



Children & sisters, 1928 [Klevze]

St. Michael's Orphanage: A Visual History

Wednesday, May 8, 2024; 7:00 pm; Presented by Douglas Dixon

Attend in person at the Hopewell Presbyterian Church. The in-person event is free and open to the public. Or to attend the event online via Zoom, please visit www.hopewellvalleyhistory.org for more information.



Speaker:

Douglas Dixon is an independent technology consultant and writer, now morphed into a history enthusiast and author. He is a board member of The Hopewell Museum and the Hopewell Valley Historical Society, and developed the *Hopewell*

Valley History Project (HopewellHistoryProject.org).

Since mid-2019, the History Project has collected, digitized, and freely shared local historical materials to aid research into area people and places. With the assistance of some 140 local contributors, the site now hosts some 640 documents and maps, 4170 images and videos, and an interactive *Hopewell History Map*. With these materials, Doug also has authored some 40 *Hopewell Borough History Briefs*, over 500 pages of research reports on local organizations, businesses, and properties – and the people who made them.

As a software technologist, Doug specializes in Web technology, databases, and digital media. He has authored four books on digital media, published hundreds of feature articles, and presented over a hundred technical seminars and talks.

What was St. Michael's Orphanage? Some know it from old photos, with the large forbidding building standing alone in an empty field. And many now know it as the over 400-acre D&R Greenway St. Michael's Farm Preserve just outside Hopewell Borough, with few visible remnants of its past use.

In this presentation, Doug Dixon provides a visual history of St. Michael's, using photos and memories from a variety of contributors. We will "walk" behind the building to see kids playing on the playground and around the grounds. Then we will go inside the building to see the children in the nursery, school rooms, chapel, dining room, and dorm rooms.

St. Michael's Orphan Asylum and Industrial School was a major local institution that operated for three quarters of a century (1898 to 1973), providing support and education for abandoned and neglected children, from infants to around age 14.

The buildings are gone, but St. Michael's lives on in local memories. The building had a capacity of 450, and was home over the years to thousands of children, over a hundred Sisters of St. Francis who operated the facility, and other live-in staff, plus families living on the associated farm. The site also hosted additional day workers and day students.

Co-sponsored by the Hopewell Valley Historical Society, the Hopewell Museum, and the Hopewell Public Library.

