



Milestones

Preserving Our Past for the Future

SEPTEMBER, 2005

Message From The President:

Quality of Life vs Tax-Ratables

The motto of our Historical Society has always been “Preserving Our Past For The Future.” In the last issue of this newsletter, I wrote “Our Heritage is at Risk”, where I encouraged everyone to work together toward the goal of preserving our cultural history and our village-like neighborhoods. Again, I feel that I have to get back on my proverbial soap box and alert you about my concerns regarding the expansion projects that are being planned in our community.

Lower Merion is a desirable place to live, work, and raise a family. It’s a living community that will continue to grow with new challenges and opportunities. It’s only natural that there will be tensions that will require debate and resolution. Since real estate is a fixed commodity, we can anticipate pressure to increase the density of residential, institutional, and commercial properties. In addition, we will need to rebuild much of our infrastructure and work to understand emerging community-based life styles.

Today’s challenge is that there are just too many (re)development projects on the drawing board. In the next 5 to 10 years, we will experience an unprecedented growth spurt and as a result could become victim to the fall-out of unintended consequences of many of these projects. One of the forces driving this stream of expansion is the desire of our local government for more tax-ratables. Our suburban community will be maxed out; our real estate built out, built up, and infilled with little remaining open space, inadequate

water drainage, and the ever increasing vehicular traffic. We do not fully understand the consequences that today’s decisions will have on our quality of life in the future.

Our officials must begin to foster trust, confidence and cooperation and give the public a direct and influential role in planning our future. All of us in the Lower Merion community must get involved and grasp onto the issues; we must voice our concerns and be listened to by our local government representatives.

You can have an informed opinion by joining your local civic association, talking with your township commissioner, sitting in on a Zoning Hearing Board meeting, and by participating in the various township Commission meetings and Commissioners’ meetings. Check out the township’s website at LowerMerion.org and their cable TV “Channel 7”. In the near future, check the “Public Access Channel” which is in development. Read your local newspapers and debate these quality of life issues with your neighbors.

Please, get informed and get involved with the challenges that we will face in the coming years. It’s that important because this decade will define the legacy that we leave for our children.

Sincerely,
Nery Francis

There...Going...Gone.



A 1950’s ranch-style house at 606 Fairview Road that was recently demolished.



Another recent phenomena are “teardowns” where good houses are purchased, torn down and replaced with a “McMansion” type structure. So far this year there have been twenty-five demolition permits

issued in the township with the record number belonging to Fairview Road in Penn Valley where there are four teardowns.

The team of Max Buten, John Powell, and Ted Goldsborough have been

going around Lower Merion and photographing these teardowns. We will have a record of these houses that once were part of the landscape of our community. ♡

Updates

Website:

LowerMerionHistory.org

Our website is an unqualified success! Over these past 3 years usage has steadily grown, and in just these past seven months (January thru July), we had over 102,800 visitors - that averages to 490 visitors per day.

Updating our website remains a priority for us; we have recently added:

- Records from our Flat File collection of more than 170 items which consist of such items as antique, atlas and road maps; pamphlets, railroad timetables and booklets; lithographs and survey documents.
- Over 8,000 Lower Merion High School Alumni records from 1896 to 1948.
- Hundreds of Vertical File updates.
- The full text of "Glimpses of Lower Merion" by Charles R. Barker. This authoritative 20 page work was written and published in 1958.
- Currently we are working on loading the full text of our book, "The First 300: The Amazing and Rich History of Lower Merion." This project will be completed later this year. ✪

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 and we visited the six elementary schools. This year's volunteers who participated in the 2005 Intergenerational Interview program were:

Betty Cannon	Lynne G. Kauffman
Rosemarie Cannon	Charlie Lentz
Marlene Dubin	Joan Lentz
Barbara Earle	Barbara McElroy
Al Gebhart	William O'Brien
Fran Gebhart	Joan C. Roberts
Mary Giersch	Dick Schneider
Ted Goldsborough	Peg Schneider
Alison B. Graham	W. Robert Swartz
Emmy Hartley	Charles C. Timm
Christine Jones	Arthur Ziemer
Dick Jones	Jill Ziemer
Bonnie Kauffman	Diane Zullinger

Collection Highlights

We're proud of our heritage and are fortunate to have some of the primary source material that relates to Lower Merion. I would like to showcase two such items from our archive collection.

John Roberts' Deed

Included in the collection of the Roberts' family papers was the original vellum indenture belonging to John Roberts from the parish of Llangian in the County of Carnarvon, Wales, for his 150 acres in "Merion" dated July 30, 1682, recorded on April 24, 1684, and witnessed by Rowland Jones, Ellis Morris, David Evan, Owen Lewis, Sr. and Jr., Evan Harry and Rowland Ellis. From this original parcel of land grew "Pencoyd Farms" which was the first foothold of what is today the Township of Lower Merion.

Ann Bagley, Mary Keim and Mary Wood have been carefully transcribing this document. When they have completed this task, the indenture will be safely returned to our Archive Room for conservation.

The Quaker "Rules of Discipline"

In our collection, we have a hand-written draft copy of the not-yet-published

1719 edition of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Rules of Discipline. These "rules" were "ad- vices" for the behavior of American Quakers and were a compilation of guidelines covering every aspect of Quaker life—from individual "conduct and conversation" to proper management of meetings. The guidelines were periodically issued from 1682 through 1763 by the highest institutional authority of American Quakerism, the "Yearly Meeting." Its purpose was to establish "Decency and comely Order in all our Meetings of Worship & Business, as well as orderly Walking, Honesty, & Plainness in the particular Members of our Society."

During this past year Alan Tarver and Peggy Morscheck have transcribed the more than 7,200 word document and are working with historians at Magill Library at Haverford College to fully understand the importance of this one-of-a-kind document. ✪



A sample page prescribing the form of a Certificate of Marriage.

We Gratefully Accept Donations

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

Frank P. K. Barker, Jr.
Leonard R. Bezar
Daughters of the American
Revolution, Merion - Dr. Rush
DAR 2-033-PA Chapter
Mrs. David R. Davis
Mrs. Mary P. Giersch

Jane Hill Golas
Lower Merion Conservancy
Mrs. Julia Nash Murphy
David R. Oser
Pat Pierson
Albert F. W. Vick, Jr.

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 2006
Lynne G. Kauffman
Jack Maguire
Dennis Montagna
Class of 2007
Alison Graham
S. Hamill Horne
Joan Roberts
Class of 2008
Andrew Amsterdam
Denise H. Francis
Bruce D. Reed

Upcoming Events for Fall 2005

Take a Tour of the Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center

Sunday, October 9, 2005, starts at 1:00pm

Members: \$10 / Non-Members: \$20 per person

Park your car at the Lower Merion Academy and board a Fairmount Park Trolley that will take us down through Fairmount Park to the Fairmount Water Works Inter-

A 1910 view of the Fairmount Park Water Works.



pretive Center on the Schuylkill River. Denise Francis and Ann Bagley, both PMA Park House Guides, will point out important sites in Fairmount Park. We will then have a private tour of the Water Works (including a 20 minute movie of its history) then we'll circle through another part of Fairmount Park, heading for home, passing some of the finest views and outdoor art in the United States. Back to the Academy by 4:00pm for light refreshments and conversation.

Due to seating on the trolley, space is limited to 30 people.

Mail your reservation(s) and payment no later than Monday, October 3rd.

Check should be payable to "The Lower Merion Historical Society."

For more information about the Water Works, check out their website at FairmountWaterWorks.org

Past Times Present Thursday, November 3, 2005 at 7:45pm.

Free Admission!

John and Jan Haigis are a husband and wife team of singer/songwriter/historians who bring history to life through their songs and stories. Known as "Past Times Present," they have been performing together for more than 20 years for folks of all ages at schools, historic sites, libraries, retirement and nursing facilities, as well as weddings and private parties.

Whether singing a cappella or accompanied by John on hammer dulcimer, mountain dulcimer, flute, or limberjack, the couple's performances are always interactive. They encour-

age the audience to sing along with them to familiar songs, and even to learn the choruses to a few new ones. Their performance will concentrate on 18th and 19th century popular music, with a few of their original songs from and about those periods added to the mix.

Followed by light refreshments.

Location: Waverly Heights

Main Meeting Room • 1400 Waverly Road • Gladwyne, PA 19035



Our hosts Jan and John Haigis

Public Access Cable Television

Part of our mission is the education of the community and how our history plays an important part in the quality of life for the community. To support this objective, we published our book "The First 300: The Amazing and Rich History of Lower Merion," and launched our website LowerMerionHistory.org. The expansion of these efforts into public access television is the next logical step and is in keeping with our strategic plan.

At our June Executive Board meeting, our guest speaker was Irene McNeil of Wynnewood, who spoke to us about a Public Access Cable Television channel for the Township of Lower Merion and the Borough of Narberth. Irene informed us about the Lower Merion Township/Comcast Franchise Agreement and the 3 PEG Channels: P as in Public Access and used by the community, E as in Educational and used by the School District (Channel 6), and G as in Government and used by the Township (Channel 7). Currently, Lower Merion uses only two of the three channels that are offered by this

Franchise Agreement.

To "turn on" the Public Access channel, the next step is to draft a business plan and create a non-profit entity with a community-based Board of Directors who will manage and recruit programming, financing and volunteers. Irene believes that, by using models of other Public Access Channels throughout the country, the Township and the Borough can create community television programming that is representative of our own needs. She underscored the importance for the community to take the lead in its own Public Access Cable Channel and make it user-friendly and open to everyone. The Historical Society plans to take an active role in this initiative and recommends that our membership advocate its creation.

For more information, you can visit LowerMerionPATV.org or call Irene McNeil at (610) 642-0499. ☘





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 9, 2005

Trolley and Fairmount Water Works Tour

Thursday, November 3, 2005

“Past Times Present” Concert

March 2006

Treasures of Fairmount Park - Art and Architecture in the Park

April 2006

Banquet and Annual Meeting at the “New” Tavern Restaurant (*members only*)

May 2006

Thomas Massey House “Colonial” Dinner

The Lower Merion Historical Society

Location:

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

Contact:

Phone and Fax: 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

Gift Shop

When visiting the Lower Merion Academy, be sure to see the items on sale in our Gift Shop.

The First 300: The Amazing and Rich History of Lower Merion (hardbound, 284 Pages, 800+ visuals)	\$42.00
Lower Merion Historical Society Bronze Paperweight (3” Diameter)	\$15.00
Lower Merion Academy Wooden Collectible (5” x 6”)	\$20.00
Lower Merion Academy Note Cards (5.5” x 4.25”, 10 per pack)	\$ 5.00
Lower Merion Academy Print (8.5” x 11” Suitable for Framing)	\$ 5.00
John Levering’s Map of the Township of Lower Merion, 1851 (unframed 23” x 29” reproduction)	\$ 5.00

Members automatically receive a 10% discount. • All prices include PA Sales Tax