



# Milestones

Preserving Our Past for the Future

SEPTEMBER, 2006

## Message From The President:

### Preserving Our Past for the Future

Next year, in August 2007, Lower Merion will be celebrating the 325th anniversary of the founding of “The Welsh Tract” in America. This landmark date will be celebrated by a series of events that will focus on the growth and development of our various communities. In preparation for this commemoration, the Society, as part of its continuing education program, has been working with our local government and the school district to inform the community about our unique heritage. Also, we’re actively involved in basic research on topics that have been published in professional journals, popular magazines, research papers, booklets, specialty books, lecture series, guided tours, and video documentaries that promote our Lower Merion.

*In August 1682, the Welsh Quakers first arrived to the area. They were seeking a home in the New World, which they had christened “The Welsh Tract.” These “Merioneth Adventurers” were part of William Penn’s vision of the “Holy Experiment” in which the persecuted peoples of the Old World could find refuge in a land of promise and new beginnings.*

Another important aspect of our mission is to speak out in favor of preservation and restoration of our neighborhood communities. This takes on many aspects: speaking up about preserving those valuable buildings that define who we are today; establishing historic districts; and putting specific buildings on the National Register of Historic Places (like our Lower Merion Academy). Our history best defines our community and creates a sense of place, a neighborhood that has a shared heritage.

In the July 2006 issue of “Main Line Today,” our “award-winning historical society” was the recipient of the “Best of the Main Line and Western Suburbs” in the category “History Hounds.” Thank you to all our volunteers who work with the community and helped us earn this public recognition.

Sincerely,  
*Nery Francis*

## “In short, there’s simply not a more congenial spot for happily-ever-aftering than here in Camelot”

lyrics from Lerner and Loewe’s “Camelot”

For more than a century, Lower Merion has had the distinction of being called “The Main Line.” A more recent term that has been used to identify our community is “Camelot.” An affluent area with large castle-like stone houses that, in some cases, architec-

turally incorporate a turret style addition. This kind of economic statement is not a bad thing, but too much of a good thing can have its consequences.

Pieces of our township are disappearing every week. Building by building, it is being torn down and

replaced with new and larger houses. Demolitions are a natural process when poorly-designed or poorly-built structures need replacement. Some of these new houses are bigger, some are better built, some are stylish, some are uglier.

*Continued on page 3*



20-22 Holland Avenue in Ardmore. A twin scheduled for a teardown to make room for the expansion of a car dealership.



Central Avenue in Bryn Mawr. Row houses on the west side of the Avenue. Most were demolished over the summer as part of Main Line Health’s future expansion.



Kirkner house at 1601 Spring Mill Road (Philadelphia Country Club) in Gladwyne. A 19th century country cottage scheduled for a teardown to make space for an expanded parking lot.

## We Gratefully Accept Donations

Our library holdings continue to grow thanks to the generosity of the local community. During these past six months, the following groups/people have donated items related to our Lower Merion history:

John W. Alexander, Jr.  
Ann Bagley  
Joseph Betz  
Frank Parke Bicking  
S. Jonathan Bugbee, Jr.  
Max Buten  
Estate of Margaret Hill Collins  
Victoria Donohoe  
Franklin Maps  
Helen E. Hanna  
Cathy Hetznecker  
Dr. William J. Homer  
Melissa Hope  
Donald Lawler  
Farilyn Leopold  
Lower Merion Conservancy  
Lower Merion School District  
Bala Cynwyd Middle School  
Lower Merion School District  
Harriton High School  
Richard Reuss  
Joan C. Roberts  
Stefan Schreier  
Township of Lower Merion  
Planning Department  
Frank Weer  
Dr. G. Britten Winters  
Nick Zarvalas

## Website Update

We have not slacked off on our commitment of building the best website that incorporates the “must have data” on Lower Merion. Our “virtual library” continues to be updated due to the recent acquisitions to the General Reference and Vertical File Collections. Also, our online database of Lower Merion Alumni has been update with the addition of more than 35,000 names from Lower Merion High School (1949 to 2003) and Harriton High School (1959 to 2003).

We must be doing something right. One way to measure success is to look at our year-to-date statistics that show that there were 110,797 visitors to our website!

# Collection Highlights

As a community, we're proud of our Quaker roots and William Penn's influence in molding our form of government. We're fortunate to have in our Archive Collection source materials that relate to William Penn. Two Penn memorabilia items in our collection are:



Obverse side of the "Seal" from the 1701 "Charter of Privileges"

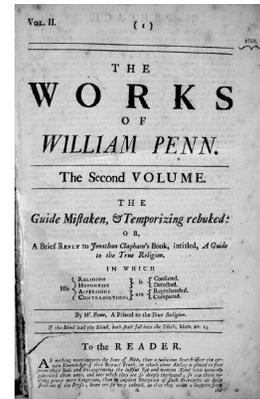
## The Seal from William Penn's "Charter of Privileges"

On October 28, 1701, during Penn's second and last visit to the colony, Penn signed his "Charter of Privileges for the Province of Pennsylvania and its Territories," formally establishing a stable frame of government that, for its day, was remarkably liberal. In this document, Penn granted a set of individual rights to the inhabitants of Pennsylvania, codifying the freedom of conscience and that the inhabitants were never to be "molested or prejudiced" for their religious beliefs or practices. Before William Penn returned

to England, he wrote to the Welsh settlers stating: "You shall be governed by laws of your own making and live a free people."

## The Works of William Penn by William Penn

This publication is a complete set of Penn's writings and epistles which was published in 1726. It is printed in an oversized format in 2 volumes; Volume 1 is 911 pages, Volume 2 is 916 pages. The formidable title of this anthology is "The Works of William Penn: The Guide Mistaken, & Temporizing rebuked: or, A Brief Reply to Jonathan Clapham's Book, intituled, A Guide to the True Religion In Which His Religion is Confuted, His Hypocrisy is Detected, His Aspersions are Reprehended, His Contradictions are Compared." This publication offers us a window into the past and an account of Penn's beliefs and dreams. ★



The Title Page

## We Would Like to Recommend

The historical society supports the work of American INSIGHT ([AmericanINSIGHT.org](http://AmericanINSIGHT.org)); a local non-profit video production company. Its mission is to produce historical documentaries about the lives and work of Americans who have made lasting contributions to the cultural, social and political life of our country.

Currently, American INSIGHT is working on a series of documentaries titled "Pennsylvania Visionaries." The next installment, "Free Speech: A Sacred Challenge," will be a one-hour documentary that explores the origins of free speech in England as well as its immigration to America through the auspices of the founder of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, William Penn.

## When We Were Kids!

Organized in 1996, the Historical Society's Intergenerational Program teaches Lower Merion School District's fourth graders about life in the past. The program ran throughout May when we visited the six elementary schools. This year we had twenty-five volunteers who participated in the Intergenerational Interview program. They were:

Lita Cohen  
Marlene Dubin  
Barbara Earle  
Margot Flaks  
Al Gebhart  
Fran Gebhart  
Mary Giersch  
Ted Goldsborough  
Alison Graham

Emmy Hartley  
Sylvester Haynie  
Felicia Howard  
Bettie Javoronok  
Christine Jones  
Dick Jones  
Bonnie Kauffman  
Joe Manko  
Dr. Bill O'Brien

Joan Roberts  
Dick Schneider  
Peg Schneider  
Bob Swartz  
Jim Wiggins  
Jill Ziemer  
Diane Zullinger

## Haunted History: The Ghosts of Lower Merion!

Sunday, October 29th at 5:02pm (at sundown)



*The William Warner monument located at Laurel Hill Cemetery. It was sculptured by Alexander Milne Calder who did all of the sculpture on city hall (including William Penn) and who is buried at West Laurel Hill Cemetery.*

*Meet at the Conservatory at West Laurel Hill Cemetery, 225 Belmont Avenue, Bala Cynwyd*

Here's the perfect event to celebrate Halloween. Lower Merion is a hotbed of haunted history and Jerry Francis will provide the stories behind 13 local ghosts. Most people know that the General Wayne Inn is haunted, but did you know the ghost's name is Wilhelm? Hear the stories of the German clockmaker, the Colonel and the Lady in Gray, Tuggie the Witch, Murder Orchard in Penn Valley and other ghostly events from our past.

And for the really brave, there's an optional flashlight walking tour of the cemetery after the lecture. Use the western gate on Belmont Avenue and follow the signs to the Conservatory.

Co-sponsored by West Laurel Hill Cemetery and The Lower Merion Conservancy  
Free admission and complimentary refreshments supplied by the Bringhurst Funeral Home.

## Centennial Fever: The 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition and our Union Sunday School

Sunday, December 3, 2006 at 1:30pm

*Lecture and Slide Presentation by Rochelle Christopher  
Lower Merion Academy, First Floor Meeting Room*

Come explore the fair commemorating the 100th anniversary of the nation's independence as we explore the values, mores, and wonders of the Industrial Revolution. Rochelle Christopher, of Victorian Vanities ([VictorianVanities.net](http://VictorianVanities.net)) will be our guide to the latest gossip and inventions seen on this marvelous journey back through the only World's Fair ever hosted in Philadelphia.

Free admission and complimentary refreshments.



*Memorial Hall, the centerpiece of the Centennial Exposition*

## Camelot - continued from page 1

What is most disturbing about the avalanche of demolitions in Lower Merion is that many of these are tear-downs of perfectly good housing stock. What was wrong with these structures is that they are presumably too modest in size and understate their presence.

Lower Merion is a great place to live and raise a family. Therefore, land is expensive, we have low taxes, good municipal services from the township/borough, excellent schools, proximity to the city, and lack of crime. At this time of greater economic affluence and moderately low interest rates, there is also a de-

mand for more and bigger houses. To meet this market demand, the solution is often to tear down a modest sized house and to build a much bigger structure.

The problem with this trend is the loss of housing for those of modest income. We should have places for people of all ages and incomes to live, for our neighbors who are employed in municipal, educational, sales, clerical, construction, and service industries. To have a well balanced community we need to retain a mix of housing for the different socio-economic levels of our population. We should maintain an inventory of housing stock, such

as small apartment buildings, twins, row houses or smaller singles on smaller lots. These are the type of houses that are disappearing; namely "workforce" housing. Tear-downs have a negative impact on the nature and character of our neighborhoods and should be discouraged in most situations.

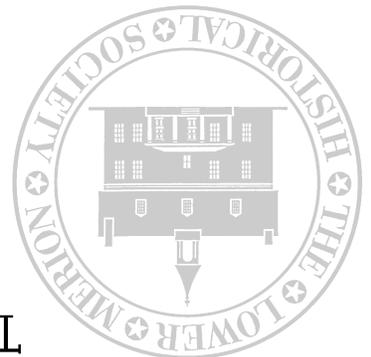
"Camelot" should be a diverse community where a family can work, afford a home, and raise their children. We all contribute to the general welfare of Lower Merion. ♣

by Ted Goldsborough, Max Buten  
and Jerry Francis

# The Lower Merion Historical Society

Lower Merion Academy  
506 Bryn Mawr Ave., Box 2602  
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

LowerMerionHistory.org



## Mark Your Calendar

**Sunday, October 29, 2006**

Haunted History: The Ghosts of Lower Merion

**Sunday, December 3, 2006**

Centennial Fever: The 1876 Philadelphia Centennial  
Exposition and our Union Sunday School

**March 2007**

Guided Tour of Rittenhouse Town

**April 2007**

Banquet and Annual Meeting at  
the "New" Tavern Restaurant (members only)

**May 2007**

Guided Tour of the Merion Meetinghouse  
and the Lower Merion Academy

# The Lower Merion Historical Society

## Our Mission:

The Lower Merion Historical Society is an organization dedicated to "Preserving Our Past For The Future." This is accomplished by stewardship of local history, education of the community, preservation of historic resources and outreach to promote awareness of the cultural heritage of the Township of Lower Merion and the Borough of Narberth.



LowerMerionHistory.org

## Officers and Directors Effective April 2005

### Officers:

President - Gerald A. Francis

Vice President - Ross L. Mitchell

Treasurer - John B. Hagner

Corresponding Secretary - Betty Cannon

Recording Secretary - Barbara McElroy

Immediate Past President - Edmund L. Goldsborough

President Emeritus - W. Robert Swartz

### Directors:

**Class of 2007** - Allison Graham, S. Hamill Horne, Joan Roberts

**Class of 2008** - Andrew Amsterdam, Denise H. Francis, Bruce D. Reed

**Class of 2009** - Dennis Montagna, Charley Paige

The Historical Society is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization serving the community since 1949. For more than 57 years, our volunteers have provided educational programs to the public. Thousands of students, residents and scholars have worked with the Society's extensive resources. The Historical Society is a vital force in preserving the rich history of the Lower Merion community.