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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **THE MARTIN CORYELL HOUSE B&B A WINDOW INTO LAMBERTVILLE'S PAST**

When Mary and Rich Freedman decided to open a bed and breakfast, their search for the perfect location led them to Lambertville, NJ's 19<sup>th</sup>-century gem, **The Martin Coryell House**. The couple quickly learned that the red-brick Federal mansion at 111 North Union Street was steeped in local history, having been owned by one family for nearly a century. As restorations began, they were pleasantly surprised to uncover beautifully preserved architectural features *and* a well-documented story of one of Lambertville's founding families.

#### **A Legacy In the Making**

When French Huguenot John Emanuel Coryell purchased his first 200 acres here in 1732, he joined a small group of enterprising farmers in the largely unsettled lands on the Jersey side of the Delaware River. The area that would become Lambertville had been purchased from the Delaware Indians just 30 years earlier as part of a 150,000-acre tract running northward from Trenton.

In 1733, Emanuel secured a patent from King George II to operate a ferry across the river, an enterprise that led to the villages on both sides of the Delaware being called "Coryell's Ferry." Given Lambertville's location midway between New York and Philadelphia, the ferry provided a critical transportation link. It also served as an outpost and point of crossing for General Washington and his troops during the Revolutionary War.

Emanuel also owned a stone tavern and inn, known as the "ferry house," which sheltered travelers as well as his own growing family. Among the community's most prosperous and influential members, before his death in 1749, Emanuel acquired 1,016 acres of land, the lion's share of the current-day City of Lambertville.

The Coryells continued to play a prominent role locally and nationally for generations, owning a substantial portion of land and, in 1802, lending their name to one of the city's streets. During the Revolutionary War, George Coryell, an iron worker and army captain, attracted the attention of General Washington, who admired a gate he had forged for Benjamin Franklin. Coryell apparently became well-acquainted with the general and later served as one of President Washington's six pallbearers.

Emanuel's great-great grandson Martin also made his mark. His obituary in the journal of the American Society of Civil Engineers notes his contributions to the development of the Morris, Delaware and Raritan canals as well as the Belvidere Railroad, which ran through Lambertville and Trenton. Martin also helped build the city's waterworks and sat on the board of the Amwell National Bank of Lambertville. It was his wife and second cousin Myra who purchased the mansion at the corner of North Union and Jefferson in 1876.

### **A Mansion Restored**

Though the town's name was changed in 1810 to "Lambert's ville," honoring another prominent resident, U.S. Senator John Lambert, the Coryell legacy lives on, particularly at the Freedman's beautifully restored B&B. Deeds outlining the transfer of the property read like a "Who's Who" of Lambertville, with early landowners Holcombe and Hoff taking their place alongside numerous Coryells. While another house may once have stood on the lot, the current dwelling was built around 1864 by William and Sarah Johnson. Following Myra's purchase, members of the Coryell family continuously owned the home until 1959 when Camille Erisman Bryan passed away. A granddaughter of Myra and Martin, Camille had deeded the house to the First Presbyterian Church in 1953 for use as a parsonage. She retained lifetime occupancy rights, an arrangement made possible by the conversion of the house into a two-family dwelling.

The house Mary and Rich purchased in 1998 bore a close resemblance, at least externally, to photographs taken around 1900. The three-story mansion still

greet visitors with a lovely, wrought-iron fence, a wide front porch and well-kept gardens. Inside, a restoration undertaken by a local architect has given new life to such 19<sup>th</sup>-century details as wainscoting, inlaid, quarter-sawn oak flooring, an 1890s electric chandelier and, in the vestibule, a Minton-Hollins tile floor from Stoke-upon-Trent, England. Exquisite decorative finishes like faux-marbled mantels in the parlor and a Chinoiserie mural in the foyer could easily belong to an earlier time. Professional interior design has highlighted the home's Victorian elegance while adding a decidedly modern brand of style and comfort.

As the B&B becomes a landmark in its own right, the home's restoration mirrors that of the city of Lambertville. An industrial center well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, manufacturing everything from lace and hairpins to wooden spokes and wheels, the city had fallen upon hard times by the 1970s, its population dwindling substantially. A slow but steady renewal process has flourished in recent years, bringing a growing number of galleries, upscale shops and fine restaurants to the city's 19<sup>th</sup>-century storefronts. Guests of the Martin Coryell House B&B can take it all in by walking a few short blocks. Eighteenth-century entrepreneur Emanuel Coryell might well be pleased to see his lands put to such good use.