

In Memoriam

A Tribute to Mary Robertson Ives

Mary Robertson Ives vividly remembered moving to the Great Chester Valley in 1922 ... as an 8-year-old from Wisconsin - with her father James Robertson, her mother, and her younger sister Janet. Her parents had purchased a dairy farm on the south side of Swedesford Road near Valley Store, today's intersection with Route 29. That farm is today occupied by the campus of Penn State-Great Valley.

Mary and Janet began attending primary school in Paoli at what was once the historic General Jackson Inn, located on the Lincoln Highway across from its intersection with Chestnut Road. But after a couple of years, their mother transferred the girls to the Friend's School in West Chester, from which they both continued on to West Chester High School. Mary recalled how on each school morning their mother would drive the girls from the farm to the Pennsylvania Railroad's Frazer station. In one of my many interviews with Mary, she recalled: *"At Frazer we caught the train on the PRR's West Chester & Frazer branch ... a steam engine and 2 passenger cars. This short line began in Malvern, with stops at Frazer, Immaculata College, Morstein, Greenhill, Fernhill, and finally the main West Chester station at Biddle Street."* She graduated from West Chester High School in 1932.

She graduated from the Drexel School of Business Administration in Philadelphia, and worked for a Center City firm. She also became a Red Cross volunteer prior to WWII, and when America joined the war she volunteered for active service with the Red Cross. In 1943 Mary was sent to Iceland, an important staging area for the forthcoming Allied invasion of France, and remained there until late 1944, when she returned to the States. While in Iceland she met and married Dr. Ives. Regrettably the marriage did not last after the war, and she returned to the family farm and resumed her employment in the city.

After Mr. Robertson died in 1956, Mary and her mother remained on the farm for more than a decade. But she recalled years later: *"In the mid-1960's, when plans were announced for what became the Great Valley Corporate Center, mother and I decided that this was no place for us to stay for long. Then, when the decision was made to build Route 202, which would bisect our farm, my mother and I sold the farm and moved to Paoli."*

At her passing on 14 October 2015, she was the oldest member of the Great Valley Presbyterian Church, where she had faithfully served for decades as its historian. Mary joined the Tredyffrin Easttown History Club in the late 1970s, and contributed greatly to its *Quarterly*, writing 11 articles. She remained a faithful attendee at our Society's meetings even after moving to Tel Hai Village in Honeybrook, driving her own car to meetings until just a few years ago. Mary and I visited together often over the years as I sought her encyclopedic recollections of this area from those long ago times. Even in her 100th year, some of her razor-sharp memory was still in evidence when I visited her just weeks before her passing. I miss her keen intellect, her attention to detail, and her gentle spirit.

— Roger Thorne



Mary Robertson Ives, May 2008. Courtesy of Roger D. Thorne

In Memoriam

Remembering Bob Tickner

Robert W. (Bob) Tickner, 83, a retired project engineer who traced his family's arrival in America back to 1638, died Oct. 5, 2015 of multiple myeloma at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.

Born in Susquehanna, Pa., Bob served in the Navy during the Korean War. Afterward, he earned a bachelor of science and a master's degree, both in engineering, at Pennsylvania State University. He worked as an engineer at ice cream maker Sealtest, before joining Campbell Soup Co. in Camden as a project engineer in 1965. He retired in 1994.

Bob had a genuine love of history, and he and his wife Helen were active members of the Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society from 2004 until his illness finally made it impossible to attend the monthly meetings. For years Bob could also be relied upon to serve on the Society's Audit Committee.

That love of history, country and family also led him to delve into his genealogy, and he was active with the Main Line Genealogy Club. He traced his family to John and Mary Benson, who sailed to America in 1638 from England, aboard the *Confidence*, landing only 18 years after the *Mayflower*.

In the 1950s, Bob uncovered a box of old letters from an ancestor serving as a Union soldier during the Civil War, one of which was written from the Gettysburg battlefield to assure his families that he had survived. "Today I will write a few lines and let you know that my name is once more set down with the living," Manzer L. Benson wrote to his mother on July 5, 1863. "We have had a little brush here in Pennsylvania. We gave them perfect thunder."

Unfortunately, although Pvt. Benson survived the carnage at Gettysburg, he was wounded the following year at the Battle of the Wilderness in Virginia and died in a Confederate prison camp in 1864.

He is survived by his wife, Helen Haynes Tickner; sons Robert, William and Thomas; eight grandchildren; a sister; and nieces and nephews.

— *Adapted from his obituary by Roger Thorne*



Robert W. (Bob) Tickner. *Courtesy of the Tickner family*

Remembering John and Ann Hanft

John Daniel Hanft, Sr., 94, passed away on May 16, 2014 in Ft. Lauderdale, FL and was predeceased there by his beloved wife Ann Mafera Hanft, 90, in June of 2012.

The couple were long-time residents of the Upper Main Line, living in Berwyn, Devon, Paoli, and Hershey's Mill, until a move to Florida in Sept. 2010. They were long standing contributors to a wide variety of civic and local community activities including: Saint Monica's Church, the Devon Preparatory School, the Upper Main Line Little League, the Great Valley Swim Club, and the Tredyffrin Easttown History Club (later Historical Society). They wrote several articles for the *Quarterly* in the 1950s-60s and he served as treasurer 1960-65.

John served with the Armed Forces as a First Lieutenant in the Army's Infantry and Engineering Division during World War II in England, France and Germany in five major campaigns. He received a degree in engineering from The Cooper Union College, and joined the Philadelphia office of Turner Construction Company in 1954 where he held a wide range of managerial and executive positions until retiring in 1989 at age 70. Ann was a well known figure in the local real estate business, as owner/broker of Ann Hanft Realtor Appraiser and later an independent Designated Appraiser, and was a long time member of the Main Line Board of Realtors and the Chester County Board of Realtors.

— *Adapted from their obituaries by John O. Senior*