



Milestones

Preserving Our Past for the Future

FALL, 2008

Message From The President:

Uncovering Our Lost Heritage

In recent months, our research team of Andy Amsterdam, Max Buten, Jim Easter, Ted Goldsborough, Leon Levine and Steve Selinger have been out and about doing historical research on the Pennsylvania Railroad's Schuylkill Valley Division, the Schuylkill Navigation Canals, and the industrial development along the Schuylkill River in the West Manayunk area. They explored along the Cynwyd Trail and the banks along the Schuylkill River where they did field explorations, photographed the landscape and collected valuable artifacts. Then they broadened their scope of research conducting many personal interviews, delved into private collections and collected source material from the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and other local archives. Finally, they traveled to the State Archives in Harrisburg, the Library of Congress in Washing-

Research Source Materials



ton D.C., and the National Archives in College Park Maryland. Because of their efforts, this group of volunteers has enhanced our knowledge of this local region.

See the results of their research and hear the story about the lost heritage they have uncovered at our October 15th Lecture. For details, refer to page 3 under *Upcoming Events*.

The Historical Society has a full agenda for the fall season, and we are already planning for next year's programs when we will have the opportunity to celebrate our 60th Anniversary of serving the Lower Merion and Narberth communities.

The Cynwyd Train Station - A Progress Report

Over the summer, the Historical Society received the necessary approvals from the Township's Historical Commission and the Zoning Hearing Board that has allowed us to proceed with re-construction.

We are proud to report that Phase One stabilization work is progressing well. Due to the extensive fire, termite and water damage, we have been faced with many challenges and surprises. The foundation of the basement and crawlspace has been fortified with stone and mortar and is no longer in danger of collapse. This process included the replacement of the masonry and timber sills that had completely decayed. A new floor joist structure and sheathing has been installed over the entire first floor. Additionally, the timber frame portion of the train station had settled by inches due to the decayed sills and timbers at the base of the structure. Re-

placement of all decayed materials enabled the raising of the structure to be level with the main station building.

Interior framing of walls, stairs, second floor repairs and roof repairs are commencing. The leveling and raising of the shelter shed portion of the original station will also be undertaken in the near future.

We look forward to 2009 when we will have a new train station that will be the centerpiece of the Bala Cynwyd community along with its beautiful landscaping by the Beautification Committee, a revitalized township park and the new Cynwyd Trail. ★



Part of the JECB Construction team are (left to right) Jim Easter, Brian Horne, Paul Wright, Fran Winter and Jeff Dolan

Our Local History Seen Through the Lens of a Camera

W Robert Swartz, age 84, died May 31, 2008, after an extended illness. One of the greatest strengths of The Lower Merion Historical Society is its photography collection. Bob's collection is the reason we have thousands of historic images, which are now safely preserved at the Lower Merion Academy. In addition to being our photographer, he was President of the Society from 1991 to 1995.

Bob ran a well frequented - with the feel of the country store - photography shop on Lancaster Avenue in Ardmore for 48 years. *The Ardmore Camera Shop* was a respite from the hubbub of the turbulent world. When you stopped by Bob's shop, settled into one of the two or three comfortable chairs by the show room window facing Lancaster Avenue, you could visit and chitchat. During most of those years he kept his eyes open for historic photos and artifacts. Patrons from

all over the Main Line regarded Bob as an expert and chronicler of local history. His photos were used weekly in the local newspapers on their history pages. In addition to processing photos, he recorded the current events and happenings in our community through his collection of high-quality photographs.

In 2000, the Society dedicated our highly acclaimed, award-winning book, *The First 300: The Amazing and Rich History of Lower Merion* to Bob. There are more than 800 images, many of them from his collection, in this book. It is a lasting tribute to his years in the photography business.

Many people have helped The Lower Merion Historical Society in its 59 years of existence, but among the most significant was Bob Swartz. Thank you, Mr. Bob, for your wonderful sense of history, for helping us with your memory, for your kind friendship to so many less fortunate than we. You did your best and we appreciate it. ❖

An Open Letter from Judy Swartz and Family

O n behalf of the family, I want to thank all who made donations to the Society in Bob's name. The Society was a big part of his life, and one of the high points was when the book *First 300* was dedicated to him. He loved Lower Merion for all of his 84 years taking pictures for most of that time. We have turned these over to the Society where we know that they will be of value to a future generations.



The thoughts, prayers and good wishes of so many at a difficult time were a great comfort to all of us. ❖

A Sampler of Recent Events

Preserve America Designation

R ecently, the Township of Lower Merion was designated a *Preserve America Community* by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. At a press conference, on July 22nd, at the Pencoyd Iron Works Building (620 Righters Ferry Road in Bala Cynwyd), a citation was presented to the township for their his-

toric preservation efforts in the community. After the ceremony, the group visited the Cynwyd Train Station to observe a preservation project in progress. To learn more, visit PreserveAmerica.gov ❖

At the presentation of the citation are (left to right) Doug Cleland, Township Manager, Bruce D. Reed, President, Board of Commissioners, and John Bravacos, Regional Director of H.U.D.



The Way West

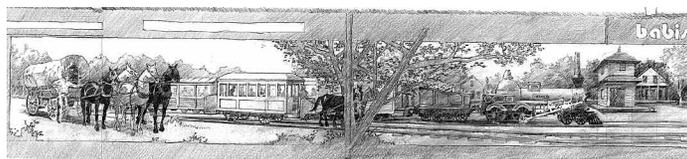
Old Lancaster and Montgomery Avenues

T his busy intersection has a history of being the transportation corridor to the west - to the new American frontier.

If you are in the area, stop by the south side of the intersection and take a look at the recently installed Wall Mural that is 70 long feet and 10 feet high. Through the assistance of State Representative Mike Gerber, the Township was awarded a grant by the Pennsylvania Department of Community

and Economic Development that funded this attractive piece of public art.

The mural was designed and painted by Bala Cynwyd resident Michael Webb.



Michael's intent was to illustrate the historic modes of transportation that have been used along this roadway corridor;

these modes include, a horse-drawn wagon and trolley, a steam locomotive from the railroad era, and the toll booth for car traffic.

An official commemoration will be scheduled this fall after the completion of the remaining enhancements. At that time the mural will be dedicated *In appreciation of the Honorable Lita Indzel Cohen for her many years of Dedicated Public Service.* ❖

Upcoming Events

Lecture on Uncovering Our Lost Heritage - The PRR Schuylkill Valley Division in Lower Merion

Wednesday, October 15th at 7:30pm

The Lower Merion Academy, First Floor Meeting Room, Admission is Free!

Jerry Francis will lead a discussion and a PowerPoint presentation (with over 60 antique images) covering the topic of the Pennsylvania Railroad's Schuylkill Valley Division freight and commuter line. Travel back in time to Bala, Cynwyd, Bar-

mouth, West Laurel Hill, Clegg's Mill, the "S" and the Manayunk bridges, and make a detour at the "switch back" into the Pencoyd Iron Works in West Manayunk. A lively Q&A will follow along with light refreshments and displays of memorabilia. ✪



Steam Locomotive in the vicinity of the Cynwyd Train Station on the outbound tracks taken by Richard Short in 1950.

Lecture on The Pennsylvania Railroad and the Suburbanization of Cynwyd and Bala

Wednesday, November 12, 2008 at 7:30pm

The Lower Merion Academy, First Floor Meeting Room, Admission is Free!

Although Bala and Cynwyd are less than six miles from Center City Philadelphia, they were late to develop as suburbs. Both became bedroom communities thanks to the construction of a Pennsylvania Railroad line to Read-

ing and anthracite country. In many ways, the two are archetypical middle-class railroad suburbs. Professor Hepp's presentation will focus on the first five decades of Bala and Cynwyd's development from the coming of the railroad in the 1880s

John H. Hepp, IV, Associate
Professor of History,
Wilkes University,
Wilkes-Barre, PA



to the electrification of the line in 1930. A lively Q&A will follow along with light refreshments and displays of memorabilia. ✪

Cynwyd Trail Clean Up

Please Note These Dates On Your Calendar:

Saturday, September 27th • Sunday, October 19th • Saturday, November 1st

Those interested in participating in the cleanup of the Cynwyd Trail should meet at the former Barmouth Train Station, located behind the Bala Eye Care and Comcast buildings at the base of Levering Mill Road in Bala Cynwyd. Sign up starts at 8:30am and the workday begins at 9:00am and will end at 1:00pm.

NOTE: On the Saturday, November 1st date, at 1:00pm, as a *Thank You* for everyone's work on clearing the Cynwyd Trail, West Laurel Hill Cemetery/Bringhurst Funeral Home will host a complementary lunch at their Conservatory Building that is located next to the Bell Tower. In addition, The Lower Merion Historical Society

will have a presentation and displays of memorabilia dealing with the old Pennsylvania Railroad's Schuylkill Valley Division.

For further information, contact Christopher Leswing, Assistant Director of Building and Planning for the Township of Lower Merion, at (610) 645-6116 or CLeswing@LowerMerion.org ✪

Capturing the Present for the Future

The slogan of our Historical Society has always been *Preserving Our Past For The Future* because most of our activities and programs have centered around our history - the first settlers in Lower Merion and Narberth, the 18th century mills, the 19th century mansions, etc.

Now, as the result of a recent update to our website, we have extended our mission into the present time. Take a look at our new homepage and check out the link [Lower Merion/Narberth Building Photographs](#).

Here we have recorded the present, with an understanding of what will be history in the future. Although we sometimes try, we can't preserve all historic and notable buildings, but we can, at the very least preserve their images.

Currently there are over 4,000 images of buildings that are

in the categories of existing, historic, under construction and teardowns.

In the future, other categories of photographs will be added to include our bridges, street signs, sculptures, dams, etc.

We have Max Buten and Ted Goldsborough to thank for this collection because they were the individuals who photographed or scanned all the images. Take a look at "Lower MerionHistory.org" ✪



1001 North Lane in Gladwyne is an example of a teardown. The original house before demolition photographed in July 2005 (on the left) and the new house that was built to replace it photographed in August 2008 (on the right).



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:

Ben Bernhart	Lower Merion/	Judy Swartz
Max Buten	Harriton Alumni	Joan C. Toenniessen
Easttown Historical	Association	Frank Weer
Commission	Kathleen Rais	Dick Weiss
Robert B. Fowler	MacMurray	West Laurel Hill
Pamela Fox	Old York Road	Cemetery/Bringhurst
Albert A. Gebhart	Historical Society	Funeral Home
Havertown Township	Reading Area	Barbara Lindsay
Historical Society	Community College	Wilson
Arthur W. Hindle, Jr.	Bruce D. Reed	Jean Wolf
Christine Jones	John R. Rosengarten	Alan Wood
Edward Davis Lewis	St. Coleman's Parish	

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

Officers and Directors Effective April 2008

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

Directors:

Class of 2009 - Dennis Montagna, Joanne Murray, Anna O’Hora
Class of 2010 - Max Buten, Alison Graham, Leon Levine
Class of 2011 - Andrew Amsterdam, Denise H. Francis,
Bruce D. Reed

The Historical Society is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization serving the community since 1949. For more than 59 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.