**VOLUME 15, ISSUE 1** 

NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**MARCH 2007** 

# A Horse and Carriage Ride with Dr. Cameron Wilson at our March Meeting



### By Richard Noe

Over the past two years, Dr. Cameron "Cammy" Wilson and I have worked on producing a film about carriage riding in Tyler Park, which also covers some of the details about the harness gear used in conjunction with such rides. Our goal was to preserve and pass on some aspects of horse and carriage life so that it might be enjoyed by future generations who would never have any real life experience with a craft that had such a huge impact on our lives for hundreds of years.

Except for occasional encounters with the Amish and other religious sects that choose to continue to prefer this mode of transportation, one can imagine that most residents of this area have never actually seen a horse drawn carriage making its way along the roadways or fields of Bucks County. Yet, for hundreds, indeed thousands of years, horse drawn conveyances of every size and shape were the way by which civilized man "got around".

The Automobile, of course, changed all that in a matter of decades. Fast and powerful, this modern marvel soon became the preferred means of transport in the USA. The introduction of Henry Ford's mass-produced "Model T" allowed most of the country to adopt the automobile as their primary means of transport in the years following World War One.

Story continues on page 3

## Memories of the Richboro Nike Base

by Virginia B. Geyer, Northampton Township Historical Commission

My husband and I had just purchased ground in Richboro, Northampton Township, Pa., in March of 1954. Here we were going to build our home. It was a Friday afternoon, and a very happy moment. Then two days later, the Sunday newspaper carried this headline, "NIKE MISSILE BASE TO BE BUILT IN RICHBORO"! What was a "Nike Base," and where was it going to be built? You guessed it -- just up the hill from where we were planning to build. The Army was to construct housing and radar facilities on 10.13 acres on Twining Ford Road, while down on 18.96 acres of their ground on Newtown Road, they were going to construct the dining or mess hall and other facilities, including the missile launch pad. It seems we were going to be near the area between the two sites. I don't think that made me feel any better.

A few contentious meetings were held in the old Richboro firehouse (on the northeast corner of Newtown Road and Second Street Pike) to explain just what a Nike Base was and what to expect when it opened. Finally, a high-ranking army officer explained that the Richboro Nike Missile Defense Base was one of twelve that circled around Philadelphia (during the "Cold War" with Russia 1950's-1970's). They were the last line of defense.

#### NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome back! I am glad Spring has arrived. This month my daughters and will attend the flower show and then I am off to Charleston, SC and Augusta, GA where the azaleas will be in full bloom. Right now I am doing some "fiddling jobs" like going through closets and removing wallpaper.

It should be very busy at our house in the next few months because family and friends will be arriving to see "King Tut." These visits will make more happy memories.

I am looking forward to our featured speaker and member Richard Noe at our March meeting. I hope that you can attend and please bring a friend. Note that we are starting refreshments and socializing at about 7 PM so our meetings can get started promptly at 7:30 PM.

### Did you know?

Mary B. Seader

The entire collection of HISTORIA's (over 14 years) are available online and in color. Check it out at:

#### www.northamptontownshiphistoricalsociety.org

We need your input! Please consider writing and submitting an article for the HISTORIA. Your stories, reminisces, and photos about "Northampton the way it use to be" are always welcome. Contact the editor listed on the last page of this HISTORIA.

## Membership Renewal for 2007 is due!

Please take a moment to check the mailing label which should read 2007 if your membership is up to date.

Congratulations to our latest Life member,

Lois Craven Ferguson

# Congratulations to the following NTHS members that gave above and beyond their normal membership dues in 2006.

NTHS Circle - Doug Crompton, Lois Craven Ferguson

Patron - Roy and Gail Reinard

Sponsor - Elinor Crompton, Bud and Dotty Davis,

Margaret and Lewis Hull, Nancy Turner

Sustaining - Jim and Larice Burtt, Kathryn Ciaverelli,

Childrens Cultural Center, Christine and Joseph Fluehr, Jim and Joan Kinney, Richard Noe,

Louis Leitenberger III, Janet and Kurt Nelson, Virginia Smith, Fred Stewart, Steven Rovner,

Nancy Turner

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Mark your Calendar

## NTHS Meeting Wednesday March 21 7:30 PM

Richard Noe

"A ride through the park with Dr. Wilson" Arrive at 7 PM for refreshments.

#### **MERCER MUSEUM**

Pine and Ashland Streets, Doylestown, PA (215) 345-0210 Hours: Mon.-Sat. 10-5, Sun. Noon-5, Tues. until 9 Admission: \$6, \$5.50 seniors, \$2.50 Ages 6-17, Free to members and children under 6

#### "Women Remember World War II"

Sunday, March 25

2-4 p.m., Mercer Museum - Spruance Library Local author Peg George will share some of the stories from her recently published book.

#### **Mercer Museum Auction**

Friday, April 20

6-9 p.m., Mercer Museum

The Mercer Museum Auction catalogue is filled with great merchandise, useful services and unique experiences.

#### 34th Annual Mercer Museum Folk Fest

Saturday & Sunday, May 12-13 (Rain or Shine) 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Mercer Museum

Traditional artisans make the skills and trades of early America come to life.

## **NTHS Meeting**

Wednesday, May 16 - 7:30PM

7PM refreshments

Jacob Rinier and other local former Nike specialists will talk on the Nike program and reminisce about life at the local Nike bases.

## **Underground Railroad in Bucks County**

Monday, May 21

12:30 p.m., Mercer Museum

Millard Mitchell discusses the operation of the Underground Railroad in Bucks County during the Civil War.

## Carriage Ride with Dr, Wilson From page 1

But the venerable "Horse and Buggy" with its slower, more leisurely pace and it's reassuring "clip clop" sound, continued to fascinate those who could recall the days when it was a part of everyday life. Such is the case with the much beloved Dr. "Cammy" Wilson.

Raised on a Richboro farm, Cameron Wilson became an expert driver of wagons and carriages as well as an accomplished horse rider. College trained as a Veterinarian, he witnessed first hand, the end of the horse drawn wagon, which simply could not compete on the road or the farm with internal combustion machines.

Recognizing that his much beloved horse and carriage would soon be only read about in history books, Dr. Wilson became committed to the cause of preserving this unique "way of life" in any way that he could. Over the years, he has tirelessly preserved and promoted the artifacts and the art of carriage riding. The ribbons and trophies in his office are a testament to his skills and his dedication to that commitment.

One of the carriages featured in the film is a beautiful "Bird in Hand Flyer" wagon, built by an Amish wagon-smith in Bird in Hand, PA (near Lancaster). Amish craftsman continue this tradition of hand crafting harnesses and wagons as they have done for years and this particular model is highly prized by Dr. Wilson for its' flexibility and smooth ride.

The horse seen in most of the video segments is a special breed of Welsh Pony and Quarter Horse named "Lady", who was highly trained for carriage pulling and knew Cammy's every call. She seldom had to be even lightly tapped by the long thin whip used to get her attention. Both the horse and Cammy knew every nuance of Tyler Park's trails and fields. I, as camera operator, never once had to be concerned with where we were headed and was free to point the camera in every direction, often having no idea of what lay ahead.

The DVD highlights two carriage rides though Tyler Park that span a beautiful autumn day and a summer afternoon. During our rides, Cammy shared many tales of "yesteryear" involving the park's former incarnation as a productive farm. The soundtrack features invaluable information about the operation of a Horse and Carriage as well as various tidbits regarding the Tyler estate and the comings and goings of the owners.

One beautiful scene that will delight viewers is our ride through the Schoefield Ford Covered Bridge. One can sit back and nostalgically ponder the romantic "clip clop" of the horse hooves and the carriage wheels on the thick rough wood-planked floors of this historic structure high above Neshaminy Creek.

Dr. Wilson feels that today's residents of Bucks County have missed out on this big part of our local history. This DVD will allow Cammy to demonstrate his expertise and experiences so that viewers can capture some part of this rich history that has passed so many of us by.

Cammy and I hope you get a feel for the horse and carriage days of our history by viewing the film, since you will probably not experience this once common transportation method any time soon in Northampton Township. The DVD is being shown at the March 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Northampton Township Historical Society and will, at some point, be made available to the public.



The Northampton Township Historical Society recently purchased and donated a video projector to the Northampton Township Library. Library Director, Ginny Volkman, receives the projector from board member Doug Crompton as board members Betty Luff, Pat Komelasky and Mary Seader look on. The projector will make possible video and computer presentations in any of the libraries many conference rooms.

# **Announcing the 4th Richboro School Reunion**

11AM - 5PM, May 25, 2007 Northampton Valley Country Club

> Open to <u>anyone</u> who attended the Old Richboro School Reservations by April 15th Contact - Emma Worthington 215-943-0108

# Nike Memories From page 1

"If the enemy airplanes got by them, Philadelphia was going to be nuked," said Robert Kramer, a radar operator. Each base was named according to its position on a circle divided into 100 degrees, with north at zero degrees. Richboro was PH-07, manned by Regular Army from about 1954-60. Most other bases were manned by National Guard units.

The American strategic defense plan was for the Air Force to engage incoming Soviet bombers over the Atlantic Ocean. If any bombers did get through, the Nike defense would be activated before they reached land. The Philadelphia command center would track the plane or planes, and alert the appropriate Nike site to lock onto the target and fire missiles. This was a real doomsday scenario. Although doomsday never happened, the soldiers always had to be ready in case it did. There was drilling, drilling drilling, plus maintenance and repair, cleaning, and even mowing grass.

The army requested Northampton Township supervisors to pave Twining Ford Rd, since it was a dirt road, which became quite muddy during periods of rain or snow. The township, however at that time could not afford to do it. The army then agreed to pave the road, if the township would maintain it. Then came the blizzard of 1958, and the township could not keep its end of the bargain. The snow was so deep that even the army's equipment was unable to get out. The base was isolated. The Johnsville Naval Air Station came to the rescue, with some of the largest equipment ever seen at that time.

By coming to Richboro, they opened parts of Jacksonville Road, Almshouse Road, and Second Street Pike on their way to open up Twining Ford Rd. to the upper base, and then down Second Street Pike to Newtown Rd. to the lower base. The heavy equipment was soon followed by a few cars driven by people who hoped to find food and staples. It was Sunday, and normally stores were closed in the 1950's. At the request of the supervisors, however, Luff & Traub's General Store agreed to open.

Once the Nike base was built, the public became accustomed to seeing truckloads of soldiers traveling up and down local roads, going to their duty stations. Most soldiers, however, did not have private transportation out of town when they had "leave time." With no malls built yet, most leave time was spent at the Spread Eagle Inn, in Richboro. Soon dinner or lunch invitations by various families appeared on the bulletin boards of both Addisville Reformed Church and the Nike Base. Many long time friendships were made. Just a few years ago, the young Mississippi lad with whom we had become good friends, surprised us by bringing his family to Richboro for a visit. We had met his wife earlier when she came to Richboro to visit him at the Nike base. It was December, and she was shivering when she and her husband came to our home for dinner. She was wearing just a light summer suit, not realizing how cold our winters could be. A heavy sweater and a seat in front of the fireplace soon stopped the shivering. An extra coat in the closet was put to good use when she left.

#### Continued on page 5



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## **Nike Memories**

From page 4

On a summer afternoon, my mother, who wore a hearing air, was sitting on the back porch enjoying the garden and the birds at the feeders. Suddenly she gave a loud call for me-her hearing aid was beeping at close regular intervals. What could it be? This happened off and on all the weekend. I mentioned it to the Mississippi soldier we knew. He thought about it for a short time and began laughing. Every time the army base trained on the radar, it sent out high intensity, radar charged waves that my mother's hearing aid picked up. I wonder how many other people had the same problem, but never got the answer.

About 1960, some of the Nike bases, including the one in Richboro, received notice to shut down. Soon the operating personnel left, and the dismantling of the base began. Outside crews moved the missiles and deactivated the launch site. The Federal government began to offer the sites to other agencies. At this point, the U.S. Navy obtained the two sites without cost. Its intention was to install high-density housing for Johnsville Naval Air and the Willow Grove Navel Air Stations. Northampton Township did not object to the navy presence, but asked that any residential building conform to the then rudimentary zoning laws.

After several meetings between Northampton Township Supervisors and local Department of the Navy executives, it became apparent that the navy would not meet the township request. The township appealed for a hearing before the Congressional Armed Services Committee. The request was granted, and the Vice Chairman of the Board of Northampton Township Supervisors and several interested citizens were heard in Washington, D.C. on June 14,1966, (details in "Military Construction Authorization - Fiscal Year 1966, Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services. S.17771 (H.R. 8439)" (p. 821) The Armed Services Committee then ruled against the Navy, prompting the Navy to drop their building plans. Following this event, the township immediately appealed for the ownership of both the upper site of 10.13 acres, and the lower site of 18.96 acres. In very short order, the township took ownership, and transferred the ownership of the upper site on Twining Ford Road to the Council Rock School Board.

The mess hall on the lower site on Newtown Rd. became the first home of the Northampton Township Library on October 3, 1970 with just 3000 old and new books. Athletic fields of all varieties have gradually been added on most of the remaining property. Whether interested in baseball, football, Halloween parades or listening to music in front of the "shell," there was and is something for everyone. It is a far cry from its first use as a farm, than as an Army Nike Missile Base.

## The Nike Missile Program

By Doug Crompton

While Ginny's excellent story about Richboro's Nike base described local interest, I thought you might like some of the technical facts regarding the Nike program. For those interested in more information on this subject there is a vast amount of historical and technical information available on the Internet regarding our early missile programs.

The initial thought of providing a defense against ballistic missiles started in World War II with the German V2 Rocket. Early efforts by the US were focused on anti-aircraft rather than anti-missile defense. In 1945, Bell Labs was contracted by the Army to develop an anti-aircraft missile. It was named Project Nike and it was from this project that the Nike Ajax was developed.

On November 27, 1951, a Nike Ajax became the first guided missile to intercept and destroy an airplane in flight. Under the threat of Soviet developments, the Army rushed the Nike Ajax into production and, between 1954 and 1958, deployed the missile system around key urban, military, and industrial locations. It was the world's first operational surface-to-air missile system. In April 1958, production of the Nike Ajax system ended and the last missile was delivered to the Army. The Ajax was replaced by the Nike Hercules and finally the Nike Zeus.

In total, AT&T Western Electric, Bell Telephone Laboratories and numerous subcontractors produced 350 Nike batteries for domestic and overseas deployment, to be manned by regular and National Guard troops. Douglas Aircraft manufactured 13,714 missiles in its Santa Monica, CA plant and at the Charlotte, NC Army Ordnance Missile Plant.

According to Army records the Richboro Nike base (PH07) started operations in 1956 under Army unit C/506th. In September 1958, it changed to unit C/3/60th until it was decommissioned in September 1961. The launch site had two type B magazines, 20 Ajax missiles and 8 A type launchers. In about 1960, selected Ajax bases were being converted to the new Hercules missile. This was a larger missile that could carry a nuclear warhead. Because of its longer range and more advanced payload, fewer sites were required to protect a given area. The Richboro site as well as six others in the original Philadelphia ring of 12 were not upgraded. Had the Richboro base been upgraded to a Hercules site it would have been in service until at least the late 1960's and would most probably have housed nuclear weapons. One can only speculate why the Richboro base was not upgraded. Development was at the backdoor of the radar site on Twiningford Road and the sleepy town of Richboro was really starting to wake up in the 1960's. Perhaps this was a factor. We will never know. The nearby PH99 base in Eureka, Warrington Township did upgrade however, and housed nuclear missiles until the early 1970's.

Story continues on page 6

## The Nike Missile From page 5

Individual Nike bases were built with two locations typically ½ to 1 mile apart. The IFC or Integrated Fire Control site housed the radar and computers used to detect the incoming aircraft and calculate the trajectories used to guide the missile. These sites were typically at a high location. The IFC site in Richboro, located on Twiningford Road, was at one of the highest locations in Northampton Township. The second site on Richboro-Newtown Road was where the missiles were launched, stored and serviced. Administrative areas were collocated within the IFC or launch areas. The administrative areas included a barracks, mess hall, and a recreation/administration supply building. These buildings were typically one-story cinder block structures with flat roofs. The number of personnel at the bases was typically about 100, and included administrative, security, cooks, general maintenance, missile technicians and the commanding officers. The majority of the buildings were usually at the IFC site and this is true in Richboro. There is a discrepancy on the location of the "mess hall" at the Richboro base. Some residents recall it as being at the launch site on route 332 while a newspaper article lists it as being at the IFC site on Twiningford Road.



Nike Ajax missile ready for launch.

The Nike-Ajax missile stood 34 feet tall with its booster, had a 4 feet wingspan, and could reach speeds up to 1,600 MPH, at a 70,000 feet altitude, and a range of 25 miles. It weighed over 2,455 pounds with booster and contained three high-explosive fragmentation warheads mounted in the nose, center, and aft sections. The Ajax used a very dangerous liquid fuel combination of JP4 jet fuel and starter fluid

consisting initially of aniline/furfuryl alcohol, later dimethyl-hydrazine, and finally, red fuming nitric acid (IRFNA). Personnel had to use special protective clothing while fueling the rockets. Because of the dangerous chemicals used at the sites, the Richboro base was designated a federal cleanup area, as were many of the Nike bases. Records show that about \$70,000 was spent on cleanup and that it has been completed.

Richboro, PH07, IFC Platoon Sergeant, William Ramsdell, 1956, remembers most of the Platoon as being college graduates and draftees.

The radars used at the IFC sites sent high power signals out at several hundred times per second. This was referred to as the repetition rate of the radar. These signals would bounce off a radio reflective object, such as an aircraft in the sky and return to be viewed on screens by the radar operator. The repetition rate was in the human audible range and it often could be heard on electronic devices such as stereos, radios, and hearing aids, as the antenna swung in their direction.

Another problem in early Nike development was the amount of real estate required for a Nike battery site. In October 1952, just three months before equipment started rolling off the production line, those responsible for the acquisition of land suddenly realized that it would be difficult to secure. Almost overnight, the reduction in real estate requirements for a Nike site became an urgent task. There was no shortage of ideas on how the area could be reduced. The only trouble was that most of the ideas also reduced the effectiveness of the battery to a point where it would be hard to justify use of the NIKE System.

As originally designed, the equipment of the Nike battery was located above ground in two separate areas: the battery control area and the launching area. Based on Ordnance safety regulations governing the surface storage of explosives, it was determined that a Nike site would require about 119 acres. Such a large amount of real estate would be both costly and scarce, particularly if the site should be located in metropolitan areas such as Philadelphia.

The solution to the real estate reduction problem was the use of an underground launcher installation. This would reduce the real estate requirement for individual installations to about 40 acres, since the battery would become a magazine.

The 1972 signing of the SALT I treaty in Moscow limited the number of missiles with ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) capabilities which included the Nike Missile. By 1974, all Nike bases were deactivated. Many of the missiles were later deployed to other nations. Today Nike missiles still protect the airspace of South Korea.

Story continues on page 7

# The Nike Missile From page 6

The approximate monetary value of the contracts executed from the inception of the Nike Ajax project through its termination in December 1957 amounted to \$1.16 billion.

"Suddenly the missile blew with a roar and a skysearing pillow of orange flame from burning kerosene and nitric acid fuels... Explosion and flame touched off seven more Nikes squatting on adjacent pads, blew or burned ten men to death, showered a three-mile radius with fragments."

No missile was ever fired from any of the Nike bases over the two decades of operation in the US, but there was a serious accident at a Northern New Jersey site on May 22, 1958. The Battery B, 526th AAA Missile Battalion, near the small towns of Middletown and Leonardo, New Jersey erupted in an enormous explosion killing six soldiers and four civilians and seriously injuring three others. Windows were blown out of houses for miles around and the sound of the blast was heard for fifteen miles. The Army rushed experts to the scene from New York and Washington, D.C. The mayor of Middletown called a special town meeting, to which topranking officers of the New York Defense Area were invited to explain what happened. Newspaper and magazine editors were on hand to say, "I told you so" and twenty-two Army lawyers began to settle damage claims.

While Richboro and Northampton had a much smaller population in the 1950's it is still scary to think what could have happened. I think our current "terror threat" pales in comparison to the cold war period of the 1950's and 60's. At about the time the Ajax missiles were deployed I was an elementary school student in nearby Glenside, Montgomery County. I had no knowledge of their existence at the time but I did know how scared I was when we had to huddle in the school hallways when the nearby air aid siren went off. At first no one knew if it was a real attack or a test and until this was determined we sat there thinking this might be our last hour. Fortunately, the deterrence of missiles, like the Nike, prevented this from ever happening Thank god, we never had to use them.



I have put together a Nike PH07 website which includes additional pictures and links to further reading on the Nike program. Visit the link section at the NTHS website and click on PH07 or browse:

www.historicbuckscounty.org/richboro/nike



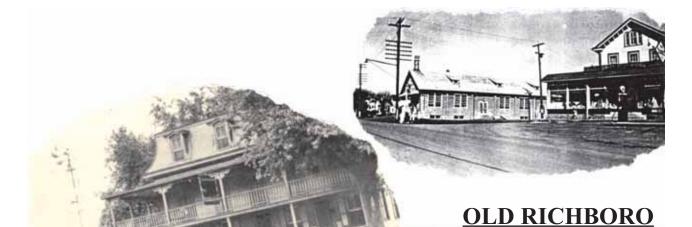
Snow plows from the nearby Johnsville Navy Base helped clear the way to the Richboro Nike sites.

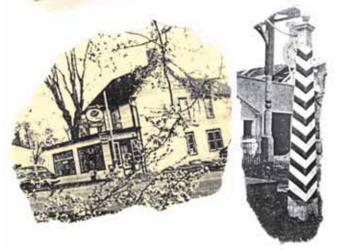


Elevator doors and entranceway to magazine below at abandoned Nike launch site, Northampton recreation center, Richboro.



Concrete radar base remains as evidence at ridge above the old Nike buildings on Twiningford Road.







Addisvilla Reformed Church

Richboro, Penna

I remember old Richboro And the way it use to be, Farms and quiet people

And real serenity

I recall the general store And the little barbershop, The firehouse on the corner And old Spread Eagle where we'd stop.

There was Davis and Cornell And Solly, Luff and Rook. They gave this town their very best They gave they never took.

There are other names that I must add Like Traub, and yes Gill too, They gave the town it's character And some say they were the glue.

But each and every Sunday When there work was finally done, They gathered at their little church And sat and prayed as one.

The world don't know Richboro
But if they looked and saw it's face,
I think we'd all be happier
And the world would be a better place.

George Ivins, 2006



## NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## www.NorthamptonTownshipHistoricalSociety.org

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Northampton Township Library, Upper Holland Road, Richboro. Everyone is welcome at our meetings. Meetings start at **7:30 PM** (refreshments 7PM), and include a featured speaker. For more information visit our web page or e-mail us at *nths@*NorthamptonTownshipHistoricalSociety.org Past issues of the <u>HISTORIA</u>, in color, are available on our web page www.NorthamptonTownshipHistoricalSociety.org The <u>HISTORIA</u> is edited by Doug Crompton. Articles are always welcome.

#### **Meeting Dates for 2007**

Please give us your ideas for speakers at future meetings: Would you be willing to write an article for the HISTORIA

Your comments and suggestions are welcome:

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March 21	General Meeting	7:30 PM - 7 PM refreshments	<b>Board Meetings 2007</b>			
May 16	General Meeting	7:30 PM - "	February 7, April 11, August 8, October 10			
	General Meeting	7:30 PM - "	7 PM - Call for location			
November 14	Dinner Meeting	6:00 PM	, 1 1vi Can for location			

#### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL CLASSIFICATIONS

T	his wil	be your member	ship for the cale	ndar year of 2007 (.	Janua	ry 2007 to	December 2	007)	
INDIVIDUAL FAMILY -	SPONSOR - \$10 PATRON - \$250 (5 year membership) \$20 SUSTAINING - \$50 SPONSOR - \$100 PATRON - \$250 (5 year membership) NTHS CIRCLE - \$500 or greater (Life membership)								
sent with all editions renewal time is the firm is current, please pass	of the HIS st quarter s this appli	STORIA. Please check yof the year or when the M	our mailing label for the larch HISTORIA is rec may be interested in ou	ng year. This application is ne expiration year. Normal eived. If your membership r society. Please consider a ng society costs.	PO I	thampton BOX 732		Historical Soci	ety
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May we cou	ant on	you to serve	on one of our	committees?:	;	Y	N	MAYBE _	