



Milestones

Preserving Our Past for the Future

MARCH, 2005

Message From The President:

Our Heritage is at Risk

Lower Merion has a unique and rich history, and this legacy is worth passing on to future generations. Yet, social and physical change is inevitable, and during the past 300 years we have seen many changes in the Lower Merion community. Our beginnings were that of a farming community, with the building of roads and road-side inns that would facilitate the westward expansion to the frontier. Later came the Railroad Era and the blossoming of our villages into towns. We were transformed into the "Main Line": a prosperous suburban community with elegant country houses, and various educational, religious, and cultural institutions. With the introduction of the automobile, our simple country roads evolved into highways. The most noticeable transformation was the construction of the Schuylkill Expressway, which cut through Lower Merion, thus connecting our neighborhoods to the regional highway system.

Today, we are about to embark on another set of social and physical changes. We are a suburban township connected to Philadelphia; and therefore, experiencing the pressures of urban sprawl which threatens our quality of life. If this trend continues, it could mean the loss of our neighborhoods due to the blending and in-filling of our various towns. Just pick up your local newspaper and read the headlines to see what is happening here in Lower Merion. We read about multi-modal transportation studies, the need for structured parking, and the service cut-backs to our public transporta-

tion systems. We are bewildered by the use of acronyms to identify proposed zoning overlays; for example, M.U.S.T. (Mixed Use Special Transit District), M.U.D. (Medical Use District), and T.S.A. (Transportation Services Area). In addition, the integrity of our historic districts is being challenged, the number of tear-downs are increasing, and there are numerous cases of property owners who are guilty of demolition by neglect of their historic resources.

We can still claim some of the emblems of our rich history, but our heritage is at grave risk. We, as a community, must get involved with the planning and implementation of these proposed changes that will forever re-define our neighborhoods. Good planning will ultimately result in a better community, but if all of these changes move forward without a thoughtful master plan, Lower Merion could become a victim of the fall-out of unintended consequences. All of us must strive to retain our communal identity; for what kind of benefits could we reap that would possibly outweigh our losses from the bulldozing of our heritage?

Sincerely,
Jerry Francis

Jerry Francis

We Gratefully Accept Donations

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

Sue S. Althouse
John F. Bayley, Jr.
William Carr
Daughters of the American
Revolution, Merion - Dr. Rush
DAR 2-033-PA Chapter

Friends of the Academy
Mrs. John F. Gerity
Lynne G. Kauffman
Merion Meeting - Religious
Society of Friends
Frances T. Light

Lower Merion School District -
Bala Cynwyd Middle School
Charles Timm
Township of Lower Merion
Anne H. Trotter



*The original
Ardmore Train Station*

In addition to these donations, the Society has an active acquisition program to help fill out our collection. We deal with out-of-print book dealers and also have a user profile set up on eBay to alert us to any Lower Merion items available for auction. We don't win every auc-

tion, but we have acquired some interesting materials. Our latest acquisition was:

"An original large Pennsylvania Railroad file, on the alterations to Ardmore Station and the sale of Railroad Station property to the Philadelphia Savings

Fund Society Bank. The file was from the PRR files in 1954. The file has over 25 maps, renderings, overhead photographs of the station and freight station area, Suburban Square, and the design of the new building and removal of the westbound shelters, etc."

Updates

Website:

LowerMerionHistory.org

As we outlined in our 2005 Membership Renewal Letter, our website continues to grow in popularity. During the first two months of this year, the number of visitors to the site has grown to over 450 per day! When the next update is completed, we will have indexed more than 36,500 items; namely, 2,900 library books, 15,500 burial records, 16,000 vertical file records, 1,600 photos, 340 atlas plates and maps, and 200 flat file records. In addition we have more than 2,000 pages of full text material. Currently we are actively 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 in April or May of this year. ☘

Corporate Sponsorship:

The Historical Society Welcomes Our New Corporate Sponsor

The Bringham Funeral Home at West Laurel Hill Cemetery

225 Belmont Avenue
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004
(610) 664-1591
www.forever-care.com

Lectures and Tours:

Just like our website, the first few weeks of 2005 have been active. We have been out and about spreading the news about the heritage of Lower Merion. Representing a wide range of the community, we have visited groups spanning from pre-school to adult education. Listed below are some of the groups that we have visited.

Overbrook Presbyterian Pre-School, our six elementary public schools (Belmont Hills, Cynwyd, Gladwyne, Penn Valley, Penn Wynne, and Merion), The Shipley School, Rosemont Forum at Rosemont College, St. George's Chapter 13 (The Questors of Pennsylvania), and the Jephtha Abbot Chapter of the DAR Chapter.

Grant from the Merion Community Association

For many years, our 1985 Xerox 1025 Marathon photocopier has been an important piece of office equipment. For archival purposes, we use this machine to copy all of our Vertical File materials onto acid free paper for conservation. But our 1985 photocopier machine has outlived its usefulness. Because replacement parts are no longer available, service, maintenance and repair can no longer be performed. It was time for a new copier, and we did an evaluation of our present and future needs regarding what would be the best replacement unit. In December, The Lower Merion Historical Society received a \$4,000 grant to purchase a Toshiba e-STUDIO 200L digital multi-

function copier. A big thank you goes to the Merion Community Association. ☘



Ted Goldsborough admiring our new photocopier



Following the "Forum on the Legacy of William Penn's Philosophy on Public Education" on October 16, 2004, State Senator Connie Williams presented the Society with a grant of \$20,000 from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). This award completed our successful Academy Capital Campaign. Left to Right: Ross L. Mitchell, Jerry Francis and Senator Connie Williams.



"The Architecture of West Laurel Hill Cemetery, A Walking Tour" held on November 14, 2004, led by Kimberley Andrews from Bringham Funeral Home.

Upcoming Events for Spring 2005

Banquet and Annual Meeting at the 'New' Tavern Restaurant

(Members only) on Wednesday, April 13th, 2005, 6:00 to 9:00 P.M.

This will be an opportunity for our Membership to come together and share a special meal. In addition, we'll have the election of Officers and Directors (see below), followed by a guest speaker.

This year our guest speaker will be George M. Painter III, the Vice President of "The Lower Merion Society for the Detection and Prosecution of Horse Thieves and Recovery of Stolen Horses." George will share



with us the history of this horse company that was founded here in Lower Merion in 1818.

The 'New' Tavern Restaurant is located at 261 Montgomery Avenue (at the corner of Tregaron Road) in Bala Cynwyd. Our neighbor and host for this event will be Nick Zarvalas. Invitations have been mailed to our Membership. Please RSVP your reservation to us no later than Friday April 8th. We're looking forward to a wonderful evening together with your presence. ♣

Election of Officers and Directors for 2005/2006

The Lower Merion Historical Society • 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

Betty Cannon

Recording Secretary

Barbara McElroy

The Committee nominates the following Directors for a three year term to constitute the Class of 2008

Andrew Amsterdam

Denise H. Francis

Bruce D. Reed

The Committee also nominates the following Director to fill the one year term of the Class of 2006

Lynne G. Kauffman

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

CONTINUING DIRECTORS: Class of 2006

Jack Maguire

Dennis Montagna

CONTINUING DIRECTORS: Class of 2007

Alison Graham

S. Hamill Horne

Joan Roberts

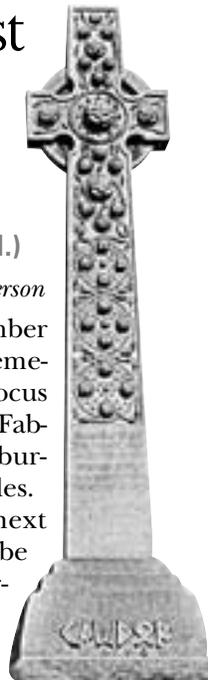
The Arboretum at West Laurel Hill Cemetery, A Walking Tour

225 Belmont Avenue in Bala Cynwyd
Sunday, May 15th, 2005 (1:00 - 3:00 P.M.)

Members: no charge / Non-Members: \$15.00 per person

This is not a repeat of the successful November 14th "The Architecture at West Laurel Hill Cemetery, A Walking Tour," rather a tour that will focus on the exceptional natural beauty of this park. Fabulous trees will be identified for us near the burial sites of Philadelphia and Main Line notables.

Our tour will begin at the Conservatory, next to the Bell Tower; our guide and hostess will be Florence R. Genser, retired Director of Haverford College Arboretum. Light refreshments will be served. ♣



Harriton House

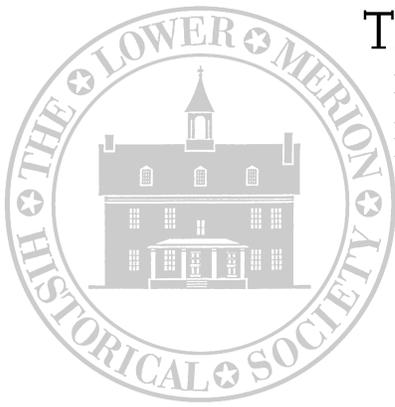
500 Harriton Road in Bryn Mawr
Saturday, June 18th, 2005 (1:00 - 3:00 P.M.)

Come visit this 300 year old treasure, one time home of Charles Thomson, the first and only Secretary to the Continental and Confederation Congresses.

Our tour guide will be Bruce Cooper Gill, Executive Director/Curator. We will meet in their new Education Center directly above the parking lot on the right across the driveway from the old house. Bruce will give a slide presentation about historic Harriton and Charles Thomson. There will be light refreshment either in the Education Center or in the garden in front of the Education Center depending on weather.

Also, we will be hosting our friends and neighbors from the Haverford Township Historical Society. Free admission to all. ♣





The Lower Merion Historical Society

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

LowerMerionHistory.org

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