



*January 2015*



***2015 Will be a Good Year for Historic Preservation***



A recent joint meeting of Lower Merion Township's *Historical Commission* and *Historic Architectural Review Board*, attended by several members of the Board of Commissioners, reached a consensus that much more must be done to protect the Township's many historically significant structures. As an initial but important step, there was agreement that we should do what is needed to properly identify the many resources – likely hundreds – that are not currently listed as Class 1 or 2 properties on our *Historic Resource Inventory*.

In order to move forward on this initiative, the Board of Commissioners voted to include **\$60,000** in the 2015 Township budget to hire an historic preservation consultant to help with this work. The *Historic Commission* will use the information provided by the consultant to make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners on which properties to add to our inventory.

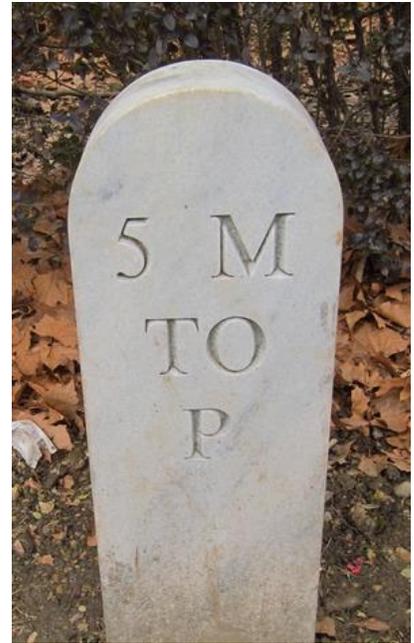
Additional preservation initiatives, including a township-wide historic preservation trust or other mechanism to protect historic resources that are at immediate risk of being lost, will be pursued in 2015.

## ***The Milestones: Ancient Landmarks***

If you are not familiar with these landmarks, be sure to read [this background story](#) about the location and purpose of Lower Merion's fine collection of historic objects.

In 2010, *Milestone #5*...identified as **5 M to P**...located on Lancaster Avenue near St. Charles Seminary in Wynnewood, was severely damaged when a car along this busy roadway hit it. It could not be repaired and the Historical Society, in partnership with West Laurel Hill Cemetery, took on the task of manufacturing a new *Milestone* and installing it in its proper location.

Last year the replacement *Milestone #5* was hit and knocked over by an out of control car that was traveling along Lancaster Avenue. Again to the rescue, Historical Society volunteers, with help by Christian Busch and Bruce Gillespie of the Township's *Historical Commission*, developed a plan to re-install and re-position the marker. The Township also volunteered their staff to aid in the project. With support from Bob Duncan, Don Cannon, Pete Mancini and a highway road crew, they replanted the *Milestone*.



We again have a complete set of 14 *Milestones* in place and on display throughout the Township. This is a fine example of collaborative teamwork between various public and private organizations.

## ***Revitalization of the 1917 Manayunk Bridge***



This \$4.12-million project is designed to extend the *Cynwyd Heritage Trail* in Lower Merion to the *Schuylkill River Trail* network in Philadelphia, via the Manayunk Bridge. Major partners in the project include PennDOT, SEPTA, the City of Philadelphia, Montgomery County, the Manayunk Development Corp., the William Penn Foundation, the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, and the Township of Lower Merion.

[When completed later this year](#), this historic landmark will be the pride of the region. At the groundbreaking ceremony on November 5<sup>th</sup> Councilman Curtis Jones Jr. said that the Manayunk Bridge is a collaborative project that will bring our communities together; namely, it is better to build bridges than to erect walls.

## ***The William Penn Inn - Some Good News***

There was an application before the Lower Merion Township Board of Commissioners to demolish this existing historic building and replace it with five new, single-family houses. [The William Penn Inn](#) contributes to the character of Lower Merion in many ways. During these past months, the preservation community has come together and lobbied to save this 18<sup>th</sup> century landmark building.

We are glad to report that the developer is reviewing their plans and has temporarily **TABLED** the project. We are optimistic that the building will be not be demolished. Stay tuned for further updates.



## ***Next On Our Radar - The Knox Farmhouse***



We are on the alert that this property may face an uncertain future.

[The Knox Farmhouse](#) is located at 718 Sussex Road in Wynnewood and has evolved from a large working farm into a retirement community called the *Charles C. Knox Home*. The property retains many original outbuildings in an open landscape.

Josiah Knox, son of an Irish immigrant, built the original farmhouse in 1856 which, The property also includes a two-and-a-half story c.1782 clapboard and stucco tenant house; a one-story, stucco-over-stone

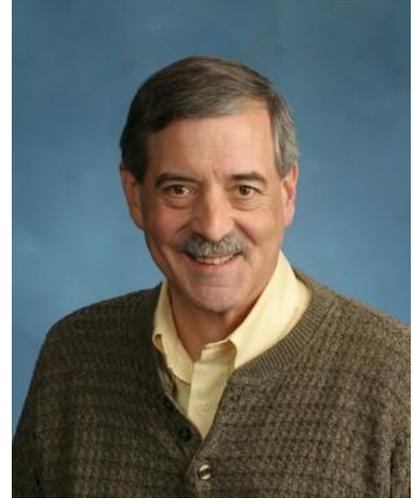
1828 carriage house; and a one-story, stucco-over-stone outbuilding, with an eighteenth-century springhouse located down the block. The *Knox Home* property is significant as one of the few nineteenth-century complexes that survived the changes brought by the coming of the railroad and the suburbanization of the Township.

The *Knox Home* has closed and the new owner has plans to add new townhouses by sub-dividing the property. Our hope is that the main house, (a Class 1 Historic Resource) will remain in tact. Stay tuned for further updates.

## ***In Memoriam - Stephen P. Selinger***

The Society lost a dear friend and neighbor on Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup>. For many years Steve was the *Corresponding Secretary* for the Historical Society, worked on our marketing plans and our various fund raising activities. He was a member of our research team with a particular interest in the *Pennsylvania Railroad*, the *Cynwyd Heritage Trail*, and the revitalization of the *Cynwyd Train Station*.

Steve would also visit the Historical Society's library every Saturday afternoon and chat with us, almost like visiting the country store and sitting around the potbelly stove. We enjoyed sharing stories related to history and his companionship. He was respectful and interested in all people. He was a *private* person with a wide circle of friends. In his quiet way, he would connect resources so they could help one another.



His Memorial Service was held on Saturday, December 27<sup>th</sup> at the *Holy Trinity Lutheran Church* in Narberth. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the *Friends of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail*, P.O. Box 695, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004.

## ***Building Photographs - Preserving Today For Tomorrow's History***

The January photo from our [Buildings web](#) shows a part of our changing history with landlord-tenant problems.



[The Bala \(Egyptian\) Theater](#) on Bala Avenue in Bala Cynwyd is again threatened.

Both the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) and the [Main Line Times](#) have reported on an ongoing legal dispute between the owner and the tenant that has resulted in the closing of the theater (a Class 2 *Historic Resource*).

[Cinema Treasures](#) has the history of the theater from its opening in 1926 to the December closing.

From [The Library of Congress](#) "The Egyptian Theatre, currently known as the Bala Theatre, is an excellent example of the Egyptian Revival style, a rare form of exotic revival popular during the mid-19th through early 20th centuries."

Howard Haas, a movie aficionado who grew up around the Bala, said the building was also important to the regional cinema scene. "It is the very last movie palace in the Delaware Valley that is in the Egyptian or any other very exotic style," he said. "It has a balcony and pretty major seating capacity. Even in the last decade, it has served as a major art house theater for openings in Montgomery County."

The Lower Merion Conservancy site has [this brief](#): "A goal to preserve the historic character of this street depends a great deal on this building. A vibrant and well-maintained building of this scale adds significant value. There is concern in the community about ongoing maintenance of the building, as disharmonious alterations and patchwork repairs have been observed."

Will Lower Merion and Narberth be down to one movie theater?

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- [Lower Merion Historical Society's Website](#)
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### ***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.

