipping wine, socializing, and sampling hors d'oeuvres. Raffle tickets for Craig Hackett prints and a few spring baskets of cheer will be available. Beer and fun cocktails will also be available. The cost is \$45 per person for members and \$50 per person for non-members, and tickets must be purchased in advance of the event.

To purchase tickets online, visit the [NHA website](#) or mail your check payable to the "Newtown Historic Association" to the attention of Betsey King, P.O. Box 303, Newtown, PA 18940. If paying by check/mail, make sure to include the following information: name, number in party, amount enclosed, email address, and phone number.

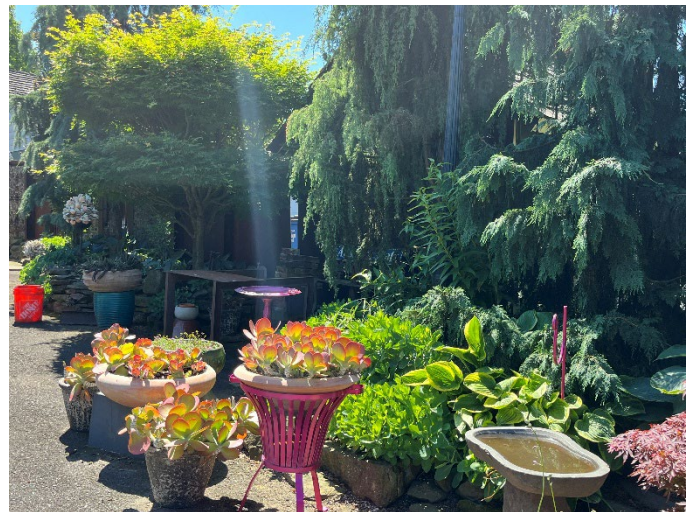
2026 Garden Club Federation of PA Garden Party

The Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania (GCFP) proudly presents the first-ever statewide garden tour on **Saturday, June 20th, and Saturday, June 27th, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** View over ninety beautiful, private landscapes and unique public gardens, spanning twelve

counties across the Keystone State. This is a rain or shine event.

Fifteen clubs from the GCFP have organized lovely gardens that will be in bloom from west of Pittsburgh to Clarion in the north, through Lancaster and all the way to east of Valley Forge.

The Countryside Gardeners Club of Newtown will be hosting a tour as part of the state-wide Garden Party. They will feature eight private and public gardens centered in Newtown but also one in Bensalem and Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. Their tour date is Saturday, June 20th, 2026. 'Day of tour,' a limited number of tickets will be available at Newtown Historic Association, 105 Court Street, Newtown, PA, and are good for both dates across the state of PA. If you have any questions, please call Keyna Crawford at (267) 679-9287 or Mary Jo Garner at (215) 858-0939.



A \$25 ticket includes a full-color tour book that will be mailed to the ticket purchaser and serves as the entrance pass to all the gardens over the two days. Tickets are available for purchase by check or credit until June 6th. After June 6th, tickets can be purchased for \$30 per person on the 'day of the tour' by credit card at designated locations. Visit the GCFP website at pagardenclubs.org for information and ticket sales. All sales are final.

Come join the Party!



Newtown Celebrates America 250!

Celebrate America's 250th anniversary with an action-packed day of exciting and educational events throughout Newtown on **Saturday, August 8th, 2026, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

The day will include a Revolutionary-era skirmish outside the Bird in Hand, an Edward Hicks reenactor at Newtown Friends Meeting House, a Civil War band at the Newtown Theatre, a reenactment of the Doan Gang's robbery of the Bucks County Treasury, historical displays at the Half-Moon Inn (Court Inn), antique fire trucks and equipment at the Newtown Fire House Museum, lobby exhibits at First National Bank & Trust Company, Hessian prisoners and graveyard tours at the Old Presbyterian Church, and more!

This event is proudly hosted by the NHA and supported by our sponsor, The First National Bank & Trust Company of Newtown, together with grants from Bucks250PA and the Bucks County Tourism Grant Program. For more information about the day, visit <https://www.newtown2026.com/>.



Support Newtown's History Through 2026 Sponsorship Opportunities

By Lori Michelin and Betsey King

As we look ahead to an exciting year of programs, preservation work, and PA250 celebrations, the Newtown Historic Association invites local businesses and community partners to join us in sustaining the history that makes Newtown unique. Becoming an NHA sponsor is more than a contribution—it is a meaningful investment in preserving our shared heritage while gaining valuable visibility throughout the community.

Our 2026 Sponsorship Program offers a range of opportunities designed to fit organizations of all sizes. Whether you choose **Diamond, Platinum, Gold, Silver, or Bronze**, each level provides a thoughtful package of benefits that highlights your support across NHA events, publications, and outreach. Sponsors enjoy recognition at signature programs, visibility in print and digital communications, and the satisfaction of helping protect Newtown's historic treasures for generations to come. Your sponsorship directly supports educational programming, archival preservation, community events, and the ongoing stewardship of the Half-Moon Inn and our historic collections. Every level makes a lasting impact—and every sponsor becomes part of the story we are committed to preserving.

To explore sponsorship levels and benefits, **please visit the Annual Sponsorship page on the NHA website:** <https://newtownhistoric.org/join-us/event-sponsorship/>

We extend our sincere appreciation to our current sponsors for their generous support and continued partnership—**please join them!**

Newtown Historic Association Sponsors (FY 2026-27)

Diamond	First National Bank of Newtown Interstate Facility Services Newtown Athletic Club/NAC Have-a-Heart Penn Community Bank
Platinum	Dan McCloskey/ReMax Properties
Gold	Johnson Kendall Johnson Leber Insurance/MAN Parry Insurance/William B. Parry & Son
Silver	Cosack Team/Berkshire Hathaway Marcolla Realty Stuckert & Yates Waitkus Design
Bronze	Action Karate BCS Builders MaGerk's McCaffrey's Newtown Business Association T&T Tree Service



Celebrate America’s 250th by Honoring the History of Your Own Home

By Lori Michelin

As the nation prepares to mark America’s 250th anniversary, the Newtown Historic Association invites residents to celebrate a little closer to home—by recognizing the history held within their own walls. Our **Historic Keystone House Signs** offer homeowners a meaningful way to showcase their property’s unique place in Newtown’s story.



For decades, these distinctive signs have been a hallmark of the Historic District, signaling a home’s heritage and the generations who shaped it. Each sign is individually researched and authenticated by the Newtown Historic Association and includes the name of the first documented owner of the property along with the verified year of construction. Homes within the Historic District that are more than 50 years old are eligible to participate.

Crafted from durable aluminum with UV-protected paint, the signs are built to withstand the elements and maintain their historic charm for years to come. Each one includes four pre-drilled holes for easy mounting,

and homeowners receive a proof for approval before production. Once finalized, signs ship directly from the vendor to your home.

The cost of each Keystone Sign is **\$75.00**.

As we commemorate 250 years of American history, we invite you to celebrate the history that begins right at your doorstep. Displaying a Keystone Sign not only enriches your home’s story—it strengthens the shared heritage of our entire community.

To order your sign, please visit our **Historic Keystone House Sign Shop on the NHA website:**

<https://newtownhistoric.org/historic-keystone-house-signs/>

Please note: You may have noticed the bronze signs posted on some historic homes around Newtown (example below). This sign maker went out of business. Although a new sign maker was found, the cost was very high (> \$700), so it is no longer being offered by the NHA. The Keystone Sign is an attractive alternative and a much less expensive option.

