

THE BULLETIN
of
RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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No. 8



INCORPORATED APRIL 30, 1948

Headquarters and Museum

THE FINLEY HOUSE
BEECH TREE LANE AND BELLEVUE AVENUE
WAYNE, PENNSYLVANIA

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HELPING RADNOR TOWNSHIP—TODAY AND TOMORROW

Two busloads of local residents toured Radnor Township on April 16 under the auspices of the League of Women Voters. They saw and had explained to them changing patterns of development and population in the township, its school facilities, rural beauties, parks (and lack of them, as well as provision for wild life), sewage disposal and road problems. Our Secretary was one of the speakers.

He told the history of Radnor, of the beginnings of Morgan's Corner, Siterville, Ithanville, Garrettville and Louella, names now forgotten, of early farmers and millers, country gentlemen and land speculators. He pointed out buildings associated with industry, wars, foxhunting, education, religion and the like.

The interest and response was considerable. All felt they better understood present-day problems in the Township in the light of its past development and all realized how quickly a mythical "progress," esthetically barren housing developments and unrealistic traffic statistics are causing their usual disorder in the diminishing of the rural character of our rolling suburban countryside.

The Radnor Historical Society, like other civic organizations, is working for a saner, studied approach to the problems of the Township. It is a "historical society" but it uses a background of the past to help it look forward. We of the Society want the men and women of Radnor Township to KNOW AND ENJOY ITS PAST so they will FIGHT TO PRESERVE ITS FUTURE.

You can learn from us. Your friends can also and we invite them to be members: businessmen and housewives, professional men and school children.

People interested in listening to history, in searching old records, taking photographs, making field trips to local historic spots, recording the reminiscences of their friends, will enjoy the Radnor Historical Society.

Members attend five meetings a year, receive the **Annual Bulletin** and acquire **KNOWLEDGE OF OUR COMMUNITY!**

Enroll your friends now! Annual Membership \$3.00.

Checks may be sent to O. Louis Ehmann, Jr., Treasurer, 123 West Lancaster Avenue, Wayne, Pa. Come to the next meeting!

FORM OF REQUEST

I give and bequeath,
(state items or amount)

absolutely, free and clear of all taxes, unto RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY, for the uses and purposes of said Society.

THE STORY OF WOODSTOCK



WOODSTOCK

Rear facade, showing left, the 1776 house and right, the 1800 addition.

The Continental officer commanding the American picket at "Camp Woods" on Newtown Road in Radnor, above the Friends Meeting House, was delivered a decisively worded letter on the seventh of February, 1778. It came from Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman at Army Headquarters near the Valley Forge and was delivered by the proprietor of "Woodstock," the farm on the hill to the north east of the Meeting House and the Old Lancaster (or Conestoga) Road.

"The Bearer Mr. James Hunter of Philada.," wrote Tilghman, who has been obliged to remove from that place to avoid the British Army is settled upon a small farm belonging to him near the Radnor picket. He complains that the lowest party under your command cut the Wood entirely from his place while there is a sufficiency belonging to the Neighbours. He is satisfied to bear his proportion but thinks it hard that he should be the only sufferer. His Excellency therefore desires that you may see justice done to this Gentleman and only a proportion . . . taken for the use of the picket. As this Gentleman has been obliged to fly from Philada. he has been under the necessity of purchasing provision for the subsistence of his family and as he has already spared the Army a full proportion of what he had laid up for his family it is His Excellency's order that no more provisions be taken from him on any account and wishes that you or the officer who succeeds you may afford him proper protection.

The letter from Valley Forge was no more than just for James Hunter, retired with his family to the farm at Radnor, had served the year before throughout the battles of Trenton and Princeton with the Light Horse of the City of Philadelphia. The First City Troop, of which he was an associator and Second Corporal, helped put new life into the American cause; later in the year Hunter was Paymaster of the Fourth Pennsylvania Battalion.

"Woodstock," the two and a half story fieldstone farmhouse in which the Hunters spent the hard winter of 1778 was then practically new. It was the second house erected on the property which took its name from the forest of white oaks, tulip poplars, black walnuts, black locusts, ash and black oaks, buttonwoods and maples, which adorned it, more profusely then but even now, for the order from Lieutenant Colonel Tilghman left some white oaks, the largest now fifteen feet in girth, a tulip poplar fourteen feet around and a walnut nearly twelve feet around. The "Woodstock" house, later enlarged, stands today as 105 South Spring Mill Road, Villanova, the property of James Hunter's great-great granddaughter, Mrs. Thornton Oakley. Upon the Hunter land north of Conestoga Road were built three more family dwellings standing today ("Woodstock Barn," "Chuckswood" and "Ithantyle") one long since gone ("Pregny") and one important house built by a friend and demolished this year ("Hardwicke"). More recent houses on the land including Mr. Herbert S. Casey's "Okehampton" are not here discussed. The Hunter land south of Conestoga Road, twenty-three acres bordering on Mill Road and known as "The Clearing," was also sold and built upon in recent years but is not of concern to us here.

The 141-acre plantation called "Woodstock" by its purchaser, had been seized for debts against Caleb Evans by the High Sheriff of Chester County who sold it on July 30, 1757, for 240 pounds to "James Hunter, of the City of Philadelphia, Chapman." A small crude house dating from the early days of the Welsh Barony stood near the spring north of the center of the farm whose borders were later marked roughly by the P. & W. Railroad, Spring Mill Road, Conestoga Road and Ithan Avenue. The farm had been granted to a Penn patentee, John Evans (died 1707), a Welsh Quaker. Indian relics dug up on the land speak of an even older occupation.

James Hunter erected his summer dwelling, known today as the "old side" of "Woodstock," immediately contiguous to the south wall of the Evans house, in 1776 as the Revolutionary War opened. Here our story really begins.

The shrewd city merchant who sought a country retreat for his family was born of Scottish stock at Coleraine, County Antrim, in Northern Ireland, in 1729, and as a lad came out to the Province of Pennsylvania. Legend says he landed at New Castle with a bolt of flax on his back but within a few years he was handling Irish stuffs in his Philadelphia shop in Strawberry Alley, aided by his nephew and partner, James Sterling, later Mayor of Burlington, New Jersey. Part of their profits were invested in land and at Hunter's death he held not only "Woodstock," his Second Street residence and other city houses, but a plantation in Fayette County called "Elinor's Fort," a plantation in Northampton County called "Elinor's Choice," three farms on the Susquehanna, property in New Jersey and, with James Sterling, several tracts in western Chester County and a "Fishing, Fowling and Hunting" preserve in the Tinicum marshes.

James Hunter and Elinor Gardiner (1731-1795), for whom he named his western acres, were married in 1764 at the First Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia. Two of their five children grew to maturity, Jane (or Janet), born in 1767, and James, born in 1772. The earliest summers of the children were spent at Radnor.

The house was simple: on each of the two principal stories were two family rooms, heated by large corner fireplaces with heavily panelled and molded chimney-breasts preserved today; the attic story contained sleeping accommodations for servants. The original entrance, at what is today the rear of the house, opened to a locust-edged lane which ran out to the Conestoga Road. Below the house was a spring house which was the source of the tiny stream, Hunter's Run, which still flows into Ithan Creek.

Many of the contents of Hunter's house including a magnificent inlaid mahogany Philadelphia breakfront secretary with its original library, a silver brandy warmer made by Edmund Milne, English Sheraton chairs and a bench painted in red and gold and decorated with torch and harp, and an iron strong box, are owned by Mrs. Oakley today; the secretary, strong box and a mahogany Chippendale desk were subsequently in the study of Hunter's son James in his later house on the farm.

The son, James Hunter, Jr., indeed, left a far greater mark on "Woodstock" than had his father. Put to learn the law, he was admitted to the Philadelphia Bar in 1795 and joined the First City Troop. Upon the death of his father, on February 26, 1796, he inherited the "Woodstock" farm. Here, about 1800, he embarked in the first of three building projects. The old Evans dwelling came down and the Hunter house was permanently enlarged to the north by an addition which provided a pair of new parlors belowstairs and three bedrooms above. The new fan lighted door was at the north side of the house and opened into a wide hall from which rose an open staircase with hand turned banister, more gracious than the cramped, box staircase of the older section. It is probable that the addition was erected by Samuel Morgan, the local carpenter and a director of the Radnor Library Company who, on February 8, 1804, contracted to build a big, new barn for \$180. The excellent fieldstone masonry of the barn was done by Nathan Moore and Jesse Lewis and, the owner recorded in his almanac, Joseph Ratliff dug the cellar and foundations and hauled the earth "to the low parts of the meadow for \$24."

Then, in 1805, Hunter's sister Jane (1767-1831), and her husband Maskell Ewing



THE BRICK HOUSE
(Chuckswood)

Erected 1807. From a photograph of about 1860 prior to alterations.

(1758-1825), a practicing attorney who served as Clerk of the New Jersey Legislature, moved from Trenton to Radnor to make "Woodstock" their permanent home. James Hunter subsequently built a new summer house for himself and wife on the northern edge of the land, a two and a half story brick house, of three bays on the four sides, in the Federal style. Its date stone is 1807. Oblong, countersunk panels of white marble ornamented the facade beneath the windows of the second story; the upper shutters were dark and the lower white. He called the new place by the old name, "Woodstock," and the Ewing house became known as "Woodstock Vale." The Hunters summered at the brick house and occasionally made winter visits; they were there for Christmas, 1829.

Educated, urbane Maskell Ewing quickly assumed a position of leadership in the life of the rural township. He was elected to the Pennsylvania Senate for six years in March, 1815, and commissioned a Justice of the Peace for Radnor on June 10, 1822. An invitation preserved at "Woodstock" today lists Maskell Ewing, Charles McClenachan, Hugh Jones and John Curwen, Jr., as Managers of a "Ball on Valentines evening" of 1810 at Elisha Moore's Inn, the White Horse, at Radnor. Ewing's Calvinist household worshipped at the Lower Merion Baptist Church (when the Marple Presbyterian Church opened, Uncle and Aunt Hunter drove to services there during the summer) and visited their closest neighbors and friends, the Penn-Gaskills at "Ashwood," the Curwens at "Walnut Hill," the Worralls, the Rudolphs at "Belle Aire" and the Thomson-McClenachan family at "Harriton."

The venerable Charles Thomson, first secretary of the Continental Congress, made a special favorite of young Elinor Hunter Ewing, seventeen when her family moved to Radnor. He possessed an antediluvian yellow coach of enormous proportions and when driving to Philadelphia liked to take Elinor along for company. On one occasion the derisive boys in the city street, seeing the spectacle lumber by, cried, "Here's Noah's Ark," at which a white fringed head stuck out the window. "And here's Noah," he retorted.

Elinor's elder brother, a graduate of Princeton, practiced medicine in Philadelphia but died early; two sisters married and left for Kentucky and New Jersey, but in 1819 she became the bride of George Fisher Curwen and went to live across the new Lancaster Turnpike at "Walnut Hill." The youngest of the family, Maskell Cochran Ewing, was born at "Woodstock Vale" in 1806. He graduated at West Point in 1826, made a European Grand Tour, and entering the army, resigned in 1836 as First Lieutenant in the Fourth Artillery to serve as an engineer on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. He married Cornelia Lansdale, of "Bloomsbury," near Havre de Grace.

When James Hunter died in 1849, a life tenancy in "The Brick House" went to the widow, Margaret (Benedict) Hunter (1791-1865) with ultimate remainder of the entire estate to the widow and four surviving children of his nephew, because Maskell Cochran Ewing died a month before his uncle.

The children of the fourth generation then came home to the older house, "Woodstock Vale" (the "Vale" was not dropped from the name for some three decades more). James Hunter Ewing (1842-1922) and his spinster sister, Cornelia Lansdale Ewing lived most of their lives in "Woodstock"; Louisa Bell Ewing (Mrs. Albert Horatio Gallatin) and Maskell Ewing (1847-1931) are identified with other houses on the property.

J. Hunter Ewing took an agricultural course at the Philadelphia Polytechnic College, was apprenticed on his Curwen cousins' farm and in 1861 was raising cattle, sheep and grain at "Woodstock" and enjoying the peaceful, rural pleasures the place afforded. He planted a new orchard and grafted trees and roses. His "Daily Journal"

for that year tells of shooting hawk, crow, lark and partridge, of playing quoits with young Horace Binney Hare whose father then rented "The Brick House," of driving his younger sister of a wintery morning in the sleigh to share lessons with the Levi Morris children on the Gulph Road, of attending church at Old St. David's (for the lad's Maryland mother was Episcopalian). Trains were met either at Villa Nova or at White Hall, sister Lou went to town to a ball given by their Radnor neighbors, the Misses Brown of "Vanor," and the two girls, when they wanted to be weighed, had to go to Brooke's Mill along with the rye. A red letter day was May 25 when a 65-foot flagpole was raised at "Walnut Hill," an even more exciting day than July 9 when, on a rare trip from home, the young farmer somewhat sarcastically recorded a memorable moment:

Clear. Went to Washington in the morning, after taking a bath in the Eastern Branch, we went to Mr. Carroll's where we were warmly received. Went to the President's Levee in the evening with Miss Bessie & Sallie Harwood where I had the honor!! of shaking hands with "Old Abe." Staid at the Carroll's all night.

On only one remembered occasion did danger come close to "Woodstock." When J. Hunter Ewing was young, the shingle roof of the old house caught fire. The flames were seen by the priests at the Augustinian College which occupied the old "Belle Aire" estate at Villanova. They sent a group of students on the run up the Spring Mill hill. A bucket brigade was formed to the springhouse and the house was saved.

Although J. Hunter Ewing subsequently became a partner in the Philadelphia banking house of Townsend Whelen & Co. (his wife was Hannah Chase Whelen), the life he loved was in the country. In 1865 he was one of fifteen young men who met at "Glenays," the house of Richard R. Montgomery, near White Hall, to form a local cricket club, the plan having been conceived by his brother Maskell and young William Woodrow Montgomery while hiking in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The game was already being played at Haverford College and at Dr. Lyons' school at Rosemont. Now, encouraged by the Ewing brothers and Montgomery, the Merion Cricket Club was born; in 1876 J. Hunter Ewing served as its President. Ewing gave service to Radnor Township as School Director in 1879 and as a Judge of Elections. In 1886 he was a founding member of the Radnor Hunt, which established a clubhouse on the old Yarnall farm on Darby-Paoli Road. Later, he was Accounting Warden of the Church of the Redeemer, Bryn Mawr.

Maskell Ewing likewise took an active part in Radnor affairs. He led in the formation of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Rosemont, in 1869, soon after leaving the University of Pennsylvania, and was elected to its first vestry. Married to a sister-in-law of A. J. Cassatt, who owned the charter of the Lancaster Turnpike, Ewing was a founder of the "Lancaster Avenue Improvement Association." He was one of the organizers of the Bryn Mawr Horse Show, active in the Bryn Mawr Polo Club and at seventy was described as "still an athlete."

"The Brick House" at "Woodstock" had been let in the early 1860's, at the end of Aunt Hunter's lifetime, to Judge J. I. Clark Hare and his family and for many years subsequently to Joseph Pancoast Smith, a cousin of the Ewings' cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Chew Sterling, of Trenton. Then came other Philadelphians as tenants including the John Thompson Lewis family (they were there in 1876) and in the mid-eighties, Adolphe Borie and his family. Maskell Ewing tried living in it for a year but the house, enlarged in the third story by half timbered dormers and to which a heavy verandah decorated with wrought iron had been added, was found to be too expensive to run. It was again leased for some years, through the 1890's, to Malcolm Lloyd and

his family. Thomas Paton bought it in 1902. "The Brick House" was sold to John H. Packard and in 1914 acquired and handsomely restored by Mr. and Mrs. Charles C. Harrison, Jr. As "Chuckswood," it remains the home of Mrs. Harrison. It is the finest early nineteenth century brick house in the Township.

Maskell Ewing, dissatisfied with "The Brick House," returned to "Ithantyle," the house he had built on five acres of land on Spring Mill Road. "Ithantyle" was designed about 1883 by architect Allen Evans of the firm of Furness, Evans & Co. (Frank Furness, Allen Evans, Louis C. Baker, E. James Dallett) which during that decade secured scores of commissions for country houses in Radnor and gave the area much of its eclectic character. Of grey stone construction, its traditional design was varied by a frame third story which employed grey clapboarding edged in a scallop pattern, a frame rear wing and a ponderous verandah on two sides. "Ithantyle," somewhat altered, today is the attractive house of Mr. G. W. Hornsby, 199 South Spring Mill Road, Villanova.

Immediately adjoining "Ithantyle" to the south were stone quarries operated by Charles B. Quigley, who succeeded Anderson Kirk as owner of the Sorrel Horse Tavern which stood below, on Conestoga Road, just off the "Woodstock" land. Quigley neglected to smother the blasts in the quarry and when a huge rock fell through the roof into the Ewing nursery, the neighbors succeeded in closing the quarry.

During 1884, land was sold by the Estate on the Conestoga Road and Ithan Avenue lines of the property. Old Mrs. Ewing's daughter and son-in-law, the Gallatins of New York, who had been visiting in the old house when their son Albert Eugene Gallatin — he wose great collection of twentieth century art is in the Philadelphia Museum — was born in 1881, bought the Ithan Avenue property, six acres. A stone and frame house was built for them in 1885 by Allen Evans. Called "Pregny," the structure incorporated a pseudo French Norman hipped roof rising between a pair of towering chimneys. Like "Ithantyle," the house was cloaked by a heavy verandah, ascent to which was had by several steep flights of seven steps, which shielded the stonework of the first story. After a few years residence, "Pregny" was rented to Captain Cliperton, the British Consul in Philadelphia (known in the neighborhood for his pack of dogs who accompanied him everywhere) and later to Mrs. Felicia Dallett Frishmuth before it was demolished. It made way for the handsome residence of George H. McFadden, for which Clarence Zantzinger was architect; the house, now the home of Mrs. Caroline McFadden Ewing, is designated as 200 Ithan Avenue, Villanova.

Henry Laussat Geyelin bought eighteen acres of wooded land and his large grey stone Gothic gabled house, "Hardwicke," was erected on Conestoga Road, designed also by Allen Evans. Paton, who later purchased "Chuckswood," was Geyelin's brother-in-law. "Hardwicke," recently removed, will be the site of several new split-level houses.

Old "Woodstock" passed to J. Hunter Ewing when his mother's estate was divided in 1907 and when he later spent the winters in town, continued to be his summer home. In 1922 it was inherited by his daughter Amy, Mrs. Thornton Oakley. With Mr. Oakley's collaboration, architect George Bispham Page made interior alterations and improvements in 1931.

The Oakley grandchildren, visiting at "Woodstock" today, represent the seventh generation of the family on the property since James Hunter's purchase, 201 years ago. When the seventh generation comes to "Woodstock," they drive up Spring Mill Road and down the lane laid through natural woods, towards the familiar white pebble-dash stuccoed house of five bays, bearing faded green shutters and the date



MASKELL EWING
(1758-1825)

From a pastel portrait by Sharples

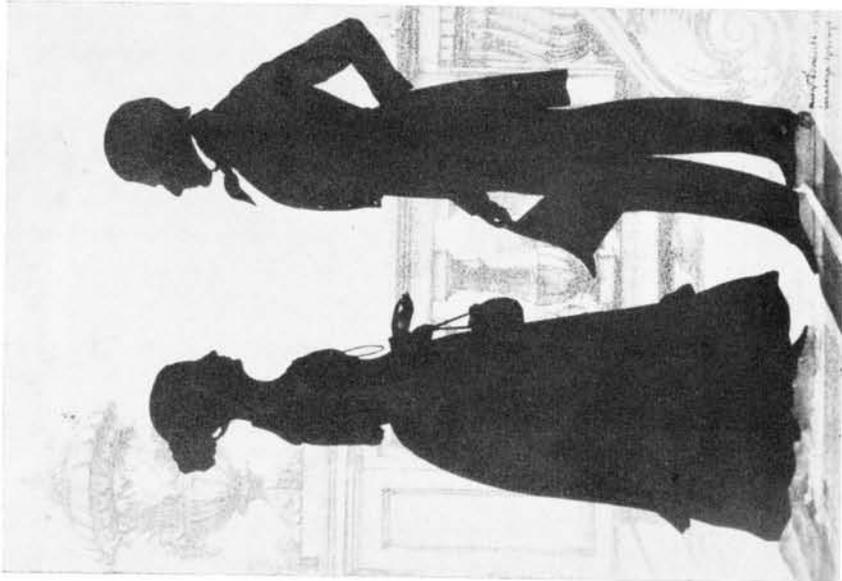


MRS. MASKELL EWING
(Jane Hunter, 1767-1831)

From a pastel portrait by Sharples



MRS. GEORGE FISHER CURWEN
(Elinor Hunter Ewing)
From a portrait by unknown artist about 1815



MR. and MRS. MASKELL COCHRAN EWING
at SARATOGA SPRINGS, 1840
From a silhouette by Edouard

stone, "JEH 1776." They first turn east, however, towards the fieldstone, oak timbered barn of 1804, for here, in "Woodstock Barn," Mrs. Oakley now makes her home.

Her gifted artist husband, working with architect Page, redesigned the barn as a house and studio in 1926. The old barnyard which it faced became a walled perennial and box garden, edged with cedars. The barn contains the possessions of two centuries of family life at "Woodstock." Here too are many evidences of a life of achievement and artistic creativity by Thornton and Amy Oakley, including the original illustrations drawn by the artist for the series of travel books written by his wife. These pictures brought the life and color of foreign countries to a wide reading public and earned for Thornton Oakley, among many other honors, two bestowed by the government of France, the Palmes d'Officier d'Academie and the dignity of Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur.

Mr. and Mrs. Oakley were enthusiastic incorporators of the Radnor Historical Society in 1948 and he designed the seal of the Society. At Mr. Oakley's death in 1953, the Society received from his wife its chief treasure, a completely equipped Conestoga Wagon. The Conestoga Wagon remains, until the Society has its permanent home, at "Woodstock." Nothing could be more appropriate, for this vehicle repeats the once popular and now permanent name of its chief route to the west, the Conestoga Road. It was on the Conestoga Road that James Hunter must have ridden when he brought the long-ago order to the Radnor picket to save the beautiful trees surrounding the now ancient house which we admire and enjoy today.

FRANCIS JAMES DALLETT

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ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY, 1957 - 1958

May 15, 1957

A medley of beautiful Oriental Export porcelain filled the house of Mr. and Mrs. Richard W. Barringer, of Radnor, at the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Society to which Elinor Gordon, Villanova Collector-Dealer, spoke on "Lowestoft." Mrs. Gordon's remarks were accompanied by Kodachrome slides and she identified the examples of the porcelain brought by the many members attending.

Elected to fill vacancies on the Board of Directors were Theo B. White, *vice* Mrs. Charles W. David, resigned, and Professor Lee N. Allen, *vice* Herman P. Lengel, resigned. Reelected to the Board for a three-year term, in addition to Messrs. White and Allen, were Herbert S. Casey, Richard W. Foster and P. Nicholson Wood.

At a meeting of the Board of Directors held following the meeting Miss Robbins was elected President; Mr. Vaux, Vice President; Mr. Dallett, Recording Secretary; Father Dunne, Corresponding Secretary; Mr. Ehmann, Treasurer.

October 12, 1957

The Society's fall outing was a motor trip to New Castle, the old provincial capital of Delaware. The expedition from Radnor took a picnic lunch, planned by Mrs. Edward W. Westhead, Chairman of Hospitality, on Delaware Bay overlooking the old packet ship landing. Mr. Theo B. White addressed the group on local architecture and many of the fine eighteenth-century brick houses, churches and public buildings which adorn the once-bustling port were visited.

November 10, 1957

A tea at the Memorial Library of Radnor Township opened the exhibition in the Library of fine, large photographs of old buildings in the area taken by Miss Robbins and Mr. and Mrs. Vaux. The exhibition remained for two weeks in the Library which now houses the bound books belonging to the Society.

Mrs. Gertrude Ware Case, newly appointed Curator, took charge of the Society's collection of manuscripts, pamphlets, photographs and artifacts, deposited in the Headquarters room in the Finley house.

January 14, 1958

Continuing the architectural theme of the season, the Reverend John J. Vrana, O.S.A., discussed "The Architectural Development of Villanova University" at a meeting held in the University Library on one of the wettest nights of the season. Father Vrana's slides and remarks described the Villanova buildings starting with John Rudolph's country house, "Belle Air," through the Victorian "Collegiate Gothic" structures created by architect Edwin F. Durang to the steel and concrete buildings of today.

The resignation from the Board of William F. Machold was accepted and Mrs. Gertrude Ware Case was appointed to fill his unexpired term as Director.

April 21, 1958

Paul Jones, editorial writer of "The Evening Bulletin," spoke on the life of George W. Childs, newspaperman and developer of Wayne, at a meeting held at St. Aloysius Academy, Bryn Mawr, formerly "Wootton," the mansion built for Childs in 1881 by John McArthur, architect of the Philadelphia City Hall.

The meeting originally planned for March 19, was rescheduled because of the great storm. Interesting Childs memorabilia was loaned by a relative, Mrs. Louis D. Peterson, of St. Davids. A large audience expressed appreciation for the hospitality of Mother Mary Esther and the Sisters of the Academy who conducted guests on a tour of the brick-and-timber Tudor style house.

Members of the Board raised the subscription for a two-year membership in The National Trust.



RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM DAVIS HUGHS

At Wayne about 1884

This Revolutionary dwelling, originally the home of the Cleaver family, was purchased by Mr. Hughs in 1878. It stood near the site of "Woodlea," the house of William Wood, now the Caley Nursing Home, bordered by Lancaster, Wayne and West Avenues.

NEW MEMBERS

since our last printed list

Lee N. Allen

Mrs. Dwight S. Coons

Harold D. Greenwell

A. T. Haakinson

Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Hompe

Miss Gladys C. Lawton

Mr. and Mrs. Alfred F. Meyers

I. Wistar Morris

Miss Mary H. Obyke

Miss Ruth P. Orme

Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Peirson

George Brooke Roberts

Harrison Taylor

Mrs. Richard Tunis

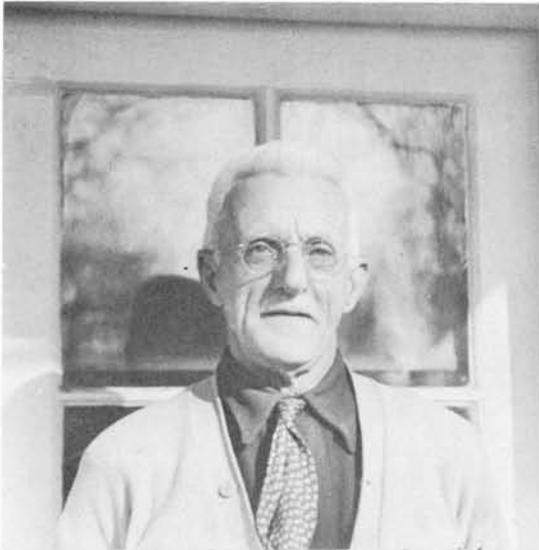
Dr. John Wallace Watt

Theo B. White

James H. Wilkes

HERMAN P. LENGEL: "JOBGING CARPENTER"

The Herman P. Lengel Company, at 250 Conestoga Road, Wayne, advertises itself as "Jobging Carpenters For Three Generations." The firm, now celebrating its seventieth year as builders and carpenters in Radnor Township, is headed by Herman P. Lengel, who in 1948 was a charter member of this Society and who served as one of its Directors from 1948 to 1957. The story of the Lengel family seems particularly appropriate to our 1958 Bulletin for the programs of the Society during this season have been almost entirely devoted to architectural themes. The influence of the Lengel family on the building trade in Radnor Township has been considerable and we record here not only this association but the background of a two and a half centuries residence in Pennsylvania before they came, with other persons of diverse origins and occupations, to settle in Wayne. Here is the story as Herman Lengel told it to me.



HERMAN P. LENGEL

Jonathan Lengel, the builder who established the family here in 1888, came of Berks County stock, from the country of the "Pennsylvania Dutch." His ancestors, Paulus and Johann Lengel, unable to worship as they wished in the Black Forest region of Germany, crossed the Atlantic in 1737, only to be met, in Philadelphia, so tradition has it, by men "with drawn swords and muskets" who conducted them out of town along the old Ridge Road to a settlement just beyond modern Reading. The legend, reliable or no, indicates that the Quakers were anxious to preserve the character of the city and wished German-speaking settlers to live elsewhere. Johann Lengel eventually went even farther west of his own accord and was killed by Indians. Paulus remained in Berks County and prospered. He married and had ten sons and one daughter. Seven sons served in the Continental Army and one of them remained in the South after Yorktown. John, the eldest, was baptized by the Reverend Mr. Schultz, who was associated with the Lutheran congregation at Eagle, indicating an early bond between Germans north and south of the Schuylkill River.

Paulus or Paul Lengel died in 1786, having made a will shortly before his death. A copy of this document, together with another will made by Stephen Lengel in the next generation, is in Herman Lengel's possession. They reveal much of the history of the family. The Lengels had acquired land in Tulpehocken and Heidelberg Townships. They were all farmers. The wills show a desire to divide property equally among the children with a small token to the eldest of his birthright and at the same time a wish to keep certain property together. The sons were to bid among themselves for the home farm and the proceeds then to be divided. Ample provision was made for the widow and all details of her rights to a room in the farmhouse and in certain animals and crops was outlined carefully.

Stephen Lengel was the fifth son of Paul. He married Elizabeth Reath whose father had fought with Washington. Their son Adam Lengel was the father of Peter who was Herman P. Lengel's great-grandfather. Grandfather James Monroe Lengel married a Dunkelberger, also of Revolutionary stock. At least one member of the family fought at Gettysburg. Grandfather Lengel was a carpenter-draftsman and worked among the Pennsylvania Dutch for a year as an apprentice without pay, for a year for "what he was worth" and then for a year "on the road" as a journeyman, getting experience.

Jonathan Lengel, Herman's father, worked in Philadelphia as a young man for an Irish contractor. Hearing, however, of opportunities in the new suburban communities developing along the "Main Line" of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Jonathan went to Devon and worked with McCone. In 1888 he came to Wayne and built for himself a house at 236 North Aberdeen Avenue, then a dirt country lane. Here, Herman P. Lengel and his twin brother were born. Eight months later the family moved; in 1897 they went to live in the house still occupied by Mr. Lengel. Jonathan Lengel was active in Masonic affairs and in the Radnor Volunteer Fire Company. Of most interest to us, however, is the list of local buildings which he and his sons erected:

The George W. Childs Library (now called the Memorial Library of Radnor Township), the Saturday Club, the Masonic Hall, the Waynewood Hotel (now the Presbyterian Church House), the Radnor Fire House, the Central Baptist Church and its adjoining parsonage, the main house, entrance lodge, log cabin and water wheel at "Walmarthon," the St. Davids estate of Charles S. Walton (now the Eastern Baptist College), "Waldheim," the residence of William Henry Sayen at Walnut Avenue and Radnor Street Road, Wayne (now owned by Valley Forge Military Academy) for which David Knickerbacker Boyd was architect, "Fairhill," the house of Mrs. Thomas Harvey Dougherty on Maplewood Road, Wayne, which was built for Vicomte Louis de Branges de Bourcia, the East Lancaster Avenue store of the late Ira Vanson Hale and Mr. Hale's residence (now the Radnor Township Police Headquarters), the house of Carl H. Wetzel at 214 South Wayne Avenue, Wayne, a home for H. O. Hildebrand at 320 Louella Avenue (recently Edward H. P. Fronfield), the present Mrs. Charles C. Lister, Jr., house at 473 St. Davids Avenue and the McCloud house two doors west of it, the Muller house at Chamounix Road and Cornwall Lane, St. Davids (Francis Gugert, architect; built for Edward Laurent) and the brick and half timbered house on Fairview Road to the right of the "Walmarthon" entrance built for Arrott (D. K. Boyd, architect).

In addition, the firm constructed a row of eight houses on the north side of Poplar Avenue, Wayne, between Woodland Avenue and Radnor Street Road, the barn of the W. H. Finley property at Beech Tree Lane and Bellevue Avenue, Wayne (where the Radnor Historical Society has its headquarters), and a two-story steel-and-concrete addition to the Broomall Convalescent Hospital. Jonathan Lengel and his sons worked much farther afield than Radnor Township. In 1907, the Wayne Estate, then under the management of Fred H. Treat, started a development at Alexandria, Virginia. Jonathan Lengel hired a team of men who went to Virginia to build the houses in which the local real estate firm had invested. For R. H. Johnson, of Wayne, James Lengel, Jonathan's son, built a house in Valadero, Cuba, and thereby hangs a tale worth telling. The 1936 hurricane which started in the Caribbean destroyed the Lengel-built Johnson residence in Cuba, swept up the coast to New England and badly damaged two summer houses at Wareham on Buzzard's Bay likewise built by the Lengels for two Wayne families, Houghton and Williams!

Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Lengel had a large family. Randall died when nine years

old and Frederick from the effects of gas while a soldier in World War I. Minnie, the only daughter, married J. Harold Hallman, President of the Wayne Title and Trust Company. Stuart attended Radnor High School and Pennsylvania State College, was employed by Westinghouse in Pittsburgh and now lives in Buffalo, New York. James Lengel, Herman's twin, left Wayne at seventeen, studied at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and is now a pharmacist at Phoenixville. He served in World War I in a professional capacity and always regretted he did not see active service. John, a builder, lives in Wayne as does Grover, who is connected with the Iron Works.

Herman P. Lengel attended school at Radnor long before the new buildings went up and graduated from the High School in 1909 when it was in the Masonic Building next to the Fire House. He served on the Pacific Coast during World War I and then returned to Conestoga Road and to his work as a jobbing carpenter. His mother, Louise M. Lengel, first interested him in history and in collecting photographs of old Wayne, many of which are now in the Society's headquarters. He keeps up his interest in history but has dropped his active role in Township politics. His chief hobby is shooting and he goes to an island off Cape Charles for his share of brant geese and ducks every winter. On Herman Lengel's walls are no less than five prints by A. B. Frost, the popular Victorian illustrator who lived in Wayne in Lengel's youth. Two of these show the happy and unhappy hunter on a wet and on a fine day. The others are of upland shoot-



JONATHAN LENGEL

Built 236 North Aberdeen Avenue for his family in 1888.

ing scenes. Mr. Lengel says that Mrs. Frost helped color the prints when Mr. Frost's sight became impaired.

To sit and talk with Herman Lengel is great fun. He has many amusing memories. His father hired a boy from Virginia about the beginning of the century and the family was astonished when they found the lad had voted in the elections, although a resident only a few months and still under age. He was paid one dollar for his vote by the Republicans, says Lengel. A fine collection of old hand tools can be seen in the Lengel workshop above the family house, but Mr. Lengel considers modern machine tools an improvement over them in speed and precision. In the same shed a map screening expert produced the 4x8 safety glass screen used by American forces for bombing Hiroshima. During the Second World War the H. B. Fowler Company had a plant in the Lengel garage where radium dials were printed. The air in the building was changed every ten minutes and the building was tested every three months for radium count. Most of the radium plants in the country were closed because they could not keep radium under control. Lengel and his associates, however, devised a recipe of "soap, water and elbow grease" which worked perfectly in the radium clean-ups and their shop remained open.

Although the Wayne branch of the Lengels no longer speak German they retain the Reformed Lutheran faith. In Berks County there are still cousins speaking Pennsylvania Dutch. The clan, four hundred strong by now, has contributed many enterprising citizens to the development of Pennsylvania; Radnor Township owes much of its physical appearance to the industry of Jonathan Lengel and his sons. A family of this kind represents a significant illustration both of American history and of the elements that make Radnor Township interesting to the sociologist and historian as well as to its inhabitants.

CAROLINE ROBBINS

The following is one of many unique broadsides and pamphlets in the collection of the RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

RADNOR WORKING MEN'S CLUB.

1877.

Winter Entertainments.

-
- January 18. BALLIGOMINGO Bell Ringers (Wayne Hall Lyceum),
Admission, 25 Cents.
- " 25. READINGS—Club Meeting.
- February 1. LECTURE, "Early English History,"
Mr. W. W. Montgomery.
- " 8. LECTURE, "Mistakes," Mr. J. Henry Smythe.
- " 15. CONCERT, BURLINGTON QUARTETTE (Wayne Hall
Lyceum). Admission, 25 Cents.
- " 22. SPELLING BEE.
- March 1.
- " 8. STEREOPTICON EXHIBITION, "Views in Venice
and other places," Mr. Samuel Wagner, Jr.
- " 15. LECTURE with experiments, "Chemical Wonders,"
Mr. T. D. Rand.
- " 22. LECTURE, "American Statesmen," Mr. Rowland Evans.
- " 29. ("Holy Thursday.") No ENTERTAINMENT. Service at
Church of Good Shepherd.
- April 5. LECTURE (Subject not given). Rev. Dr. H. P. Hay.
- " 12. READINGS from Shakespeare,
Members of Club and others.
- " 17. CONCERT, Members of Choirs of Church of the Re-
deemer and Church of the Good Shepherd.
- " 24. CLUB REUNION (Place of Meeting not chosen).
-

The above entertainments, except when otherwise specified, will be held at the School House, Morgan's Corner. Admission 15 Cents, except to members of the Club and their families. Hour of commencement, 7.30 P. M.



THE OLD SPRINGHOUSE

*On the property of William Davis Hughs, Lancaster Avenue, Wayne.
The site is now D'Amicantonio's Shoe Store.*

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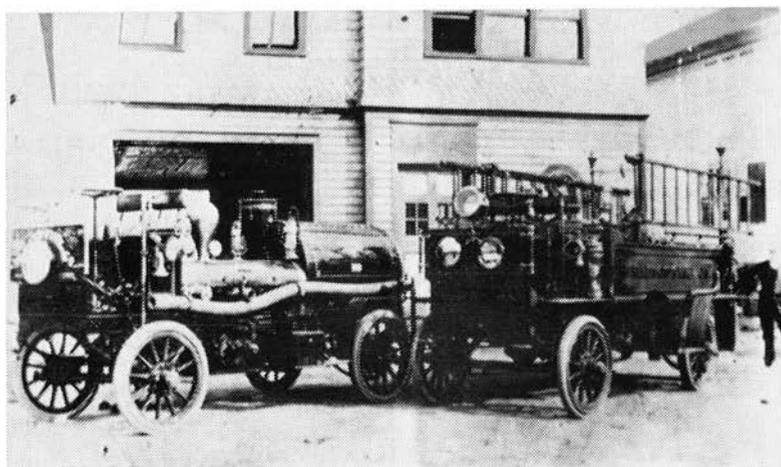
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WAYNE, PA.

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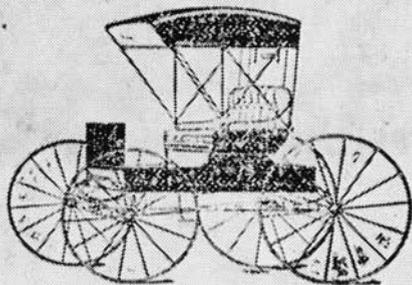
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