



# Milestones

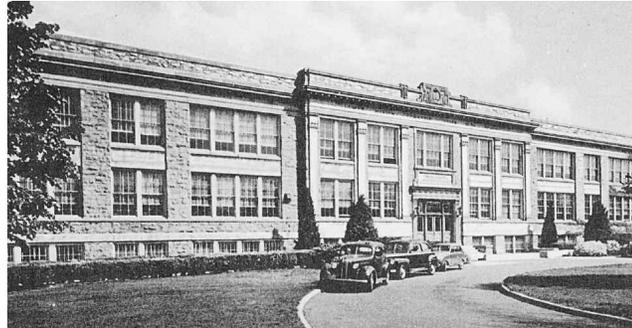
Preserving Our Past for the Future

SPRING 2009

## Message From The President:

### Celebrating Our Diamond Jubilee

On the evening of October 24, 1949, about 90 community residents showed up for the first meeting of the Historical Society - about three times more than were expected. Most participants had to stand through the proceedings. Overseeing the inception of the organization were three prominent figures in Lower Merion: the Society's founding president, John Nugent of Philadelphia's Evening Bulletin; Douglas MacFarlan, a well-known physician; and Edward H. Snow, the "forbidding" principal of Admore Junior High School. Together, they molded the Society around its central purpose, which was to gather, preserve, and disseminate information concerning the history of the lower Main Line. Their vision was to fill the gaps left by other community organizations and the local school system, which did not teach the stories of their surroundings; the heritage left at their doorsteps.



The first meeting of the Historical Society was held at the Ardmore Junior High School in 1949.

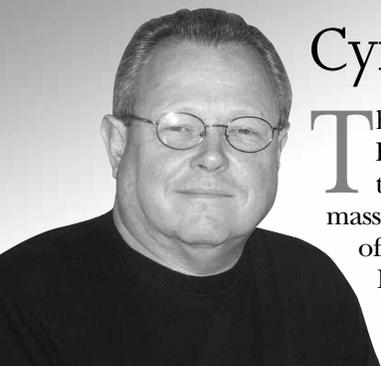
Sixty years later, it would serve us well to examine our own history and the foundations upon which our Society was built, how much we have changed, and how we have endured the test of time. We have not only stayed true to our mission, but have also expanded it to include stewardship, outreach, and active conservation - in some cases, even renovation - of local landmarks and open spaces. After moving into our most-appropriate permanent home of the Academy, the first school in the region, we have made sure to open our doors as often as possible to invite the public to use our space, our collection, and our volunteers. We have changed to continually meet the

needs of our changing community: we no longer constitute an exclusive club of lecturers and librarians, but rather have become eclectic collaborators who work on everything from uncovering the ruins of our industrial past to promoting smart growth initiatives.

It is in this spirit of inclusiveness that we are celebrating our Diamond Jubilee.

In closing, I leave you with a quote from the editorial page of the Main Line Times, submitted by an observer of that historic first meeting: "At the launching of the brand new Lower Merion Historical Society last week, a number of excellent reasons were advanced for the establishment of such an organization. Each of these reasons, however, rested on one unquestioned assumption: that history has value... But we rarely ask ourselves why... We are seldom shown that we inherit the past... that even those among us who have never seen a history book live in the grip of, and under the weight of a vast, accumulated, endlessly transmitted tradition. We are not sufficiently conscious of the ocean of oldness - and the relatively thin tributary of newness - in our culture and our daily lives. If and when we become [so], we will come to realize that it is only by knowing the past that we can understand the present and mold the future, and thus make the most of our own brief histories."

I couldn't have said it better myself.



### Cynwyd Station Stabilization Project Update

The Society lost a dear friend and neighbor last December: Jim Easter, general contractor for the Stabilization Project, died suddenly of a massive heart attack in his apartment on the night of December 5th. Now three months later, the Historical Society, in conjunction with Broadlands Financial Group, are preparing to res-

urrect the project with the help of a new general contractor. Once the preparations are in place, it is estimated that it will only take another 120 days to complete. The Station now represents part of Jim's legacy, as it could not have been done so well or with such care without him. ✪

# The Cynwyd Heritage Trail

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail is a proposed two-mile recreational, multi-use paved trail running from Cynwyd Station to the Manayunk Bridge along the unused portion of SEPTA's R-6 tracks.

On Wednesday, February 18th, the Lower Merion Township Board of Commissioners voted to receive the Master Plan for the Cynwyd Heritage Trail and to request that Montgomery County approve the use of a significant portion of the Township's Open Space funds

for use in the construction of the Trail. Thus we are all able to take the next steps in the Trail's development – namely, public comment meetings on what should be incorporated in the Trail's design, and the volunteer "clean and green days." A draft copy of the *Cynwyd Heritage Trail Master Plan* is available on the Lower Merion Township website at <http://lowermerion.org/Index.aspx?page=657>.



Group picture from the February 28th walk with group leaders Christopher Leswing of Lower Merion Township and Christopher Kingsley of the Friends of the Ivy Ridge Trail.

## Trail Workdays for 2009 are:

- April 18th and 19th
- May 16th and 17th
- June 20th and 21st
- September 12th and 13th
- October 17th and 18th
- November 14th and 15th
- December 5th and 6th

Many thanks to those of you who came out to show support for the Trail! ✪

## Upcoming Events

### Annual Meeting and Election

Sunday, April 19, 2009 from 12:00 noon to 1:00pm at the Lower Merion Academy

This year's Annual Meeting will be **BEFORE** the *Open House*. The two main items on the Annual Meeting agenda are the *Report from the President and the Election of Officers and Directors*. Afterwards we will join the public for our Open House celebrating our 60th Anniversary from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

Report from the Nominating Committee, Ted Goldsborough, Chairperson.

The Committee nominates the following slate of Officers for a two-year term:

**President:** Gerald A. Francis  
**Vice President:** Ross L. Mitchell  
**Treasurer:** John B. Hagner  
**Corresponding Secretary:** Stephen P. Selinger  
**Recording Secretary:** Barbara McElroy

*Under the Society's By-Laws, additional nominations shall be accepted from the floor during the Annual Meeting (Article IV, 3)*

The Committee nominates the following slate of Directors for a three-year term, to constitute the class of Class of 2012:

Dennis Montagna, Joanne Murray, Anna O'Hora

**Continuing Directors:**

**Class of 2011:** Andrew Amsterdam, Denise H. Francis, Bruce D. Reed

**Class of 2010:** Max Buten, Alison Graham, Leon Levine

## Lecture on Rediscovering Vine Creek & Gully Run

Tuesday, April 28th, 2009 at 7:00pm at The Lower Merion Academy, First Floor Meeting Room, Admission is Free!

These two country streams supplied water for the farm, power for the mill, steam for the factory, an obstacle for the railroad and the expressway, a sewer for the neighborhood, and a scenic attraction for the Cynwyd Heritage Trail.

Join us and discover Vine Creek and Gully Run were shaped by the development of Lower Merion Town-

ship and changed as the neighborhoods, mills and railroads changed. See where ponds powered mills and then didn't – railroad stations were and then weren't – the major steel mill that was and wasn't – all along the Cynwyd Heritage Trail.

With current and historic photos, presented by Max Buten and Steve Selinger. A lively Q&A will follow along with light refreshments and a display of memorabilia. ✪



## A Sampler of Recent Events



### Friends of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail

The newly-formed Friends of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail are hitting the ground running, so to speak, with the election of their Board Officers, the development of a website, and the coordination of volunteers and refreshments for Township clean and green days. Pictured, left to right, are Commissioner George T. Manos of Ward 9 (Bala Cynwyd), President Nancy Winkler, Treasurer Drew Ries, and Secretary Kathy Burns. Absent is Vice President Lee Rudy.

The Friends invite all who are interested to get involved and become members, so that we can all help plan and build the Trail together. Stop by our Open House April 19th for more information or to sign up. ✪

### Society to Sponsor a New Cub Scout Pack

The Lower Merion Historical Society is partnering with Leaders of Lower Merion Boy Scouts and parents to sponsor a new Cub Scout Pack for the Bala Cynwyd and surrounding communities served by The Cynwyd and Belmont Hills Elementary Schools. Years ago there was a large Cub Scout Pack sponsored by The Cynwyd HSA at the Cynwyd Elementary School. It is The Historical Society's intention to help Scout Leaders and families revive Cub Scout Pack 581. To achieve that, we are also partnering with Boy Scout Troop Bala One, the Oldest Boy Scout Troop in America. Please stop by the Troop Bala One and Cub Pack 581 table at the Open House April 19th for more information or to sign up. ✪



### Township Hallway Murals

Commissioner Brian A. Gordon of Ward 12 (Merion) admires the new murals that adorn the second floor of the Township Administration Building after the short unveiling ceremony on January 21st. Commissioned by the Township, the Historical Society compiled the 70 images for the murals in celebration of Lower Merion's transition from rural farmlands to a first-class suburban Township - the first in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The images illustrate various modes of transportation, businesses and industrial complexes, educational institutions, Township services, recreational interests and a few of our "Main Line castles". Companion booklets, with short descriptions of each image, are also available on the second floor. ✪



### An Historical Tribute to the Philadelphia & Columbia Railway

On Sunday, March 22nd the Merion Friends Meeting in conjunction with the Historical Society dedicated a display of original "Sleeper" Stones on the grounds of historic Merion Meeting. There was a brief talk about the history of the railroad, its role in the growth of Lower Merion Township, the Abolition Movement, the railroad as part of the Underground Rail Road and the involvement of Quaker residents. ✪

### The Green Tree Returns

Once the construction of the Academy was completed (c.1812), the Lower Merion Academy Trustees purchased a fire insurance policy for their public building. For almost 150 years, the Lower Merion Academy was insured by the Mutual Assurance Company of Philadelphia, commonly called *The Green Tree*. According to oral history, the Academy was the 12th policy written by the Mutual Assurance Company. To alert the community and the local fire brigade of this protection, a *Green Tree* plaque was installed on the property. To commemorate this, a replica of the plaque was recently mounted where it had been for decades, centered above the porch roof. The Historical Society is proud to have this important symbol back on the Academy. ✪



### Academy Attic Hearth Uncovered

In January, school district workmen, who were repairing the chimney area in the Academy attic, removed the plaster at the base of the brick chimney and to their surprise, discovered an original, intact fireplace! Work stopped and the School District reported this discovery to the Historical Society. From the size and shape of the fireplace, it was ascertained that it was used for lighting a small fire to get a draft started in the much larger basement kitchen fireplace. Daniel Russoniello, of Archer & Buchanan Architecture, generously supplied specifications for a historically accurate restoration, whereby the Society will leave a section of the brickwork and stone exposed for educational purposes. ✪



# The Lower Merion Historical Society

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

## LowerMerionHistory.org

### 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/individuals have made a donation to the Society to help enlarge our *Special Library Collection* of books, manuscripts, photographs and maps:

- |  |                       |   |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| Nolan N. Atkinson, Jr.                                   | David H. Fenton       | Elizabeth D. Steelman                                 |
| Sue Althouse   | Edward Frazer, Jr.    | Richard A. Tilghman                                   |
| Ann Bagley   | Gladwyne Free Library | Township of Lower Merion/<br>Planning Department      |
| Louis Bernstein  | Robert Grumbacher     | Township of Lower Merion/<br>Public Information Dept. |
| Boy Scout Troop Bala One                                 | John Maki             | Frank Weer  |
| Bringinghurst Funeral Home/<br>West Laurel Hill Cemetery | Phyllis Matthew       | Alan Wood   |
| Bryn Mawr Baptist Church                                 | David J. Monteith     | Mary Wood   |
| Joseph Delavan   | Betsy Mullen          |   |
|  | Daniel R. Russoniello |   |



*Richard A. Tilghman, former Pennsylvania State Senator, recently donated a stick barometer. This unit was manufactured by Casartelli in Manchester, England, c1850.*

# The Lower Merion Historical Society

#### Location:

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

#### Contact:

Phone: 610-664-3216  
E-mail: LMHistory@comcast.net

#### Library Hours:

Wednesday evenings, 7:00 to 9:00 pm  
Saturday afternoons, 2:00 to 4:00 pm  
*Also by appointment*

#### 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

### Our Museum Gift Shop

When visiting the Lower Merion Academy, stop to see the items in our Museum Gift Shop.

<b>The First 300: The Amazing and Rich History of Lower Merion</b> (hardbound, 284 Pages, 800+ visuals)	\$44.95
<b>John Levering's Map of the Township of Lower Merion, 1851</b> (unframed 24" x 36" reproduction)	\$ 10.00
<b>Lower Merion Historical Society Bronze Paperweight</b> (3" Diameter)	\$10.00
<b>Lower Merion Academy Wooden Collectible</b> (5" x 6")	\$10.00
<b>Lower Merion Academy Note Card</b> (Hand Printed)	\$ 2.00
<b>Lower Merion Academy Print</b> (8.5" x 11" Suitable for Framing)	\$ 2.00

*Members automatically receive a 10% discount.*