



**June 2025**

**"Warm summer sun, Shine kindly here"**

**- Mark Twain**

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### **A big anniversary is around the corner!**

In 2026, the United States will celebrate 250 years of independence, a milestone known by many terms: the Semiquincentennial, the Bisesquicentennial, the Sestercentennial, or the Quarter Millennium. We challenge you to say those words 3 times fast!

Given this opportunity to pause and reflect on our nation's past and future, the Lower Merion Historical Society is planning numerous ways to recognize how Lower Merion and Narberth have contributed to the rich story of America, in ways big and small. Stay tuned to our [redesigned website](#) for news about programs, exhibits, publications, and more!

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### **Come Visit Us**

Spend a balmy summer evening exploring the history of Lower Merion and Narberth!

All are welcome to visit during our weekly open hours, every Wednesday evening from 7-9pm. You'll find us next to Bala Cynwyd Middle School,



on the second floor of the 1812 Lower Merion Academy Building, 506 Bryn Mawr Ave in Bala Cynwyd.

You are welcome to browse, or if you have a more specific question or request, please [reach out to us](#) ahead of time so we can prepare material from our collection in advance of your visit.

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## Upcoming Programs

**Friday, June 27 | 12 PM - 1 PM**

Interested in learning more about volunteering for the Society? We invite you to [RSVP](#) for our volunteer open house and information session.

**Friday, July 4 | 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM**

Stop by our informational table at the Fourth of July Celebration organized by the Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd. More information available [here](#).



## Save the Date!

On the evening of Thursday October 28, we will host author Dr. Joe Lex, volunteer guide at Laurel Hill Cemetery and host of the "All Bones Considered" podcast, as he discusses the history of this local landmark, including stories from his new book about 52 fascinating women who are buried there.

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## And in Case You Missed It...

In April, we hosted our [Annual Meeting](#) where outgoing President Kate Jiggins and Vice President Erin Betley shared their reflections on their tenure, including progress on the Society's governance and policy, collections management, finance, and development. Incoming President Linda Tasker shared her vision for the coming years, including a renewed

membership drive, emphasizing the important role members play in sustaining our mission.

We welcomed new Board members Jim Bevlock, Lois Cronholm, and Gabriel Montoya, and bid a grateful farewell to Kim Andrews, who capably chaired our Governance Committee.



*Our board. From left, in front: new board member Jim Bevlock, Brad Upp, new board member Lois Cronholm. In back: New board member Gabriel Montoya, Dennis Montagna, new VP Scott Reynolds, new President Linda Tasker, Treasurer Craig Whitney, outgoing VP Erin Betley, Jamie Singer, Samar Khan. Not pictured: Elizabeth Laurent, Kate Jiggins.*

The proceedings included a presentation by our intern, lifelong Lower Merion resident Xandra O'Neill, who spent last summer inventorying and rehousing our flat file collection, researching the Jewish community in Lower Merion, and developing a guide to using our collections to aid in genealogical research. We look forward to publishing her work on our website soon!







In May, Board member Jim Bevlock gave a historical presentation to the sisters of Merion Mercy Convent. He shared images and information about the history of the convent grounds and surrounding neighborhood, including the [General Wayne Inn](#), [Belmont Driving Park](#), Washington's encampment in 1777, and [Merion Friends Meetinghouse](#).

To round out our recent public programs, Treasurer Craig Whitney and Board member Brad Upp hosted an informational table at the Juneteenth Block Party Celebration organized by PALM: Center for Positive Aging of Lower Merion. It was a lively community event anchored in themes of freedom and culture, along with some excellent Civil War-era fashions!



## Historical Society Rewind

Philadelphia is a city steeped in history, and in celebrations of history. In 1876, Philadelphia hosted 10 million visitors at the Centennial International Exposition/World's Fair at Fairmount Park, showcasing American industrial and cultural achievements to a global audience. Anyone who visited the Please Touch Museum in recent decades will remember its scale model of the fairgrounds and its 200 structures, a testament to the massive scope of

this event.

How did the Centennial influence Lower Merion and Narberth? One interesting connection has to do with the origins of Kindergarten in the United States.

One of the many Kindergarten exhibits at the Centennial was "The American Kindergarten", where Miss Emily Maria Coe of New York City taught her adaptation of the Froebel educational system and also trained teachers in her methods (Friedrich Froebel's system of Kindergarten or "Children's Garden" was developed in Germany in the first half of the 19th century, using "Froebel's gifts," tools he designed for creative play after decades of educating young children).

You may ask what became of the American Kindergarten exhibit that Miss Coe designed and paid for?

Here is the almost unbelievable answer: the small frame building (below, left) was purchased, dismantled, and reassembled elsewhere, as many Centennial buildings were. "The American Kindergarten" was reassembled right here in Lower Merion, adjacent to the [Lower Merion Academy](#) where it served as the Union Sunday School for almost 50 years (below, right, peeking out behind the Academy). The building was demolished almost exactly a century ago, making way for what later became the bus circle outside Bala Cynwyd Middle School.



Information about the origin of the Union Sunday School is contained in the 2002 [registration form](#) for the Lower Merion Academy-Cynwyd Elementary-Bala Cynwyd Junior High School complex listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

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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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