

The Carversvillian

THE VOICE OF THE HISTORIC CARVERSVILLE SOCIETY

APRIL 2010

And the Winner Is...

This year marks the Second Annual Historic Carversville Society sponsored Art Poster Contest for Carversville Day. The winning poster was submitted by LORETTA SHIGO and is reprinted here for all of our membership to see. Congratulations, Loretta, on your fine work! Be on the lookout for this poster advertising Carversville Day; you'll find it in New Hope, Lambertville, Stockton, Doylestown, as well as right here in Carversville. Plus, this Carversville Day poster will be featured in the *Bucks County Herald* and the *Intelligencer*. We want to thank our other talented neighbors who entered this contest as well. It was definitely not easy to choose a winner when so much talent was evident! For the two weeks in May that we'll be selling Raffle Tickets in front of the General Store, you will be able to view all of the poster contest entries, which will be framed and on display in the General Store. A limited edition of signed and numbered copies of Loretta's poster will be available for sale on Carversville Day.



Carversville Day — Saturday May 22, 2010

Carversville Day 2010 is scheduled for Saturday, May 22nd. Don't miss THE social event of the year! There'll be something for everyone so bring the kids: lots to do, to see, to eat! And plenty for adults too! It's sure to be a great day!

The **Cookie Contest Booth** opens at 10am!! Buy and eat the many culinary cookie creations and CAST YOUR VOTES for the best cookie in Carversville. On this particular day of the year, permission has been given by every dietary authority known to man to eat cookies in the morning, at noon, or early afternoon. In fact, on this particular day, it is considered healthy and wise to eat as many cookies as you can. Keep going back until all the cookies are gone. We want YOU to VOTE FOR THE BEST COOKIE!

Face Painting, Hair Wrapping and other game activities will be available in The Secret Garden. The always popular **White Elephant Sale** will also open at 10am and will host a great variety of knick-knacks, do-dads, thing-a-ma-jigs, as well as jewelry, electronics, household goods, toys, books, CDs – you name it!

The best Crafters and Artisans in the Delaware Valley will be set up throughout the Square and The Secret Garden. Visit these talented individuals; don't be shy; buy, buy, buy! You will definitely find a "must have" painting, or piece of jewelry, or sculpture, or jewelry box, or...who knows what wonderful item! It's a great time to buy holiday gifts or birthday gifts. For those of you who travel abroad, you know how difficult it is to find "American made" gifts. Here's your opportunity! All items are hand made by our crafters. They are perfect gifts.

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Clean Up Day Saturday, April 24

Bring your brooms and your energy. We'll supply the rest! (See pg. 7 for details.)

From the President . . .

Dear Fellow Carversvillians,

My husband and I have lived in Carversville for almost twenty years. I will never forget the day he returned from one of his bike rides and said that I had to see this road and the adjoining village; it was one of the prettiest places he had ever seen. So I did and it was love at first sight. It was and is a place with history, quaintness, charm and an abundance of character (as well as characters, which we were to learn later). From the start I realized that we had chosen a very special place to live and almost everyday I am appreciative of that fact. In many regards Carversville has changed very little over time. Sure there are more cars, worse traffic and more people; that goes along with increased development. But the village remains intact with its historic buildings, an Inn and General Store and a wonderful architectural blueprint of the evolution of village life over the centuries.

After we had lived here about six months I saw a sign advertising Carversville Day. I volunteered to assist and you guessed it, I ended up helping with the children's games. I found, to my joy, that scenic beauty was not the only thing Carversville had to offer. So it was at this point I learned that I didn't move just to a location on a map but to a real honest to gosh community. I found a place where people chipped in to help one another and got together regularly to celebrate their shared love of community – a place where everybody knows your name as well as that of your dog. Cars took turns crossing our narrow bridges and the drivers always waved a thank you. Caroling in the Square always brought tears to my eyes, standing in the cold until I couldn't feel my feet celebrating a religious event but also celebrating community.

I feel saddened when I realize that this is the part of Carversville that has changed the most: the sharing. I hope I am wrong, but now it seems that rather than pick up a piece of trash on the road we assume someone else will get it. We arrive at Carversville Day to enjoy it but do not volunteer to help make it enjoyable. We say we are too busy with our own lives and its pressures and don't have the time. But this community is where we live, where we raise our children and, I hope, teach them the values that they will need in life. If we don't have time for this, this sense of sharing and community, I am fearful of what this says about our priorities.

Betsy Muzina, Co-President HCS

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My Old House

6128 Carversville Road (The Stiffler Studio)

This column is a little bit different than previous "My Old House" columns because, sad to say, the Stiffler Studio is up for sale by auction. We are extremely grateful to Jane Parker and Earl Nichols and Ted Nichols of New Hope Photo for their input to this article. They are each former occupants of The Stiffler Studio and were eager to help us document the importance of this property to the Village. The "voices" of the narration will change as Jane and then Earl and Ted tell their stories.

Before I sold 6128 Carversville Road in the summer of 2006, I had intended to write a brief history of the property so its story could be preserved. I didn't manage to do so before selling and once it had been sold I felt as if, well, it was no longer my business to document it. Recently, some friends told me that the house was to be auctioned off in the near future. Little did I know it would change hands again so quickly. If I could, I would buy it back myself, but unfortunately that doesn't seem feasible at this time.

I hope the house will go to someone who will live in it and love it as I did but I am also concerned that its unique history may not be known and therefore not respected by whoever next takes it over. Because the house lies within the historic district, I assume it will be safe from drastic alterations. The structure has significance in the history of the village even though over the years it has undergone many changes.

Most of the information that follows was derived from my experience living there, from talks with longtime Carversville residents, from the 1958 book *Solebury Township* by John Richardson, from my own internet research, from Earl Nichols, who purchased the house as a newlywed in 1955, and from Ted Nichols of New Hope Photo, who grew up in the house. I hope those for whom this information is new and interesting will look at the house with fresh eyes. Any corrections or additions about the house are welcome.

Seen from the road, the house does not stand out. Perhaps that's because it actually did start life as a one-car garage with a one-story studio above it. The house stands between



The Stiffler Studio before the addition



The Stiffler Studio with second floor addition

Phyllis and Ken Haldeman's home on the left and Paul Gold and Michelle Wiley's house on the right. It is not particularly noticeable to those driving or walking on Carversville Road unless they look to the right as they are heading into the village, when a good view of the entire structure is possible. The house sits perpendicular to the road and appears to be either Paul and Michelle's garage or part of Phyllis and Ken's garage.

I bought the house in January 1988 and lived there until November 2004. Mrs. Alice Wolf had owned it for about 10 years before that. She bought it from real estate brokerage owner David Kurfiss, who owned it at the time, having himself bought it from the Nichols family. The Nichols family, Earl and Beth, bought 6128 as well as the house next door, up on the hill, in 1955 from the original owner, John Ledru Stiffler. The Nichols moved in just before the famous flood of 1955.

The house is considerably older than current real estate listings state. Originally, it was part of the property on the hillside to its right, now Paul and Michelle's home. The artist and actor John Ledru Stiffler, who came to Carversville after some years on the stage, probably built both houses in 1917 but no later than 1927. Stiffler worked in stained glass with Bucks County impressionist George Sotter in Sotter's Holicong studio, and it is my understanding that Stiffler built the Carversville Road studio for his own use while living in the house uphill. Steps still wind up the hill from the parking area to that house.

Stiffler studied under Sotter at Carnegie Tech's School of Fine Arts in the early 20th century. Two of his classmates there became nationally recognized Bucks County artists: Forrest Crooks (of Tuckamony Farm, now Honey Hollow) and Valentine D'Ogries, who also worked in Sotter's studio and who became as famous as Sotter for his own stained glass work. Before coming to Carversville, Stiffler appeared with the Marx brothers in the musical revue "I'll Say She Is," first in Philadelphia in 1923 and then on Broadway in 1925. The credits refer to him as Ledru Stiffler (omitting his real

(continued)

first name: John). After five years of working with George Sotter, John Ledru Stiffler decided to enter the ministry and eventually became vicar of St. Philip's Chapel on River Road. He continued his artistic interests however, by painting in oils, usually landscapes that included figures.

He sold the Carversville property in 1955 and within a few years thereafter, the top story, which is wood-framed and shallowly eaved, was added over the flat-roofed, stuccoed studio. Stiffler died on Oct. 20, 1982. He and his parents are buried in Solebury Friends Cemetery across from the meetinghouse on Sugan Road. Stiffler is named in John Richardson's book as one of Bucks County's artists in residence.

The original structure had a modernist or arts and crafts-style flat roof and iron casement windows complementing the design of the Gold-Wiley house next door. Sad to say, the studio's casement windows, whose style and material are now treasured and irreplaceable in arts and crafts architecture, were removed during a renovation, probably in the 1970s.

The studio consisted of the ground-level garage and a two-room structure above it, with two fireplaces, each with a tall, uniquely shaped concrete chimney, one in each of the two rooms. Originally, the two unusually shaped chimneys jutted above the level of the flat roof over the structure, and their uniqueness was easily noticed. Now, the additional story conceals the chimneys, but the odd shapes can be seen from the street by looking between the house and the Haldeman's' garage.

A concrete entrance patio at one time wrapped around the back of the house. The garage and studio walls are stuccoed concrete block. I speculated that Henry Chapman Mercer, who used concrete for his early 20th century landmark buildings in Doylestown, might have inspired Stiffler. During my time in the house, when I replaced the broken bluestone hearth of one fireplace, I embedded three Mercer tiles in the hearth because they seemed to belong there. The second fireplace has a brick hearth. I was told by a chimney sweep that that fireplace is a classic, tall and shallow Rumford Fireplace, named after Count Rumford, a British loyalist who originated the design in the 18th century (and left for England after the American Revolution).

During the 1970s, the second-story screened porch was added to the back of the house, and an original first-floor casement window with a view of the hillside was filled in. Now there are wood "picture" windows in the living and dining rooms and six-over-sixes in the rest – nice enough windows, but not the original. I added the single French door at the rear of the living room and the garden window that overlooks the parking area.

I hope this material might be a useful addition to the history of the village.

Jane Parker

6124 & 6128 Carversville Road (The Stiffler Property) 1955-1970.

As an engaged couple, Elizabeth Suckow & I, Earl Nichols, were looking for property that would be large enough for my mother, Hattie Nichols and my younger brother and sister, Russell and Priscilla, as well for Elizabeth and me after we married on May 28th, 1955. We bought the Stiffler property in Carversville, which was one tract of land with two buildings. The upper house (6124) would be for my mother and my younger siblings and the lower house (6128), then known as the Studio, would be for my wife and me. Everything worked quite well until 1958 when our first child, Ted, was born. The Studio was OK for two adults but more space was needed and "up" was the only solution.

We hired a local contractor, Harvey Overpeck, to design and build the second floor addition: a master bedroom, full bathroom, 2 children's bedrooms and a small sewing room. By 1969, three additional children had arrived; the Studio was very crowded with 2 boys, 2 girls and 2 adults.

In September 1969 my mother had passed away and by then both my younger siblings had married and left the area. We discovered that we were expecting again. We gave some thought to adding to the upper house and moving in there, but a neighbor who was a contractor advised us against an addition because of the shale hillside. He recommended that we sell and relocate. We bought the lot on Aquetong Road and put the Carversville Road property on the market. The people who were interested in buying the Stiffler property from us would only buy if Solebury Township would permit the lot to be split into two properties. As we know, this happened, thus the 6124 & 6128 Carversville Road.

When we bought the Stiffler property in 1955, my wife Elizabeth met Mr. Stiffler in Lambertville, NJ where he was living at the time. Because there were people still renting the upper house, we could not move my mother into the house that May. Mr. Stiffler had an apartment available in Lambertville and allowed Mother and the two children to stay there until the occupants moved out of the upper house. That was the only occasion when we had any direct contact with him but it was a positive experience.

*Earl & Beth Nichols
and Ted Nichols of New Hope Photo*



Films in the Field

Don't plan anything else for the last Mondays of June, July, and August. Gather around with your neighbors in the parking lot beside the General Store to watch classic cinema chosen by our own Film Master Noel Barrett.

As you may remember from the General Membership Meeting at the Inn in November, this year our choice of films will be much greater because we are switching to digital films. They'll still be shown the old-fashioned way: outdoors on the side of the General. We do think you'll be pleased with the sharper quality and sound – and choice of films.

The names of the films will be posted outside the General Store, and inside, a week before each film. Here are the dates:

- Monday, June 28th
- Monday, July 26th
- Monday, August 30th

The **films are free** and you're welcome to bring your own eats and drinks, but you should know that the HCS will be grilling hot dogs and burgers and selling other gourmet goodies for your enjoyment at each film! Bring chairs or a blanket to sit on – and a sweater; it gets chilly in Carversville on a summer's eve!

Carversville Art Sale

Mark your calendars! The 2010 **Carversville Art Sale** will be held on Saturday and Sunday, **October 16th and 17th** at **Guthrie's Barn**. The Art Sale is an HCS benefit and a remarkable social and community event as well.

We ask those artists interested in displaying and selling their works at the Carversville Art Sale to call the Art Sale Chairperson, **Joe Santoro**, at **215-297-0807** for further details. Additionally, we extend an invitation for an artist to volunteer to do a painting demonstration during the day. In 2009, W. Carl Burger fulfilled this function. He created a painting on the spot, demonstrating watercolor technique as well as his own wit and wisdom. This masterpiece was then auctioned off to the highest bidders who were absolutely delighted to have made the winning bid and felt privileged to spend some time with Mr. Burger. It was an exciting event and a great learning experience.

Don't miss this community event! Put a big X on your calendar now! See you on October 16th and 17th at Guthrie's Barn!

Cookies!

The Carversville Cookie Contest is, beyond doubt, the most competitive, and the highest culinary event to take place within the context of Carversville Day. Every year we are impressed by the quality, beauty, and originality of the entries. The 2010 event will prove to be no less cutting edge that previous endeavors!

Be sure to enter YOUR cookie creation to this gustatory extravaganza! **Bake 4 dozen – that's right: 48 cookies – and drop them off at the cookie counter overseen by the Cookie Master Dr. Howard Barsky by 9:30 a.m. on Carversville Day.** Our top-quality judges and election officials will oversee the counting of your votes to determine the winners in the following cookie categories: most popular (popular vote), most chocolaty, best bars, most creative, best presentation, and most healthful.

Please, if at all possible, sign up in advance on the sheet in the General Store to let us know you will be entering your masterpiece in this event! Whether you sign up in advance or not, **BRING US YOUR COOKIES ON CARVERSVILLE DAY!** In addition to attaining great prestige, the top winner (by popular vote) will be awarded a coveted cookie jar hand made by famed (no kidding) local potter and pottery instructor Nan Kirstein.

2010 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 24	Clean Up Day
May 22	Carversville Day
June 28	Films in the Field
July 26	Films in the Field
August 30	Films in the Field
October 16/17	Art Show
October 24	Pumpkin Carving
November 15	General Membership Meeting at The Carversville Inn
December 19	Caroling in the Square

Focus: Village Volunteers

We are so grateful to all of you who help out here in Carversville! Really, it would not be the great place it is without you! All the countless things that people just step and volunteer to do is amazing. So we've decided to start talking with some of you and highlighting all the super people who live here. For this inaugural column, we're starting with a couple of newcomers.

Eric & Jen Stephens are relatively new arrivals in town. They bought the house at 3637 Aquetong, on the right hand side as you are leaving town, at the bend in the road and moved into our village in May 2009. Jen is a music teacher and Eric is an architect and designer.

They jumped in and became Carversvillians immediately. When they were asked if they could help out at *Caroling in the Square*, they didn't hesitate a moment! Jen brought her electronic keyboard down to the Square, even on that cold,

wintery night. She definitely needed gloves on as she accompanied the "voices of the village" raised in Christmas song and she continued until we were all just about frozen. Eric set up the keyboard, kept the music from blowing off the stand, kept a light on her music by (we promise better technical support in 2010!) and sang along with the rest of us. It was a memorable *Caroling* and we thank Eric & Jen for their help.

Jen teaches K-5 grade vocal arts in the Pennsbury School District; in addition to those 500 little ones, she's responsible for 4th & 5th grade chorus and gives piano lessons at home two evenings a week! She has a Bachelor's in Music from Temple, attended a 6-week intensive summer course at the Julliard in NYC and obtained a Masters in Music at West Chester University. Eric also attended Temple, earning his Bachelor's in Architecture. He then started classes at Yestermorrow Design and Build School in Vermont. He is interested in pursuing *permaculture design*: designing land use systems for individual homes or larger tracts that introduce permanent sustainable local plants that provide food, such as fruit trees and berry bushes, instead of "lawn." Another aspect of *permaculture* is finding local plants to be used to revive brown fields instead of scraping off the soil and sending it elsewhere. Eric works with the Wrightstown CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) and would like to see a CSA formed in Solebury. Jen says: "We moved to Carversville because we absolutely love the rich arts and culture of the area. Carversville is such a beautiful little town! Our house offers us so much." The art studio behind their house was a big draw; they intend to make it into Jen's piano studio. If you want piano lessons, or a *permaculture* consult, give them a call at: 267-293-0276!

What wonderful people and great additions to our community! They epitomize the "village volunteer" and we are delighted to welcome them to Carversville.



Jen, Eric & Roxie Stephens

White Elephant Sale

White Elephant Sales are also known as Rummage Sales. Don't miss this one at Carversville Day. It'll have the best elephants/rummage you've ever seen!

Cleaning out the attic or cellar?
Downsizing to a simpler life? We can use all your no-longer-needed items for the White Elephant Sale on Carversville Day. Your useless object is someone else's treasure! Just remember: all items should be clean and vermin-free!

Need some suggestions as to what constitutes a "white elephant" or rummage sale item? What about old jewelry you no longer wear? Great idea! Do you have some computer components, electrical cords, an old record player? How about compact discs or cassette tapes you no longer play? Excellent! What about old bird feeders that you are replacing this year? Wash out the old ones and give them to us to sell! Flower vases. Books. Children's toys. Wonderful! How about old office furniture? Stationary items. Weird lamp you'd no longer use. Pictures that used to hang on your walls. We'll find a new home for these cast-offs. Someone here in Carversville will love your items! Give us your cool but unwanted gems!!

Deliver your items, starting on May 15th – one week prior to Carversville Day – **to the driveway of Joe Santoro, the elephant herder!** His driveway is located just across the road from the beginning of Wismer Road.

Please note. Any items that do not sell will be taken to local charities; books will go to the library. Nothing will be thrown away or wasted! Remember – all donated items should be clean and vermin-free.

Carversville Day — *(continued from front page)*

The **Kevin McKinley jazz quartet** will get the morning started in style under the Music tent in front of the General Store at 10 a.m. to start the groove. In the Secret Garden we hope to hear neighbor **Nick Zelenevich** leading the children in songs with his banjo. The afternoon will get off to a rousing start immediately following the Pet Parade with the **Jazz Group** starring our own **David Stier and Michelle Wiley** and several other excellent jazz musicians! Stay tuned....

Of course Carversville Day couldn't exist without that most sought after, famous, talent-filled **Pet Parade** at high **Noon**. All those crazy Carversville critters – and their owners – will strut across the stage and claim their hour of fame! Have an unusual pet? Enter it in this year's parade! Anybody have a goat out there? Carversville thrives on the unusual, the odd, the quirky!

Our **Plant Table** was a sell-out sensation last year and we want that to happen again in 2010. Our generous friends at Stone Creek Farm will help us to provide you with healthy, attractive flowering plants to purchase.

Some good old-fashioned **Children's Games** are sure to be entertaining after the Pet Parade. They'll be held in front of the Pet Parade stand. **Sparkles the Clown** will also grace our Village fun during this time.... so keep your eyes peeled! We all need to relax now and then, so this year, look for **Nyda, the massage therapist**; she'll set up her shop and use her magic hands to provide you with a great massage!

Of course we want you to enjoy **Good Food** throughout this entire magnificent day! Chomp down on one of **Chef Will's Crab Cakes**; fill up on our **beef & garden burgers and hot dogs sizzling on the grill**. Check out the bake sale held by the Carversville Christian Church on the porch of the Inn. We hope to host other yummy food vendors as well. And word has it that there will be a superb ice cream vendor in town that day! We are negotiating with OWOWCOW to provide you with their spectacular product. We aim to make it another sell-out season for good food!

Save room for the **Watermelon Eating Contest**. Who will be this year's champion? Will it be YOU?! Everyone's welcome! Several entry levels will be available.

Those **Raffle Jars** will be in front of the General Store for 2 weeks before Carversville Day, filled with gifts and new surprises that can be yours – for the price of a dollar raffle ticket. This may be your lucky year – but only if you **buy** your raffle tickets! And speaking of surprises and items of interest, the **Annual Live Auction** will be worth the wait! Bring your checkbook!

The Historic Carversville Society is always eager to share the long history of our village...so stop by the **Historic Society Booth** and see what new tidbits you can learn – as well as what interesting and historic HCS items you can purchase! Paul Savage's wonderful review of our village's homes will surprise you with little known facts and with a self-guided walking tour!

Spend your entire day with us; we have lots of activities to keep you interested. Enjoy the old-fashioned community spirit and fun!!

See you at Carversville Day, Saturday, May 22nd!

(Tentative schedule of activities on the back page.)

Clean Up Day!



Carversville Clean Up Day is scheduled for **Saturday, April 24th**. Please plan to come by and help us spruce up the Village and the Secret Garden too.

The Day starts about 9 a.m. – or maybe 9:30 a.m. for you sleepy heads. Bring a broom, and/or a shovel and your work gloves. Wheelbarrows are always most welcome! We'll supply trash bags, and safety vests and a list of areas that need to be cleaned of trash.

Clean Up Day only takes about 3 to 4 hours, especially with lots of people show up. There'll be a sign up sheet in the General Store if you have a favorite place you want to clean; otherwise we'll assign you or your group where to pick up trash in our lovely village.

Stay for lunch after you work! Hot dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers, and salad will be available for all of our volunteers – and just possibly cookies too! Don't miss this event. Show how much YOU love Carversville by helping us with this Spring Cleaning!

The Carversvillian

The Historic Carversville Society

P. O. Box 41

Carversville, PA 18913

Carversville Day 2010 Schedule

(tentative, subject to slight revision!)

- 10:00 a.m. Artisan and Crafter Booths Open; Cookie Contest Opens; Plant Sale Begins;
White Elephant Sale Begins
Kevin McGinley & Friends performing until 12noon
- 10:30 a.m. Storyteller Jane King in The Secret Garden
- 11:30 a.m. Registration for the Pet Parade - (Meet in front of Noel Barrett's)
- 12 noon The Prestigious Pet Parade - (March to Creek Side Meadow)
- 1:00 p.m. **Michelle Wiley, David Stier & Friends** Perform
- 1:00 p.m. Children's Games - On the meadow
Sparkles the Clown-strolling until 3:30pm
- 2:00 p.m. Watermelon Eating Contest
- 2:30 p.m. Live Auction - Don't miss it!
- 3:00 p.m. Announcement of Cookie Contest Winners & Raffle Drawing Winners!

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*Jewelry, Ceramics, Paintings, Sculpture & Furniture for Sale!  
Huge White Elephant Sale! Plants! Carversville Historic Booth!  
Lots of Great Food! Lemonade! Crab Cakes! Ice Cream!*

**All proceeds benefit the Historical Carversville Society**

**\* Saturday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> \***