
The Corridor

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Newsletter of the Old York Road Historical Society

Fall 2026

LECTURE SERIES

The Program Committee has arranged for the following presentations to be held on Wednesday evenings at 7:30 p.m. in the John Barnes Room of Abington Friends Meeting (520 Meetinghouse Road, Jenkintown). The programs will also be accessible via Zoom. The lecture series is sponsored by a grant from the Jenkintown Lyceum and all programs are offered free of charge.

October 14 – History’s Mysteries: 1776 and the American Revolution. Historian Herb Kaufman will examine many of the myths, legends and lore that have become a significant part of American Revolutionary War and colonial era history including such varied topics as “Yankee Doodle,” Paul Revere’s ride, what happened on the Fourth of July, and Molly Pitcher. Every day, stories are repeated in schools, museums, and television programs because they are catchy, humorous or entertaining; but Kaufman will help separate fact from fiction. This program focuses on these mysterious, misrepresented and often imagined incidents and events. You will learn about the Revolutionary War and colonial myths, stories, and events that they never taught you in school.

November 11 – Incomprehensible Friends and Rebellious Enemies: German Soldiers in the American Revolutionary War. Between 1776 and 1783, Great Britain hired more than thirty thousand German soldiers to fight in its war against the American rebels. Collectively known as Hessians, these troops and accompanying civilians, including hundreds of women and children, spent extended periods in locations as dispersed and varied as Canada in the north and West Florida in the south. Drawing on extensive research in private papers and official records by members of the German corps, Dr. Friederike Baer, Professor of History at Penn State Abington College, explores the key experiences of these individuals as they waged war on a distant continent against a people who had done them no harm, with particular attention to German troops stationed in the Philadelphia region. Dr. Baer appeared in the 12-hour Ken Burns documentary, *The American Revolution*, seen on PBS last fall.

- - FALL OUTINGS - -

ABINGTON FRIENDS’ CEMETERY

Sunday, November 1, 2:00 p.m.

The Society will host a cemetery tour that takes us to the oldest religious institution in the area – Abington Friends Meeting. The meeting was organized in 1693 and originally met at Richard Wall’s house in Cheltenham (now the Wall House operated by the Cheltenham Township Historical Commission). In 1697, John Barnes, a wealthy English tailor, gave 120 acres for the meeting house and school. The cemetery, located immediately behind the meetinghouse, contains the graves of many people and families who were prominent in the early history of this area. Family names include Lippincott, Mather, Morris, Parry, Heacock, Hal-lowell, Jarrett, Walton, Bosler, Shoemaker, Jenkins, Fitzwater, Tyson, Cadwalader, and Knight. We will meet at the 18th century meetinghouse and then walk through the cemetery. Light refreshments will be provided. A registration form is included herein. Please respond by Monday, October 26.

The Bryn Athyn Train Wreck

Saturday, 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 105 years ago on Monday, December 5, 1921. This head-on collision of two trains along the Newtown railway line resulted in the deaths of 26 people with many others injured.

Railroad historian Larry Eastwood will give a presentation on the train wreck with a Q&A period to follow. At 2:45, a walk to the crash site will be led by Society President David Rowland. Pre-registration is required by December 2 through the Pennypack Trust web site (www.pennypacktrust.org). Pennypack Trust and Old York Road Historical Society members are free; non-members \$10. This program will be held at the Trust’s Visitors’ Center.

A Bit of History – Training for Shore Duty

By James M. Rubillo

I spent the summer in Wildwood Crest and happened to visit the World War II aviation museum at the Cape May Airport. Since the Coast Guard Training Station is located in Cape May, a significant portion of the museum involves Coast Guard history. While browsing, I came across a small posting that stated that the Coast Guard trained its patrol dogs at Lynnewood Hall in Elkins Park during World War II. This sparked my interest and led to the discovery of several press photographs in the Society's collections taken on Lynnewood Farm (located opposite Lynnewood Hall on the south side of Ashbourne Avenue).

During World War II, the grounds of Lynnewood Farm were used by the United States Coast Guard to train military dogs. Approximately 200 dogs, and their handlers were housed and trained for coastal and shore operations in the jockey quarters and stables on the Farm.

With the outset of World War II, the threat from German submarines along the nation's coasts was considered a major threat. The Coast Guard was assigned the mission of protecting American shores against sabotage, enemy submarines, enemy landings, and "fifth

column" activities. The mission had three basic functions: (a) to detect and observe enemy vessels operating in coastal waters and to transmit any information obtained to the Navy and Army, (b) to report attempts of landing by the enemy and to capture enemy agents attempting to enter our nation, and (c) to prevent communication between persons on shore and the enemy at sea. Trained dogs were identified as valuable assets in carrying out this mission.

By 1942, Peter A.B. Widener II was a well-known horse owner and passionate dog breeder. Prior to the war, he had constructed a large number of kennels on the expansive Widener property.

Upon hearing of the need for trained dogs, he volunteered his kennel facilities to the Coast Guard for the training of "shore dogs."

The Coast Guard unit at Lynnewood developed a rigorous train-

ing program. An assigned Guardsman was taught to walk on the left side of dog. The guardsman used a choke chain that had to be put on properly so it would not



injure the dog. The guardsman, and his dog, trained from eight in the morning until four in the afternoon, breaking only for lunch. Then when night fell, they would continue training the dogs by surprise attacking them. The dogs showed unusual alertness, and they easily sensed the presence of strangers. They were also formidable adversaries. A fifty-pound dog, attacking with teeth bared, was often a more dangerous adversary than a man with a gun. Once the dogs completed training, they were sent off to serve along the coast.

The Coast Guard also had mounted patrols that worked along stretches of beach. Dogs were added to the mounted patrols in addition to the foot patrols. The four month "shore dog boot camp" ended with a review prior to reporting for coastline duty.



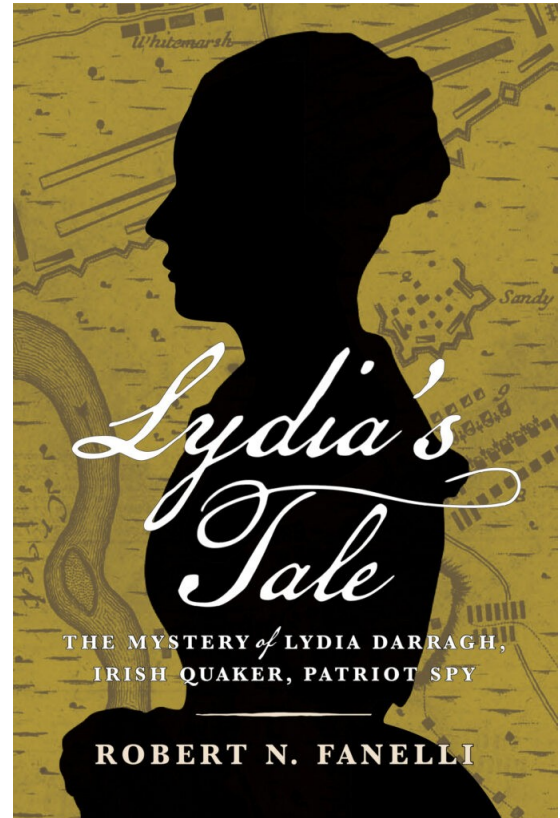
James M. Rubillo is a retired college dean, professor, and non-profit CEO. He is a prolific and well-travelled speaker who has an intense interest in local history. He serves on the Society's Board of Directors.

You're Invited: The Society's 90th Birthday Party!

Not only is the United States of America celebrating a momentous anniversary this year (250 years since its founding with the signing of the Declaration of Independence), but the Society is celebrating the 90th anniversary of its founding. To mark both of these important milestones, the Society is hosting a party that will feature historian Robert N. Fanelli, who will discuss his new book on Lydia Darragh, a Quaker patriot famed for warning the American troops, encamped at Whitemarsh, that the British were planning a sneak attack. Her actions are said to have saved George Washington's army from a devastating ambush as it lay starving and freezing on the barren hills of Whitemarsh at the end of 1777.

Lydia's Tale: The Mystery of Lydia Darragh, Irish Quaker, Patriot Spy uncovers a myriad of previously unknown records, knitting together for the first time the life and experiences of this remarkable heroine of the American Revolution who lived in the heart of Philadelphia. Behind her story we find an assertive woman who took an active hand in the affairs of her family and her community. Drawing on genealogical sources, legal documents, and other correspondence, the author reconstructs Lydia Darragh's early life in Dublin, her livelihood in Pennsylvania, and how the Revolution shaped her and her children's lives. Exploring the context of Lydia's tale sheds light on the activities of women in Revolutionary Philadelphia, reveals the complex issues faced by pacifist Quakers in a time of war, and brings to light the contributions of Irish immigrants in securing America's freedom.

Robert Fanelli is a member of the Old York Road Historical Society. He is also Secretary of the Washington Crossing American Revolution Round Table and a frequent contributor to the *Journal of the American Revolution*. He serves as a Trustee of the Swan Historical Foundation, which owns the excellent collection of Revolutionary War artifacts on display in the museum of the Washington Crossing State Park in Titusville, New Jersey. He is particularly interested in Pennsylvania's role in the American Revolution, and has lived most of his life in Glenside along the flanks of Edge Hill, site of an encounter between the American and British armies on December 7, 1777.



The celebratory event will be held at Manufacturers' Golf and Country Club on Sunday afternoon, November 15th. The program will begin at 2:00 p.m. A lovely reception will follow with a cash bar and passed hors d'oeuvres. Valet parking will be available. Door will open at 1:45. Individual tickets are \$60 each and a Sponsor ticket is \$100 per person. Sponsors will be listed in the program and will receive a complimentary autographed copy of the book and a drink ticket.

Society Open House and Used Book Sale

October is Archives Month throughout the Philadelphia area, and the Society is participating in Archives Month Philly, a month-long schedule of events celebrating archives, the work of archivists, and the rich history contained in archives that is happening across the Delaware Valley. The Society will host an Open House and Used Book Sale on Tuesday, October 20, from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. at its headquarters in Alverthorpe Manor. Tours of the archives will be conducted and refreshments will be served. There will be a wide selection of regional history books (new and used) available for sale. This is the perfect opportunity to bring a history-loving friend.

OF LOCAL INTEREST

The Cheltenham Township Historical Commission is sponsoring an Open House on Sunday, October 18th from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Richard Wall House Museum, 1 Wall Park Drive, Elkins Park. Over 40 history related area organizations will have display tables at the event, including the Society. The Wall House will also be open for guided tours.

Archival Donations

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

- A large collection of books, directories, genealogical resources, postcards, maps, property atlases, photographs and ephemera related to Philadelphia, Bucks, and Montgomery counties, from Michael Foy.
- A large collection of historic photographs of *Lyndanwalt*, site of this year's Patrons' Party, from John Fisher.
- Papers of Cheltenham Township Commissioner Ann Rappoport dating from 2015 to 2025, from Ann Rappoport.
- Memorabilia from the Twining family of Glenside, from Wendy Clymer.
- A large collection of oversized historic photographs along with newspaper articles and works of art from the collection of the late Russell Pletcher, former Lower Moreland police chief, from Cathy and Lonnie Mundock.
- An 1897 property atlas covering Cheltenham, Abington, and Springfield townships, from Arden Bardol.
- Records and memorabilia of the Friends of Cheltenham Libraries, from Barbara Kotzin.
- Books from collection of Isadore Lichstein, editor of the Philadelphia Bulletin Almanac for many years, and related to Philadelphia and its environs, from Paul Lichstein.
- Photographs and ephemera related to the St. Aidan's Chorus that performed a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta annually from 1932 to 1956, from Jane Tucker Tozier.
- A set of books with the bookplate of Eva Roberts Stotesbury, from Carter Leidy, Jr.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The following are the officers and directors for the Society's 2026-2027 program year:

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

Directors: Bryan Havir, Bruce Laverty, Kathy Marquardt, Daniel Morrison, Maria Paula Mugnani, James Rubillo, Sharee Solow, Stephanie Walsh.

Directors Emeriti: Leslie Bell and Mildred Wintz.

Society Membership Information

Membership Renewal

Now is the time to renew your membership! 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 2026 to the summer of 2027, the date on your label should be "2027." 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.

IRA Donations

For the past several years, many folks have taken the opportunity to donate their required minimum distribution (RMD) to charitable causes. As a 501(c)(3) organization, the Society qualifies as a worthy cause for your IRA donations.

Making a Bequest

Updating your will? Please consider including a bequest naming 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

Alverthorpe Manor, 2nd Floor
515 Meetinghouse Road
Jenkintown, PA 19046

215 - 886 - 8590

Archive Research Hours

Tuesdays, 12 noon to 3:00 p.m.
Wednesdays, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Or by appointment

Society's Website

www.oyrhs.org

Society's E-mail Address

OldYorkRoadHistory@gmail.com