



THE LANDMARK

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Newsletter of the Friends of Old Annville
P.O. Box 99, Annville, PA 17003

Community Life in the Age of COVID-19: Spring Program at St. Anthony Coptic Orthodox Church Canceled, Annville on Lockdown

President's Message, by Michael Schroeder

“This church is worth understanding,” explained Mr. John Borland, Deacon of Annville’s St. Anthony Coptic Orthodox Church, as we sat across a long table in the church’s social room in late February, just inside its magnificent oak paneled front doors and beautifully carved oak transom facing West Main Street. I was interviewing Mr. Borland for this President’s Message, as a way to acknowledge and celebrate the Church’s receipt of the Friends of Old Annville’s 2019 Historic Building Award, and in anticipation of the guided tour of the building that we’d arranged for FOOA’s Spring Program on Saturday, April 4.

And now that Spring Program has been canceled, or at least postponed till autumn, in consequence of the coronavirus and COVID-19 illness that have upended life across the USA and the world, not to mention here in the Lebanon Valley. I hope I’m wrong, but from the epidemiological models and timelines I’ve seen, I’d be surprised if this year’s Memorial Day Parade and Historic Old Annville Day are not also canceled. At the present writing we just don’t know, just as no one knows when we’ll return to some semblance of normal.

But even if these cherished annual community events are canceled this year, and even though most local businesses are temporarily shuttered, and schools and religious services temporarily suspended, and even though we’ve already grown weary of the “social distancing” required to halt the spread of this virus, that doesn’t mean that our community life has ground to a halt. Indeed, shuttering businesses, keeping a safe distance, bumping elbows instead of shaking hands, washing our hands regularly, and suspending “business as usual” are the best ways we have to protect our families, friends and neighbors, and our larger community. We’re still checking in with each other, looking after each other, and drawing strength from the ties that bind us together — ties we can appreciate even more when they’re tested by an invisible foe such as this.



Detail of tile mosaic iconography gracing the exterior of St. Anthony Coptic Orthodox Church at 118 W. Main St. in Annville.

Meantime, holed up at home with our family members, it’s a great opportunity to read new books and learn new things — like about the history of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt and here in the United States, for instance. As a historian and bibliophile, over the years I’ve accumulated quite a number of books on the history of Christianity, which I consulted while researching this piece. Curiously, the Coptic Orthodox Church gets very short shrift in all of them. The 724-page *Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* (1990), for instance, includes only a handful of brief mentions,

as does David Chidester's 627-page *Christianity: A Global History* (2000), and the 1,154-page *Harper-Collins Dictionary of Religion* (1995).

In all these cases, those brief mentions focus on a key event mentioned by Mr. Borland: the Council of Chalcedon of 451 C.E., which decreed the doctrine of Christ's dual nature as both truly human and truly divine, as opposed to the Miaphysite doctrine adopted by the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt, among other dissenting branches: that the Lord Jesus Christ is perfectly human and perfectly divine, and that these two natures are united together without mingling, confusion, or alteration in one nature according to the Christological formula of St. Cyril the Great of Alexandria. From this point forward, the Coptic Orthodox Church would follow a very different path than the Eastern Orthodox Christianity of the Byzantine Empire and the Roman Catholicism of Rome, and later, of the Protestant sects that proliferated during and after the Reformation.

Today, some 15-20 million Egyptians – an estimated 10-15 percent of the country's population – belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church, making it the largest Christian community in the Mideast and North Africa. Emigration of Egyptian Coptic Christians to the United States began in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By 2010, the USA saw some 151 Coptic Orthodox parishes, with an estimated population of 200,000 to 700,000. Pennsylvania's first Coptic Orthodox Church was St. George in Philadelphia, founded in 1969. Others soon

followed; today there are at least 12 Coptic Orthodox parishes across the Commonwealth.¹

Mr. Borland indicates that at any given time, St. Anthony's congregation has been roughly 50 families, many of whom emigrated from Egypt in the past decades. Most don't live in Annville but do live within 50 or so miles, making it challenging for members of the congregation to establish ongoing connections with the larger Annville community. But they've tried, and continue to try, especially during events like Historic Old Annville Day, when church members prepare heaping pans of some of the most delicious food the day has to offer. Mr. Borland expects that as the second and third generations become increasingly Americanized, such connections are likely to grow and flourish.

The building itself, built around 1861, was home to United Brethren Church until 1912. In 1928, the building became the home of St. Paul the Apostle Church. In 1981, St. Paul moved to its current location at 125 S. Spruce St., and in 1997 the building was purchased by St. Anthony, which celebrated its grand opening in November of that year. Since then, the building has undergone a series of major renovations inside and out and has become a true gem of a historic structure.²

We are delighted that St. Anthony Coptic Orthodox Church is flourishing and in two short years poised to mark its first quarter-century in Annville. The entire Annville community is all the richer for it. We in FOOA offer our heartiest congratulations to the congregation for its receipt of our 2019 Historic Building Award, and look forward to the opportunity to tour the church building and learn more about the history of the Coptic Orthodox Church once the threat posed by this virus has finally receded. Until then, please stay safe!



Left: Detail of iconography inside the baptistry overlooking the sanctuary in St. Anthony Coptic Orthodox Church in Annville.

¹ See <http://directory.nihov.org/church/usa/pennsylvania>; see also Saad Michael Saad, "The Contemporary Life of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United States," *Studies in World Christianity* 16:3 (2010), 207-225, and Yvonne Haddad and Joshua Donovan, "Good Copt, Bad Copt: Competing

Narratives on Coptic Identity in Egypt and the United States," *Studies in World Christianity* 19.3 (2013), 208-232.

² Photos of the exterior painting and restoration (ca. 2010-2014) can be found at www.joelspainting.com/category/schools-churches/.

Begin Historic Old Annville Day with the Annville Free Library's 5K Walk/Run

We are delighted to reproduce this invitation from Annville Free Library Vice President and longtime FOOA member Carolyn Scott, even as we don't know whether the event will take place. We sure hope it will!

Historic Old Annville Day is above all a day for community, and for many in our community that day begins early with the Annville Free Library's "Book It! 5K Walk/Run." For the sixth time, this year on Saturday, June 13, the Annville Free Library will hold this annual fundraiser. The event begins, rain or shine, at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot of Annville-Cleona High School. All proceeds benefit the activities of the library.

The course for the 5K Walk/Run is entirely off-street, follows a well-marked route across school property, then dips into the Quittie Park before looping back for a final circuit around the high school track. Chip timing and speedy (!) race results are provided by Falcon Race Timing. Volunteers along the route cheer on participants and hand out water. Afterward, back at the high school parking lot, folks will find more water stations and can refuel on snacks of fruit, soft pretzels, and Rita's Ice (generously donated by Jim Plummer).

In the past, those running and walking have included neighbors, friends, and some staff from the Annville Library and from the greater Lebanon

County Library world. Each year we see some family dogs joining in – all on leash and on best behavior. There are always a small contingent of toddlers in strollers and numerous children and youth who participate often along with their parents and even grandparents. Always there are the quite serious competitors of all ages.

Afterward, a time for prizes: 10 age groups from under 8 to 70 and over, and please do not underestimate any of them! Additional drawings take place for useful and fun gift cards from local businesses.

Ours is an unusual race, we have been told, and we like to think that is because of its inclusiveness and openness to all—just like the Library. So, come join us then continue on, as many already do, and stroll Main Street for the many interesting activities FOOA has planned for celebrating our town and our sense of community.

Not sure of your calendar or the weather for June 13? Think of signing up as a donation to the library in support of its service and programs.

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Registration is \$15.00 for children age 11 and under. For all others, \$25.00 on or before May 30, and \$30.00 after May 30. Register online through the "Book It 5k" link on the library website: <http://annville.lclibs.org/>

Our Sincere Gratitude for a Very Generous Bequest from Mrs. Phyllis Carey

The Friends of Old Annville expresses its sincere gratitude to Mrs. Phyllis Carey for her very generous bequest of nearly \$60,000 to our organization. Phyllis Snyder Long Carey was a longtime resident of Annville, born March 9, 1918, to George & Ethel (Herr) Snyder. George served as a supervising agent for 22 years at the Annville Train Station. Upon graduating from Annville High School in 1936, Phyllis immediately started working as a beautician in her own beauty salon, a position she held for 33 years. She married her high school sweetheart in the early 1940s and they built a home at the end of East High Street, where she continued her business until her retirement in 1970. Sadly, Ralph passed away in 1962 at the age of 44. In the late 1960s she met & married John Carey, an agronomist. His work took them first to State College, PA, then to Albuquerque, NM, and back east to Smyrna, DE where he eventually retired.

Phyllis was described as a woman of small stature, warm, caring, and hospitable, but who also was not afraid to speak her mind when warranted. A longtime member of the American Needlework Guild, in retirement she taught needlework both in New Mexico & Delaware. Phyllis passed away April 13, 2018 at the age of 100. In future issues of *The Landmark*, we will discuss how we intend to husband this very generous bequest.



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Please note that your MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DATE can be found in the line above your name and address on this issue of *The Landmark*. Please send your dues and address change to Rachel Noll, 1673 Louser Road, Annville, PA, 17003-8856. Questions? Call Rachel at (717) 867-2137.

Individual & Student \$ 5.00 Family (2+ persons) \$ 10.00 Business \$ 25.00 Friend of FOOA \$ 50.00 ★
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