THE BULLETIN
of
RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume II  SPRING, 1963  No. 3

Incorporated April 30, 1948

Headquarters and Museum
THE FINLEY HOUSE
Beech Tree Lane and Bellevue Avenue
Wayne, Pennsylvania

Visitors Cordially Welcome. Telephone MUrray 8-7915

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George Vaux, Vice-President
Robert I. Cummin, Secretary
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Theo B. White
ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY, 1962 - 1963

May 13, 1963

The Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the Society was held at the Harriton Cemetery, following a tour of graveyards in Radnor and Lower Merion Townships. The following Directors were elected to serve until 1965: Mrs. Gertrude Ware Case, Francie James Dallett, Miss E. Dorothy Finley, Mrs. Malcolm G. Sauser, James C. Massey was elected to serve as Director until 1964. After the business was concluded, the members adjourned to the house of Mr. and Mrs. Vaux for refreshments. The Directors then re-elected the following officers to serve for the coming year: Miss Caroline Robbins, President; George Vaux, Vice-President; Robert J. Cummin, Secretary; and O. Louis Ehmann, Jr., Treasurer.

October 13, 1963

One Hundred Years of Radnor Architects was the theme of the Society's Ninth Open House Tour. (See Mr. Massey's article.) Mr. Massey, Miss Robbins, and Mrs. Cummin took charge of arrangements.

November 27, 1962

David J. Kennedy's Views of the Philadelphia Area, 1836-1880 was the subject of a talk by James Rawle at the Wayne Presbyterian Church. Mr. Rawle has recorded on slides much of the work of this noted expert and versatile water-colorist. Nearly all of Kennedy's paintings are owned by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Mrs. Westhead was in charge of refreshments.

January 16, 1963

Mrs. C. Higgins of Wayne led a symposium at the First Wayne Federal Savings and Loan Association on The Changing Taste in Food at which Miss Robbins also spoke (see article). A number of old menus, recipes, and cookbooks were exhibited by various members. Mrs. Wolfson handled hospitality.

March 20, 1963

Banjotown - Radnor, a Fact or a Legend? was the subject of a talk by Bertram Wolfson who lives there. (See Mr. Massey's article.) It is hoped that the success of this presentation will encourage additional neighborhood research projects. The meeting was at the First Wayne Federal Savings and Loan Association, and again Mrs. Westhead was in charge of refreshments.

The Radnor Historical Society is open to anyone interested in the history of our community. Send annual dues of $3.00 to O. Louis Ehmann, Jr., Treasurer, 123 West Lancaster Avenue, Wayne, Pennsylvania.
There follows a list of the names mentioned in the Poor records. It includes names of Overseers, Settlers, Committee members, Poor, people who "kept" the Poor, tradesmen from whom goods were bought, individuals who bought goods at the Vendues, people who bought strays. Since a number of these names appear several times, only the years of the first and last reference are given. Because spellings vary widely, the spelling used by an individual if he signed the book personally is also given. When the book itself may be referred to it is referred to as Constable in 1788.

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*These references obviously refer to more than one person of this name.

**THE MINUTES OF THE TOWNSHIP MEETING**

The appearance of one set of Town Meeting Minutes in the Radnor Poor Book raises the questions of when town meetings began here, when they ended, and what authority they had. Some research has been done on this and will continue until answers can be given. Some facts, however, do appear.

The only statutory authority for town meetings stands in the Laws of the Duke of York which prevailed here from 1676 until the advent of William Penn. Penn, under the Charter from Charles II, divided his grant into counties and directed his surveyors to lay out land in townships. He gave no definition of the governmental rights of townships; such definition awaited nineteenth century statutes. The Charter did specify that all laws should be in harmony with those of England.

It seems therefore that the holding of town meetings was done simply in accordance with tradition and for convenience. Certain borough charters make provision for them. We have seen primary evidence of town meetings held in Radnor, in Goshen, in East Bradford and secondary reference to meetings held in Bynberry, Chester, Darby*, and Upper Darby townships.

The Darby Monthly Meeting Minutes of the Society of Friends refer to town meetings held in the Friends Meeting House. In Goshen the inhabitants met in individual houses, in inns, in the “ston scoulhouse.” We do not know where Radnor met. A 1772 statute requires that...

* The Darby Book, containing earlier and fuller records than most, was liberally quoted in Smith’s History of Delaware County. Its present whereabouts is unknown.
MARCH 16 1810

From this time forward the minutes and proceedings of the Township Meeting of Radnor Township in Delaware County is to be fairly entered in this Book by order of the Township Meeting this day.

RADNOR DELAWARE COUNTY MARCH 16 1810

The Inhabitants of Radnor Township in Town-meeting this day, on due notice Agreeably to Law, for the purpose of Electing Township Officers.

Whereupon Isaac Abrahams Esqr. and John Brooke were appointed Judges of the Election, and John Siter was appointed Clerk.

The Meeting proceeded to the Election of Township Officers.

Maskell Ewing Esqr. and James Lewis were elected Supervisors of the Highways.

Jacob Gyger and James Morgan were elected Constables.

David Brooke was appointed Town Clerk.

John Brooke, Jesse Brooke, John Siter and George Brooke, were appointed Settlers for the ensuing year.

Enquiry having been made, whether the Plough which was directed to be procured for the repair of Roads, at the Town Meeting in March last had been made. Benjamin Davis the late Supervisor

or informed the meeting, that he had directed, Jacob Gyger to examine which Mr. Gyger being present informed the meeting he would have it soon done.

A Committee was appointed in March 1808 to collect all the Laws, that were in the Hands of the Officers, for some time past, which they had drawn for the use of the Township from the Prothonotary's Office, and Mr. John Brooke informed the meeting he was on that Committee, and had procured all they could find and had deposited them in the hands of the Officers for the use of the Township.

Maskell Ewing informed the meeting that he had procured from the Prothonotaries of the County the 7th and a part of the 8th Volume of the Laws that have been passed since the Publication of Roads Digest which he presented for the use of the Township.

Whereupon

A Motion was made by Maskell Ewing, and seconded by Benjamin Davis, that some person be appointed to examine all the Laws that are in the possession of Messrs. Siter and Brooke, with those now presented by Mr. Ewing, and if it could be, that all complete Volumes can be made up, to get them bound in a neat Manner and Lettered. On the Question Whether the meeting would agree upon the said Law's, and have a digested copy in the Affirmative Nemine Dicentia.

Whereupon

Maskell Ewing was appointed to procure the said Law's to be bound. A Motion was made that the expense thereof shall be allowed him in the Settlement of his Accounts as Supervisor he having been appointed to that Office this day.

Whereas it now appears, that no minutes were ever kept in this Township in the past Ten Years, the Town Meetings, other than those kept respecting the Poor prior to the Year 1808 since which the Poor Accounts have been kept at the Poor House and House of Employment.

A Motion was made and seconded that the proceedings of this Meeting be made up as fully as possible in the Commission of the Poor and the proceedings which may hereafter be had at Township Meetings in this Township, and cause the same to be fairly transcribed into the said Book.

On the Question, Whether the same be agreed to by this Meeting? It was carried Nemine Contra Dicentia. Almost unanimously.

No further business being offered the meeting rose.

There is but one more entry in the Book. On one of the last pages there appears in the handwriting of one of the earliest clerks the statement:

"We whose Names are Underwritten Being Freeholders and Inhabitants of the Township of Radnor Do hereby certify that we have ass'd the foregoing rates of game, vegetable and roast. Costs were correspondingly high as the accounts, prepared by the George Vauxes, of a dinner in 1876 at the Old Academy of Natural Sciences for Dom Pedro, illustrate, though the service charges seem delightfully low!

The eighteenth century table was startlingly different. In menus suggested in The Frugal Housewife (Philadelphia, 1796) the first course, placed at one time on the table, included cold head soup, beef, lamb, boiled chicken, pastries, plum pudding and collars (hamburger, I think); the second turkey, smelts, lamb (in case you'd overlooked the first round I suppose), cheesecake, minced pies, lobsters and jellies, these dishes also placed in a circle on the table. William Frierst, a musician traveling in the United States in 1785-97, wrote of the enormous quantity of meat consumed three times a day at breakfast, dinner and supper, noting that to the normal roasts of England were added "raccoon, bear and possum" (Travels, London, 1802, 32-34). His remarks could be fittingly applied to the memoirs of his contemporaries. Some differences reflected frontier life, of course, and the inevitable emphasis on game, local fish and vegetables in any but exceptional farms. Others stem from the more active
The first native imprint, The Compleat Housewife, 1742, was a republication of a famous English work by Hannah Glasse. So, too, was the popular A New System of Cookery, by a Lady (Mrs. Marie Eliza Kettleby Randoll), which appeared in Philadelphia in 1814 with a New York edition, and elsewhere, but which was, with no concessions to transatlantic taste, a replica of the English work. As the nineteenth century wore on, adaptations of French and English books were made. J. M. Sanderson of the Franklin House in Philadelphia did one in 1833. Nowadays there are plenty of Italian, Chinese and other foreign recipes conditioned to our measurements and commodities. Even the food once peculiar to the Pennsylvania Dutch peoples and settlements may now be found in studies by Frederick Kees and others.

The first native author was Amelia Simmons, described on her title page as "an American Orphan," whose American Cookery was published at Hartford in 1796. The book is scarce, and little is known about Amelia. Fortunately a good deal may be discovered about Eliza Leslie (1787-1838), our first local authority on housewifery and one of the few culinarians to be found in the Dictionary of American Biography. Eliza was the daughter of Robert and Lydia (Baker) Leslie, who came from Philadelphia and land grant of 5,000 acres made to Richard Davies in 1681. In 1726 the land was conveyed to John Jerman. Title to the land changed hands over the years. In 1846 Sarah Jane Matlack purchased 56 acres including the present land of Banjotown, from Elizabeth S. Parke and Mary Ann Jacobs. These 56 acres extended from the present west boundary of Banjotown to the intersection of Newtown Road and Conestoga Road. This included the land on which was subsequently built the Meigs Estate, open to the tour of the Historical Society this past fall.

Banjotown was vacant farm land and woods until approximately 1883, at which time a 10 acre plot was subdivided into 36 lots by Mrs. Sarah Jane Matlack. Twelve of the lots faced on Newtown Road, and the remaining 24 lots bordered on a dead-end road, now called Matlack Lane. Why Mrs. Matlack, who owned quite a large piece of property in Ithan, suddenly decided to carve up 10 acres of land into 36 lots on which were erected small houses for the laboring class, is unknown. Did she need the money resulting from the sale of the land? Was there an increased demand for laborers in the Ithan-Wayne area? These questions are unanswered.

By 1853 there were three houses in Banjotown. One on lot 1, lot 33 and lot 36. The two houses on lots 35 and 36 burned down in the 1920's. The Radnor Fire Company answered the alarm but due to the inadequate water supply, they were quickly destroyed. George Munger's stable now stands in its approximate location. The only one of the original houses that still exists is the house on Lot Number 1 which was then owned by George W. Derrickson, a local auctioneer.

By 1892 four more houses were built on lot number 2, lot number 4, lot number 5, lot number 27. The house on lot 25 was inhabited by George Handy, a Negro, and his son, Mr. Handy was a good natured fellow who did odds jobs around the neighborhood, and collected garbage to feed his pigs. One night Mr. Handy thought he heard a burglar prowling outside his house—he got his gun, waited until he heard the sound again and fired in its direction. The sound stopped—he proudly announced to his wife the fact that he had shot the burglar but would wait until daylight to see who it was. Next morning Mr. Handy went out to find he had shot his horse as the burglar. His horse no longer exists.

The remaining frame dwellings on lot 9, lot 21, lot 24 and lot 29 on Matlack Lane were built in 1908.
The original eight houses of Banjotown were indeed a community. Its inhabitants were either claimants by, or attributed to, Banjotown. Among these were "Shaky Jim" who cut wood and did odd jobs—for this he received his living, but he had a "Dog John" who never washed or shaved. He collected garbage in his two-wheeled cart, and gave it away to a friend. A farmer's house with four dogs. He only worked enough to eat, and preferred to spend his days playing with his dogs, who were trained to dance and jump, and even smoke pipes.

About the turn of the Century, much of the open land was purchased, consolidated, and large estates constructed. William W. Atterbury owned 42 acres on the south side of Newtown Road, running west from the Railroad Friends Meeting House, approximately one mile north of Atterbury Road. Mr. Atterbury succeeded Mr. Cassatt as President of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Mr. Cassatt decided that the land should have been purchased from Mr. Cassatt.

In 1909 or 1910 Col. Robert Montgomery purchased land on Tryon Road, near the far southwest corner of Newtown Road and Darby-Paoli Road, and shortly thereafter commenced the construction of his large mansion. If one can visualize Banjotown as a community at this time, the ducks, pigs and chickens running about, then one can understand how natural it was that the land should have been purchased by Cassatt.

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ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF RADNOR ARCHITECTS

Notes on the Ninth Open House Tour

by James C. Massey

The Radnor Historical Society sponsored its Ninth Open House tour on Saturday, October 13, 1962, with visits to several important, architect-designed Radnor Township houses, ranging in date from the 1850's to the present. Before the middle of the nineteenth century, Radnor was a quiet country farming district remote in feeling from Philadelphia. But with the great mid-century expansion of the city, and the opening of the Columbia Railroad along what is now the Pennsylvania Railroad's Main Line, the township became attractive as a location for the summer residences of wealthy Philadelphians, and by the end of the century, for year-around residences.

With this movement, architect-designed houses came to Radnor for the first time, and within a few decades it was seldom that an estate was not identified with a prominent Philadelphia architect. Of particular note were two architects who established residences in Radnor—Theophilus Parsons Chandler in伊安, and David Knickerbacker Boyd in Wayne. T. P. Chandler’s house still stands, though altered, on what is now Chandler Lane, off Sproul Road. He was one of Philadelphia’s prominent late-nineteenth-century architects (1845-1928) and in addition to an active practice, was the first Director of the University of Pennsylvania architectural department.

Architect Boyd’s widow, Elizabeth M. Mifflin Boyd, recently gave to the Radnor Historical Society her husband’s scrapbook, and this historic document was on display at the Society’s Headquarters and Museum, “The Homestead,” for the tour. Boyd was a popular local architect in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (1873-1944) and was active in both Philadelphia and the Wayne area. His best-known works here are “Waldheim,” at Eagle and Radnor Roads, Wayne, built for William Henry Sayen and now part of Valley Forge Military Academy, and “Walmarthon,” the vast Charles S. Walton estate off Chamounix Road, St. Davids, now the Eastern Baptist College.

Open for the Radnor tour were “Leighton House,” Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Biddle’s house; the Academy of Notre Dame de Namur; “The Peak,” Mrs. Arthur I. Meigs’ House; and Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Geddes’ House.

“Leighton House” is at 926 Cooper-town Road, near Landover Road, Bryn Mawr, and was built during the 1860’s by Michael Ericsson for Richard Montgomery, and known then as “Glenays.” After passing to the Biddle family, a wing was added in 1925 and extensive garden walls and a pool were added in 1928 from designs of Architect George Howe of Mellor, Meligs and Howe. The Biddle place is a large and handsome Italianate Villa, a fine example of a pre-Civil War Phila-delphian’s summer house in the country. It is the oldest place in Radnor Township whose authorship is known. “Leighton House” has been furnished with family antiques that have been for the most part bought abroad.

The Academy of Notre Dame de Namur, Sproul and Godfrey Roads, Villanova, was originally known as “Hillsofar” and
“Crystal Spring Farm.” The house was built about 1895 for Lincoln Godfrey from designs by architect Theophilus Parsons Chandler. The large stone mansion was later bought by Clarence Geist, who renamed the estate “Launfal.” He commissioned the great Philadelphia Architect Paul Cret to rebuild and expand the mansion extensively during 1925-26, and had the prominent French planner Jacques Greber design the surrounding gardens. T. P. Chandler was also an important nineteenth-century Philadelphia architect who softened the often cold Victorian style of his day with a pleasing picturesque grace. Of particular note are his three church designs on the Main Line-St. Martin’s, Radnor; Christ Church, Ithan; and St. Asaph’s, Bala, as well as the Rudolph Ellis Estate on Bryn Mawr Avenue, Bryn Mawr.

“The Peak” on Newtown Road, Radnor, just west of Radnor-Chester Road, reflects decades of loving care by Mrs. Meigs and her late husband, the noted architect of the important Philadelphia architectural firm of Meoll, Meigs and Howe. The house was built by Mr. Meigs’ father, Dr. Arthur V. Meigs, in 1906 from Barkley Henry, who had built the Home in 1903. Under Mr. Meigs’ guiding hand, “The Peak” evolved into a richly appointed Georgian house of great beauty, through a long series of alterations and additions.

Of particular note are the “Garden Room” wing, with its fanciful “spider web” door, and the “Sunset Tower” beyond the box garden. Architect C. R. Morgan designed a small contemporary house with a great deal of openness, but surrounded by closed courts of brick, which also define its terracing of the hillside. Mr. and Mrs. Geddes have furnished their home in the best modern taste.

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SAMUEL YELLIN AT THE “PEAK.”

— photo by James C. Massey