
The Corridor

Volume XXX, No. 3

Newsletter of the Old York Road Historical Society

Fall 2021

Lecture Series In Person

With the loosening of restrictions for the COVID-19 pandemic, the Society will once again be hosting lectures live and in-person at the John Barnes Room of Abington Friends Meeting. Masks are required to attend and there will be NO refreshments following the lectures. Until concurrent on-line capabilities are mastered, Zoom presentations are suspended.

LECTURE SERIES

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 free of charge.

October 13 – Octavius V. Catto: A Legacy for the 21st Century. Octavius V. Catto was a black 19th-century scholar, athlete, community leader, and civil rights activist. Catto spent most of his life in Philadelphia. While on his way to vote on Election Day, October 10, 1871, Catto was shot and killed. Join us as we look back at his life 150 years later. Amy Cohen, Director of Education at History Making Productions, will share a Mid-Atlantic Emmy Award-winning 15-minute film she produced on his life to coincide with the 2017 installation of a memorial to Catto at Philadelphia City Hall. Following the film screening, Ms. Cohen will lead an interactive discussion about Catto's current relevance.

November 10 – *Hitherto Invincible: How Three Generations of Barkers Helped Build America.* Join local history author and Society Vice President Thomas Wieckowski and WHYY Producer, Karen Smyles for a discussion of Wieckowski's latest book on three generations of the Barker family of Cheltenham Hills. Family luminaries include Abraham, president of the Philadelphia Stock Exchange and an ardent abolitionist, Anna, a central figure in the Transcendentalist movement and wife of the co-founder of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Wharton, US Presidential candidate and international banker honored for his international achievements. Copies of the book will be available for sale following the event (\$25 per copy) and the author will be pleased to sign the book.

- - FALL OUTING - -

100th Anniversary of the Bryn Athyn Train Wreck

Sunday, December 5, 1:30 p.m.

Join the Society as it partners with the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust for this annual program observing the anniversary of the Bryn Athyn Train wreck, which occurred 100 years ago on December 5, 1921. This head-on collision of two trains along the Newtown railway line resulted in the deaths of 26 persons.

Railroad historian Larry Eastwood will give a presentation on the train wreck with a Q&A period to follow. At 2:45, the assembled will commence a walk to the crash site led by Society President David Rowland. The walk is on generally smooth terrain and is less than a mile in distance. At the site, there will be a brief ceremony commemorating the 100th anniversary.

This year's event will be held in Church Hall on the Lord's New Church property. Space is limited for the lecture and registration is required. However, all are welcome to gather either for the 2:45 walk from the Lord's New Church or at the crash site on the county's Pennypack Trail shortly after 3:00 for the ceremony.

Pre-registration is required by December 3 through the Pennypack Trust web site (www.pennypacktrust.org). Space is limited for the lecture in Church Hall. Pennypack Trust and Old York Road Historical Society Members free; non-members \$10. This program will be held at The Lord's New Church (1725 Huntingdon Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006 – opposite the north side of the June Fete Fair Grounds). Park near the playground when you come in off of Huntingdon Road.

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Wednesday Research Hours Restored

The Society is pleased to report that our research library and archives will re-open on Wednesdays for walk-in visitors. Face mask coverings are required and the Society would request that only those who have been vaccinated come in. This is to help protect our volunteers who staff the archives during our public hours.

A Bit of History – Promoting Wanamaker's

By Stephanie Walsh

Tucked away in a corner of the Old York Road Historical Society's ephemera collection are 16 volumes of *The Magic City: A Portfolio of Original Photographic Views of the Great World's Fair and Its Treasures of Art*. Produced by the John Wanamaker Book Department as part of the Historical Fine Art Series, the 11" x 13.75" magazine was published by H.S. Smith and C.R. Graham for Historical Publishing Co. in Philadelphia in 1894.

In 1893, The World's Columbian Exposition took place in Chicago to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival to the new world. Various administrative challenges and financial setbacks delayed the ambitious project from opening on the actual anniversary the year prior. The Fair, which meant to showcase American ingenuity and industrialism, was to be held in Chicago because it embodied these traits after being rebuilt from the 1871 Great Chicago Fire. A temporary attraction, the Fair was open to the public from May to October.

You may be wondering why the historical society would have these magazines? The Great World's Fair, officially known as The World's Columbian Exposition or Chicago World's Fair, falls outside of the scope of the Society's collecting focus. Also, Chicago is over 700 miles away from the His-

torical Society! While the Society does have other bound volumes from the Fair that were once part of prominent local individuals' libraries, we are still researching who might have donated these magazines. What makes these

Wanamaker created was a small booklet which contained various reading material alongside advertising photographs or illustrations.

During the 1876 Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia, Wanamaker not only served on the Fair's organizing committee but also created his greatest retail endeavor - the Grand Depot. Scholars have stated that Wanamaker saw the Grand Depot as the center of Philadelphia civic life. In addition to offering a wide array of goods and services, Wanamaker took on the responsibility of using the store to educate his employees and

customers on topics including fine art and world culture.

Wanamaker had visited the World's Columbian Exposition while serving as US Postmaster General under President Benjamin Harrison. During this four-year period (1889-1893), Wanamaker was not involved with his stores. Once he returned to the retail industry, it is unsurprising that he continued using a magazine-based advertising method.

Issued weekly from January until April, each issue of *The Magic City* contains sixteen to twenty engravings from original photographs along with historical descriptions of the Fair grounds, buildings, exhibits, and showcase of international cultures and customs:



magazines important is that they embody much of John Wanamaker's retail practices and philosophies.

In 1861, John Wanamaker and his brother-in-law Nathan Brown opened a men's clothing manufacturing and retail shop. After Brown's death eight years later, Wanamaker continued alone as John Wanamaker and Company. By the time the World's Columbian Exposition occurred in 1893, Wanamaker was well-established in the world of merchandising as one of the largest clothing retailers.

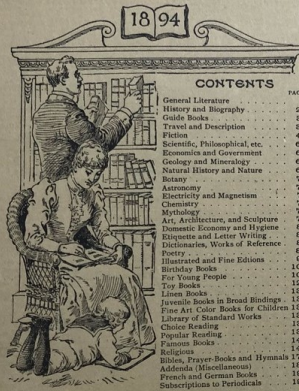
Much of Wanamaker's success has been attributed to his use of advertising. Before this time, it was unheard of to offer more than a simple announcement stating the basics of the business. One of the first advertising mediums

The art galleries and their precious contents; the majestic buildings; the surging millions of happy people; the curious things of foreign countries; the quaint little ships of Columbus and the Vikings; the Midway Plaisance and its singular inhabitants - all of these have been reproduced and preserved forever in the pages of this beautiful and instructive book - a lasting souvenir for the millions who were there and a permanent view of the great WORLD'S FAIR for those who could not go.

An introductory message from the publishers highlights how this format of using images along with text will be a benefit to the reader and their understanding of the Fair. The text under each image contains specific details about what the reader is seeing. In photographs of the buildings and grounds, these details could include the name of the building, its purpose, construction cost, architect, designer, and builder along with other details of note. Cultural descriptions and activities were included with the portraits of the groups that were housed within the area of the Fair called the Midway Plaisance. At times personal observations are interjected to the data.

While the first issue was primarily an introduction to the Fair, it also contained a small advertising sec-

THE BOOK DEPARTMENT.



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THE NEW BOOK CATALOGUE
JOHN WANAMAKER
PHILADELPHIA

Books are handled here just as dress goods or shoes or any other merchandise are handled—bought for the least that taking biggest lots and knowing how makes possible, sold as near bed-rock as may be. A fair price every time, no matter what prices are anywhere else.

A look through the book store will make you wonder where such mountains of books can go to. Tables heaped, fixtures loaded, shelves crowded. Old friends, standards and classics, in familiar dress or new bindings; new titles as well, and all in quantity to load an army of readers. Not a thin place in the whole stock, and everything is fixed to make your choosing easy.

The book business has grown and grown until we sell more books at retail than any other house in America. The key-note to all this is simply: wherever books can be had to the best advantage we take them in such lots as to command the lowest possible prices.

Next to having our book store where you can step into it, is to have a copy of our Annual Book Catalogue—192 pages of description lists of books—more than 9000 titles and a fair price quoted for every book.

A copy of the Catalogue will be mailed free to any address upon application.

John Wanamaker,
PHILADELPHIA.

tion inside the front cover. This blurb discussed the difficulty found in buying shoes, and the quality and customer service you could expect at Wanamaker's establishment. The subsequent issues moved all the advertisements to the back cover, which changed with each issue. Some ads highlighted a particular department, while others identified the information and services available at the store. Through this medium, Wanamaker could continue his efforts to expand his goal of enhancing the worldview of Philadelphia's burgeoning middle class, yet continue to advertise the goods and services his retail store could provide.

John Wanamaker built an international retail empire with stores located in Philadelphia, New York, London, and Paris. However, he

built his country estate *Lindenhurst* close by in Cheltenham Township on property bordered by Township Line Road, Old York Road and Washington Lane. Seven years after Wanamaker's death in 1922, *Lindenhurst* was sold to Henry W. Breyer, Jr., heir to Breyer's Ice Cream Company. Around 1946 the house was demolished; the property is now part of the Salus University campus.

Stephanie L. Walsh serves on the Society's Board of Directors and is responsible for publicity and marketing including the Society's web site and Facebook page. She is also an independent archival consultant working for both the Society and the Springfield Township Historical Society.

Society Member Publishes New Local History Book

Society Vice President Thomas Wieckowski has just published his latest local history book. *Hitherto Invincible: How Three Generations of Barkers Helped Build America* recounts the contributions of the Barker family to a growing 19th century Philadelphia. Abraham and Wharton Barker had country estates in the Cheltenham Hills during the late 19th century Gilded Age. Both men, along with other family members, were active in building America, from the War of 1812 into the 20th Century. The book will be inaugurated at a Society sponsored lecture (see related article), featuring a discussion with Wieckowski and WHYY Producer Karen Smyles. Smyles is well-known for her production, *The Montiers: An American Story*. Wieckowski's previous publications include, *Making Marathon: A History of Early Wyncote* (2009). The book is available through the Society.

Society Membership Information

Membership Renewal

Now is the time to renew your membership! At the top of the membership form you will find the dates for the current membership year. The membership year is the same as the school year; the advanced year being used to denote the year on your mailing label. So, for the membership year that runs from the fall of 2021 to the summer of 2022, the date on your label should be "2022". Annual dues have not increased this year. Please contact the Society at 215-886-8590 with any questions. As always, support at the Patron level or higher greatly enhances the work we are able to do.

Matching Gifts

Did you know that the Society is eligible to receive corporate matching gifts? Several members have doubled the impact of their gift by submitting paperwork to their company for this purpose. Check with your employer to see if the Society qualifies for a corporate match. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Making a Bequest

Updating your will? Please consider including a bequest to the Society's general endowment fund in your will or estate plans. Your gift will help ensure a vibrant future for the Society.

OLD YORK ROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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515 Meetinghouse Road
Jenkintown, PA 19046

215 - 886 - 8590

Archive Research Hours

Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Or by appointment. Please email the Society to make an appointment

Society's Website

www.oyrhs.org

Society's E-mail Address

OldYorkRoadHistory@gmail.com

Donations to the Archives

The Society has received a number of significant donations since February including the following:

- Advertisement for the Willow Grove Manor development (1925), from Charles Huntoon.
- A large collection of photographs and press clippings for Rolling Hill Hospital, from Theresa Mullen.
- Research files of Doreen Foust related to Wyncote, from John Foust.
- A Harbison Dairies milk crate, from David Hamilton.
- Ephemera from Willow Grove Park dated between 1897 and 1912, from Jim Knight.
- Custom bound ledger of the household items inventory from the estate of Rodman Wanamaker, from Thomas Keels.
- Four watercolors of scenes in Huntingdon Valley painted by Lynne S. Kennedy, from Gwen Shields.
- Records of the Retired Executives and Professionals (REAP) organization, from Len Moskoff.
- Photographs of Spring Valley Farm in Huntingdon Valley, from the Canterbury (NH) Historical Society.
- Lower Moreland Township, Zoning Board and Huntingdon Valley Fire Company files and ephemera, from Charles Miller.
- Records of the Kiwanis Club of Jenkintown, from Anne Lotts, to be added to the existing collection.
- The charter, plaques and framed items of the Ashbourne Country Club, from Arden Bell.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The following are the officers and directors for the Society's 2021-2022 program year:

President: David Rowland
First Vice President: Thomas Wieckowski
Second Vice President: James Rubillo
Secretary: Eileen Koolpe
Treasurer: Michael Czerwonka, CPA

Directors: Leslie Bell, Kirsten Gyllenhaal, Bryan Havir, Natalie Karas, Edward Landau, Betty Smith, Stephanie Walsh and Mary Washington.

Directors Emeriti: Martha McDonough, Joyce Root, Robert Skaler, and Mildred Wintz.