



APPLEFORD

The Apple Seed

APPLEFORD'S NEWSLETTER

FALL 2023



Photo of Appleford by: Pictures by Todd

Libby Hill and the founding of the Appleford Committee

As members of the Appleford Committee celebrate our Golden Anniversary, we are grateful for the countless volunteers who have come and gone over the years, joining forces and sharing skills to maintain, preserve and constantly improve the historic property. But we are especially grateful for one thing that has never changed in all of that time, and that is the enduring presence of Libby Hill, who has been part of the Appleford Committee since the very beginning.

In 1973, Libby Hill was a busy young wife, living in Villanova with her husband Joe, two young sons, and an infant daughter. One day out of the blue, she received a phone call from a complete stranger. It was the wife of a Lower Merion Commissioner, calling to invite her to a brainstorming session about the future of Appleford. A few months earlier, the longtime owner of the property, Anabel Parsons, had died and bequeathed the estate

to Lower Merion Township. It was no secret, however, that the Board of Commissioners was reluctant to take on responsibility for the 22-acre site, so Libby welcomed the chance to become involved. "Of course I was interested because my property abutted Appleford," Libby recalls. "It was at my back door. I didn't want to see a new development of houses behind me if there was another option."

And so, not long after receiving that phone call, Libby found herself in the living room at Appleford, one of a half dozen volunteers at the organizational meeting of the Appleford Committee. Elected on that day as the Committee's first secretary, she recorded details about incorporating as a non-profit and drafting by-laws, for the record, filing

her minutes in her full name, Elizabeth B. (Mrs. Joseph) Hill. As the Committee grew

during the late 1970s, her minutes were filled with the names of new members and plans to raise funds by renting Appleford for events.

"The attitude was always 'let's try that,'" Libby says. "It was the most seat-of-the-pants operation you've ever seen. But then someone rented the house, and then another

person, and suddenly we were in business." With "absolutely no training" Libby recalls how she put together the very first rental contract.

Much of Appleford's early success to produce income, in Libby's view, was due to the involvement of various Main Line garden clubs. Anabel Parsons was an avid gardener and a member of the Four Counties club.

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Libby Hill and guest at an early Appleford event in the 1970's

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A Message from the President

Dear Appleford Family and Friends,

Welcome to the fall issue of the Appleseed Newsletter. I'm not sure about you, but fall is one of my favorite times of the year. The sights and smells rival none other. Walking Appleford, you will be in awe of the color palette surrounding you. All at once, Mother Nature splashes paint in colors of vibrant reds, brilliant yellows, and burnt oranges to delight our visual senses. And luckily for us, the neighboring properties contribute to the fall celebration with the delicious aroma of burning wood from their chimneys-now that's a treat!

We have had quite a busy rental season at Appleford. I want to say the wedding and event season went off without a hitch, but that's never the case. Mother Nature offered many challenges, but the quick thinking and fast responses from the Appleford team comprised of Lisa McBride, Sofia and John McGinty, and dedicated liaisons working the many events ensured a smooth transition with minimal disruption. The many brides, grooms, hosts, and hostesses quietly thank you for making the process look so easy.

"Our June Summer Solstice event was a blockbuster success with 180+ attendees."

We continue to celebrate our 50th Anniversary as a committee and are currently planning our fall and winter schedule. We will end the year in December with our annual Holiday Party to thank our many Friends of Appleford for their generosity and support. We are tremendously grateful to you. We hope to welcome some new faces at our Winter Open House the following week.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and share it with your friends and family, encouraging them to visit Appleford and enjoy the beauty our Township gem offers each of us daily. More details and times are highlighted in this newsletter, and updates will be posted to the Appleford website www.applefordestate.com throughout the year. Please follow us on Instagram @applefordestate or Appleford on Facebook to stay current and enjoy photos from past events throughout the year.

Thank you for your generous support, and I look forward to saying hello to you at one of our many events. As the holiday season approaches, I wish you all a joyous, healthy, and safe holiday season surrounded by loving family and friends.

Happy Everything!

Lyn Marinchak, President
The Appleford Committee



In May, we held a Spring Open House that exceeded all expectations for attendance, with many new faces getting to know the history of Appleford with guided house and garden tours. Our June Summer Solstice event was a blockbuster success with 180+ attendees. All were treated to a delicious array of delectables from 10 of the best caterers and bakeries in the area while enjoying the music of a local steel drum band. Mother Nature obliged with the most perfect weather enjoyed in years! Remember to check the Appleford website for next year's Summer Solstice event to mark your calendar! You won't be disappointed.



2023 Appleford Committee

The Appleford Committee

Lyn Marinchak, President

Bruce Belzak
Becky Best
Betsy Hastings Block
Susan P. Bloom
Nancy Bruechert
Carol M. Bryan
Carol Carlson
Wynrhys E. Coghlan
Patricia R. Cosgrave
Lorraine Y. DeSimone
Samantha Wolfe Ehlinger
Pamela S. Fish
Marion Laffey Fox
Judi Garst
Bruce A. Gillespie
Bernadette W. Holroyde
Karen Nagel Kamp
Christine V. Kanter
William J. Kenny
Patricia Kolff
Christine Kuhinka
Anja Levitties
Bruce N. Long
Leonard F. Magargee, Jr.
Binney McCague
Colleen Holt McCauley
Mary Kate Miller
John H. Rice
Kimberly Salviano Rosen
Eileen Kelly Sandifer
Carroll McConnell Shields
Michele C. Spence
Margot Sullivan
Alicia Templeton
Mary Vaira

Sustaining Members

Cathy Decker
Lori M. Fell
Beth C. Hare
Kristin Hays
Libby Hill
Marylyn S. Jeffers
Lee McIlvaine Manonian
Joanna Phelan
Daniel Brainard Slack
Helen Weary
Julie Williams
Geraldine Zipf

Lisa McBride - Director
of Marketing and Events
Sofia & John McGinty
Resident Managers

Tours at Appleford

Photo of Appleford by: Pictures by Todd

In Spring 2023 the Appleford Committee revitalized the conducting of tours for both the historic Richardson Brognard Okie house and the Thomas Sears gardens. The debut was at the Appleford Spring Open House on May 10. The response was overwhelming and committee members Carol Bryan and Lorrie DeSimone conducted numerous house tours, while Michele Spence led a large audience around the grounds on what was a beautiful spring day. A number

of new visitors to Appleford were thrilled to receive stamps for their Philadelphia: America's Garden Capital passports.

On June 21st a horticultural group from the Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College was shown the grounds by Carreen Wright, our head gardener and plant specialist. In addition, Lorrie reprised her house tour to great enthusiasm at being privy to the charm and elegance of Anabel Parsons' home.

Tours of the house and grounds will now continue to be offered, so please check the Appleford website for dates. We also welcome any interested neighbors and community groups to schedule a tour to explore this beautiful and historic treasure of the Main Line. Please come and let us show you the property consisting of over 24 acres which include the Parsons-Banks Arboretum and an Audubon bird sanctuary.

The Kelly Cousins

The Parsons family is not the only family whose history is intertwined with the Appleford estate. Bridget Cavanagh arrived in Philadelphia from Ireland in 1959 and promptly joined the staff at Appleford, working in the house for Mrs. Parsons. Her niece, May, joined her at Appleford in 1966. As with many Irish immigrants of that era, Bridget came from a large extended family, which included three nephews and two nieces already in the Philadelphia area. Being on their own and far from home, the extended family connections were an important part of Bridget and May's lives, bringing them a great deal of joy.

Bridget's nieces and nephews themselves had large families, with 29 children among them. The 29 great-nieces and great-nephews spent their childhoods visiting Appleford Estate frequently with their parents. Many of the children did not even know the name of the estate, and to this day refer to it simply as "Villanova".

Arriving at Appleford, the families would be greeted by the estate's two Airedale terriers, Mickey and Timmy, at their car doors. The children all remember Mickey and Timmy's vigorous barking being a bit intimidating and would hesitate to leave their car until Preston

(another Appleford staffer) took the dogs by the collar and moved them along.

The families would enter the main house through the staff door on the side, being greeted by Bridget, May, and their colleagues. The adults would remain inside 'visiting', talking over tea and fruitcake, while the children were set out to freely wander the grounds (and stay out from underfoot of the adults).

Many afternoons were spent playing on the grounds of the estate while the 'grown-ups' enjoyed their time together. The children have warm memories of running through the gardens and down to the pond to play tag, occasionally being chased by the estate's resident peacock. The maze in the garden was a favorite spot.

Bridget and May left Appleford in the mid-1980's. Bridget retired to Ireland, while May continued to work for another family on the Main Line for a number of years before also eventually retiring and returning to Ireland as well.

After Bridget and May left, the children had few opportunities to visit Appleford, but retained

many warm memories. Now grown and with families of their own, the great-nieces and great-nephews would reminisce about childhood visits to Appleford during those special occasions when their generation of extended family would gather to 'visit'.



Photo by: Pictures by Todd

Over the years, a few of the great-nieces made visits to Appleford. In 2021, one of Bridget's great-nieces, Eileen Kelly Sandifer, discovered the work of the Appleford Committee, and began to volunteer, subsequently joining the Appleford Committee in 2022. Eileen was thrilled to join a large contingent of Bridget's great-nieces at this year's Summer Solstice party – reconnecting to the fond memories of their childhood many decades ago.

Summer Solstice at Appleford

With steel drum music wafting out of the tent and into the lush gardens of Appleford, a record number of neighbors, supporters and Appleford Committee members in garden party attire enjoyed another beautiful Summer Solstice fundraiser on June 22nd.

Gorgeous flower arrangements were provided by volunteers on the Appleford Committee, as well as generous local florists Trillium and Fleur de Lis Floral. The delicious and varied food tastings were

graciously provided by the following caterers and bakers: Catering by Design; Feastivities Events; Feast Your Eyes; John Serock Catering; Perfect Setting Catering; Sage Catering; Seedling & Sage Catering; 12th Street Catering; Bredenbeck's Bakery; the Master's Baker and Paines Hollow Kitchen. Contributions of music came from Norma Michael's Entertainment and table settings from Party Rental Limited.

The Appleford Committee graciously thanks our vendors and partners for contributing to a most festive and memorable night.

Photos by: Pictures by Todd





Open Houses at Appleford

The Appleford Committee is grateful for all who were able to join us for the Appleford Spring Open House on May 10. What a tremendous attendance on a lovely spring

evening! The house and garden tours were enthusiastically received and we were particularly happy to see many new faces who had heard about the event by word-of-mouth,

and through our website and social media. We hope that many will return and become loyal supporters.

The Appleford Committee invites you to a



Enjoy a behind-the-scenes look at Appleford in festive holiday decor.

Wednesday, December 13 • 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm

House tours and light refreshments will be provided.

Please reply with a guest count to rsvpapplefordcommittee@gmail.com.



APPLEFORD COMMITTEE

Become a Friend

We have already received generous contributions from many of you and greatly appreciate this continued support. Appleford is a beautiful treasure and the Appleford Committee strives to maintain the house and gardens at the highest possible level for the benefit of the local community. Please see the enclosed envelope or QR code for details on how to make your gift this year. All donors who

contribute at the Friend level (\$150) or above by November 23rd will be sent an invitation for two people to the Appleford Holiday Party on Thursday, December 7th, 2023. We would love for you to join us; please feel free to share this information with friends.



Among her final wishes was the hope that Appleford would always be a welcoming place for garden clubs, and with that in mind, the Appleford Committee in those early years relied on their help to care for the landscape. At the same time, club members came to appreciate the beauty of the property and began spreading the word that it could be rented. Libby says, "That's probably what got us started."

Of course, with increased rentals came a steep learning curve. While members of the Appleford Committee stepped up to take on jobs like pruning rose bushes, polishing furniture, and planning public events, they soon learned that running a rental business presented more tricky challenges. They had to establish rental rates, require security deposits, and oversee large events. Also, Anabel Parsons

had left behind a household staff of workers who continued to live and work at Appleford and needed support.

Libby recalls that staff with special fondness. She remembers how the housekeepers, Bridget and May, would save left-over



Libby Hill celebrating 50 years at Appleford

wedding cake for the Hill children to put in their school lunchboxes. And then there was Thomas, the chauffeur, who would show up at Appleford weddings with his wife, uninvited but "both dressed to the nines as if they were guests, ready to party."

After several years as the Appleford Committee's secretary, Libby went on to serve as both president and treasurer. Year after year, she regularly attended meetings and supported Committee fundraising events, invariably with husband,

Joe Hill, at her side. Fellow volunteers remember how each December, the couple would work together to set up the holiday silent auction, with Joe dutifully moving tables in place as his wife directed him around the room. Sadly for all of us, earlier this year Libby lost her wonderful partner of 57 years. But she remains an active and invaluable member of the Committee that she co-founded, with a keen interest in the ongoing work to preserve the house and the open space that surrounds it.

"I think I hung in for so long because I was fascinated with how things at Appleford were going," Libby says. "You never knew what might happen next. But aside from all that, for me, it was always about keeping this acreage nice. I always thought Appleford was lovely."

Lovely indeed, thanks in large part to the vision and dedicated service of Libby Hill, a name that has special meaning for all of us on the Appleford Committee roster.

Thank you for your generous support!

We are grateful for each and every gift made in support of Appleford's mission! The Appleford Committee extends a special thanks to our 2023 Benefactors and Patrons (listed below) who have made significant investments in the house and gardens this year. Please consider making your own gift – at a level that works for you – before our fiscal year closes on December 31, 2023.

Benefactors (\$1,000 and above)

Mr. and Mrs. S. M. V. Hamilton, Jr.
Dr. and Mrs. Roger Marinchak
Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Miller
Ms. Cheryl Smith

Patrons (\$500-\$999)

Mr. Bruce C. Belzak
Mr. and Mrs. Charles J. Bloom
Mr. * and Mrs. William C. Buck
Mr. and Mrs. Gary S. Fink
Dr. and Mrs. James E. Fish
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Jeffers

Mr. and Mrs. R. Stephen Kamp
Mrs. Christine V. Kanter
Dr. * and Mrs. Jacob Kolff
Mr. and Mrs. Chad R. PUNCHARD
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Sandifer
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Brainard Slack
Mr. * and Mrs. Philip A. Sullivan
Mrs. Helen S. Weary
Mrs. Thomas A. Williams
Mr. and Mrs. George Yatrakis

*Deceased

List reflects gifts received January 1 to September 1, 2023.



APPLEFORD

COMMITTEE

Appleford
770 Mt. Moro Rd.
Villanova, PA 19085

Become a Friend of Appleford in 2023!

It's not too late to make an annual gift of support to Appleford this year.

We hope to see you at

APPLEFORD'S ANNUAL


Holiday Party

Thursday, December 7th, 2023



The house will be beautifully decorated for the holiday season and delicious food and drink will be provided by the Appleford Committee and 12th Street Caterers.

Come peruse the silent auction and raise a glass with other Friends of Appleford!