
The Corridor

Volume XXX, No. 1

Newsletter of the Old York Road Historical Society

Spring 2021

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This spring marks the 85th anniversary of the founding of the Old York Road Historical Society. It also marks the one-year anniversary of modern life lived in the midst of a viral pandemic. The latter has affected the former in that our ability to gather in public together to celebrate remains impossible. Thus, we develop alternatives while waiting for circumstances to change for the better.

History indicates that 1936 might not have been the most propitious time to start a non-profit organization, but lucky for us such was the case. And since 1936 the Society has been sustained thanks to the time, generosity and dedication of many members, volunteers, donors, directors and officers. The Society continues to flourish, rooted in the founding desire to preserve and promote the history of the communities along and adjacent to the Old York Road.

It is our hope that some version of a Patrons' Party will be held this summer and that we will be able to have a festive gathering to celebrate our anniversary in the fall. In the meantime, we are grateful for your continuing support and we wish you well, looking forward to the time when we can gather together in person once again.

David B. Rowland
President

LECTURE SERIES

Due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the Society will host lectures virtually over the internet via Zoom. Lectures will be held live and will not be recorded for later playback. A link will be sent out to those on our email list several days in advance. Additionally, the link will be posted on our web-site and Facebook page a day prior to the presentation. If you would like to be on our reminder list, please send an email to OldYorkRoadHistory@gmail.com.

The Program Committee has arranged for the following presentations to be held on Wednesday evenings at 7:30 p.m. The lecture series is sponsored by a grant from the Jenkintown Lyceum and all programs are offered on Zoom free of charge.

March 10 – A Tragic Collision on the Ohio River and Its Connections to the Old York Road – In December 1868, two passenger steamboats collided at midnight near the Indiana state line. The steamers, one laden with coal oil, burst into flames. Many people perished in the ensuing inferno. Three Old York Road area residents and an internationally famous celebrity were on board the steamers. This presentation by Society Secretary James Rubillo, examines this tragic event as well as its impact on our three area residents.

April 14 – The Philadelphia Area Architecture of Horace Trumbauer – Raised in Jenkintown, architect Horace Trumbauer achieved national renown for his wide range of residential, commercial and civic structures he designed in and around Philadelphia. During the American renaissance in architecture, he masterfully interpreted the classical styles. Society President David Rowland will share some of the beautiful buildings Trumbauer designed in the area, with a focus on those in the northern suburbs of Philadelphia.

May 12 – The Ridley/Fox Shooting and Its Aftermath: An American Tragedy – Camp William Penn, the first and largest training camp for black soldiers in the Civil War, was an important factor in the emerging quest for racial equality. The camp was generally a peaceful and successful experiment. The fatal shooting of a white local gardener William Fox at Camp William Penn by a black soldier, Private Charles Ridley, on August 7, 1863, has been well-documented. Politically, it played into the hands of those who argued to keep arms out of the hands of blacks as well as keep them out of service in the army. Society Vice-president Thomas Wieckowski will review his current research on the circumstances of the shooting and the devastating impact on Ridley and the Fox family of La Mott.

A Bit of History – Going, Going, Gone

By Edward C. Landau

On April 29, 2009, one of the area's oldest and most historic houses was offered at public auction. While the property failed to sell, the fate of the house would soon be determined. The auctioneer's cry in search of additional bidders or a higher bid would be the same as the extended fate of the house.

The property at 1050 Ashbourne Avenue was best known as Heidelberg or Kerlin Farm. Everard Bolton built his first house here, around 1683, on land granted from William Penn. That house was replaced with a stone house that was built within the next 25 years, most likely before 1700. That house remained until it was demolished in February 2013, over three centuries later.

The house was mostly hidden from the road by the woods that surrounded it, but became better known when Ellen Gartner Ginsburg researched its history. In 2004, Ellen documented her findings in her "History of Heidelberg" publication, along with several other compilations including the property's horticulture, deeds and wills (all at the Society).

Heidelberg was listed on Preserving Pennsylvania's "2004 Listing of the Commonwealth's Most Endangered Historic Properties", and also on the 2004 Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia "Region's Most Endangered Historic Properties".

But by this time, the property was not being maintained, and offers to purchase it were turned down until it deteriorated to the point that it was offered at a Sheriff's sale. In in the space of a couple of

months after the failed auction, the property was awarded to the holder of a lien, and soon after, sold to a developer. After extensive efforts to save the house, and per-

cording to the simple Quaker layout known as the William Penn plan. Although three additions surrounded it; 1790 to the left (east); 1850 to the rear (south); 1898 to the right (west), these additions preserved the rooms and façade of the original house over its 300+ years.

1790 - East side addition.

The first addition was a 3-story stone farmhouse, built by the Jones family. They were the second of three Quaker families that owned the house for most of its existence (through 1944). They linked the two sections together with a grand staircase, and later added a single story addition onto the rear of the original house, upon which the 1850 addition was added.

1850 – Rear addition. The Robert Haines family, from Germantown, added the 2nd and 3rd stories onto the rear of the original house, finishing the Jones' grand staircase which unified the three portions of the house, and also added the wrap-around Victorian porch. This portion was primarily brick construction, with a Mansard roof. The Haines' traveled the world, bringing back ideas and plants. They established the Cheltenham Nursery on this site.

1898 - West side addition. The fourth and final addition to the house was built by daughter Jane Bowne Haines. Jane grew up in the house prior to building this addition, which is thought to have been built to accommodate horticultural visitors, but also to provide the first indoor plumbing.

The property was bought in 1944, and shared by the Bowker, McLaughlin and Milner families,

SHERIFF'S SALE

By virtue of a Writ of Execution No. 05-17090, issued out of the Court of Common Pleas of Montgomery County, Pa., to me directed will be sold at Public Sale on

Wednesday, April 29, 2009

at 1:00 O'clock P.M., Prevailing time in Court Room "A" at the Court House, in the Borough of Norristown, said County the following described Real Estate:

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground, with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, situate in the Township of Cheltenham, County of Montgomery and the Township of Cheltenham, County of Montgomery, State of Pennsylvania, and described partly according to a Survey and Plan thereof, made by George R. Milner, Registered Engineer of Cheltenham, Pennsylvania, on the 30th day of June A.D. 1944, as follows, to-wit:

BEGINNING at a point in the middle line of Oak Lane Road, (33 feet wide) at the distance of 48.35 feet measured South 57 degrees 1 minute West, along the said middle line of Oak Lane Road, from its intersection with the middle line of Ashbourne Road (33 feet wide) thence extending from said beginning point South 22 degrees 50 minutes East, crossing the Southeasternmost one-half of the bed of Oak Lane Road, 30 feet to a point of curve on the Southeast side thereof thence extending on the arc of a circle curving to the right, with a radius of 40 feet, the arc distance of 40.33 feet to a point of tangent on the Southeast side of the said Ashbourne Road; thence extending South 52 degrees 57 minutes East, along the said Southwest side of Ashbourne Road, 410.30 feet to a point; thence extending South 41 degrees 8 minutes 18 seconds West, 104.48 feet to a point; thence extending South 52 degrees 57 minutes East, on a line parallel with the said Ashbourne 300 feet to a point in line of land of the School District of Cheltenham thence extending South 41 degrees 8 minutes 18 seconds West, along said line of land of the School District of Cheltenham, 388.20 feet to a stone set for a corner thence extending North 48 degrees 40 minutes 50 seconds West, along land now or late of William Longstreth, 462.72 feet to a stone; thence extending North 48 degrees 10 minutes 34 seconds West, still along said land now or late of William Longstreth, 421.10 feet to a point in the said middle line of Oak Lane Road; thence extending North 57 degrees 1 minute East, along the said middle line of Oak Lane Road, 401.14 feet to the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

BEING the same premises which George R. Milner and Helen E. Milner, his wife, by Deed dated September 19, 1972 and recorded September 25, 1972 in the Office of the Montgomery County Recorder of Deeds in Deed Book 3730,

page 222, granted and conveyed a 1/8th interest to Elizabeth Barclay.

BEING the same premises which Hugh McLaughlin, Jr., Executor of the Estate of Julia A. McLaughlin, deceased, by Deed dated January 17, 1985 and recorded October 30, 1985 in the Office of the Montgomery County Recorder of Deeds in Deed Book 4782, page 2183, granted and conveyed a 12 interest to Elizabeth Barclay.

BEING the same premises which Daniel J. Matt and Elizabeth J. Matt, aka Elizabeth J. Milner Matt, his wife, by Deed dated October 17, 1985 and recorded October 30, 1985 in the Office of the Montgomery County Recorder of Deeds in Deed Book 4782, page 2200, granted and conveyed a 1/8th interest to Elizabeth Barclay.

BEING the same premises which George Lee Milner aka George Milner, Jr. and Kathy A. Milner, his wife, by Deed dated October 17, 1985 and recorded October 30, 1985 in the Office of the Montgomery County Recorder of Deeds in Deed Book 4782, page 2202, granted and conveyed a 1/8th interest to Elizabeth Barclay.

BEING the same premises which Albert H. Bowker and Nellie B. Bowker, his wife, by Deed dated October 17, 1985 and recorded December 23, 1985 in the Office of the Montgomery County Recorder of Deeds in Deed Book 4782, page 2203, granted and conveyed a 1/8th interest to Elizabeth Barclay.

JUDGMENT was recovered in the Court of Common Pleas of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, Civil Action, as of No. 2005-17090, seized and taken in execution as the property of Elizabeth Barclay aka Betty Barclay at the suit of Kahl Home for Aged and Infirms.

BEING PARCEL NO. 31-0040685-001.

LOCATION of Property: 1050 Ashbourne Road, Cheltenham, PA.

THE IMPROVEMENTS THEREON ARE:

SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING

SEIZED AND TAKEN IN execution as the property of:

Elizabeth Barclay aka Betty Barclay; Real Debt: \$63,905.76 and to be sold by

JOHN P. DURANTE, Sheriff

DOWN MONEY: A deposit of ten (10%) percent of the Price Bid or Two Thousand (\$2000.00) dollars which ever amount is greater, shall be required to be paid in cash or by certified check to the Sheriff as down money on each property purchased.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE, NORRISTOWN, PA.

TO ALL PARTIES IN INTEREST AND CLAIMANTS:

Notice is hereby given that a schedule of distribution will be filed by the Sheriff on May 29, 2009 and distribution will be made in accordance with the schedule unless exceptions are filed hereto within ten (10) days thereafter.

mission by the owner to collect artifacts and document the house, it was demolished.

In addition to the 9-bedroom house, the property was historically important as home to Jane Haines, the founder (in 1911) of the horticultural school for women, which is now Temple University's Ambler Campus. The property served as a plant nursery in the 1800's and had been evaluated by Morris Arboretum, which determined that among the many large old trees, there is a state co-champion 225 year-old sweetgum and a 100 year-old *Franklinia*.

The Original House. Everard Bolton arrived with William Penn in 1682. His house was built ac-

who renamed it Kerlin Farm. The house had been occupied by a caretaker for over ten years prior to Alfred Bowker's totally restoring the house after its purchase. Alfred Bowker's grandson, Hugh Beck, who grew up in the house in the 1940's and 1950's remembered those days, and narrated a video tour of the house in 2011.



Edward C. Landau serves on the Society's Board of Directors as Vice President and is responsible for the lecture series and field trips. He is a landscape architect who has worked on many local projects including the Jenkintown Town Center and the Butler Avenue streetscape revitalization in Ambler.

THANKS TO OUR MAJOR MEMBERSHIP DONORS

The Society gratefully recognizes those who have so far supported our work for the 2021 program year through membership at the Patron level and above.

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David B. Rowland
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Recent Archival Donations

The Society is pleased to have received a number of gifts over the past several months, the following being the most significant:

- Research file on *Twin Maples*, an early American home located Fairacres Road and previously on the former Pepper estate, *Fairacres*, from John Valentine.
- Research file on the Bryn Athyn train wreck of December 5, 1921, from John Fruncillo.
- Four exhibition panels that recount the history of the Willow Grove train station that hung in the station during the Willow Grove Tri-centennial celebrations. Also, a number of Reading Railway and PRT annual reports, many dating from the 1930s, from Harry Garforth.
- An extensive run of *Philadelphia Vick* (1965-1969) and *Hatboro Vick* (1970-1974, 1977-1991), a publication of the Vicks plant in Hatboro that manufactured Vicks products for Richardson-Merrell Inc., from Amy Wolff.
- Two property deeds of Joseph Longstreth and a Quaker marriage certificate between Joseph Longstreth and Susanna Morris dated 1772, from Janice and Bruce Farenwald.
- A large group of correspondence between Charlotte Mangold and Alfons Mangold dating from 1939 to 1948, from Nancy Arena.
- Photographs and ephemera from the Boy Scouts Breyer Training area, formerly the property of John Wanamaker's estate, *Lyndenhurst*, from Endamai Holland.
- An autograph book of Emma Krewson Oldham from the 1880s with later writings including a poem written on the death of her son, Charles B. Oldham, who was killed on the last day of World War I and in whose memory the Cheltenham American Legion Post is named, from Judy and Russell Miller.

Membership Reminder

We are mid-way through our 2020-21 membership year. If the mailing label on your envelope does not read "2021" or if you are receiving a membership form with this newsletter, you are either not currently a member or current in your membership. Please consider renewing at the Patron level or above. Your generous support is critical for our sound fiscal operation and is greatly appreciated.

OLD YORK ROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Archives Research Hours

Located on the second floor of Alverthorpe Manor, the research library and archives is currently closed for walk-in visitors. Private appointments are being handled during the COVID-19 pandemic. Anyone wishing to conduct research is invited to email the Society and request an appointment. In general, visitors are accommodated on Saturday afternoons.

Society's Website

www.oyrhs.org

Significant Archival Purchase

While the Society largely depends upon donations of archival materials to enhance its collections, on occasion the Society will purchase an important piece of local history. And so it was in December, when a unique book entitled "Jay Cooke's Mansion" was found on the internet and secured from a rare book dealer in New York City. The small volume contains 44 hand drawn plans of Jay Cooke's mansion, *Ogontz*, that was built in 1865. This portable version of architectural plans, gives a detailed vision of the design and construction of this palatial mansion. The book was likely created by or for the construction foreman from a blank book. Each floor plan was sketched in black and red ink on white or tan drafting paper, which was then trimmed and pasted onto the pages of the book. Each plan is labeled with the name of the room or rooms and their specific features, along with measurements. The book contains all floors and rooms from the basement to the fourth story. We are grateful for previously received unrestricted gifts from Sandra L. Muller and Patricia S. Scott, that enabled the Society to purchase this treasure.

The Annual Meeting of the Society will precede the May lecture. Officer and Committee reports will be presented and the Nominating Committee will present a slate of Officers and Directors to be elected for the 2021-2022 program year.