



December 2013

Fairmount Park Historic Holiday House Tours

It is that time of year to get out and see some of our local treasures. From Thursday to Sunday, December 5th to 8th and 12th to 15th is this year's *Yuletide Tours*. Decorated by various interior designers and garden clubs, the historic houses will delight visitors with festive adornments and stunning interiors. The theme this year for each house is:

Strawberry Mansion: *"Home for the Holidays"*

Laurel Hill: *"Angels at Laurel Hill"*

Woodford Mansion: *"Wassailing at Woodford"*

Cedar Grove: *"Simple Gifts"*

Lemon Hill: *"Holiday Entertaining"*

Mount Pleasant: *"Visions of Twelfth Night"*



This is a perfect way to share the season with friends and family. There are plenty of ways to visit these beautiful homes this holiday season. Visit the houses at your own pace during open house hours, take a guided trolley tour on select dates, or reserve a group tour through the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

[Click Here](#) to download the 2013 holiday events brochure.

Preserve America Signs Puts the Heritage into Cynwyd Heritage Trail



The U.S Department of Interior has designated the Township of Lower Merion a *Preserve America Community* and awarded the Township a *Preserve America Grant* to fund the development and manufacture of interpretive signs for the *Cynwyd Heritage Trail*. It has been a collaborative effort between the Township and the Historical Society's volunteers who did the research, supplied the images, collected the copyrights for the images, drafted the wording, and did the fact checking.



These informative signs (24"x36") have just been installed by the Township's Parks and Recreation Department to provide users of the Heritage Trail with information about the heritage of this 19th century industrial corridor. **To appreciate the images and the story that they tell, you must walk the Trail and see them in situ. Enjoy your walk!**

The two wall mounted signs located inside the Cynwyd Train Station in the Vestibule Area

CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL

SCHUYLKILL VALLEY DIVISION OF THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD



Founded in 1846, the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) was the largest railroad by traffic and revenue in the United States for most of the 20th century. In order to compete with the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad (P&R) and barge traffic on the Schuylkill River Navigation Canal, the PRR expanded over one hundred miles in 1884 into the anthracite coal fields of the Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Lehigh, and Wyoming Valleys by building a Schuylkill Valley Division that paralleled the P&R. Freight rail service peaked in the 1920s with approximately 2,000 coal cars per day. However, due to competition from the trucking industry and the decline of the anthracite coal industry, freight traffic was all but eliminated on this line by the 1950s.

The Schuylkill Valley Division also ran as a commuter rail line between Philadelphia and Norristown. This branch line was electrified in the 1930s, as part of the extensive electrification project that traversed from its 52nd Street Junction in Philadelphia to Norristown.

By the 1950s, with the surge in automobile sales and construction of extensions of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, the PRR's infrastructure was in decline. The Pennsylvania Railroad merged with its longtime rival, the New York Central, to form the Penn Central in 1968. The new railroad and its successors continued to provide commuter service under contract with various public agencies. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) became the owner and operator of the line from 52nd Street to Ivy Ridge in 1983. Rail service beyond the Cynwyd Station ended in 1986.






Below: The Pennsylvania Railroad's official shield, adapted like a logo to represent the line when the company began.

For Left: This poster, shown in 1950 shows a PRR L-1 class steam locomotive operating north from Cynwyd Station.

Left: A schedule for passenger service on the Schuylkill Division, dated May 1913. The inside of the schedule might display a list of the stations within this division.

These signs were made possible by Lower Merion Township. All content is courtesy of the Lower Merion Historical Society.

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail Interpretive Signage Project is being supported in part by a Preserve America grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

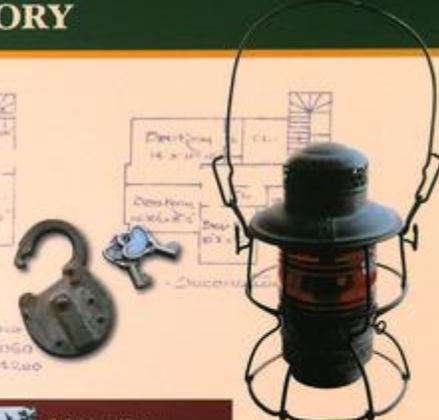
CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL

CYNWYD STATION HISTORY



A key Bala Cynwyd landmark since its construction in 1900, the Cynwyd Train Station is one of the last remaining original Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) standard stations in the region. Cynwyd was one of four passenger station buildings on the Schuylkill Valley Division in Lower Merion including Bala Station, West Laurel Hill Station, and Barmoseth Station.

Train stations, which also served as post offices, were such important community landmarks that adjoining neighborhoods were renamed to match those of the stations: "Pinecord" became "Bala," and "Academyville" became "Cynwyd." Cynwyd was a typical PRR depot, in that it incorporated passenger, freight, and postal services.

Left: Special ticket ends used by agents in travel between Cynwyd and Philadelphia.

Right: A lock, typical of those used on freight stations like Cynwyd in the early 20th century, and a PRR standard lantern. In the background are the original pattern book plans used for Cynwyd Station.

For Left: Cynwyd Station as it appeared in 1900, as a real photo postcard. In addition to the passenger depot shed, this image shows baggage on the platform, waiting to be loaded.

Left: The Adams Express Company built a structure from addition on the station's north side in 1900 to handle freight.

Right: A postcard from 1907 shows the north side before the freight addition.





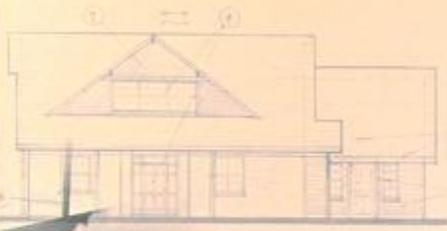
These signs were made possible by Lower Merion Township. All content is courtesy of the Lower Merion Historical Society.

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail Interpretive Signage Project is being supported in part by a Preserve America grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

The two wall mounted signs located inside the Cynwyd Train Station in the SEPTA Waiting Room


CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL

CYNWYD STATION REVITALIZATION



With the decline and demise of the Pennsylvania Railroad, maintenance of the Cynwyd Station suffered, and the building was almost demolished by neglect. Community support for the station and its rail line resulted in a revitalization project involving Lower Merion Township, Montgomery County, and the Lower Merion Historical Society.

The Cynwyd Station Revitalization project is indicative of the degree of local support from the Bala Cynwyd community. First, the project received a considerable donation of in-kind professional legal, financial and architectural services, without which it would not have been possible. Second, this project exhibits a high level of craftsmanship and design imagination that will ensure that it remains a treasured icon of the Bala Cynwyd community for another 100 years.



Lower Merion Township - Facing Lot Elevation 1/20



Left: The fire inside the station and plan in January, 1973.



Above: The station was in need of major repairs, inside and out, when the photograph at left was taken in 2007. Thanks to significant community support and volunteers, repairs began soon after. The photo above on the right shows progress being made in 2009.



Many environmental professionals participated in the renovation to ensure the incorporation of green materials and strategies. For example, even after the building suffered three fires and seismic damage, approximately 35% of the old growth lumber was reused. The original first floor window sashes were re-scribed by hand in order to fit energy efficient paneling, and the roof, bathrooms, and flooring incorporated salvaged or recycled materials. In addition, an innovative rainwater harvesting and stormwater management system was custom designed for the train station to alleviate the basement's damp conditions while capturing and filtering runoff that previously ran into Vine Creek. In this way, the station has become a unique case study as a green historical renovation that meets modern building and fire codes.

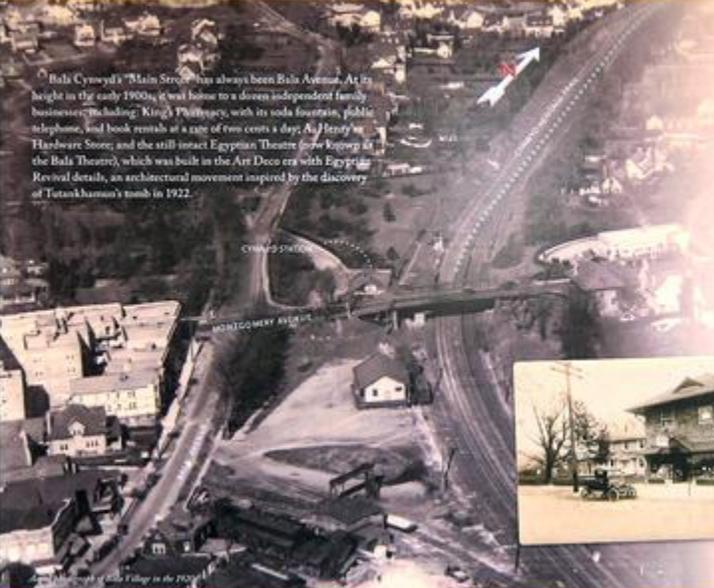
 These signs were made possible by Lower Merion Township.

 All content is courtesy of the Lower Merion Historical Society.

 The Cynwyd Heritage Trail Interpretive Signage Project is being supported in part by a Preserve America grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.


CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL

ENTRANCE TO BALA VILLAGE



Bala Cynwyd's "Main Street" has always been Bala Avenue. At its height in the early 1900s, it was home to a dozen independent family businesses, including: King's Pharmacy, with its soda fountain, public telephone, and book rentals at a rate of two cents a day; A.J. Henry's Hardware Store; and the still intact Egyptian Theatre (now known as the Bala Theatre), which was built in the Art Deco era with Egyptian Revival details, an architectural movement inspired by the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922.




Right: The Egyptian Theatre, shown here shortly after completion, was built in 1926 from a design by the Highman-Merritt Co.

Above: The Post Office (Monroe Field Post Co. Building) was designed by architect Henry D. Behrens, in 1920.

Left: King's Pharmacy in 1916.

 These signs were made possible by Lower Merion Township.

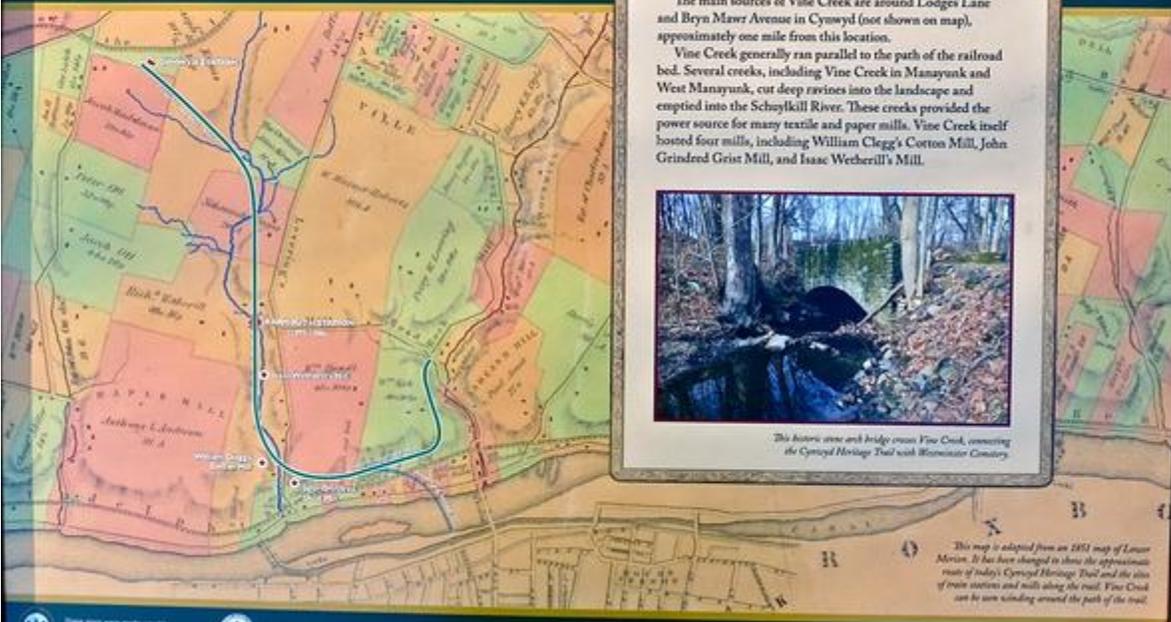
 Aerial photos from the Dollar Metal Survey Company Collection, Hagley Museum & Library; Egyptian Theatre photos from the Irvin B. Glazer Theatre Collection, Smithsonian of Philadelphia. All other content is courtesy of the Lower Merion Historical Society.

 The Cynwyd Heritage Trail Interpretive Signage Project is being supported in part by a Preserve America grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.



CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL

VINE CREEK



The main sources of Vine Creek are around Lodges Lane and Bryn Mawr Avenue in Cynwyd (not shown on map), approximately one mile from this location.

Vine Creek generally ran parallel to the path of the railroad bed. Several creeks, including Vine Creek in Manayunk and West Manayunk, cut deep ravines into the landscape and emptied into the Schuylkill River. These creeks provided the power source for many textile and paper mills. Vine Creek itself hosted four mills, including William Clegg's Cotton Mill, John Grindred Grist Mill, and Isaac Wehrill's Mill.



This historic stone arch bridge crosses Vine Creek, connecting the Cynwyd Heritage Trail with Westminster Cemetery.

This map is adapted from an 1851 map of Lower Merion. It has been changed to show the approximate route of today's Cynwyd Heritage Trail and the sites of main sources and mills along the trail. Vine Creek can be seen winding around the path of the trail.



These signs were made possible by Lower Merion Township.



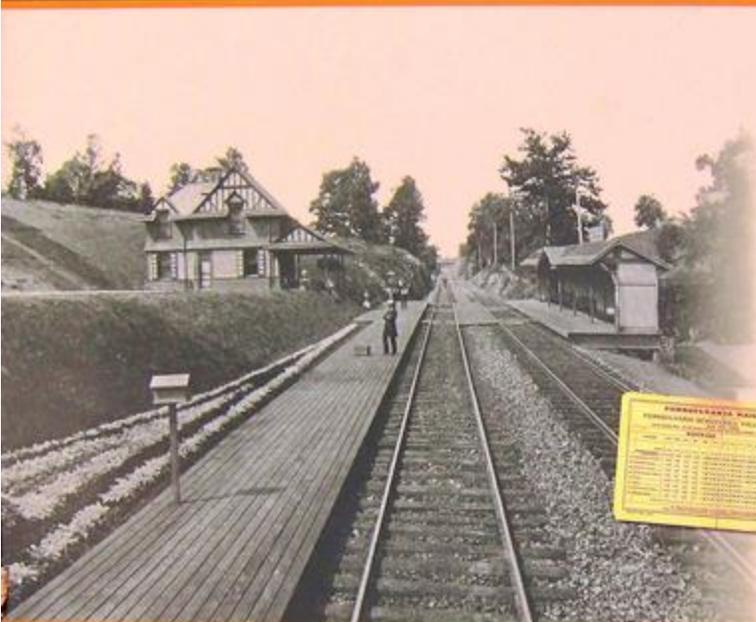
All content is courtesy of the Lower Merion Historical Society.

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail Interpretive Signage Project is being supported in part by a Preserve America grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.



CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL

WEST LAUREL HILL TRAIN STATION



Before the advent of parks, the only great swaths of green open space where the general public could visit and picnic were cemeteries. For this reason, the West Laurel Hill Station (1884-1899) was one of the most popular of the early stops along the line and generated much weekend traffic. For city-dwellers seeking a rural setting, the railroad reinforced this effect by artfully landscaping the grounds around the station platforms.

After passengers disembarked at the station platform, the trains would move another hundred feet down the rails to the freight platform, where caskets would be unloaded onto horse-drawn carriages. The brick-paved ramp carved into the hill that leads up to a side entrance of the cemetery is still visible.

The West Laurel Hill Station was decommissioned and disassembled in 1899 to make way for the new station at Barnsworth, which was better located to service both West Laurel Hill Cemetery and the newly-incorporated Westminster Cemetery.



These signs were made possible by Lower Merion Township.



Large photograph was purchased from the Library Company of Philadelphia on behalf of the American Pioneer Underwriters, Inc. All other content is courtesy of the Lower Merion Historical Society.

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail Interpretive Signage Project is being supported in part by a Preserve America grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.



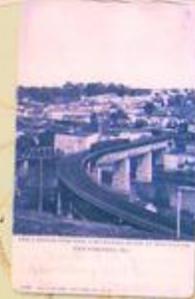
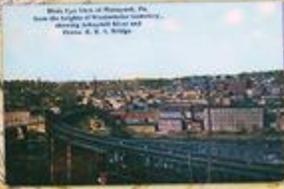
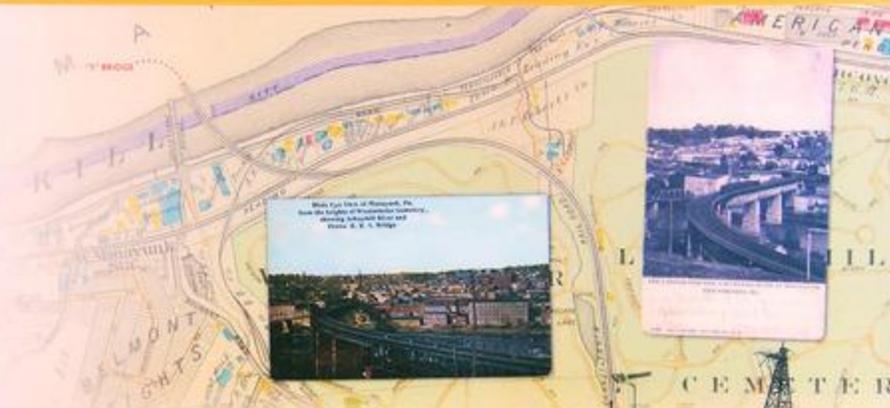


CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL

THE "S" BRIDGE & THE MANAYUNK BRIDGE

The original Pennsylvania Railroad bridge across the Schuylkill River, known as the "S" Bridge due to its shape, was constructed in 1884 as a double-track iron truss bridge that connected the West Manayunk community in Lower Merion to the Manayunk neighborhood of Philadelphia. An "S" shaped curve was incorporated in the design in order to produce drag, to help slow trains which invariably had built up momentum from descending the slope from Cynwyd Station. The bridge can be seen in the two early 20th century postcards at right and the 1908 map behind.

Due to heavier loads, which primarily consisted of freight trains carrying anthracite coal, the "S" Bridge was dismantled ca. 1918. It was replaced by the Manayunk Bridge (below), a Spanish-arch concrete bridge. This newer bridge is now fondly regarded by many as the definitive icon of Manayunk.



These signs were made possible by Lower Merion Township.

1908 map courtesy of the Railroad Historical Society. All other content is courtesy of the Lower Merion Historical Society.

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail Interpretive Signage Project is being supported in part by a Preserve America grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.



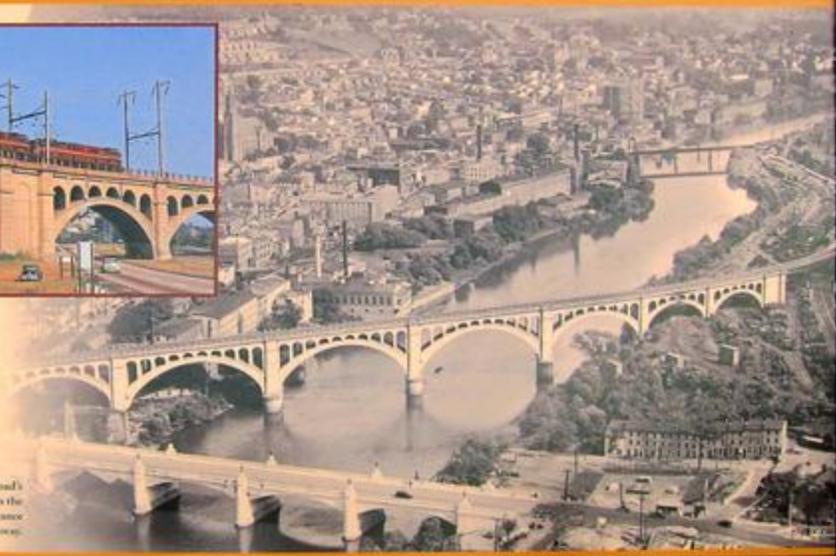
CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL

TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR IN TRANSITION



Above: This image from the 1950s depicts a unique time in history when the three transportation corridors of this area operated concurrently. A Pennsylvania Railroad passenger train led by two GG1 locomotives crosses the Manayunk Bridge on its way to Valley Forge, before the line was inherited by SEPTA. A freight train sits on the Reading Railroad line at bottom left. Meanwhile, some of the first cars on the newly constructed Schuylkill Expressway drive towards Philadelphia.

Right: This aerial view shows the Pennsylvania Railroad's Manayunk Bridge, the Green Lane Bridge in the foreground, and the Zoo Park Bridge in the distance before the construction of the Schuylkill Expressway.



These signs were made possible by Lower Merion Township.

All content is courtesy of the Lower Merion Historical Society.

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail Interpretive Signage Project is being supported in part by a Preserve America grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.





CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL
SWITCHBACK BRIDGE

In 1891, George Brooker Roberts, a Bala Cynwyd resident and president of the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR), ordered the construction of the Pencoyd Branch off of the Schuylkill Valley Division to the Pencoyd Iron Works. Up until that time, the iron works, owned by Percival Roberts, a cousin of the PRR president, had no choice but to use the services of the Reading Railroad, which passed by the factory as it ran along the river. The PRR branch was built solely to deliver coal and raw materials, and move out finished products for the Pencoyd Iron Works.

This section of the trail was constructed on a portion of the land that was used for the switchback between the Manayunk Bridge and the trail's terminus at Rock Hill Road and Belmont Avenue. A chunk of the Switchback Bridge was found on the trail during a 2009 clean up - an unusual find since all of the salvaged metal was thought to have been sold for reuse.



This image depicts the Switchback Bridge from the view of the entrance to the 'S' Bridge. You can see how the tracks curved underneath the 'S' Bridge. They ran along the Lower Merion waterfront for about a half a mile.

These signs were made possible by Lower Merion Township.



2000 Map courtesy of the Lehigh Historical Society. Photo of train using Switchback Bridge purchased from the Library Company of Philadelphia on behalf of the American Pioneer Underwriters, Inc. All other content is courtesy of the Lower Merion Historical Society.

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail Interpretive Signage Project is being supported in part by a Preserve America grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.



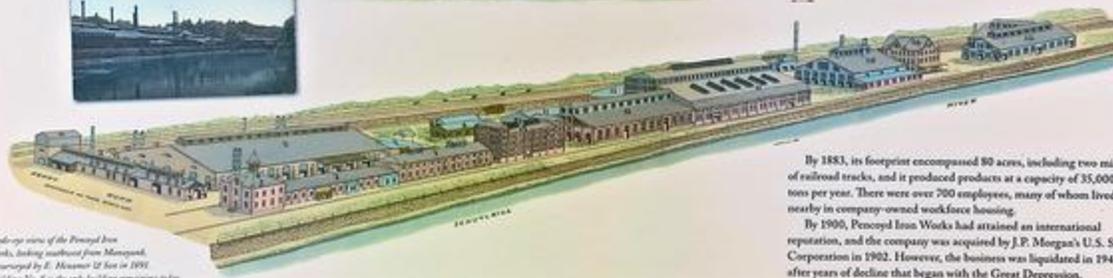
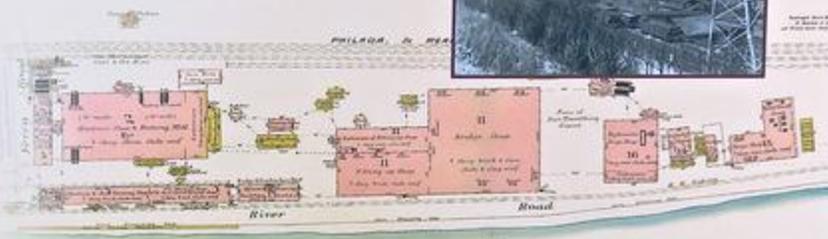
CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL
PENCOYD IRON WORKS

The Pencoyd Iron Works was founded by Algernon and Percival Roberts, heirs of John Roberts, one of the first Welsh settlers of this region in 1683. John Roberts had named his land "Pencoyd," meaning "head of the woods" in Welsh.

In 1852, the brothers began the construction of a specialty foundry, manufacturing railroad axles along the banks of the Schuylkill River. In 1859, the business expanded to include the manufacture of iron and steel bridges. It soon became a leading bridge producer, constructing hundreds of bridges across North America, including the Pencoyd Bridge, and the famous Upper Steel Arch Bridge across Niagara Falls.



Birds-eye view of the Pencoyd Iron Works, looking southeast from Manayunk, as surveyed by E. Hissauer 12 Jan in 1901. Building No. 8 is the only building remaining today.



By 1883, its footprint encompassed 80 acres, including two miles of railroad tracks, and it produced products at a capacity of 35,000 tons per year. There were over 700 employees, many of whom lived nearby in company-owned workforce housing. By 1900, Pencoyd Iron Works had attained an international reputation, and the company was acquired by J.P. Morgan's U.S. Steel Corporation in 1902. However, the business was liquidated in 1944 after years of decline that began with the Great Depression.

These signs were made possible by Lower Merion Township.



Drawing and plan from Historical Photo AK42, AK43, Map Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia. All other content is courtesy of the Lower Merion Historical Society.

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail Interpretive Signage Project is being supported in part by a Preserve America grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.



CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL

SEBASTIAN A. RUDOLPH'S ASHLAND PAPER MILL

From Theodore W. Bean's *History of Montgomery County, "Manufacturing Industries"* (1884):

“These well known mills are situated on Rockhill Creek [now Gully Run], close to the River road, and are better known by the name of Rudolph's Mills. In old times they were used for the making of dye-woods, and were known as Ashland Dye-Wood Mills. In 1860 they came into the hands of the present proprietor, A.S. Rudolph, who gradually increased the capacity of the mills until they have assumed their present proportions. Their speciality is newspaper material, of which they manufacture one hundred and eighty-five tons a month.”

Paper of every description was made here from straw, wood, recycled cotton rags, and waste paper. The mill supplied paper to Philadelphia's newspapers. The Superintendent and the hands lived in dwellings on the premises, known as Rudolph's Row. Remains of the mill and workers' housing were destroyed by the construction of the Schuylkill Expressway.

Left: Rudolph's Row, as seen in the 20th century. On the far left, view of the millhouse on view inside the Rockhill Bridge in 1912. The other view shows the mill in front of the Manayunk Bridge, with the Green Lane Bridge at left. The Schuylkill Expressway was seen in the built on the land occupied by the housing.

These signs were made possible by Lower Merion Township.

Drawing and plan from *Historic Plans 4256, 2017*. Map Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia. All other content courtesy of The Lower Merion Historical Society.

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail Interpretive Signage Project is being supported in part by a Preserve America grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL

BENJAMIN SCHOFIELD, JR.'S WEST MANAYUNK WOOLEN MILLS

West Manayunk Woolen Mills, owned Schofield Mason & Company, began operations in the 1850s. Most of the employees consisted of child laborers. During the Civil War, the owners made "stanning profin" by supplying the Union Army with woolen blankets. Census data for 1900 and 1910 show wool production continuing into the 20th century.

The property was later sold and was occupied by the Cement Burial Case Company until sometime after 1981. The burial vault business supplied the two important nearby regional cemeteries, Westminster and West Laurel Hill.

From Theodore W. Bean's *History of Montgomery County, "Manufacturing Industries"* (1884):

“These mills are close to the River road in West Manayunk. The main building is two hundred and fifty by sixty feet, four stories in height. About ninety-two hands are employed upon worsted and woolen yarns when in full operation, producing two thousand four hundred pounds of filling per day and sixteen thousand pounds of worsted yarn per month. There is an eighty-horse-power engine and three boilers in the mill. The pay roll is two thousand four hundred dollars a month, and the plant is valued at forty thousand dollars.”

The last remaining mill buildings, at the northeast corner of Belmont Avenue and Rock Hill Road, as they appeared in early 2013. Visible from left to right are buildings number 1, 9, and 10.

These signs were made possible by Lower Merion Township.

Drawing and plan from *Historic Plans 4183, Map Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia* 2012 photo by Tony Pollock.

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail Interpretive Signage Project is being supported in part by a Preserve America grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

Let Horse Thieves Beware!



On November 23rd The Lower Merion Society for the Detection and Prosecution of Horse Thieves and Recovery of Stolen Horses held their 195th Annual Meeting and Banquet at the Cynwyd Club. Founded in 1818, the purpose of this

society is to honor man's greatest servant – THE HORSE, and to insure and to protect the horses of the membership from the nefarious enemies of society known as *HORSE THIEVES*.

The Lower Merion Historical Society actively supports this ancient and honorable society. In 2018, the Lower Merion Horse Company will be celebrating the 200th anniversary of its founding with a gala party and local events. Anyone interested in more information or joining this society, mail your request to: The *Lower Merion Horse Company*, c/o Corresponding Secretary, 351 W. Signal Hill Road, King of Prussia, PA 19406.

Amtrak Keystone Train 644 Makes a Visit to the Cynwyd Train Station

Dateline Thursday, November 14th at 12:04pm, an Amtrak locomotive with 5 passenger cars passed thru SEPTA's *Cynwyd Train Station* and came to a stop at the railroad bumper that is located at the end of the track. The train remained parked there for more than an hour while the 130 dismayed passengers dis-embarked and waited on the platform. They realized that they were not at *Penn Station* and everyone became upset to learn that their train had come to a stop at a local commuter station called *Cynwyd*.



There is a lot more to tell of what happen next...from Amtrak's, SEPTA's and the passenger's point of view. The cause of this unfortunate mishap is [still under investigation](#) to how the train got lost and found its way onto the *Cynwyd Line*.

Building Photographs- Preserving Today for Tomorrow's History

This photograph from [our Buildings web](#) is part of our ever-changing history.



Cynwyd Pa. Bala Avenue and Pembroke Road.



2497 Cynwyd Pa. East Side.

In 1913 a Pennsylvania Railroad photographer took pictures of attractive single houses in Lower Merion for in a booklet that promoted living on the Main Line and commuting on the Railroad. Prints of the original photos were saved in a common black-paper scrapbook, with descriptions in white ink. Two years after the railroad's bankruptcy in 1970, many of the PRR's records were auctioned; the scrapbook became part of the *Penn Central Railroad Corporation Collection* in the Pennsylvania State Archives.

In 2012 I stopped at Harrisburg to see the scrapbook/album and took photographs of the PRR photographs with their one-line titles. Photographing them was difficult in the too-bright room with fluorescent lights overhead and bright windows on one side. I had to

prop up the photographs at an angle to avoid the glaring reflections on the prints.

Then came the problem of identifying the prints. They had titles which weren't always correct – The buildings were sometimes placed on the wrong street, which might be misspelled – Bryn Maur, Cynwyde among them. With help from Ted Goldsborough and Bob McCormick almost all of the prints used in the PRR's booklet could be matched to the present buildings.

The buildings are little changed in a century, but their surroundings are vastly different. See how the areas have changed in the 100 years since they were built, in these photographs of old and new on [Bala Ave](#) and [Colwyn Lane](#)

-Max Buten

Happy Holidays!



The Historical Society's Executive Board of Directors would like to wish you a joyful and happy holiday season!

Favorite Links

- [Lower Merion Historical Society's Website](#)
 - [Membership Information](#)
 - [Buy Our Books](#)

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE LOWER MERION HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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.