



July 2026

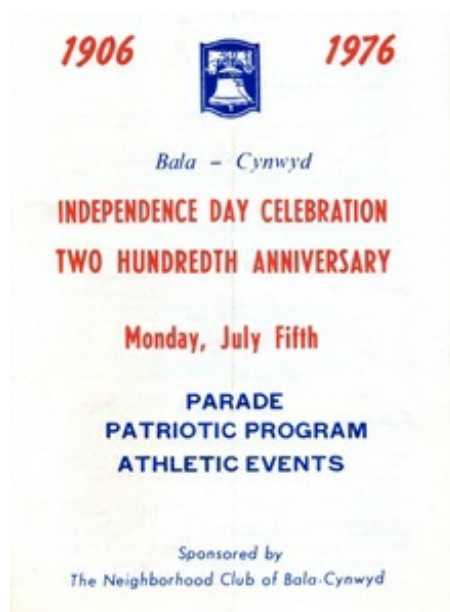
"O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave"

- Francis Scott Key

Celebrating 250 years of American self-government and independence

We were delighted to collaborate with the Township of Lower Merion on a dramatized reading of the Declaration of Independence, available [here](#). Featuring some of our community's most historic places and compelling voices, the video serves as an opportunity to reflect on the enduring principles that have shaped the United States since its founding.

While working in our archives, Administrative Coordinator Paige Bartello found a program from the 1976 Bicentennial Independence Day Celebration organized by the Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd (*below, left*) and a charming photo of the Society's entry in the parade a few years later (*below, right*).



Also in 1976, the Historical Society published "Lower Merion: A Portrait", written by Carl E. Doebley and edited by Phyllis C. Maier, specifically for the Bicentennial celebration. We have several copies in the reading room, please come visit during our remaining summer open hours on Wednesday August 5 and September 2, or email us at info@lowermerionhistory.org to arrange a research appointment with Paige on Thursdays or Fridays between 10:30am-3pm.

Showcasing a century of learning

Along with researcher Ben Soifer, facilities manager of the Caskey Torah Academy, we explored the 100 year history of a building where generations of teachers and students have built community.

In 1926, the Lower Merion School District opened the Wynnewood School, to serve the growing suburban population in the Wynnewood area, which was rapidly expanding due to new transportation links and residential development. A significant transformation occurred a half century later, when Torah Academy of Greater Philadelphia purchased the property in 1971, bringing Jewish education into a historic building that had already served many students in our community.

Our collection provided valuable insight into the building's early years, its role in the community, and the broader history surrounding education in the area. As part of the project, Ben also explored the early development of Jewish education in the Philadelphia region and its evolution into institutions

like Torah Academy that continue that tradition today.

For Ben, the project carried a personal significance. Having grown up and continuing to live in the Lower Merion community with his family, he found that researching the history of the building was especially meaningful and inspiring.



Ben Soifer's research project culminated in this centennial display, now on view at Caskey Torah Academy.

Upcoming Programs

Saturday, August 29 | 12 PM - 4 PM

Come check out our informational table at the [Historical Society of Pennsylvania's History on the Street: Back to School Edition](#)! This free street festival will feature vendors, activities, food trucks, and a live DJ.

Saturday, November 14 | 7 PM - 10 PM

Planning is underway for our upcoming Fundraiser Gala and Silent Auction at the Cynwyd Club! Tickets will go on sale September 1, so keep an eye on [our website](#) for updates. We are most grateful to our event sponsors!

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The Residence at Bala Cynwyd
Gilda Kramer & Sam Adelbaum
Linda & Simon Tasker



Consider becoming a founding sponsor! We welcome local businesses, organizations and community members to partner with us. Full details are available [here](#).

And in Case You Missed It...

For the fourth year in a row, we enjoyed engaging with the community at our informational tables at NarbEarth Day in Narberth Park, Juneteenth on the Main Line Celebration in Ardmore, and the Independence Day Celebration hosted by the Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd.



Board members represented the Historical Society at several local events, including Brad Upp, with Craig Whitney, and Samar Kahn at Juneteenth on the Main Line (left), and celebrating July 4th (right)

In May, the Society hosted local author Julia Steinberg Agnew as she shared with an engaged audience the research behind her newly published book, [Frank Miles Day: The Life, Works and Legacy of a Philadelphia Architect](#).

Day designed numerous structures in Lower Merion and surrounding communities, including designs of the outbuildings at Stoneleigh and Oakwell in Villanova. A recording of her presentation is available [here](#).



From right, Board member Jamie Singer, Julia Agnew and her daughter, and Board member Erin Betley at the book signing

Thank you to our wonderful volunteers!

Working behind the scenes, our volunteers have contributed hundreds of hours towards improving our collections and our programs!

We are grateful for the dedication of:

Simon Bank

Daniel Barrett

Catherine & Sonia Bonita

Ted Davis

Tanya Gardner

Phil Gibbon

Valerie Holliday

Megan Mazza

Sara Spector

Xandra O'Neill

Jim Talone

Lindsey Wavrek

Aurora Zecher

We have welcomed three student interns for the summer: Talyn Summers (University of Pittsburgh), Astrid Olshin (Durham University), Lindsey Reisner (Cornell University, Columbia University)

Historical Society Rewind

Many of you have noticed a re-invigorated presence for the Society on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), thanks to the efforts of Board member [Jamie Singer](#). We recently passed over 3,000 followers on Facebook thanks to her efforts!

We found that the most compelling recent story was a highly-contested local preservation effort. Read on for her work:

La Ronda, a fanciful Spanish Gothic mansion in Bryn Mawr, stood as a testament to innovation and elegance from 1929 to 2009. Originally the residence of Percival E. Foerderer, a leader in leather manufacturing, and his wife Ethel Brown, this 51-room masterpiece was the final commission of Addison Mizner, a renowned architect based in Palm Beach, Florida.

In 2009, La Ronda was sold for \$6 million, presenting an opportunity for rebirth. Although the new owner's plans to demolish and then build a new 10,000-square-foot house were met with efforts from the township's historical commission, the Lower Merion Historical Society, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation to preserve its legacy, the mansion was ultimately demolished.

The new owners, who were hidden behind a corporate front, wanted to build a new house. All the negotiations were through a lawyer. It didn't have a Class I historic designation in Lower Merion—a previous owner rejected that—so legally, there wasn't all that much that could be done.

Even an investor offered to purchase the property and move it, to no avail. La Ronda was gone forever.



Rear and front views of La Ronda

The Lower Merion Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) organization, and is 100% donor-supported, sustainable only through your generosity. Please help us preserve the unique history of our area by making a tax-deductible donation [here](#).



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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.

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