

The Half Moon

The Newsletter of the Newtown Historic Association



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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.

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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

John Beninati, Jenny & Mike Current, Maria Dwyer, Ginny Francksen, Heather Lewis, Ann Michell, Anna & Christopher Moser, Kaitlyn VanDyke, Susan Wittenzellner



Upcoming Calendar

July:

- 7/17: **Porchfest** from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., Court Inn

August:

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

September:

- 9/21: **"The Life and Times of Captain Daniel Bray: From Waterman to Militia (1741 to 1840)"** at 7:30 p.m., Court Inn

October:

- 10/3: **Historic Newtown Market Day** from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Court Inn (rain date is October 4)
- 10/18: **Newtown Cemetery Tour** starting at 2:00 p.m., Newtown Cemetery
- 10/22: **"The Newtown Treasury"** at 7:30 p.m., Court Inn

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).

Newtown Wine Walk

Photos: Neale Messina

The second Annual Newtown Wine Walk was held on May 16, 2026. It began at the Newtown Theatre

and included different "stops" around the town.

One of the stops on the walk was the Newtown Historic Association's headquarters, the historic Half-Moon Inn (Court Inn), where participants experienced an authentic historic bar experience.

It was a picture-perfect day. A great time was had by all!



Annual Memorial Day Tribute to Local Veterans

The Newtown Historic Association held its Annual Memorial Day Tribute to Local Veterans on May 25, 2026, at the NHA's Callahan Research Center.

On display were over 200 pictures of local soldiers who fought in the World War II, Korea, and Viet Nam wars, letters written by soldiers containing their private thoughts and moments as they experienced war, and more than 300 World War II military shoulder patches from the U.S. Army, Army Air Force, Marines, Navy and Coast Guard.



If you did not have a chance to stop by in May, please be sure to visit next year.



Lighthouse Hill Cemetery Sign Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

On May 27, 2026, with the sun shining and approximately 40 attendees, the Newtown Historic Association, led by Board member Brian Rounsavill, was honored to host the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Newtown Heritage Walk sign at Lighthouse Hill Cemetery.



This special event recognized the rich history of Lighthouse Hill Cemetery and its deep connection to Newtown's African American heritage, including the legacy of St. Mark African Methodist Episcopal Church and the many individuals laid to rest on these sacred grounds.

We are grateful to everyone who joined us to help honor the past, celebrate this important preservation effort, and ensure these stories continue to be remembered for generations to come.

Elementary School Walking Tour

During the Elementary School Walking Tour on June 3, 2026, approximately 175 fifth grade students from Newtown and Goodnoe Elementary schools learned about the history of our town from volunteers from the Newtown Historic Association and its partners. Newtown Library Company, Newtown Fire Association, The Newtown Theatre, and Newtown Borough Council joined the NHA in hosting the students.



From one of the fifth-grade teachers: "On behalf of our staff and students, I wanted to extend our sincere thanks for the wonderful walking tour field trip today. We had a fantastic time, and we are so appreciative of all the planning, preparation, coordination, and volunteer time that went into making the experience possible."

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. We are pleased and honored to carry on this great annual tradition.



Spring Garden Cocktail Party

Photos: Neale Messina

What a wonderful evening at the Newtown Historic Association's Annual Spring Garden Cocktail Party on June 6, 2026.

More than 65 guests joined us to enjoy delicious food, refreshing drinks, and the beauty of the garden. A heartfelt thank-you to MaGerks and Wegmans for their generous food contributions, to our sponsors for helping make the evening possible, and to our amazing volunteers. We're also grateful to Neale Messina for capturing the night so beautifully in photos.

All proceeds from this event benefit the Newtown Historic Association. Thank you to everyone who joined us and made it so special!



2026 Garden Club Federation of PA Garden Party

By Mary Jo Garner and Keyna Crawford

The Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania (GCFP) presented the first-ever statewide garden tour on June 20 and June 27, 2026. Over ninety beautiful, private landscapes and unique public gardens, spanning twelve counties across the state, were on display

Countryside Gardeners Garden Club, a member of GCFP, sponsored eight gardens in the Newtown area on June 20. The weather was spectacular. Much time and effort were invested in this project, and garden owners were delighted to welcome visitors and tell everyone about their gardens. We extend a big thank you to all hosts for volunteering their time and to all the garden owners including: the NHA Half Moon Inn, Katie Fisk, Amy and Andy Smith, Sharon and Bill Kiryluk, Lovi Nirvana, Rami Cobb, Lucinda Sanders and Nicholas Walker, and Bowmans Hill Wildflower Preserve.

Overall, the event was a huge success with over 1,300 tickets sold. For more information and to enjoy highlights from the event, visit pagardenclubs.org.



NHA Sponsors

We extend our sincere appreciation to our [2026-2027 sponsors](#) for their generous support and continued partnership.

Newtown Historic Association Sponsors (FY 2026-27)

Diamond	Interstate Maintenance NAC Have a Heart Penn Community Bank The First National Bank & Trust Co. of Newtown
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Family Fun Day

By Betsey King

Fun was had by all at the first Family Fun Day hosted by the Newtown Historic Association on June 28, 2026. Children and adults flooded the Half-Moon and Boone Gardens where they had the opportunity to step back in time and participate in games and activities reminiscent of colonial times. There was patriotic cornhole, sack races, and potato spoon races—bringing out the competitive spirits of both the old and young. Folks were able to learn about colonial clothing thanks to the donations of beautiful handmade dresses and outfits by the Moser family. Pictures were taken outside the old root cellar in colonial garb and taken home as keepsakes.

Thanks to the fabulous Troop 29 Boy Scouts, children of all ages participated in muster drills, practicing the discipline and techniques of the militia men of colonial times while fife and drum music played in the background. March drills brought the children from the Boone Garden to the Half-Moon Inn gardens.



Quilt square making and coloring were among some of the activities favored by many of the children. The NHA is sponsoring a coloring contest with the Newtown Library Company for children of various age groups. Visit newtownhistoric.org/celebrate-americas-250th to download a copy of the contest form and enter your drawing. Prizes will be awarded for each age group.

Snacks and water were available during the event as were tours of the Half-Moon Inn.

We are grateful to the many volunteers and families who helped make the Newtown Historic Association's first Family Fun Day such a memorable afternoon. Thank you

to everyone who joined us in celebrating local history, colonial traditions, and the spirit of community.

Be sure to visit the NHA website for upcoming programs, coloring contest details, and more activities connected to America's 250th anniversary celebration.



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Family Fun Day (cont'd)

By Betsey King



NHA Logo Store

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 the NHA Logo Store anytime at: <https://newtownhistoric.printful.me/>



Newtown Celebrates America 250 Coloring Contest

By Lori Michelin

The Newtown Historic Association, in partnership with the Newtown Library Company, is running the Newtown Celebrates America 250 Coloring Contest. This community initiative invites children and teens to contribute original artwork in recognition of the nation's Semiquincentennial. Official two-page entry and drawing templates are available from the following locations:

- Half-Moon Inn
- Newtown Library Company
- [Online](#) (download for at-home completion)

Completed drawings may be dropped off at the NHA's Half-Moon Inn or Callahan Research Center, or the Newtown Library Company, during normal operating hours. **Submissions must be received on or before August 8, 2026.**

All entries will be displayed on August 8, 2026, as part of the *Newtown Celebrates America 250* community celebration. Contest winners will be announced by August 31, 2026. Awards include a certificate of recognition, a Newtown Library book sale gift card, and a READ crayon. Winning artwork will also be available for purchase as printed canvas keepsakes through the [NHA Logo Store](#), offering families a lasting memento of their child's contribution to this historic milestone.



Porchfest at the Half-Moon Inn

The Newtown Historic Association is hosting Porchfest at the Half-Moon Inn on **Friday, July 17th, 2026, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**

Porchfest is a Newtown tradition that started 25 years ago. If you are new to the community, here is how it works. The host opens their porch and yard to the community, and provides a few snacks, a bit of wine, and an alcohol-free beverage for the kids. Guests add to the party by bringing a snack and/or wine or beer. Kids are always welcome; they add to the fun!

We'll have two cornhole games set up for those interested in playing. The restrooms within the Inn will be open; however, the Tavern Room and exhibits will be closed. You are welcome to bring folding chairs to relax in either of our gardens!

This event is free and open to the public. All are invited and you do not have to be a member to attend.



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.

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/>.

Newtown Celebrates America 250 Comes to Historic Newtown

Celebrate America's 250th Anniversary with a full day of living history in Historic Newtown on **Saturday, August 8th, 2026, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Presented by the [Newtown Historic Association](#) and community partners, [Newtown Celebrates America 250](#) transforms one of Bucks County's most historic and walkable downtowns into a community-wide celebration featuring Revolutionary War reenactments, living historians, military drills for children, museum exhibits, demonstrations, historic site tours, and family activities.

The day begins with Revolutionary War encampments, colonial crafts, fife and drum music, and the Battle at the Bird-in-Hand, featuring approximately 50 reenactors portraying American and British forces. Visitors are encouraged to stay after the battle for a patriotic finale featuring a ceremonial 21-gun salute to America and a community sing-along of "Happy Birthday" led by [Mayor Tara Grunde-McLaughlin](#).



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Newtown Celebrates America 250 Comes to Historic Newtown (cont'd)

Throughout the afternoon, visitors can explore museums, churches, meeting houses, and historic landmarks while experiencing programs highlighting the Revolutionary War, Civil War, African American history, early Pennsylvania, and Newtown's local heritage.

Featured experiences include a demonstration of "Old Washy," Newtown's restored 200-year-old hand-pumped fire engine, first-person interpretation portraying Harriet Tubman, Hessian soldiers discussing their experiences during the Revolutionary War, William Penn interpretation, historic exhibits, and more.

Visitors are also invited to stop by the Great American Cookout in the Boone Garden where complimentary hot dogs, chips, water, and ice cream will be available thanks to [Penn Community Bank](#) and the [Newtown Rotary Club](#).



Most activities are located within a few blocks of one another, making [Historic Newtown](#) easy to explore on foot. Admission is free. For schedules, maps, participating organizations, and visitor information, visit www.newtown2026.com.

We would like to recognize and thank the organizations who made this event possible with grant funding and

sponsorship: The Bucks County Tourism Grant Program, Bucks250PA Mini Grant Program, and The First National Bank of Newtown.

The Life and Times of Captain Daniel Bray: From Waterman to Militia (1741 to 1840)

Join us for our general meeting on **Monday, September 21st, 2026, starting at 7:30 p.m. at the Half-Moon Inn.**

Daniel Bray was first a Scottish farmer from Baptisttown, New Jersey, who became an experienced waterman on the Delaware River, rising to Captain of his own Durham boat in 1769 at age 19. Later he joined the 2nd Regiment Hunterdon County New Jersey Militia, rising to captain in 1775. He earned his position in history when General George Washington charged him with obtaining the boats needed to cross the Delaware River on Christmas Night in 1776. Later he was promoted to general of the militia, and fought in the War of 1812.

Enjoy a first-person interpretation about Daniel Bray—from his boyhood as a farmer, to building Durham boats to becoming a waterman on the river, to marrying Mary Woolverton, to obtaining the boats for George Washington—then back to farming and finally the War of 1812. There is some audience participation, two costume changes, and a short play. The talk is supported by slides, a sung original River Shanty, and a Recited Ballad by Joseph Folsom (1903) with a short break.

The narrator, Daniel Nurmi McAuliffe, has been a reenactor for 32 years with the 5th Pennsylvania Regiment, crossing the Delaware River numerous times. In 2013, he was asked to portray Captain Daniel Bray to replace his deceased mentor, Dick Bray, a direct descendant.



The New Century Club: Women's Leadership, Learning, and Civic Service in Newtown

By Brian Rounsavill

The Newtown New Century Club was one of Newtown's leading civic and literary women's organizations. Organized in November 1895 and federated the following year, the club began with more than thirty members and soon became a forum for education, culture, public service, and community improvement. Its founding members included Lavinia Blackfan, Anna M. Maris, and M. Anna Smith, who helped bring to Newtown a model of organized female leadership then spreading across the United States.



Original New Century Club Sign, c.1900.

The club emerged from the broader women's club movement that gained momentum after the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. The exposition's Women's Pavilion showcased the intellectual, artistic, professional, and charitable work of women at a time when many had limited access to formal public leadership roles. In Philadelphia, that momentum helped inspire the New Century Club, founded in 1877 as one of the earliest women's clubs in the country. Clubs like it promoted literature, science, art, education, and civic welfare, while giving women practical experience in organizing, fundraising, public speaking, and reform work.

The Newtown club modeled itself in part after the New Century Club of Wilmington, Delaware, even inviting members of that organization to Newtown to explain how their club functioned. From the beginning, however, the Newtown New Century Club was more than a social gathering. Members presented papers, read literary works, prepared programs, discussed history and current events, and developed the habits of public engagement. These meetings offered local women a respected space for intellectual growth and civic participation at a time when many formal institutions remained dominated by men.

That purpose was both cultural and practical. Like many women's clubs of the Progressive Era, the Newtown New Century Club connected self-improvement with service, believing that reading, study, music, lectures, and historical research could strengthen both individual character and community life. Members applied their organizational skills to local welfare work, charity, and civic betterment, including work with the Newtown Welfare Committee, food drives, and holiday baskets for families in need. By combining education with service, the club reflected the belief that informed and organized citizens could improve their communities.

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The New Century Club: Women's Leadership, Learning, and Civic Service in Newtown (cont'd)

By Brian Rounsavill



Newtown New Century Club "Calendar Party" photographed c.1915 on the side lawn of the Heston House, hosted by Mrs. M. Amanda Heston, which was located at 212 South State Street before it was razed in the 1960s. The Calendar Party consisted of twelve tables set up to represent the twelve months of the year, and the ladies wearing pointed hats were celebrating their birthdays during the month of the gathering.

As the club grew, its meeting places reflected its expanding role in the community. During its first year, members gathered in one another's homes. The club then rented Enterprise Hall¹ for six years and later Tomlinson's Hall² for five years before accepting the hospitality of Mrs. M. Amanda Heston, whose home served as its meeting place for the next fourteen years.

¹ The Enterprise Building housed the printing operations of the "Newtown Enterprise" newspaper, located at 126 South State Street, and had a large meeting room on the second floor, often referred to as "Enterprise Hall." The building was built in 1874 by Eleazor F. Church (1820-1893), founder of the Newtown Enterprise.

² Enos Tomlinson (1862-1896) was engaged in the confectionery trade and operated out of the Croasdale Building at the southwest corner of State Street and Washington Avenue (Ned's Cigar Store Building). He purchased the property in 1893 and carried out extensive renovations. The building had a large meeting room on the third floor that was used for making infantry top coats during the Civil War.

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The New Century Club: Women's Leadership, Learning, and Civic Service in Newtown (cont'd)

By Brian Rounsavill

In 1920, Mr. and Mrs. Edward S. Hutchinson deeded the club the Newtown Academy building, a historic property on Centre Avenue, between State and Sycamore Streets, as a free gift to serve as a permanent headquarters. Over the next year, the club raised money for renovations through a large rummage sale, donations from former Academy students, and contributions from club members. The building was then renamed "New Century Club," giving the organization a permanent home for meetings, lectures, programs, committee work, and social events.



Newtown Academy, c.1890. The building was razed and this site is now the drive-in window of the First National Bank on West Centre Avenue.



View of the original site of the Newtown Academy, 2026.

The building itself carried deep local significance. The Newtown Academy was the first school of its kind in Bucks County because it was the first institution to offer a "high grade" (secondary) education. Built in 1798 on Centre Avenue in Newtown, it played a pivotal role in the region's early education and trained many teachers. Unlike the basic, one-room elementary schoolhouses common in the area, the Academy provided a more advanced curriculum. The school was later purchased and operated under the supervision of the Presbyterian Church (beginning in 1852) and frequently had the local Presbyterian pastor serving as its head. The Academy educated many of the county's early teachers before it was officially discontinued in 1886.

By occupying this site, the New Century Club linked its mission of learning and civic service to a place already associated with education. In addition to serving as the club's headquarters, the building became a focal point for local events, including Red Cross meetings, home nursing classes, Girl and Boy Scout meetings, dancing classes, and wedding receptions. During World Wars I and II, the New Century Club building served as a local civilian volunteer center, offering first aid instruction and Red Cross sewing activities that produced surgical dressings, hospital garments, and comfort kits for the national war effort.

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The New Century Club: Women's Leadership, Learning, and Civic Service in Newtown (cont'd)

By Brian Rounsavill



Newtown Red Cross Auxiliary making surgical dressings in the Newtown Academy Building, c.1917.

Annual programs and club records show how organized and active the club remained over many decades. Its committees handled membership, finance, programs, civic and welfare activities, house and grounds, historical work, and other responsibilities. The club preserved minutes, treasurer's books, membership records, printed programs, correspondence, scrapbooks, and essays, many of which documented Newtown's own past. In this way, the organization did not simply participate in local history; it helped preserve it.

The Newtown New Century Club also supported younger women through an active Junior New Century Club. The junior organization extended the parent club's emphasis on fellowship, public service, and civic responsibility to women under the age of forty. Press clippings and records from the mid-twentieth century show that its members participated in community activities and helped carry forward the club's tradition of organized volunteerism.

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The New Century Club: Women's Leadership, Learning, and Civic Service in Newtown (cont'd)

By Brian Rounsavill

The club sold its Centre Avenue building in 1930 to the First National Bank and Trust Company of Newtown after maintenance of the property became burdensome. Although the historic Academy building continued to stand for a time and remained associated with community use, it was eventually razed in 1957 to make way for bank expansion. The site is now occupied by the First National Bank & Trust Company administrative building, a vivid reminder of how Newtown's streetscape has changed over time. Despite the loss of its clubhouse, the club remained a vibrant part of the Newtown community through the mid-1990s.

The legacy of the Newtown New Century Club lies in its long record of learning, leadership, and service. For more than a century, the club gave Newtown women a structure through which they could read, write, debate, organize, raise funds, serve neighbors, and shape civic life. Its history shows how women's clubs helped transform education into action and fellowship into public service. In Newtown, the New Century Club stood as a bridge between the town's educational past, its civic development, and a national movement that encouraged women to take an active role in building stronger communities.

Sources:

- Newtown Historic Association. "A Walking Tour of Newtown." 1961.
- Newtown Historic Association. "New Century Club Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Collections and Archives."
- Newtown Historic Association. "Newtown 1684-1984." 1983.
- Philadelphia Area Archives. "Newtown New Century Club Records, 1895-1980."
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- New Century Club. "New Century Club." Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Century_Club_\(Philadelphia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Century_Club_(Philadelphia))

Get Ready for Market Day!

Market Day is an annual Newtown tradition in its 50th year that takes place in the historic borough streets. This event is highly anticipated by our close community and the surrounding Bucks County.

Market Day celebrates the colonial tradition of local farmers and homesteaders bringing their crops, livestock, and homemade wares into town to sell to neighbors and townspeople. It has transformed throughout the years to feature high-quality fine artists, crafters, and food artisans.

Market Day is family friendly, with colonial-era demonstrations, reenactments, and activities. There will be two stage areas with live music and an eatery area with food from local restaurants, food trucks, and artisan bites.

We hope to see you at this year's Market Day on **Saturday, October 3rd, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** The rain date is October 4th.

We are looking for volunteers to make Market Day a success. **Please send an email to marketday@newtownhistoric.org with your contact information and availability.** Please note that it is preferable to be available for both days should we need the rain date. We hope to hear from you!

Market Day is supported by generous sponsorships and donations by local businesses and supporters. Become a sponsor today and gain exposure for your business through the NHA website, social media, newsletter, banners on event day, and more. To discuss how your business can reach a broad audience of 3,000+ people before, during, and after Market Day, contact us at marketday@newtownhistoric.org or select [here](#) to complete an online sponsorship application.



Newtown Cemetery Tour

Back by popular demand!

Join us for a tour of the Newtown Cemetery to explore the final resting place of local business professionals who provided essential services and products to our town. You will learn about how they lived and their contributions to our community.



Led by NHA Board member Susan Thompson, the tour begins at **2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 18th, 2026**. We will meet at the Newtown Cemetery on Washington Avenue by the Chapel. There is a \$5.00 charge per person. Cash only will be collected at the event, and it is weather permitting.

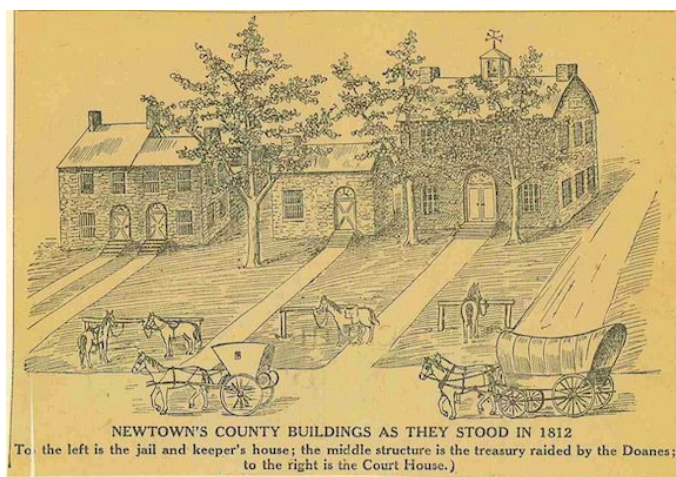
We hope to see you there!



The Newtown Treasury

Join us for our general meeting on **Thursday, October 22nd, 2026, starting at 7:30 p.m.** at the Half-Moon Inn (Court Inn). The presentation title is "The Newtown Treasury" and the speaker is Matthew Bielecki.

The Newtown Treasury refers to the historic 18th-century Bucks County Treasury building located at 35 South State Street in Newtown. It is most famous for being the site of the Doan Gang Treasury Robbery in 1781.



Matt Bielecki, MA, is an instructor in the Archaeological Technician Training Program at Bucks County Community College. He is also an archaeologist, historian, and researcher, with over two decades of archaeological experience in all stages of fieldwork, laboratory work, and technical report production encompassing the Mid-Atlantic region. Matt graduated with a BA from Pennsylvania State University, and a MA from Monmouth University. He is a member of the Lambda Alpha National Anthropology Honor Society and has presented at regional archaeological conferences and has lectured at numerous colleges and universities. Matt's research interests include stone tool morphometric and microwear analysis, with a focus on precontact and early colonial period chipped-stone economies. Matt is also a skilled flint knapper and replicative specialist.

We hope you will join us for this engaging presentation.

