



The Brandywine Dispatch

Member Newsletter of the Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates

"Keeping the Story Alive and Interesting"

Spring 2017

A Little House that Survived a Major Battle

By Susan Holloway Scott

*As a long-time resident of Chester County, I'm also a great fan of the Philadelphia area's history, with a special interest in the era surrounding the Revolutionary War and the early years of the new country. I'm delighted to be able to incorporate this history in my next novel, **I, Eliza Hamilton** (to be published in September by Kensington Books; available now for **preorder**), a fictionalized biography of Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton (1757-1854), the wife of statesman Alexander Hamilton. I wrote the following blog post after a recent visit to the Brandywine Battlefield:*



One of the best parts about writing ***I, Eliza Hamilton*** is that I've been able to visit so many of the places that were familiar to my characters. Alexander and Eliza Hamilton lived most of their lives in New York and Pennsylvania, with some months spent also in New Jersey during the war. As a young man, Alexander served as an officer in the Continental Army, and was the senior aide-de-camp of Commander-in-Chief General George Washington. For obvious reasons, Eliza wasn't there on the front lines with Alexander, and since this is her book, not his, I've only now been playing catch-up and visiting "his" battlefields.

This past weekend [Charter Day], I braved the cold to traipse across the Brandywine Battlefield, located in Chadds Ford, PA. The Battle of Brandywine was fought on September 11, 1777. It was the largest battle of the Revolution, involving the most troops (over 30,000 men between the two armies), and the longest battle as well, with fighting that ranged over 11 hours in ninety-degree heat. It was not a good day for the Continental Army. Not only were they soundly defeated with significant casualties, but their retreat also permitted the British Army to capture Philadelphia (then the country's capital) virtually unopposed. And yes, twenty-year-old Alexander Hamilton was one of those soldiers in the retreat. **Continued on Page 4**

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The President's View - Spring 2017

A life guiding phrase, which I have adopted is: “there are no coincidences!” While on vacation, I met a new friend, who had written a book on the challenge of change and the impact which change has on human attitude and behavior. While relaxing, we discussed the “pros and cons” of change.

This past Friday, when I returned to the Brandywine Battlefield Park, I once again met our friend Susan Holloway Scott, who was touring the Ring House with Andrew Outten. Susan had first visited us on Charter Day in March, when she wrote her wonderful story about the Gilpin Home. As I read the “Little House that Survived a Major Battle” story, a chord was struck in me about “change”! Yes, that dreaded word which many fear, and which others embrace. I began thinking about the impact of change on the Quaker population who were engulfed in war, and also about colonial life in general, which was highly stressed by the American Revolution. Then my thoughts moved, in a segway to the present time.

The Brandywine Battlefield and Philadelphia Campaign is undergoing a phenomenal change. With the opening of the Museum of the American Revolution and all of fabulous events, which have occurred and will be occurring this year, I am extremely optimistic that there is a wave of positive change which is being appreciated, and we must embrace it. I, for one, feel it is all good. In closing I want thank the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC); the Brandywine Battlefield Preservation Task Force Partners; our wonderful hard-working Board Members and staff; and most importantly all the volunteers who are sharing this wonderful chapter of American history. Remember, “Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending” (Maria Robinson).

Regards,

Linn (Linnell) Trimbell, President

Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates

Upcoming Events - 2017

Summer History Camp - June through August

“Advance with the Hessians”: Chester County Town Tours

Series- July 13 - [click here for registration](#)

Wineberry Days - July through August

Lecture Series Kickoff- September 10

Remembrance Ceremony - September 11

Brandywine 2017 Reenactment- September 16 & 17

Patriot's Day - November 25

For more information on our programs visit www.brandywinebattlefield.org

The Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC)

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Submissions are welcome !

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Battle of Brandywine 2017



Cannons will roar and reenactors will reenact fiercely this September 16th and 17th for the largest mock battle of Brandywine in years. Besides the reenactment, there will be many other activities including a fife and drum corps, modern and period foods, historical presentations, shopping, and more! For a full schedule of events and what you can expect, check out *Birmingham Township's* website for additional information.

www.brandywine2017.org

Arrival of the Cannon



Our artillery cannon has finally arrived at the park! Many thanks to **Forrest Taylor of Cannons Online** for construction and delivery of the cannon carriage. Mounted on the carriage is a reproduction 18th century British 3-pounder, also known as a "grasshopper". There will be a commencement for the cannon during the **Remembrance Ceremony** (Sept. 11th) at our park. See you there!



There is, of course, few signs of the battle left today. Housing developments and highways close in around what remains of the battlefield, a fraction of the long-gone open space of 1777. The word "battlefield" itself has always struck me as something of a misnomer, sounding as it does like some carefully designated and set-aside place for war. The Battle of Brandywine took place across farms and around homes, river fords, and meeting houses, and as wars always do, changed forever the lives of those caught in the middle of it.

The house of farmer Gideon Gilpin (shown here) still stands, and it is open to visitors as part of the Brandywine Battlefield historic site. Gilpin was a prosperous wheat and dairy farmer whose family had been among the first English settlers of the region. He lived with his wife and six young children in the two-story, four-room stone house shown here (the ell with the porch is a later addition.) Like most of his neighbors, he was a Friend, or Quaker. Quakers believed that war and conflict went against God's wishes, and refused to choose sides or fight during the Revolution.



It was a difficult and unpopular stand to take, especially when the war spilled over onto Gilpin's land. Standing inside the little stone house, I tried to imagine what that September day must have been like for the Gilpin family, who remained inside their house while the battle raged nearby. With shutters closed, the thick stone walls protected them to a certain extent, but considering how seasoned soldiers spoke afterwards of the terrible fighting and steady gunfire from the artillery on both sides, it must have been a horrifying ordeal.

Imagine trying to comfort your small children when you're terrified yourself. Imagine hearing the sounds of war, without knowing exactly what was happening. Imagine wondering if the next round of cannon fire will be near enough to shatter the wall of your home.

The Gilpins and their house survived, but the aftermath of the battle may have been even more difficult for Gideon. His crops - so close to harvest - fields, and trees were destroyed. Worse yet, the British had taken not only the bacon, hay, and wheat he had in storage, but all his livestock: milch cows, sheep, swine, and his yoke of oxen, the 18thc farmer's equivalent to a tractor and a truck. His farm was in ruins, and he was left with no way to feed or support his family. It was enough for Gideon Gilpin. Soon after, he chose to side with the Continental cause - and was read out (or expelled) from his Quaker community for doing so. I think there could be another book here....

One more quick Nerdy History fact: that enormous sycamore tree in the background of the photo is certified by the National Arborist Association and the International Society of Arboriculture to have been standing at least since 1787, the year the American Constitution was signed. Most likely it, too, is another survivor of the battle. *All photos ©2017 by Susan Holloway Scott.*

We would like to extend a huge thanks to Susan for taking the time to visit and write this interesting article on the newly re-opened Gilpin house. Guided Tours are now available of the home. To read more interesting articles written by Susan, please visit her blog at: www.twonerdyhistorygirls.blogspot.com

News from the Giftshop

Our gift shop features merchandise for all age groups! From children's toys and games to novelty items and portraits, we are sure to have something that might spark your interest. The books in our shop are handpicked by our staff to ensure an interesting and informative read. Also new in the shop are American Revolution soldiers that reflect Continental militia men, British regulars, and artillery regiments. These soldiers require painting and are the perfect thing for any model soldier hobby enthusiast. Also back in stock, after many years, are our Brandywine Battlefield Lapel pins. Stop in and check out some of our many great items for sale!



Reminder that all BBPA members get a 10% discount in the Giftshop!

A Colonial Garden come to Life

The flower beds at the Benjamin Ring House have never looked as good as they do now! They are no longer full of weeds but with 18th Century herbs and spices! A big thanks to Tom and Stephanie Demott, longtime BBPA Volunteers, for their exceptional work and skill in recreating this Colonial Garden.

Visitors to the Benjamin Ring house can now learn about the important roles that herbs, spices, and other plants played in the 18th century. Featured are over 30 different plants, each of which have a culinary, medicinal, or aromatic purpose. Examples include Lambs Ear, a soft leaf used as a washcloth and for dressing wounds; and Yarrow, a plant which could be chewed to relieve toothache.



Milestone Birthday Celebrated "Historically"

Jeanne Steward of West Goshen Township celebrated her 90th birthday surrounded by family in a site rich in local history. The Brandywine Battlefield Visitor's Center was the perfect venue for the celebratory gathering held May 7, 2017. Born in Westtown to Roman and Rebecca Hunt, Mrs. Steward grew up on a dairy farm with four sisters and one brother. She attended St. Agnes School in West Chester. Jeanne and her husband, Roy Steward, Sr., shared 64 years of marriage until his death in 2010. Today she stays busy gardening and taking part in activities with her Chester County family which includes five surviving adult children, 12 grandchildren and soon-to-be 6 great-grandchildren.



A school bus driver for 20 years, Jeanne loves opportunities to travel and cherishes her life in the Brandywine Valley. Her birthday celebration held on the battlefield grounds provided a beautiful and inspirational setting. The family enjoyed touring the museum exhibits between lunch and dessert. The day concluded with a fascinating tour of the recently reopened Gilpin Home, led by Andrew Outten, Director of Education & Museum Services.

- Susan Steward



BBPA would like to thank the Steward family for letting us host them for this special occasion. Happy Birthday Jeanne!

If your family or business would like to hold an engagement in or on our park facilities, please call us at 610-459-3342 or additional information. Let us help you with your next event/function!



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“Brandywine Battlefield Park serves the educational needs of the public through the preservation of the cultural landscape and the interpretation of the largest single day battle of the American Revolution. The Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates, a non-profit community-based organization, supports and assists the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission by conducting the daily operations of the site.”

Take Notice! Volunteers Wanted:

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at the Brandywine Battlefield Park or know someone who might, please visit our website for more information and to fill out a registration form!

www.brandywinebattlefield.org

Contribution Form

Yes! I would like to offer additional support to the Brandywine Battlefield Park and Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates by making a tax-exempt donation!

Please send form and donation to: BBPA - P.O. Box 202 Chadds Ford, PA 19317

My Contribution is: _____ \$500 _____ \$100 _____ \$50 _____ \$25 _____ Other: _____

_____ _Check Enclosed

_____ Please Charge my: _____ Visa _____ MasterCard _____ American Express _____ Discover

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To make an Online Donation, visit our website: www.brandywinebattlefield.org, and click the “Donate link on the home page. All donations are very much appreciated and go towards bettering educational and interpretational components of the Battlefield Park! Thank you!