

The BULLETIN  
of the  
**RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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*Incorporated April 30, 1948*

*Headquarters and Museum*

**THE FINLEY HOUSE**  
**113 West Beech Tree Lane**  
**Wayne, Pennsylvania 19087**

Telephone: 610-688-2668 – [www.radnorhistory.org](http://www.radnorhistory.org)

*Visitors Welcome Tuesdays & Saturdays, 2 to 4 pm*

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*Editor: Samuel F. Etris*

## **Board of Directors Report**

### **Brian Noll, Chairman, Buildings and Grounds Committee**

The Radnor Historical Society is fortunate in having its own Headquarters building. It was the gift of Miss E. Dorothy Finley, a founding member of the Radnor Historical Society and for many years an active member of its Board of Directors. She devoted much of her time to nurture the Society's formative years, provided space in her home for the Society's collection for years, and eventually donated her home to the Society in 1981.

Miss Finley's turn-of-the-century home, with its ground floor dating to the Revolutionary War, is the historical focus of Radnor Township. Since her gift, the Society has maintained her home as a museum for Radnor's Historical Collections with a small apartment. The rent from the apartment helps with the expenses of maintaining the property and provides an on-site resident.

Regular maintenance of the house is an obligation of the Buildings and Grounds Committee of the Board of Directors. For the past six years these costs have amounted to \$88,355.

A breakdown of these costs includes painting of both the Finley House and Wagon House at \$11,850, new storm windows and dormer repairs at \$5220, plumbing and heating repairs of \$7800, replacing the roof \$38,375 (the entire cost was offset by a grant and numerous designated contributions), and the preservation of our books and documents which required protective covers and book binding that amounted to \$4,450.

A larger memory computer was required with software to incorporate and archive the photographs of the Society's growing collection which is being worked into the Society's website: [www. radnorhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.radnorhistoricalsociety.org). Total cost \$4500. The Society is digitizing its photographic collection to provide public access to it through the Society's website.

The Society maintains its Wagon House to protect our historic Conestoga wagon and other horse-drawn vehicles; this year expenses were \$6,100. Maintenance of the Conestoga wagon to ensure satisfactory operating condition for Radnor's Memorial Day Parade is provided by a generous grant from the H&E Foundation.

Maintenance of our lovely property included the care and removal of dead trees, cost: \$10,200.



*President Ted Pollard pointing out the new storm windows on the Finley House.*

The Society contacts professionals for advice as how best to maintain this attractive property for the enjoyment of visitors, neighborhood groups, school children classes, and historic events.

## Historical Society 2008 Program

### **February 12** - The Radnor Memorial Library

Eugene J. Richardson, a Tuskegee Airman, presented the story of the Tuskegee airmen who flew during WWII. He also honored Black History Month.

### **March 11** - The Radnor Memorial Library

Marilyn Caltabiano, Director Emerita, moderated a panel of long-time Radnor residents who spoke of their early life in Radnor, continuing the Library's oral history of Radnor.

**April 27** – Annual Meeting, Home of Mr. and Mrs. John B. Smith  
“Discovering Our World,” was the presentation made by Mr. Smith as documented by the publication of maps.

### **April 8** – Annual Dinner, Rosemont Presbyterian Village

This retirement home was Beaupre, the nineteenth century home and property of Robert Kelso Cassatt.

Stephen Dittmann explained the history and architectural attributes of the building.

### **May 4** – Cabrini College, Woodcrest Mansion Tour

A top-to-basement tour of the historic Woodcrest Mansion was conducted by the staff. It defined life of the privileged during the turn of the century as lived by the family of James W. Paul, Jr., son-in-law of Anthony J. Drexel.

### **May 26** - Memorial Day Parade

The Historical Society's nineteenth century Conestoga Wagon was again drawn by farm dray horses in Radnor Township's Memorial Day Parade.

**September 21** – Picnic at the Finley House

Society members and guests participated in a bring-your-own picnic. Visitors were given special tours of the Finley house, wagon house, and the Society's collections.

**October 5** – South Wayne History/Mystery Tour

The Fourth Annual History/Mystery Tour featured South Wayne's nineteenth century architecture. Participants who filled out the questionnaire at each location were recognized following the tour at the home of Sandy and Bruce Gilbert where prizes for completion were awarded.

**October 14** – Radnor Memorial Library

Melinda Higgins Crawford, Executive Director of Preservation Pennsylvania, gave an illustrated talk on the origin and present status of the Lincoln Highway, the route that bisected Radnor Township.

**November 16** – Our Lady of the Assumption Church

Celia Paolantonio and Christine Gaeto presented an illustrated and detailed history of the Italian immigrants who worked to build the great houses of the Upper Main Line, and then subsequently built their church.

**December 11** – The Radnor Memorial Library

Mr. Roger Moss, Emeritus Director of the Athenaeum, and Mr. Tom Crane, his official photographer, reviewed the creation and realization of their magnificent book, *Historical Landmarks of Pennsylvania*.

**December 28** - The Finley House

Truman Capote's *A Christmas Memory* was read by Charles Crawford at the Finley fireplace surrounded by Christmas decorations and delectable Holiday confections.

## **Annual Meeting of the Society**

The 2008 Annual Meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John B. Smith, April 27, 2008.

Thanks were expressed to Mr. and Mrs. Smith for their generosity in sharing the hospitality of their home.

A short business meeting was conducted by President Ted Pollard who reviewed the ongoing activities of the Society in preserving the historical interests in Radnor and the events engaging the public planned for the coming year.

The chairman of the Nominating Committee, Mr. Dale, presented their nominations for the term that would be expiring in 2009. The present officers agreed to serve an additional term. It was Moved, Seconded, and Voted that those nominated would continue in their assignments. The Annual Report by Treasurer Noll was accepted by the members present.

Mr. Dale introduced the speaker for the meeting, Mr. John Smith, an avid collector of antique maps, who spoke on the subject “Discovering Our World,” as documented by maps that illustrated the steps by which we progressed toward an understanding of our world.

Mr. Smith’s collection of early maps illustrated how little was then known about the world, then limited to the Mediterranean region. Explorers and traders continuously extended their reach for new sources of new markets and gold, gradually filling in the voids. Trading nations sent professional explorers and surveyors to determine the exact location of land forms and seas to ensure the safety of their ships. This information, issued as maps, sparked financial as well as territorial ambitions of both nations and men.

Mr. Smith showed how maps were used to establish political claims as well as promote sale of land such as the detailed maps of the Main Line published by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. These maps encouraged sale of properties along the Main Line to increase passenger traffic business out from Philadelphia. The objective was to increase ridership, but at the same time the maps created the first commuter suburb in America.

He showed how silk maps carried by airmen during WWII acted to guide them back to safe haven if downed in unfamiliar country. Mr. Smith gave examples of the increases in map technology leading to modern precision mapmaking that provided essential information for planning the efficiency and safety of today's transportation systems.



## **The Society's 2008 Annual Dinner**

The Society's Annual Dinner was held at Beaupre, the Rosemont Presbyterian Village.

The speaker, Stephen Dittmann, reviewed the history of this 18th Century estate noting that the house and its setting are so attractive that the community wanted to save it.

Beaupre was built for Robert Kelso Cassatt, son of Alexander Cassatt, then President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, so there was money to build this pleasant place for him and his wife Minnie Drexel Fell, granddaughter of Anthony Drexel. It was designed by architects Cope & Stewardson to reflect the family's French Huguenot heritage and this can be seen expressed in the French exterior, though the interior has many English Georgian touches. Robert was the nephew of Mary Cassatt, famed painter of women and children.

Beaupre exemplifies a serene 18th Century summer home graced by outstanding landscaping and a swimming pool accentuating life in the outdoors. The garden was in Gallic style, a Philadelphia fashion at the time, whose beauty has survived for the enjoyment of the community.

Robert Cassatt's uncle, brother of the President of the PRR, built a French style mansion in Berwyn, now occupied by the Upper Main Line YMCA. This style was influential in homes built during the 1800s.

Mr. Dittmann observed that we are fortunate to have two outstanding Cassatt mansions that have survived.

## **Dorothy H. Therman, RHS President 1962-1981**

Dorothy Harrison Therman, daughter of George Leib Harrison, Jr. and Mary Ingalls, was born in Wayne. Dorothy, brought up as a Quaker, was tutored privately and never attended a formal school. When she was very young, she and her family yearly made extended visits to relatives in England and Scotland, interrupted only by WWII.

The family maintained a pew at St. Davids Church, Radnor where she played the piano for Sunday school.

Both she and Carol Creutzburg, devoted members of the Historical Society, began a friendship during Dorothy's first marriage when she and her husband, a doctor practicing in New York City, lived just across the street from Carol on West 9th Street in Greenwich Village. Discussions of mutual interests were frequent and enjoyable.

Later, Dorothy Therman wrote a book of reminiscences, "Just Ring a Bell." During her youth, she recalled, attention was just a cord pull away. When living in New York during WWII, she helped Fridays in the Bellevue Hospital Woman's Surgical Ward treating the injured and she helped groups preparing Bundles for Britain. Upon her husband's early death, she returned to Wayne, took a Nurses' Aid Course at the Philadelphia Municipal Hospital in 1941, spent one day a week as a Nurses' Aid at Children's Hospital and later at the University Hospital. During 1942 she worked in the Men's Ward at Philadelphia General Hospital and in its Surgical Ward, later during 1943 in its Children's Ward. During 1944, she worked two nights a week at the Valley Forge General Army Hospital.

In 1947 she married James Talbot. Their son resided in and maintained their Wayne family home, the Poplars.

A special interest of Dorothy's father was the Radnor Historical Society and he was especially helpful in the preparation of the Society's Finley house. Dorothy Therman continued her father's interest in the Society by serving as a member of the Board of Directors for 17 years, during which time she served as President from 1962 to 1981.

She prepared the article, "Excerpts from the Memoirs of George L. Harrison," published in the RHS Bulletin, Spring 1968 issue, Vol. II, No.8.

## Mary H. Meeker, Long-Term Board Member



Mary Hankinson Meeker was an active member of the Radnor Historical Society, serving on the Society's Board of Directors from 1986 until 2004. Mary had a love of local history and enjoyed sharing it with children. She died October 20, 2008.

Mary and her family moved to Wayne from Washington, D.C., in 1960. She then joined the Wayne Parent-Teachers Association (to represent her four children at the Radnor Schools), and the Radnor League of Women Voters, and became elected Republican Committee-woman in 1966 (Ward 3-2), serving in that capacity for over 34 years.

Mary was a volunteer tutor in the Radnor Schools and later associate teacher in Special Education in Radnor, Rowland, and Ithan Elementary Schools, and the DELCO Intermediate Unit. She was a member of Life Guidance, Inc., devoted to attending to special needs children.

Mary served on the Board of Trustees of the Radnor Memorial Library for 18 years. As Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, she accepted the key from the Friends of the Library for the new Library on West Wayne Avenue on April 14, 1980.

She was dedicated to preserving open space in Radnor and supported the Rails to Trails greenway, the preservation of the "Willows," the Radnor Conservancy, Radnor's public parks, and Chanticleer. She was a member of the Delaware Valley Paleontological Society and for many years participated with members from Radnor attending its meetings in Philadelphia as a group.

## **Black History Month Celebration, The Tuskegee Airmen**

Eugene J. Richardson, Jr. spoke of his experience during WWII and that of African Americans who had proven their fighting ability in all of America's wars. He spoke of the desire of these men to participate in the Army Air Corps from the beginning of WWII, and how, despite the Army's prohibition against commissioning them as pilots, they achieved their goals by way of an Army Air Corps pilot training contract at Tuskegee University. Its first graduating class was in 1941 with 5 pilots qualified for P40 fighter planes.

Those who possessed the physical and mental qualifications were accepted as aviation cadets for training as single-engine pilots initially, later as twin-engine pilots and navigators or bombardiers of multiengine airplanes. Most were college graduates or undergraduates. Others demonstrated their academic qualifications through comprehensive entrance examinations.

Pilot training programs were later organized at Delaware State University, West Virginia State University, Howard University, and North Carolina State, although their training airfields were not those of the Caucasian cadet training fields. During WWII, 994 African-American pilots graduated and of these, 450 served in combat, principally in the 99th Fighter Group which was assigned to the 15th Army Air Corps in the Mediterranean Theater. There it provided ground support to the Army troops during the Anzio invasion of Italy.

From 1942 through 1946, nine hundred ninety-four pilots graduated from the Tuskegee Army Air Corps School, receiving commissions and pilot wings. Black navigators, bombardiers and gunnery crews were trained at selected military bases elsewhere in the United States. Mechanics were trained at Chanute Air Base in Rantoul, Illinois, until facilities were in place in 1942 at Tuskegee.

However, it was not until May 1943 that graduates of the school were assigned to fly actual combat missions.

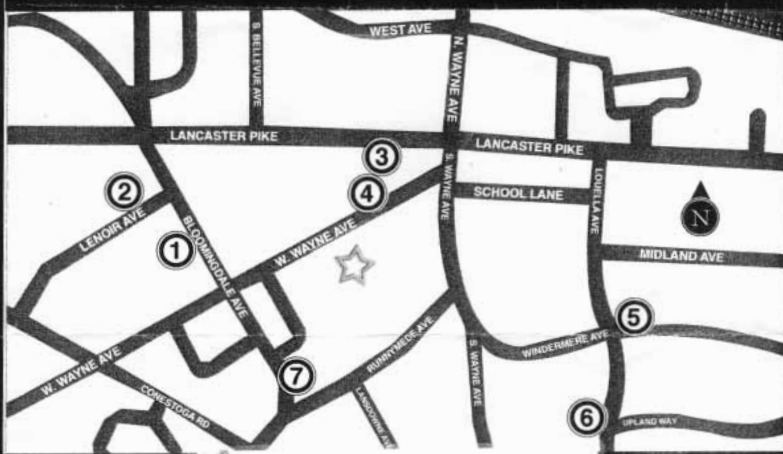
When long range bombing missions began over Italy and Germany, Tuskegee airmen of the 99th Fighter Group and later the 332nd Fighter Group equipped with long-range P51 fighter planes flew cover for the B24s. With those fighter groups as air cover, not one B24 was shot down by enemy planes. Of the 450 African American pilots who flew in WWII combat missions, 66 did not survive.

After the war in Europe ended in 1945, black airmen returned to the United States and faced continued racism and bigotry despite their outstanding war record. Tuskegee Army Air Field continued to train new airmen until 1946, with women entering the program in several support groups. Large numbers of black airmen elected to remain in the service but because of segregation policy their assignments were limited to the 332nd Fighter Group or the 477th Composite Group, and later to the 332nd Fighter Wing at Lockbourne Air Base, Ohio. Opportunities for advancement and promotion were very limited, which affected morale. Nevertheless, black airmen continued to perform superbly. In 1949, pilots from the 332nd Fighter Group took first place in the Air Force National Fighter Gunnery Meet at Las Vegas Air Force Base, Nevada.

It was not until President Truman signed an Executive Order in 1948 requiring the US Armed Forces to be totally integrated that all American citizens could serve together.

# 2008 Mystery HISTORY TOUR

## SOUTH WAYNE



**START & FINISH: 142 W. Wayne Avenue**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ① Bloomingdale Avenue Homes<br>120 Bloomingdale Ave.         | ⑤ Windermere Avenue Homes<br>206 Windermere Ave.            |
| ② Old Farm House, Lenoir Avenue<br>218 Lenoir Ave.           | ⑥ Louella Avenue Homes<br>314 Louella Ave.                  |
| ③ Old Radnor Library, Lancaster Avenue<br>110 Lancaster Ave. | ⑦ Spanish-Style Apartment Building<br>223 Bloomingdale Ave. |
| ④ The Saturday Club<br>117 West Wayne Ave.                   |   |



**RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
www.radnorhistory.org



**Mystery History Tour 2008**  
**South Wayne**  
Mary Coe

Bloomington Avenue was the site of the first residential development in Wayne, Pennsylvania. The developer was J. Henry Askin, the “founder” of Wayne. In 1864, Askin bought 91 acres of land in what was then called Cleaver’s Landing. In 1865 he purchased an additional 73 acres and, in 1870, 129 acres more, for a total of approximately 300 acres. Between 1865 and 1866, Askin built himself a home, Louella Mansion, which he named after two of his daughters, Louise and Ella. Louella Mansion still stands at the top of Louella Court in downtown Wayne. In 1871, Askin built the Wayne Lyceum Hall, later known as the Wayne Opera House. The building still stands on the corner of Lancaster Avenue and Wayne Avenue.

In 1870, Askin began construction of the homes on Bloomington Avenue. The houses were built in a style that was very popular at the time, Second Empire, the same style used in the construction of Louella Mansion. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of buildings built in this style is the roof, known as a mansard roof. A mansard roof is a type of hip roof with two slopes on each of its four sides. The lower roof is usually steeper than the upper roof, the latter often not visible from street level. Mansard roofs can be straight-sided, concave or convex. The mansard roof is named after the French architect Francois Mansart (1598 – 1666), who first popularized the style. In addition to its aesthetic appeal, the mansard roof had practical appeal. Because of its steep pitch, there was room below the roof for an additional story.



At a time when houses in France were taxed on the basis of the number of floors below the roof, the mansard roof offered a clear tax advantage. Later, during the French Second Empire (1852 to 1870), the mansard style returned to popularity and was used on many buildings constructed during Napoleon III's campaign to rebuild Paris, including the north wing of the Louvre. This Second Empire style, with its distinctive mansard roof, quickly spread throughout Europe and across the Atlantic Ocean. In the United States, the style was widely used for public buildings including federal offices, courthouses, post offices and city halls. Among the first public buildings in the United States to feature a mansard roof was the Old Corcoran Gallery (now the Renwick Gallery) in Washington, DC, designed by James Renwick. Among the most grand are the Old Executive Office Building in Washington, DC designed by Alfred B. Mullet, and our own City Hall in Philadelphia, designed by John McArthur. The number of public buildings with mansard roofs built in the United States during and shortly after the Civil War led to the style being sometimes referred to in this country as "the General Grant Style."

Eight of Askin's mansard roof houses still stand. They can be found at 108, 114, 115, 120, 123, 125 and 128 Bloomingdale Avenue and 200 West Wayne Avenue (on the southwest corner of West Wayne and Bloomingdale). Each of these homes has three stories, the third being a mansard roof with dormers and arched windows having eyebrow or pedimented window heads. Some have projecting pavilions. All have (or appear to have had) porches or verandas, a common American feature of Second Empire residential buildings.

Askin's houses are now used as apartment buildings, professional office buildings, an art gallery, and a Pilates center. Although some of the buildings have been "improved," they are, for the most part, very well preserved and remain quite attractive.

Although good representatives of Askin's mansard-roofed houses remain to this day, one would be hard pressed to find remains of the water reservoir that Askin also constructed behind the homes located on the west side of Bloomingdale Avenue, near the intersection of West Wayne and Bloomingdale Avenues. The reservoir had a capacity of 300,000 gallons and cost \$30,000 to build. There was "an elegant promenade" along the edge of the reservoir, with wicker furniture for the residents to use. Eventually the reservoir was replaced by a larger reservoir located on elevated land above Wayne.



*Bloomingdale Avenue Reservoir  
Excerpt from 1881 Pennsylvania Railroad Atlas*

As he did his mansion, Askin called his development “Louella.” It did not remain Louella for very long. In 1880, going blind and suffering financial reversals as a result of the 1873 depression, Askin sold his property to Anthony J. Drexel, a banker, and George W. Childs, publisher of the Public Ledger, and, a few years later, moved to Florida, where he spent the rest of his life. There was no further construction of mansard-roof houses in the area. Drexel and Childs shifted the focus of residential development to North and South Wayne, working with the builders Wendell and Smith and the architects William, Frank and Walter Price, Horace Trumbauer, David K. Boyd and Minerva Parker, among others. These architects did not work in the Second Empire style; they worked with variations of the Queen Anne, Shingle-Style, Tudor and Colonial Revival Styles. The Drexel and Childs development, which included the area already developed by Askin along Bloomingdale Avenue, was known as “the Wayne Estate.”

**The Spanish Revival Apartment House**  
**217 Bloomingdale Avenue**  
D.K. Boyd

Bloomingdale Avenue is the earliest developed street in Wayne. J. H. Askin was the first owner and developer in Radnor and he planned this entire neighborhood. He planned North Wayne and South Wayne to be named Louella. He built his Louella Mansion, now Louella Apartments, for one of his daughters. He named this part of Radnor, "Louella," after his daughters Louise and Ella. (See: 1875 PRR Atlas) The first streets to be platted, or laid down, before homes were built were the ones within the triangle formed by Conestoga Rd, West Wayne Ave., and Lancaster Avenue, including today's Bloomingdale and Lenoir Avenues.

The Pennsylvania Railroad built its Wayne station in 1860 to service the community that Askin was building. It was to be the first commuter community in the United States.

The first ten homes in Askin's town of Louella were built on the block of Bloomingdale Avenue between Lancaster and West Wayne Avenues during 1875 and 1887. Shortly thereafter an economic depression forced Askin to divest his shares of the Wayne Development Company selling them to the firm of Drexel and Childs.

Between 1887 and 1900, many other homes were built in North and South Wayne, including the other block of Bloomingdale Avenue from West Wayne to Conestoga Road. Now there were twenty homes on this road. Owens Lane appears on the 1900 PRR Atlas. David Knickerbacker Boyd, or D.K. Boyd, was one of the architects to build in these new suburbs. He built many buildings for the firm of Wendell and Smith including the Anthony Wayne Theatre in 1893 and four homes in Wayne between 1894 and 1897.

In 1897 he built the Louella Hotel and a Casino somewhere near South Wayne Avenue. He built the Central Baptist Church and the Saturday Club in 1897. During 1898 to 1904 he built eleven more residences in Wayne, including one for himself at 217 Aberdeen Ave.

In 1909 Boyd built the Radnor High School in Wayne. Later it became the Radnor Middle School which was demolished in 2007-2008. During 1911 to 1913 more homes were constructed in Wayne, five in Haverford, in 1914 two schools, one in Rosemont, and one in Oakmont. During 1915 to 1930, he did more than four buildings, many in Wayne, some residential, some commercial, and many additions or outbuildings like stables and garages for existing homes. By 1931, he had built or directed the construction of nearly 3,000 buildings over a 35-year period.

In 1928, Boyd built the Spanish Revival Apartment house at 217 Bloomingdale Avenue for J. Frazier Bard. It is in the Spanish or Mediterranean Revival style as its features resemble buildings of that region.



*217 Bloomingdale Avenue*

The building's Mediterranean features include: red tile roof, stuccoed walls, paired rounded windows, balconies, iron brackets, and a parapeted and gently sloped roof line.

This style has some similarities to other homes built on this street between 1875 and the 1920's, but with several differences.

Those who had traveled to Europe had observed many styles built during the Victorian era. They became fascinated to copy architectural styles and features they saw abroad, and the styles created in this country became known as Revival styles, like Colonial Revival, Spanish Revival, and Second Empire.

If you look at the homes on Bloomingdale and in South Wayne, you will see a variety of styles of brackets and frames around doors and windows. All these features became possible, like the details on this apartment building, because of the Industrial Revolution which made possible the mass-production of machine-made building parts at much less cost and in a variety of shapes. So, style of the times and technology both influenced why buildings look the way they do.

As very few homes were built in this particular Spanish Revival style, their roofs, bracket details, and window shapes are all very different.

Across the street on the west side, the homes at 212 and 216 Bloomingdale Ave. were built between 1887 and 1900, and are in a mixture of Victorian and Queen Anne style.

## **The George W. Childs Library**

Greg Prichard

Libraries in Wayne date back to 1809. The existing stone building on Lancaster Avenue was built in 1897 to provide a permanent home for Radnor Library.

A library was a major neighbor of the old Radnor Baptist Church, near the corner of West Wayne Ave. and Conestoga Road. It was one of the area's cultural hubs at the time. In 1897 a stone structure was built on a prime lot on Lancaster Pike. As the stone on top of the building still reads, it was built as a memorial to George W. Childs, the publisher of the Philadelphia Public Ledger and early developer of Wayne. Without Childs and his partner, Anthony J. Drexel, the neighborhoods of North and South Wayne and other Wayne landmarks would not exist as they do today. He had donated the land for the Library and in appreciation the building was named for him.

The town outgrew the building after a few decades, and in 1920 a Childrens' corner was built and in 1948 an extension was added on its west end. In the 1970s the public of Radnor Township pushed for a new building, and in 1980 the present Library was built on West Wayne Avenue. The new library was dedicated as a memorial to soldiers of World War II. The Radnor Memorial Library celebrated its bicentennial of libraries in the Township in 2009.

## **Home Heating in Early Wayne**

Nancy Fischer

The question posed to the participants of the 2008 Mystery History Tour asked why sidewalks in South Wayne during the 1890s were dry in winter. The answer was that the houses built by Drexel & Childs were heated by a central steam plant built by Wendell & Smith Co. This was located on Pennsylvania Avenue on the North side of the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks. The plant's power was provided by the adjacent Burket Coal Company whose huge coal bins were supplied by a siding directly connected to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The steam plant, the building for which still stands, piped steam generated by seven big boilers through pipes located beneath Wayne sidewalks, the heat from which kept them ice and snow free in winter.

There were 93 homes serviced according to the Steam Company's 1928 steam pipe map. These were located on Pennsylvania Avenue (12 houses), Lancaster Avenue (12), Midland Avenue (13), St. Davids Avenue (19), Aberdeen Avenue (17), Louella Avenue (11), Audubon Avenue (4), Windermere Avenue (4), and Summit Avenue (2).

Service was terminated in 1948 because its operations became a losing proposition for the Philadelphia Electric Company.



## **An Oral History of Radnor**

Ms. Marilyn Caltabiano moderated the panel of four senior citizens who had spent their youth in Wayne. Ms. Caltabiano posed questions to elicit their recollections. The entire session was taped and is available on loan from the Radnor Memorial Library.

*Margaret Dolan* (90 yrs) was born in the Gate House of the DeCosta Estate, built in 1892. The stone gate house is all that remains of the estate and has been professionally occupied. It is located at the NW corner of Sproul Road and Lancaster Avenue.

Ms. Dolan's family was part of the Estate's staff, five of whom attended the family and three farmed the land including the dairy. The family depended on the farm to provide fresh food and milk. Ms. Dolan's long hours tending to the production of produce and animal husbandry aroused her life-long interest in biology. Studying biological processes at higher and higher levels of education led to her becoming a professional micro-biologist working for a pharmaceutical company.

She observed first hand the transition from the horse to the automobile. Tending DeCosta's horses as a youth, she was present when one of the first automobiles on the Main Line was purchased and watched as their hired hand drove it and kept it in operating condition.

In the early days groceries were delivered by local farmers who had regular routes around the town. Later groceries could be ordered by telephone and delivered by horse-drawn grocery wagons. On school days, walking to St. Thomas School was expected regardless of snow or blow; discipline there was strict. She recalled dancing class as being a youthful agony.

In her youth Wayne was sparsely populated, and she recalled her feeling of empty spaces as she walked through the surrounding fields.

*George Aman III.* His grandparents settled here in the 1880s. His recollection of Wayne in his youth was of a small town surrounded by huge estates. His family home was on West Wayne Avenue, just a short walk to the first Radnor Library located on Lancaster Pike. It was just a brief walk to capture the latest adventures of Tom Swift. Cub Scouts also met in the Library, but Boy Scout Troop 1 met in their cabin on Lancaster Pike. Children collected at the Wayne Movie Theater on Saturdays. Movies were 10 cents for thrilling serials and group singing accompanied the pipe organ. Miss Atkinson had the dancing class for the really young and later we all graduated to Mrs. Hill's at the Saturday Club. Bicycling was the way of life and he often cycled down Lancaster Avenue with little traffic to avoid.

George's grandfather had been a real estate officer for the Pennsylvania Railroad which naturally led to his father becoming a realtor in Wayne. When the US Post Office opened its doors in Wayne, George bought the first stamps to be sold there.

*Charles Crawford* was born 1945 as the 4th generation of his family in Wayne. His youth was spent on Midland Avenue in a family of five boys. Midland Avenue was famous for its accumulation of water. After a heavy rain the Avenue became the local swimming hole. School was taken in stride, but singing was a bore, especially the all time favorite school sing-along, "Working on the Erie Canal."

The place to be on summer days was Martin's Dam, then a natural pool. He recalled that on really hot days swimming was out because of the threat of polio.

Saturday was movie day, it drew in all the youngsters in town and for 14 cents they enjoyed the featured serials, travelogues, and the Movietone News. The high point of any day was treats at the Rexall soda fountain.

Charles spoke of his charmed childhood and a full life with his faithful friends that made for a stability of youth in marked contrast to today's increasingly transient neighbors.

*Steve Pendergast* (born on the Main Line in 1945) moved with his family to a Wayne home in 1946. He remembered that sidewalks never accumulated snow because of the leaky steam heat lines beneath. This all came to a sudden halt when the steam plant closed in 1948 causing homeowners to scramble for their coal shovels.

Steve recalled that kindergarten in those days was held in the basement of the Radnor School Administration Building under the baton of Mrs. Wisner. When Steve arrived at 5th grade, the leader of the band directed him to play the trombone because he was tall enough to hold it down toward the ground and not bump the boy in front.

Movies were 14 cents at the Bryn Mawr Theater and he rode the P&W to get there. He recalled dancing class at Miss Atkinson's for the 12 to 13 year olds, and then graduating to Mrs. Hill's class at the Saturday Club.

The first family who owned a television set became the popular place to be. The neighborhood kids crowded around its big lens to peer into its tiny picture tube to see the antics of Howdy Doody, a top favorite. Steve was a member of the Cub Scouts who met in the Library and then graduated to the Boy Scout Troop 1 cabin.

## **The Lincoln Highway**

Ms. Melinda Crawford presented a pictorial history of The Lincoln Highway sponsored by the Pennsylvania Humanities Council.

She spoke of Carl Fisher, automobile enthusiast, who created and promoted the extremely successful Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Paved with brick, the race became known as the “Indianapolis 500.” He dreamed of a concrete highway spanning the continent, and called it the “Coast-to-Coast Rock Highway.” Despite his extensive promotion, it was not until Frank Seiberling, president of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, and Henry Joy, president of the Packard Motor Car Company, realizing its marketing potential, became major contributors to initiate the project. Then they began a promotion effort at neighboring states and municipalities along the route to pave the road so that taking a vacation trip on it was really pleasurable. The name “Lincoln” was chosen to give the enterprise an authoritative cachet.

In 1916, The Lincoln Highway Association published The Highway Guide, priced at \$5. The Guide described the towns and major points of interest along its coast-to-coast route. The Guide urged every motorist to pack items to successfully and enjoyably undertake the trip. Such items as extra water, extra gasoline, spare tires, air pumps, sunglasses, blankets, etc, were advised as service stations could be far apart. The Guide was replete with advertisements of where to purchase such necessities as well performing tires, reliable storage batteries, head-lamps, and all-weather clothing. A much enlarged second edition was published in 1924.

In 1928, the Boy Scouts were engaged to place “Lincoln Highway” concrete markers every mile over its 3189 miles of the concrete roadway. The original route began at Times Square, emerged from the Jersey City ferry on to what is now NJ #17 and then to US Route #1 through New Jersey into Pennsylvania. From eastern Pennsylvania it followed the present US Route #30 through Pennsylvania and with a few gaps on to Wyoming. Its route became US Route #40 through Utah, portions of US Route #50 in Nevada, and then returned to #40 on to California. Few of the markers remain in place today.



Historical interest in the highway has gradually gathered momentum and in 1995 the Lincoln Highway Association, with its earlier copyrighted logos, was reactivated. The Association then published a new Guide that provided maps to follow the original route as well as points of historical interest along the route.

Ms. Crawford showed photographs of the rugged early roadways and the early primitive service stations and lodging that faced the first adventurers. She showed how as the route became more popular services were steadily improved, ensuring an enjoyable experience for the highway traveler. Early gas stops had hand pumps often in front of stables. By the 1930s, well-built Shell and Sunoco gas stations provided extensive automotive service.

Photographs were shown illustrating simple, but attractive cabins that were built during the 1930s, some of which still exist. These replaced the over-night accommodations that had been no more than camp sites along the road.

After WWII, the tremendous growth of road travel encouraged investment in one-story “motels.” With steadily improved roads and the opening of the Interstate Highway System, the multistory Holiday Inn and Best Western hotels graced the highways.

Ms Crawford reviewed the blossoming of the eatery. In the very early days there were occasional food carts and stands along the road and sometimes meals were offered by nearby householders. The big improvement came with the retired railroad dining car along the most popular routes, which eventually gave way to specially-built “diners.” In 1925, Howard Johnson introduced its red-roof roadside dining room. In 1933, the first don’t-have-to-get-out-of-your-car drive-in appeared. McDonalds drive-ins began service in 1939. By 1940, the drive-ins numbered over 1400.

Today the Lincoln Highway Association posts information on: [www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org](http://www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org). The Association issues maps and compact discs on how to drive the original Lincoln Highway route with suggested do’s and dont’s for motorists to achieve a satisfying and fascinating trip.

## **Our Lady of the Assumption Church**

**Strafford, PA**

An historical tour of Our Lady of the Assumption Church was led by Ms. Celia Paolantonio and Ms. Christine Gaeto. They reviewed the history of the 82-year old church from its earliest days as a simple gathering of Main Line Italian workers to the founding of the church seen today on Old Eagle School Road.

A growing number of Italians had emigrated to the United States in search of a better life and profitable work. Many planned to return home to their relatives in Italy with their savings, but the opportunity for permanent employment as builders of the Main Line estates and the improving stature of the community led them to stay.

The early community of Italian Roman Catholics desired a worship space and as a start they purchased a small frame building called Strafford Hall. It became their chapel, and was so dedicated June 7, 1908.

With a gift of land from Messrs Drexel and Childs, developers of Wayne, and the purchase of an additional lot of land in 1921, the space for a substantial church and cemetery was in hand.

The Italian community then assembled to build their church. The stone came from the nearby Howellville quarry where many of the parishioners worked, and with their combined experience in building of Main Line homes, they built their church.

The cornerstone was laid on November 20, 1921, and many, many days of labor brought the building to sufficient condition for dedication on the feast day of its patron, Our Lady of the Assumption. On August 15, 1922, the church's dedication was attended by the local Bishop, his Auxiliary Bishop, members of the congregation, and the choir of Wayne's St. Katherine's church.



*Our Lady of the Assumption Church*

Since 1922, the church has been a social center of the Italian community. By the late 1940s, evidence of wear was clear and a massive renovation was begun. The years of labor by the parishioners achieved a completely transformed interior; its dedication took place in August 1950.

Its original function achieved, a church for immigrants, Our Lady of the Assumption now serves the larger community of main-stream America.



## **Historic Landmarks of Philadelphia**

Roger Moss, Adjunct Professor of Architecture, University of Pennsylvania, gave an illustrated talk on his latest book, *Historic Landmarks of Philadelphia*. This is the third book of a trilogy designed to complete a survey of the buildings in Philadelphia whose significant architectural merit deserves respectful attention. His first two books, *Historic Houses of Philadelphia* and *Historic Sacred Places of Philadelphia*, provided the reader not only with a splendid photographic record of the outstanding examples of Philadelphia's architectural heritage, but informed the reader of their reason for being. More than just a common guide book, these books describe the architectural character and utility of these historic buildings, and by providing large scale photographs, emphasize their architecture.

Beginning as a small outpost of the British Empire, émigrés settled on the first dry place above the Delaware River's flood plain. Its strategic location became the foundation for Philadelphia's growth from that of a colonial outpost to eventually becoming an industrial colossus.

The Pennsylvania State House (1732), now Independence Hall, is Philadelphia's signature building and a World Heritage Site. It shares that distinction with Jefferson's Montecello as the only buildings among the 22 World Heritage sites located in the United States. Carpenters Hall (1770-1773), a mid-Georgian building which housed the first Continental Congress, set the Philadelphia style. However, within a few generations the creative bent of succeeding architects brought new designs to the handsome buildings we now appreciate. All of these buildings are important in our architectural history, and 50 of them are featured in Roger Moss's publication.

Co-author Tom Crane, professional photographer, showed the images that were published and discussed the difficulties in using colored film for the first two volumes and the advantages of using digital images for the final volume. He illustrated how each difficulty was resolved to achieve the maximum clarity of each photograph of these magnificent buildings and their interiors so as to provide the reader with unforgettable images of the historic architectural triumphs illustrated in these three books.

## A Christmas Reading by the Finley House Fireplace

Board Member Charles Crawford read Truman Capote's *A Christmas Memory* for the Society's continuing historical observation of Christmas.

*A Christmas Memory* is Truman Capote's personal story of his Alabama country family coping as best they could with preparations for Christmas within their small income.

Capote grew up living with his Mother's relatives in Monroeville, Alabama, as a consequence of divorce. Mostly alone, there he taught himself to read and write before he entered first grade. He reminisces, "I began writing really sort of seriously when I was about eleven. I was obsessed by it." In his mid-teens, Capote moved to New York to live with his mother and her new husband. He started school, but became so disoriented from the experience, he dropped out at age seventeen and got a job with *The New Yorker* magazine. Immersed in his métier, within a few years he was writing regularly for several other publications. During these years Truman Capote developed his unique style and insights into human foibles and frailties which enliven his stories, in for example, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1958).

Charles Crawford has an enthusiastic interest in his subject. He is a veteran of 32 years teaching English and the humanities at Radnor schools and is the author of several books for adolescents.

# 80 YEARS OF THE *Anthony Wayne*

## · T H E A T R E ·

By Greg Prichard

2008 marked the 80th Anniversary of the opening of the Anthony Wayne Theatre. This hub of entertainment in Wayne has a storied history hidden behind the building's distinctive, unforgettable art deco facade. Today, few movie patrons know that it was not Wayne's first movie house, but its impressive architecture and years of memories for Wayne natives makes it possibly the grandest attraction of Wayne's town center.

In order to understand the Anthony Wayne's significance, it is important to know the history of Wayne's earlier motion picture venues.

### **Moving Pictures at the Wayne Opera House (1914)**

The first movies to be shown in Wayne were at the Wayne Opera House located at the corner of Lancaster and North Wayne Avenues. For a short time, brothers George C. and Lawrence Allen operated motion pictures at this venue, which caught fire in December, 1914. The Allens lost their silver screen and a piano in the fire, yet their projection unit was salvaged. Immediately after the fire, movie showings were immediately relocated to St. Katherine's Hall.<sup>1</sup> The first film was shown at St. Katharine's on Tuesday, January 6, 1915, only six days after the fire. The film that Tuesday night was advertised as the continuation of Kathlyn (probably one of the "Adventures of Kathlyn" serials), followed on Thursday by "The Redemption of David Corson" starring William Farnum. Admission was 10 cents Tuesday and Saturday, 20 cents Thursday.

### **The Wayne Theatre (1915-1928)**

The Allens knew that motion pictures were a lucrative business in Wayne, and would only grow in popularity. Not even a month after the fire, the Allens announced their plans for a new movie house in the *Suburban and Wayne Times*.<sup>2</sup> They converted and added to a house on North Wayne Avenue which dated back to the 1880s. At the time, it was occupied by tailor Louis di Ferdinando.

Later the *Suburban* stated that the new theatre would be fireproof, seat 570 and have a stage suitable for shows other than motion pictures.<sup>3</sup> The new theatre's opening occurred June 12, 1915, with two showings of Charles Chaplin's "His New Job," as well as live music by the Sans Pareil Mandolin Club of Wayne.<sup>4</sup> The *Suburban* reported that both shows opening night were filled to capacity, and the shows Monday and Wednesday nights were also well attended.<sup>5</sup>

The Allens ran large weekly advertisements in the *Suburban* listing upcoming shows. Occasionally these ads included pictures of the stars seen in that week's films; in fact, sometimes these were the only pictures in the entire newspaper. The advertisement of October 24, 1919 proclaimed that the theatre was under new management: Edward F. Logan, with partner E.E. Trout. One of the first events at the theatre under Logan was a benefit for the Philadelphia Orchestra's Million-Dollar Endowment Fund on October 27, 1919. A number of music soloists performed at the event.<sup>6</sup>

The Wayne Theatre's commercial success was lagging through the Logan era, prompting a series of changes in quick succession. In the spring of 1922, Logan bought out his partner, E.E. Trout, becoming the sole proprietor of the Wayne Theatre.<sup>7</sup> Shortly after, it was announced that Logan had partnered with Harry Fried and a Mr. Halprin, who together managed several other theatres throughout the state.

It was likely that the purchase of a \$16,000 organ was spurred by the influence of Harry Fried, who, later in his management, was never afraid to spend lots of money on risky ventures. On September 29, 1922, advertising for the theatre listed Harry Fried as manager for the first time. He celebrated his involvement with the Wayne Theatre two years later, when he held an "Anniversary Week," commemorating the two years he had been involved with the theatre.

Throughout its various managements, the Wayne Theatre occasionally held movies and vaudeville shows for local causes, some of which included the *Radnorite* (the Radnor High School newspaper), the Neigh-



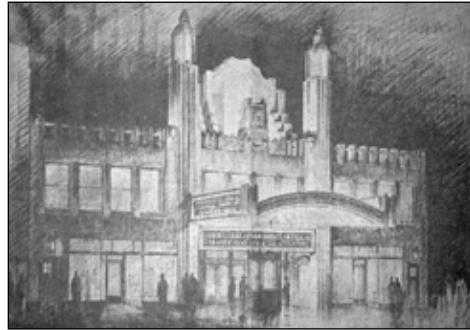
*The Wayne Theatre was located on the west side of North Wayne Avenue.*

borhood League, the Radnor Fire Company, and special benefits such as one following the death of beloved Radnor police officer John Costello in 1925.

The site of the original Wayne Theater is now occupied by a building commissioned by Harry Fried (who kept the property after moving the theatre) at 112-116 North Wayne Avenue. Today this building houses Kids n' Kribs and Reader's Forum on the retail level.

### **The Anthony Wayne (1928-present)**

In order to make his vision of an ultimate theatre a reality, Harry Fried purchased prominent land on Lancaster Avenue from Wayne barber Philip DeMarse. Before laying foundations, stream beds had to be pumped dry on the site.<sup>8</sup> For the new building, Fried chose a fresh name rooted in the very namesake of the town itself: The Anthony Wayne Theatre.



*This rendering of the Theatre by Louis Kahn was printed in the Suburban.*

The Anthony Wayne was of the very latest design, with art deco flourishes, complex brickwork and painted terra cotta details made by the Conkling-Armstrong Terra Cotta Company. The architect was Shamokin, Pa. native William Harold Lee (1884-1971), who throughout his career designed over 200 theaters, including the Seville Theatre in Bryn Mawr, another Harry Fried property.<sup>9</sup> The draftsman for the Anthony Wayne's architectural plans was Louis I. Kahn (1901-1974), who would later become one of the preeminent modernist architects of the twentieth century.

The year 1928 is sometimes referred to as the year "movies began to talk," and Fried, never wishing to be behind the times, recognized this opportunity and made the Anthony Wayne the first functional sound-equipped movie theatre on the Main Line. It was perhaps one of the first in the country as well. Shortly after the dedication, the Western Electric Company proclaimed the Anthony Wayne one of the seven perfect sound theaters in America.<sup>10</sup>

The new building was dedicated on the evening of Wednesday, June 20, 1928. In a *Suburban* newspaper interview, Fried said, "It is a matter of great personal pride to me to dedicate the new Anthony Wayne

Theater to the people of the Main Line. In looking back over my past associations in this community, my start in the little movie house in Wayne, the success of that venture, the building of the beautiful Seville in Bryn Mawr, it gives me a feeling hard to describe in mere words. . . I trust the new Anthony Wayne Theater will be a source of countless happy hours for my legion of friends on the Main Line."<sup>11</sup>

Wayne had seldom seen such an event of community togetherness as the dedication of the Theatre, with lines stretching around the block. Thomas W. Hulme, President of the Radnor Township Board of Commissioners, spoke highly of Fried and his venture at the beginning of the dedication: "This fine audience, Mr. Fried, is evidence of the confidence of this community in your ability to create this beautiful place for their entertainment. I doubt, however, whether many of them know the amount of courage it took for you to invest almost half a million dollars therein. The screen today is a means of education as well as entertainment. This building, therefore, serves a civic purpose, so you have erected for yourself a permanent monument in this community. We all join in wishing you success and prosperity."<sup>12</sup> William A. Wiedersheim then presented Fried with a watch and chain on behalf of the businessmen of Wayne.<sup>13</sup>

The picture being shown at the dedication, "Old San Francisco," was preceded by Movietone news, a series of Vitaphone shorts, and a live organ overture. The interior mirrored the extravagances of the exterior architecture. The entrance had mirrored walls, leading to a foyer with artificial fountains of green tile on either side. The lobby had a large goldfish pond adorned with colorful mosaic. The auditorium boasted 1,600 seats. The theatre soon gained the nickname "Fried's Folly" because its extravagance and location on the edge of the suburbs made many think it would be a failed (and costly) venture.<sup>14</sup> Harry Fried also managed the 1926 Seville Theatre in Bryn Mawr (now the Bryn Mawr Film Institute) and later the 1937 Suburban Theatre in Ardmore's Suburban Square.

Fried's oldest son, Irving (known as "Bud") was eight years old when the Anthony Wayne opened. The day after the theatre's grand opening, Bud toured the building and asked to try out the auditorium's revolutionary sound system. Bud played a Philadelphia Orchestra record on the brand new speakers and was astounded. From that day on, the art and science of sound reproduction became his life's work. Later in life Bud Fried founded Fried Products, a well-respected maker of audiophile-quality speakers, in the pursuit of creating a perfect reproduction of sound.<sup>15</sup>

Under Fried's leadership, the Anthony Wayne survived through the Depression with elaborate contests and displays in the lobby to entice new patrons. Fried managed the Theatre until 1940, when it was taken over by William Goldman.

During the 1950s and '60s some changes were made to the building's appearance. Most noticeably, the marquee and box office were both replaced. The box office was relocated to the west of the entrance and the marquee was replaced with a curved design. At least three major ornamental terra cotta details were removed from the upper facade.

In 1972 Budco Quality Theatres began as managers. In the early 1980s the theatre was divided in two, each auditorium with about 370 seats. Budco was purchased by AMC in 1987.<sup>14</sup>

During the Budco ownership, the Anthony Wayne was briefly threatened with closure, though the cause was a matter of significant debate. The official explanation was fire code violations, although the closure coincided with the showing of an X-rated adaptation of "Cinderella" and the community outcry that followed. In the mid-1970s, financial collapse nearly engulfed the Anthony Wayne, which was unable to purchase first-run films and thus was forced to show unpopular second-run (mostly family-oriented) films. Budco management attempted to spur ticket sales by going to the other extreme. "Cinderella," the 1977 adult adaptation of the fairy tale, was shown briefly at the Anthony Wayne before the building was closed by the Radnor Township fire inspector. The closure, according to the Township, had nothing to do with the X-rated movie or the community's petition. However, the petition may have been the impetus to inspect the theatre for fire code violations.<sup>16</sup> Budco appealed the closing, and implied a township conspiracy.

In the 1970s it was somewhat common for once grand movie theatres of the '20s to become full-fledged porn palaces. Luckily, the Anthony Wayne narrowly escaped this fate.

It's safe to say that the historical significance of the Anthony Wayne was overlooked for a few decades. Behind the poorly maintained, split in half, crumbling relic of the art deco era was a great piece of architecture waiting for its resurrection.



Harry Fried in 1940.

Community efforts, including the 1992 painting "After the Show" by local artist George Rothacker, raised the historic awareness of the Anthony Wayne and promoted its future as a centerpiece of Wayne.

In the mid-1990s, the efforts of groups including the Friends of the Anthony Wayne Theatre were successful, and Clearview Cinemas, a company known locally for the management of the historic Bala Theatre, gained ownership of the Anthony Wayne. Clearview Cinemas currently operates the theatre, with a 30 year lease which began in 1998. Some interior details were uncovered during Clearview's renovation, and are visible today in the lobby and hallways.

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This photograph of the Anthony Wayne appeared in the *Suburban* in 1930.

## **Benefactors**

Peter & Valerie Craig  
John & Nancy Fischer  
Ms. Anne Janson  
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen H. Pendergast  
Mrs. Harrison Therman\*  
Mrs. Helen S. Weary

*\* Deceased*

## **Sustaining Members**

Art & Pat Hartel  
Mr. & Mrs. Joel Jensen  
Mr. & Mrs. John M. Kelleher  
Miss Elizabeth Rowland  
John & Elaine Paul Schaefer

## Patrons

Mr. Stephen W. Bajus  
Don & Mary Ballard  
Mr. David Bashore  
Ms. Jane Beatty  
Peter Benoliel & Willo Carey  
Ms. Maxine F. Brennan  
Douglas & Karen Brown  
The Chanticleer Foundation  
Matthew Dallett & Mary Pritchard\*\*  
Ms. Nancy Davis  
Ms. Kit Carson Donato  
Renata & Bart Harrison  
Mr. & Mrs. J. Bennett Hill, Jr.  
John & Lucy Irwin  
Mr. Joseph W. Kimmel  
Ms. Caroline Y. Lindemann\*\*  
Ms. Alicia Mack  
Ada May F. Maxwell  
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur H. Moss  
Mr. & Mrs. Leo Pierce  
Mr. Edward Pollard  
Ms. Joyce Prichard  
North Wayne Protective Association  
c/o Art Beebe – RHS Class of 1958  
Wayne Public Safety Association  
Dr. Emanuel Schwartz  
Robert & Gloria Sims  
Bill & Cathy Siple  
Dr. John Williams

*\*\* In memory of Jim Dallett*



## **Volunteers – House Sitters 2008**

The following members of the Society have given of their time and provided their knowledge of the Society's collections to the public during the open periods of the Finley House on Tuesday and Saturday afternoons during the year:

John Dale  
Susan DiMeo  
Lynn Ellis  
Samuel Etris  
Evie Giegerich  
Bennett Hill  
Steve Pendergast  
Andrea Pilling  
Cathy Siple  
Sally Spargo



*Ted Pollard and the Conestoga Wagon Team*