

# ***THE BULLETIN***

*of the*

## RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

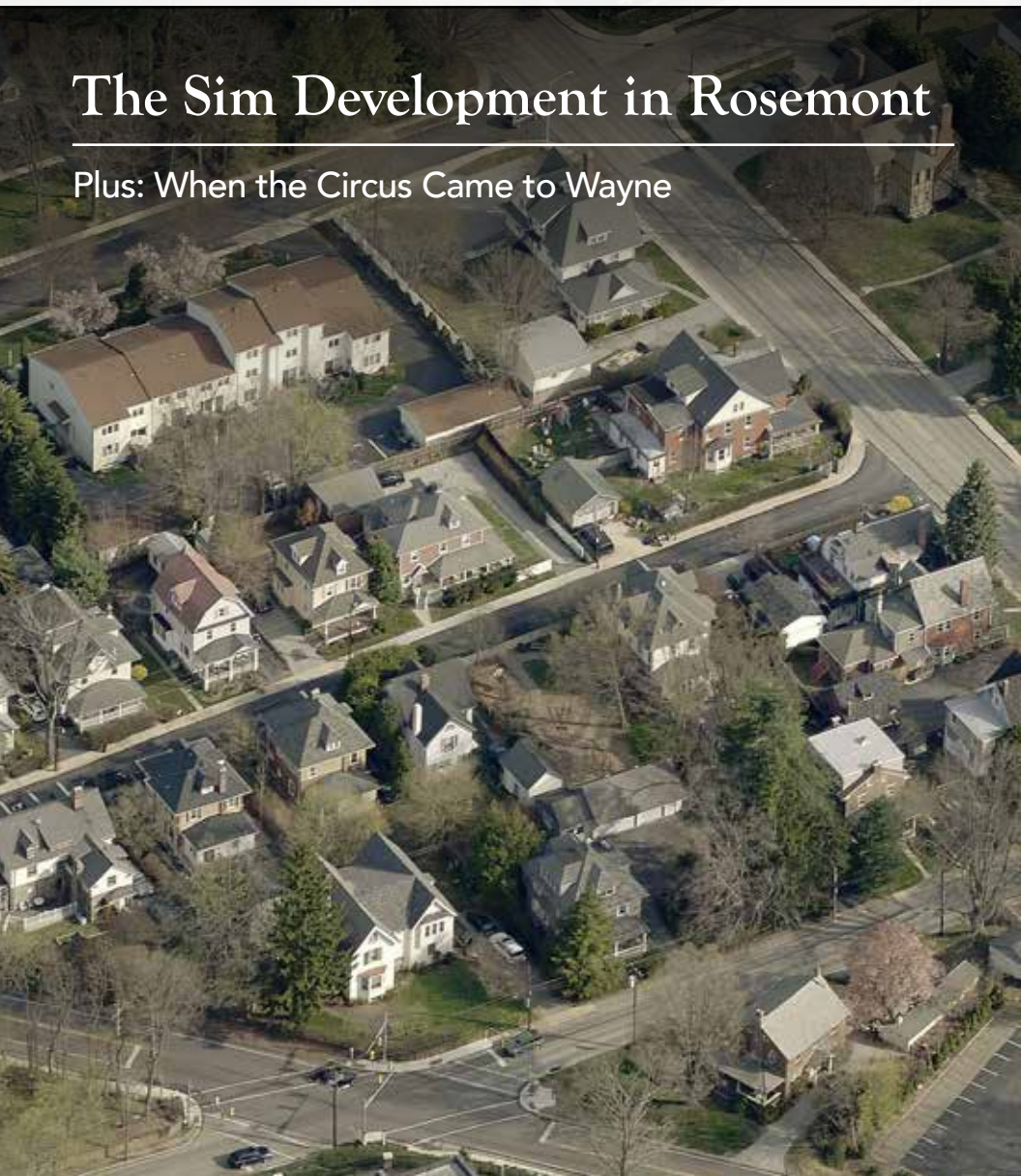
VOLUME VII

2020

No. 10

### The Sim Development in Rosemont

Plus: When the Circus Came to Wayne



*“The Radnor Historical Society is committed to preserve, protect, present, and promote the history of Radnor Township.”*

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The Bulletin of the Radnor Historical Society has been printed annually and distributed to members of the Society since 1950. Today, each issue is compiled after its cover date, so that reports on the Society's programs and developments correspond with the year shown on the cover.  
This issue was printed in March, 2022.

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## On the Cover

A 2014 aerial photograph of the Sim development, bounded by Conestoga Road (bottom) and County Line Road (upper right) divided by Montrose and Petrie Avenues.

*(Courtesy of Eagleview)*



# THE BULLETIN OF THE RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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INCORPORATED APRIL 30, 1948

*HEADQUARTERS AND MUSEUM*

THE FINLEY HOUSE  
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# THE BULLETIN

VOLUME VII, NUMBER 10

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Digital editions of previous *Bulletins*  
can be found on our website:  
[www.radnorhistory.org/bulletin](http://www.radnorhistory.org/bulletin)

## Editor's Note

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# At 75, the Society Looks Ahead

**T**he year documented in this issue was one of the most unusual in our history. Because of the global pandemic, the Finley House had to close to visitors for an extended period, our in-person programs had to be canceled, and life as we knew it changed all around us.

Thankfully, we learned to adapt quickly. Our “Your Radnor Story” online form gave our friends a new way to contribute to our archive. The Radnor Memorial Library, with the help of Adult Programs Director Pam Sedor, jumped into the Zoom age to bring live programs into the homes of our followers. And more work than ever was done behind the scenes with our archives that we look forward to sharing with you.

Today, in 2022, the Finley House is back open at our usual Tuesday and Saturday afternoon hours. We’re looking forward to exciting updates to our interior museum spaces as we continue to enjoy the breathtaking new exterior restoration of our longtime home. And as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Radnor Historical Society, we are planning to bring back a yearly tradition by holding our long-delayed Annual Dinner at the Saturday Club in May 2022 (see page 37 for more information).

We’ve been through uncertain times before, as we will undoubtedly remember as we dine in a space used as a community infirmary during the 1918 Spanish Flu outbreak. We’ll be thinking about how history will remember the extraordinary past few years and what will have resulted from the necessary life changes of the early 2020s. We have welcomed the fact, for example, that we can come into your homes virtually for live programs, but we will also be reminded of how good it feels to be together in person.

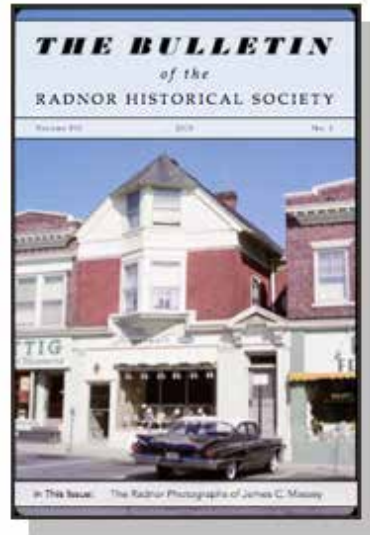
We look forward to what our next 75 years will bring, and we thank you for joining us on the journey! **RB**

## James C. Massey

We were saddened to learn of the November, 2021 passing of past RHS Board Member James C. Massey, who most recently resided in Winchester, Virginia.

Educated as an architect at the University of Pennsylvania and as a planner at the University of Virginia. In 1964 Jim was appointed Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the National Park Service. Among the Philadelphia-area buildings he photographed were works by architect Frank Furness, whose creations were being rapidly demolished at the time. Jim was one of the first historians to recognize the importance of Furness's work, about which in 1963 he wrote a pair of articles for *Charette* magazine published by the Pittsburgh Architectural Club.

Jim lived in a historic twin at 206 Gulph Creek Road when he joined the RHS board in 1962. For the 2015 *Bulletin*, Jim wrote: "I was introduced to the Radnor Historical Society by my friend Francis James Dallett, who was deeply involved in local history." Massey's photography skills were put to good use during his five-year tenure at RHS. For the *Bulletin*, his photographs of recently lost buildings under the title "Radnor Changes" documented the local architecture being wiped away. "My interest soon went to the



changes that were happening in Radnor, and especially in Wayne," he wrote a half-century later. "Radnor Township was at the beginning of a major transformation, with large new buildings, new stores, and new offices replacing old and historic structures... Looking at my 50-year-old photos today, and after a recent visit to Wayne, it seems like history has again evolved into a newer era, as buildings new in the 1950s are already being lost as the Township and other Main Line communities continue to change. It is a continuing fascination to see these changes, and to be reminded of a period not long past."

Following his work at HABS, Jim worked for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Later, Jim and his wife Shirley Maxwell started their own consulting firm. They were also authors; the pair wrote regularly for *Old-House Journal* and published several books about historic buildings and architectural styles. The two traveled the country searching for architecturally significant places to feature in their regular "Historic Neighborhoods" feature in *Old-House Journal*. It was through this series that Jim and Shirley returned to Radnor in 2015 to photograph houses for a feature about the Arts and Crafts style homes of Wayne and St. Davids. That article was published in the October, 2015 issue of the magazine.

Jim kept in touch following the visit, and shortly after decided to make some of his personal architectural photographs available to local institutions. RHS was able to add several hundred of Jim's professional-quality photographs dating from the 1950s and '60s to our archive. This invaluable record of color Kodachrome slides and medium-format black and white negatives has contributed greatly to our understanding of the area as it was in the mid-20th century. Many have been published in recent issues of the *Bulletin*, including a cover feature in the 2015 issue (pictured).

We will always be grateful to Jim for remembering RHS even when he and Shirley lived far away. Many of their articles for *Old-House Journal* can be found at [oldhouseonline.com](http://oldhouseonline.com) and Jim's photos of Radnor buildings can be viewed at [radnorhistory.org](http://radnorhistory.org). **B**

# When the Circus Came to Wayne

## Documenting the Welsh Brothers' 1904 Show

By Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

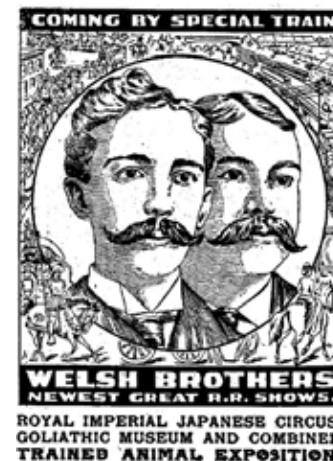


On Monday, August 22, 1904, the Welsh Bros. Newest Great Shows circus train rolled into Wayne, Pennsylvania, after an approximate seven-mile journey from the prior engagement at Ardmore, Pennsylvania, on Saturday the 20th. The intervening Sunday was mostly a day of rest, after the railroad had delivered and parked the unusual-looking circus train on a local siding.

Whether the cars were unloaded and the physical plant taken to the lot on Sunday, or the following day, is unknown. On one of the two days, show “razorbacks” unloaded the wagons from the flat cars and handlers removed the animals from the enclosed cars, altogether forming a long and highly unique caravan from the railroad to the show lot. The formally scheduled street parade would take place on the morning of the 22nd. Circus employees may have booked a hotel room for the day, dined in a restaurant, taken advantage of local features or simply taken a nap aboard their rolling home. Working six days per week was then the custom.

Wayne residents, like those elsewhere, looked forward to an annual circus appearance. It was one of the few days on the calendar when everyone took leave of school, work, and other obligations for a day of diversion and entertainment. The circus brought a perspective to local residents of the larger world beyond the confines of their own community. It was akin to a website on wheels, providing entirely different sounds, views, aromas and experiences than those experienced every day.

The arrival was announced weeks in advance by colorful “flaming” posters, placed around the community on walls and in windows, which specified the day and date of the engagement. Handbills extolling the show’s features were placed at public sites where one could be taken home and read. Announcements of the pending show date, along with informative reviews, had been printed in the newspaper. Children watched the streets in the early morning to see the circus caravan walk and roll through Wayne, from the railroad to the contracted show lot. For them, it was as exciting a day as the 4th of July. It was a day-long ritual of unique character and content.



*Left: One of several undated snapshots of a circus in Wayne from the RHS archives.*

*Right: A Welsh Brothers newspaper advertisement.*



*A typical Welsh Brothers midway, ca. 1902. (Pfening Archives)*

Upon reaching the lot to serve as the showground, the show roustabouts unloaded and erected the tents of the circus. They included the dominant big top for the performance; a dressing top where the performers changed from their street clothes to performance wardrobe; and a top to house the baggage horses that pulled the wagons and the performing horses that went into the ring. There was a cookhouse where food was prepared, served in the dining top where everyone associated with the circus ate their three meals. The first, breakfast, was ready after the tent city was in the air.

Some facts are known about the parade staged in the morning by the Welsh show. Usually taking to the streets about 10 a.m., it followed a route from the show lot to downtown, and then back to the lot. It announced the arrival of the circus to the heart of the community, the downtown streets. It probably took five minutes for the procession to pass a fixed location.

The lead feature was a carved and gilded bandwagon, with eight to ten musicians playing spirited music for which the circus was known. The Welshes had acquired one built about 1890 in Peru, Indiana, for the Great Wallace Shows. Drawn by a hitch of six Percherons, it was a great feature to commence the parade.

At least one cage wagon made the march, with a large figure placed atop it, akin to those seen in Mardi Gras and other processions. She resembled a Maggie Murphy-style character; of the type one might see on Coney Island. Two diminutive, child-sized, pony-drawn cage wagons, separated by a tableau wagon behind a four-horse team, with four framed mirrors as ornamentation and riders on top, followed the large figure cage. Two more cages, one with corner images and the other with carved corners, were likely in the march. The side show band, with African-American musicians, also rode a wagon in parade.

As the traditional end of the parade, a steam-powered calliope blasted out melodies that carried the melodies for miles, announcing to everyone in Radnor that the show was in town. This particular calliope is known to historians. It was built in 1875 as a painting and gold-leaf decorated bandwagon for the Burr Robbins circus



*An elephant, cow, and dromedary at the circus. (RHS)*

of Janesville, Wisconsin. It served the same duty on the Ringling Bros. troupe out of Baraboo, Wisconsin, in the 1890s, before passing into the possession of the John Robinson show of Terrace Park, Ohio. The Welshes leased it from the Robinson outfit for several years.

Though elephants were then a staple of circuses, the Welsh show did not have one until their 1904 tour. A large male Asiatic elephant was leased from parties unknown. His name hasn't been found anywhere, but details of his physical appearance suggest that he may be the pachyderm known later as TomTom, after he joined the Yankee Robinson circus in 1906. Standing about eight feet tall, with fine ivory tusks capped with brass fittings, he made an imposing appearance in the street parade and later in the menagerie and perhaps in the big top performance.

In addition to the big elephant, the Welsh show also had a large dromedary, the one hump species, and also a well-fed sacred cow that looked a



*A photograph of the Welsh Brothers circus parade from the Society's archives. The first vehicle is a two-horse cage wagon, followed by a child-sized pony cage and then a mirror tableau wagon. The oversized figure atop the lead cage is a "Maggie Murphy"-inspired figure that one might see at amusement areas and other entertainment venues, sized to attract everyone's attention. To the left of the lead wagon is one of the Welsh show's baggage wagons, utilized to haul the tent outfit, props and other appurtenances of the circus. (RHS)*

lot different from dairy cattle on the local farms. Their sight, sounds and smell gave an exotic aura to the circus on the lot and in the parade.

Photographs taken on Circus Day reveal that an outlying piece of ground had been leased, likely from a farmer. At least a portion of it was mowed, so that citizens didn't have to wade through "high grass." They walked out, or rode to the show by horse and buggy, parking their rigs near the circus. Women and children often filled the matinee performance. On a sultry summer day the big top sidewalls were lowered to promote a cross draft.

Men accompanied their families to the night show. By the time it finished the sun was down and hand held torches were used to augment the reflected light from the moon to take down and load the tent city back into wagons. The following day, only the flattened grass and the sawdust-covered ring remained behind to mark the magic that had taken place. Children didn't forget the experience. Some tried to stage amateur shows using their toys, somersaulting skills and anything else that could re-create the circus in their imagination.

The show lowered the tent city and packed away all assets onto the wagons that were loaded onto the show's flat cars, parked on a siding along the Pennsylvania Railroad's famed Main Line. With the elephants, led stock and horses loaded into the stock cars and the staff, performers and crew boarded in the sleepers where they slumbered away the night, the train was made up by a switch engine and placed where a road locomotive would couple up and take it to the Tuesday engagement. That was contracted to be West Chester, Pennsylvania. It was another short jump along the Pennsylvania, where the daily ritual was repeated again.

Much went into the organizing and operation of a traveling circus. What appeared in Radnor was essentially the tip of an iceberg—a one day capsule summary of a much larger story that spanned from April into October. Fortunately, there were various reports filed with and published in show trade papers that chronicle a larger part of the 1904 Welsh show story.

Bona fide brothers Mike H. (born 1866) and John T. (born 1861) Welsh served as the show general manager and general agent, respectively. This meant that Mike was on the lot of the circus, overseeing day to day operations, while John was generally ahead, booking engagements and making preparations for the ultimate arrival of the troupe.

By 1904, after fourteen years of being showmen, they had progressed from an overland horse and wagon outfit to a railroad circus, moving on their own train of about ten cars between engagements. They wintered their circus

near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in an area known as Gordonville, one of several sites utilized in just a few years. It was there that they repaired equipment, built props and rehearsed acts in special purpose-built structures.

A report in the October 17, 1903 issue of the weekly trade magazine *New York Clipper* detailed extensive preparations for the 1904 tour.

#### **Notes from Welsh Bros.' Circus new winter quarters.**

The "Newest Great" is now safely and most comfortably domiciled in its new quarters at Gordonville, Pa., a suburb of Lancaster City. The new property includes a farm with one hundred and ten acres of fertile land, upon which all of the fodder used by the show will be raised. There is stabling room for over one hundred head of stock. A railroad runs close to the quarters, and special tracks have been laid, running into the farm, where the rolling stock is stored, all of which is covered with sheds. The water facilities are unusually good, the Conestoga River flows close to the farm, and there are two artesian wells which produce excellent water. It is certainly an ideal place for sheltering a circus. A new ring barn is under construction, which will be completed by Nov. 21, when practicing will be commenced on the many new equestrian and animal acts. Jack Cousins has been engaged to preside over this department. It is now definitely settled that the show will carry a small menagerie next season, and performing wild beasts will also figure prominently in the programme. An entire new spread of canvas has been ordered from a leading tent maker. All of the tents will be of modern build, and will be noticeable for their attractiveness and up to dateness. New men will comprise the operating department, which will include some of the best "boss" workmen of the profession. Particular attention will be paid to the arena programme, many novel and new acts have already been booked, and two rings and a platform will be used to exploit the performance. The side show will be conducted on new lines, and the parade will be given special attention, as much money will be expended for new wardrobe and trappings. The two sleeping cars recently destroyed by fire will be replaced by new Pullmans of present day make, as special thought will be given for the comforts of performers, musicians and employees. Mr. and Mrs. Jack Cousins have purchased an eight-room cottage at Gordonville, and will hereafter make it their permanent house. Clinton Newton has signed as business manager and general press agent, which will be his seventeenth season with this "troupe." Newton is now at quarters, busily engaged in preparing advance literature and readable newspaper matter for the new season. The "Col." M. H. Welsh, is at present in the Western and Southern country, combining business with pleasure. Genial John Welsh is enjoying his spare moments in fishing and boating on the Conestoga. Very little repairing

will be done here this season, as the entire show from stem to stern will be new, as all of this year's material has already been disposed of. The show will really be one of the brightest and best looking "little big of big[gest]" shows ever seen on the road. All new territory will be invaded next Summer; the Western States will be principally played, which, by the way, will be the first visit of the show in that section . . . .

Work was at a fever pitch as the winter chilled the area in the third month of 1904. The March 12, 1904 issue of the *Clipper* detailed further accomplishments.

#### **Welsh Bros.' "winter quarters" notes.**

The usual nearing of Spring time activity is now in evidence at the circus depot of the above firm. The new baggage and parade vehicles are all completed and have received their dress of varnish and paint embellishing. This department of the "Newest Great" will certainly compare favorably with any show of its size and class. All of the harness to be used this season is new, and this, with the choice selection of horses and ponies (one hundred and ten in number), the finest ever handled by this show, will prove to be an attractive adjunct to the new feature street parade. Equestrian director Cousins has prepared several new trained animal acts for the "big show" entertainment, and is also hard at work placing the finishing touches to the programme, which will consist of forty-six acts, embracing a diversity of high caliber equestrian and arenic displays, particularly noticeable for the absence of "fill-in" acts. Among the notable engagements for the coming season are: the Miles Orton Troupe, equestrians and bicyclists; the Brothers Melrin, feature acrobats; West and Zants, in a novelty act; "Santell," sensational strong man; the Flying Valenteens, aerialists; Chas. Fasig, star high diver; Prof. Felton's troupe of performing seals. The comedy contingent is headed by Max Hugo, assisted by J. Frank Mackey, Chas. Clark, T. J. Madden, George Colby, Harry West, Comical Brown, Don Williams and William Pearl. Mr. and Mrs. Jack Cousins will appear in a series of entirely original feature riding numbers. Owing to the continued illness of Monsieur Jaures, the spectacular production of "Babylon" will be abandoned for the coming season; instead a series of magnificent statuary tableaux, depicting events of the Japan-Russian war will be presented. Twenty persons will participate in this novel innovation, which will be staged by the famous Niblo Troupe. The harmony end of the show will include: Gregory's Royal Marine band (twenty-one men); Prof. Louis Gilbert's Afro-American Band (ten men); Ronule's Scotch Bag Pipers, and Prof. H. F. Weston, calliapist. Side show manager Lee has engaged an excellent programme of vaudeville talent for his department, with the Belmar Sisters, refined lady

minstrels, and Mlle. Bachwaldo's troupe of performing lions as the special drawing cards. Mr. Lee will have an entirely new frontage of eye entrancing paintings, and he declares that his "Supplementary Shows" will beat anything of its kind on the road this coming season. Geo. M. Forepaugh, superintendent, and Philip Harris, special agent, are new members of the business people department. The season is carded to open very early in April, at Gordonville, a suburb of Lancaster, Pa.

Opening day was in sight when the *Clipper* published a report in the April 9, 1904 issue.

#### **Items from Welsh Bros.' quarters.**

The announcement has been made to the public in our vicinity that the "grand opening day" will take place on Thursday afternoon, April 14. The bill cars will leave quarters in a few days, to extol the merits of our latest in the tenting line. Much brand-new advertising material will be used and distributed in a lavish manner. The horses and ponies, which are in the capable hands of boss hostler F. A. Smith, are in prime condition, and certainly a better-looking lot of stock has never appeared with any of the smaller shows. A fourteen black horse band wagon team and a twenty-pony calliope team will be among the prominent equine features of the street parade. All new harness and wardrobe of the finest make has been provided. Charles Mitchell, a well-known railroad man, has signed as chief trainmaster; he will have twelve cars under his supervision. The Sisters Andre and Levello are new bookings for the big top performers. F. A. Robbins Jr. will have the candy stands and light privileges.

The news from the Welsh show continued to flow to the *Clipper*, which published a report in the May 28, 1904 issue.

#### **The Welsh Brothers Show notes.**

Five weeks of the current season have been finished, and with very gratifying results. Business has been immense, despite much disagreeable weather. This is virtually and "all new show" this season, new master workingmen in every department, new tents, new performers, and the major portion of the paraphernalia all new and in high class shape. The show was accorded turn away business at nearly every stand in the anthracite region, and at Easton, Pa., and in New Jersey, at Plainfield, Elizabeth and Bayonne. Mt. Vernon and New Rochelle, N.Y., gave us enthusiastic seating capacity. The new territory invaded so far has



*The mobile calliope in Wayne. (RHS)*

been profitable, besides the show has been favorably received by the general public, newspapers and the authorities.

Reports were still upbeat in June, as per June 11 and July 30 accounts in the *Clipper*.

#### **Welsh Bros.' Show notes.**

The states of Connecticut and Massachusetts are giving us first class business, and the show is making an unmistakable hit. Stamford, South Norwalk, Ansonia, Meriden and New Britain, all in Connecticut being especially noteworthy for extra big business. Memorial Day was spent at Southbridge, Mass., where three "big show" performances were given, morning, afternoon and evening, all to good crowds. Lee's Supplementary Shows (annex) gave seventeen performances on this occasion. Another new fifty-foot middle piece has been added to the main tope, which will now enable us to handle the crowds in better shape. Since leaving winter quarters we have added twelve horses and mules to the equine department, also a pair of exceptionally fine manege horses to the circus programme. Although the performance we are now giving is unusually meritorious and strong we have decided to add a half dozen more acts, including several riding displays, which will enable us to give a first class two ring show. All of the people with the aggregation are well and happy, and everything is

moving along with vim and in a most harmonious manner. San Barham, Ali and Johnson, and Toto Ducrow recently joined the show.

Thereafter, the reality of the great difficulty of 1904 — the weather — was unavoidable. The August 13 *Clipper* revealed the situation.

#### **Welsh Brothers' Newest Great Show notes.**

The show is back into the bountiful State of New Jersey. Since entering this territory we have encountered a siege of heavy weather, terrific thunderstorms and copious rainfalls. However, business has been fairly good. The towns of Dover, Westfield and Red Bank were especially good. The clever equestrian specialties of Mr. and Mrs. Frank B. Miller are more than “making good.” Mrs. Miller is also presenting a new novelty manege act. Prof. Wm. Wood, calliapist, rejoined the show July 30, his manipulations of the steam key board being an attractive feature of the daily street parade. Mr. Wood also appears in the concert, introducing a bright patter monologue, entitled “If I Were a Senator.” Maggie Cline, Mr. Cummins, Mr. Lockwood and Chas. F. Edwards, of the actors’ colony of Fair Haven, were interested spectators of the night performance at Red Banks.



*A typical Welsh Brothers bandwagon, ca. 1904. (Pfening Archives)*

There was nothing reported in the waning weeks of the tour. Showmen were reluctant to report the bad news of partially-filled tents, soaked grounds and reduced revenues. Daily expenses, known as the “nut,” were unrelenting. Some reductions could be made, but not enough to stave off financial disaster, and sharp elbows between partners, even when they were brothers.

Unfortunately, the 1904 tour of the Welsh Bros. circus was unsuccessful. The glowing reports of expansion and good times were eroded away and demolished by the weather’s havoc. The brothers split their partnership and went their different ways in 1905.

The “magic city” that had displayed on August 22, 1904, was no more. Wayne residents would witness the same Circus Day ritual staged by other showmen in the years to come. Only the few photographs and published reports bear enduring testimony to the splendor of the Welsh presentation on that day.

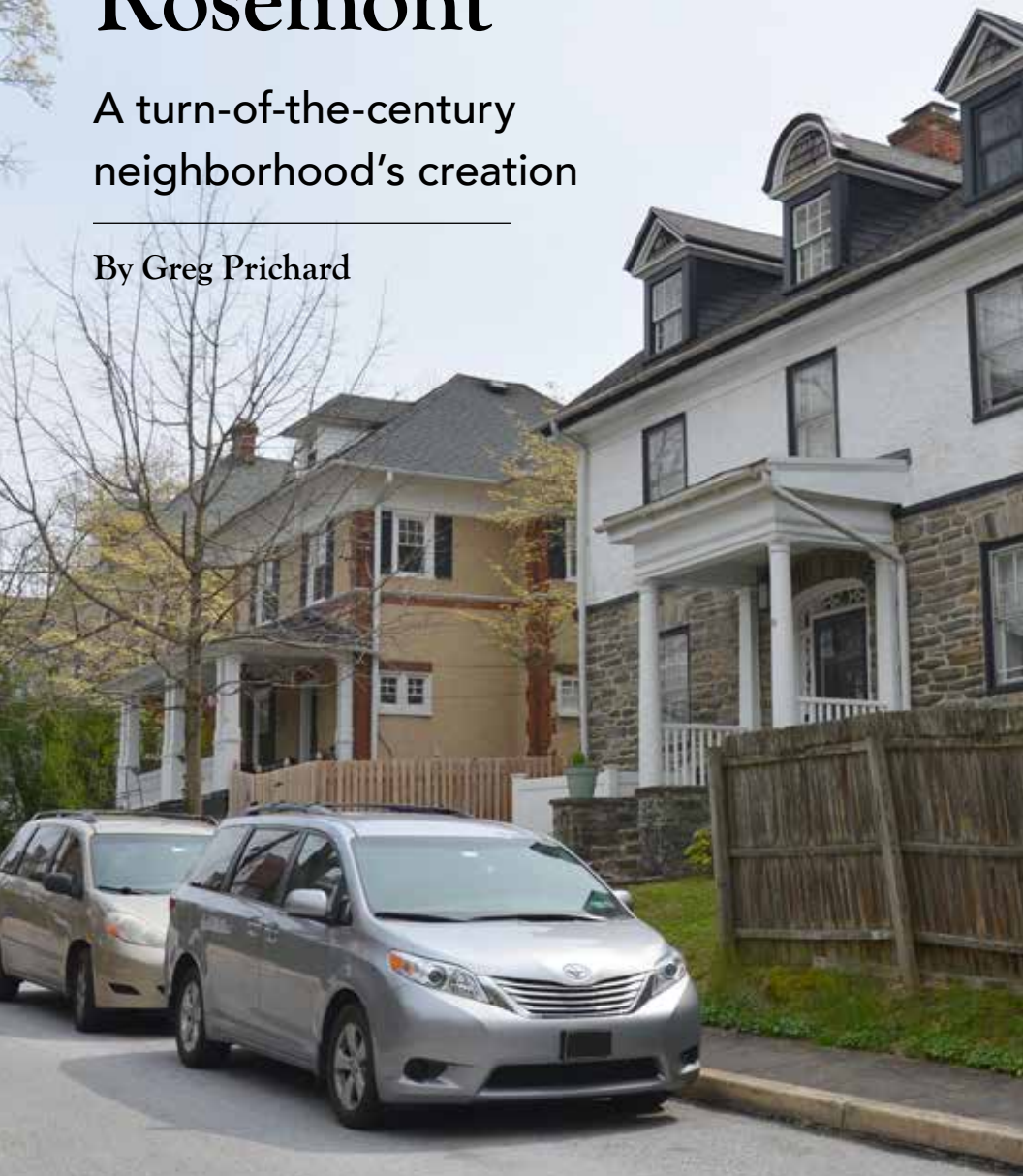
Today, the Welsh Bros. circus is most frequently mentioned owing to their employment of Ehrich Weiss and his wife for the 1898 tour. They are remembered by their stage names, Harry and Beatrice Houdini, Harry being one of the most famous magicians of all time. There’s much more of interest concerning the itinerant travels of the Welsh brothers, as they entertained thousands of Americans in hundreds of communities in the eastern United States. **B**

*Fred Dahlinger Jr. was inspired by Milwaukee’s circus parade re-creations of the 1960s to initiate research in circus history when 15 years old. After an engineering career, he eventually became a curator of circus collections and history, retiring from the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art a few years ago. He has published several books and dozens of articles and served as president of the Circus Historical Society.*

# The Sim Development in Rosemont

A turn-of-the-century neighborhood's creation

By Greg Prichard



Though the Main Line's larger and better documented neighborhoods are often singled out for their historic significance, small neighborhoods also have stories to tell. A community on the very edge of Radnor Township is one example. Set between the historic communities of Garrett Hill and White Hall and located a short walking distance from downtown Bryn Mawr, this close-knit and largely intact neighborhood owes its existence to a developer and a cadre of architects he hired over the course of two decades.

Charles Sim (1852-1923) was a landscape gardener highly regarded in his field. He served as a member of the Bryn Mawr Citizens' Protective Association and ran for a position as Lower Merion Township Supervisor in 1899.<sup>1</sup>

Sometime between 1893 and 1896, Sim purchased an 18.5-acre portion of the Joseph F. Tobias estate located on the north side of Old Lancaster (Conestoga) Road. Initially, Sim split the land into 13 lots, most of which were about an acre in size. The westernmost lot, at 4.37 acres, included a sizeable pond. Sim sold it to Charles T. Dissel, who in 1901 built a home there that he called "Old Orchard" from a design by Albert W. Dilks.<sup>2</sup> In the late 1880s, Dilks had designed another home for Dissel in Wynnewood, which still stands and is now the home of Temple Beth Hillel-Beth El.

To give internal lots street frontage, Sim extended Montrose Avenue across County Line Road to bisect the tract.

## The Development: Phase I

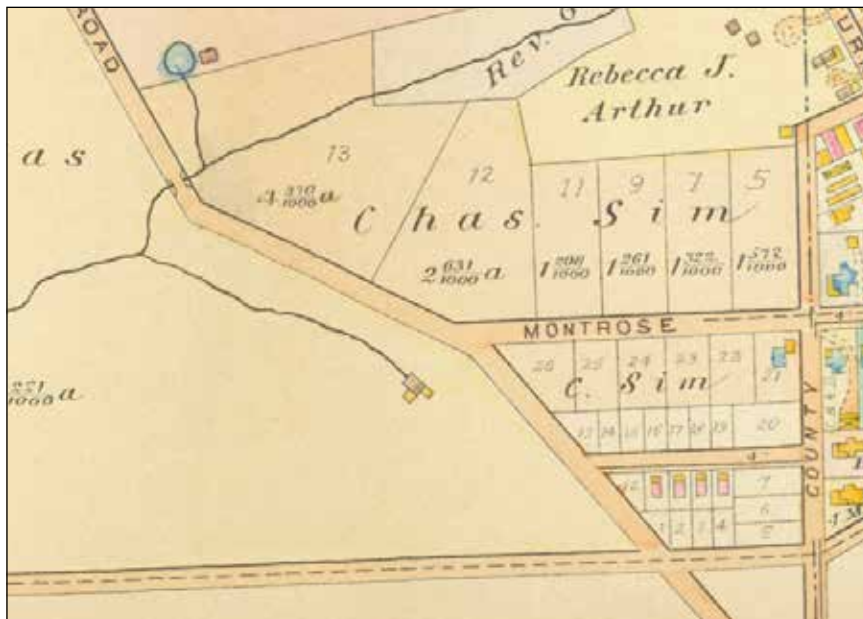
Within a few years Sim evidently wanted to get more lots out of the property, and by 1900 he split the eastern portion of the land with a new road parallel to Montrose Avenue, naming it Petrie Avenue. This allowed Sim to split the seven lots east of Montrose into 20 smaller lots.

By 1900 four homes had been constructed on the east side of Petrie Avenue and one combined office-residence was built on the southeast corner of Montrose Avenue and County Line Road. The form of this building was unusual, with Tudor Revival detailing on a steep front gable placed over a stone first floor. Its owner was Dr. Saville A. Crowther, whose dental office operated within a single-story extension on the home's east end.

Dr. Crowther's building and at least two of the four original Petrie Avenue homes were the work of architect Henry Light Reinhold, Jr., who until 1901 was a partner in the firm Schermerhorn & Reinhold. Reinhold could well

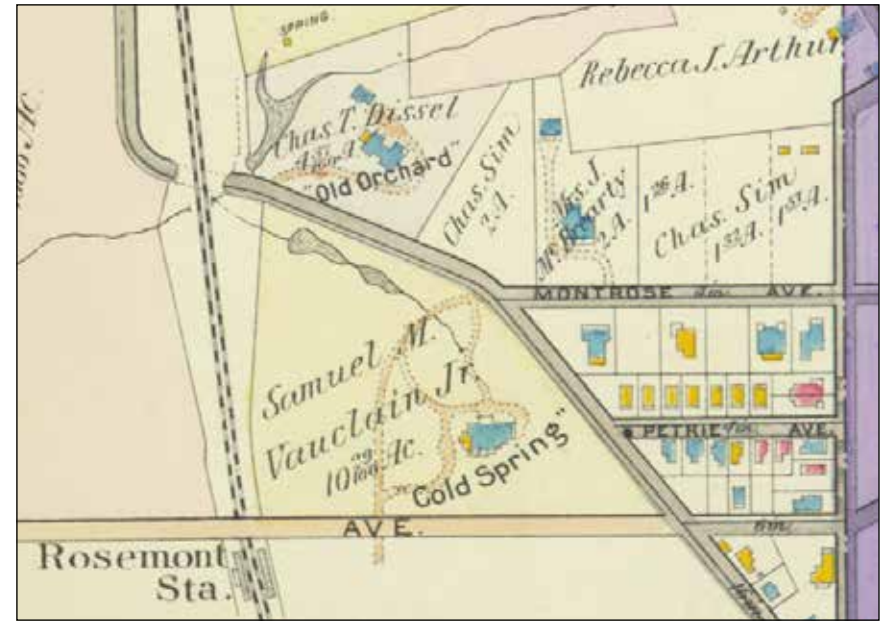


**1896:** The first atlas in which Sim's purchase of the land is shown. The property is split into 13 lots, with the James mansion between lots 11 and 12.

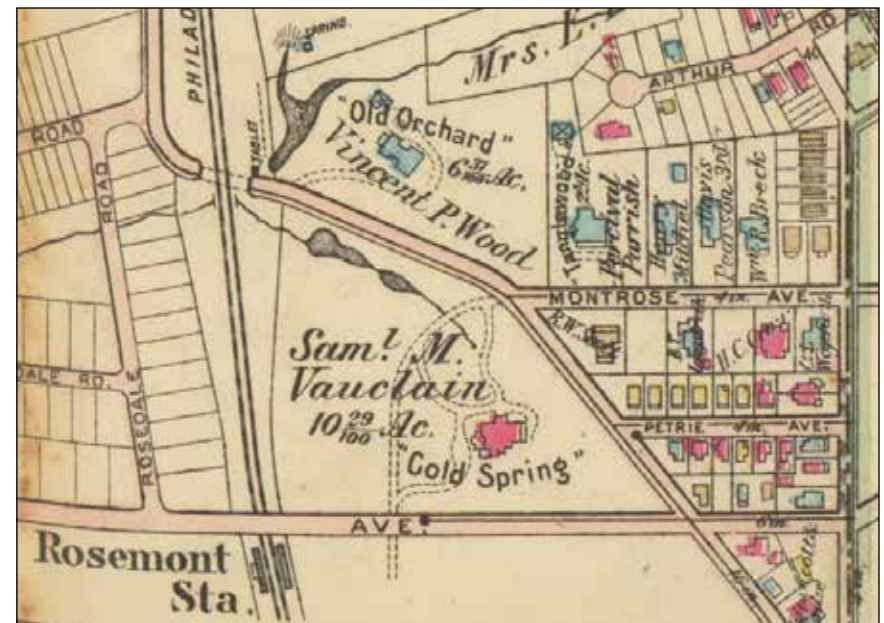


**1900:** The creation of Petrie Avenue (which is present but not labeled) allowed for the 13 original lots to become 32. The lots north of Montrose Avenue retained their size and numbering. The James mansion is not shown, possibly because it was planned to be replaced. By this time four homes have been built on Petrie and one on County Line.

All maps are from atlases in the collection of the Radnor Historical Society, with the exception of 1896, which belongs to Lower Merion Township. Digitized by the Athenaeum of Philadelphia for philageohistory.org



**1908:** The James mansion is shown again on a reconfigured lot 11. Houses on Montrose, Petrie, and County Line have been built. The P&W and its Rosemont Station are now in place, as is the "Cold Spring" estate of Samuel M. Vauclain, Jr.



**1926:** The remaining lots have mostly been developed by this time. To the northwest, the Rebecca J. Arthur property has been divided into the cul-de-sac Arthur Road. Roads with lots on the other side of the P&W are laid out but were never developed as shown.

be the Main Line's most prolific but least recognized architect. A resident of Ardmore, he designed some of the most prominent commercial buildings there and in Bryn Mawr. Having also designed residences possibly numbering in the hundreds, he was a go-to architect for developers of small neighborhoods and in-fill properties. Reinhold is best remembered today for his work designing additions to the Montgomery County Courthouse in Norristown, including its central dome.

Reinhold's style at the turn of the 20th century was typical of architects who professed to be inspired by Colonial American architecture, attempting to copy the aesthetic qualities displayed in the historic buildings of this continent rather than English, Spanish, and other "Old World" influences.

What many early Colonial Revivalists like Reinhold failed to understand about those early American buildings was their simplicity and restraint. Coming from a period of heavy decoration, they instead focused on Colonial-inspired ornamentation and how to apply it in ways and quantities that would have been unheard of in the 18th century, especially for modest homes. It would be another few years until architects like R. Brognard Okie took a more authentic approach in their interpretations of this era.

The influence of Colonial-era American architecture is evident throughout Reinhold's work, though the forms and materials he created are unlike anything built before his own time. The main business block on the south side of Lancaster Avenue in Ardmore is one example: it was called the "Colonial Block," though its massing and detailing betrayed it as a modern interpretation by Reinhold of 18th century commercial architecture.

The houses at 111 and 113 Petrie Avenue are very similar in design and are typical of Reinhold's standard residential work. Though they all vary somewhat, most can easily be spotted thanks to their basic rectangular forms with prominent front porches, stucco façades with brick quoins at their corners, and hipped roofs adorned with dormers whose walls taper upward. These homes are easily spotted by a trained eye across the eastern Main Line and beyond, including at the corner of College Avenue and Haverford Road in Haverford, Barrett Avenue in Haverford, Mondella Avenue on the Lower Merion side of County Line Road, and Birch Avenue in Bala Cynwyd.

While rather ubiquitous in this area, Reinhold's "standard" homes are interesting in their architecture and materiality. The most striking feature of the Petrie Avenue homes is their curving cornices that begin just above the heads of the second floor windows and bend outward to meet the edges of the overhanging roofs. The main façade materials are a combination of



Dr. Crowther's residence and office, as it appeared in Reinhold's 1903 monograph (top) and in 2021 (bottom). The decorative half-timbering on its façade has been concealed with siding.

decoratively patterned brick and pebble-dash stucco. A stone variant of the same basic form is found on Sim's lot #3 on South Roberts Road. The homes are tightly packed but splendidly detailed.

By 1908 18 homes had been built on Sim's 20 original lots in the eastern half of his development. An additional lot had been created facing Petrie Avenue by taking the back yards from properties facing County Line Road. A home built on that lot in 1901, now 105 Petrie, once again used the standard



Variations on a theme by Reinhold: (Clockwise from upper left) 105, 111, and 113 Petrie Avenue follow the same basic exterior design with differing façade materials and design details. Homes similar to these can be found throughout the eastern Main Line.

Reinhold plan with some additional embellishments, including a datestone shaped like a shield inserted in the center of the second floor front facade. Seven homes had also been built on the west side of Petrie Avenue, many of them featuring some of the same Reinhold traits. Three single homes and a twin facing County Line Road are also likely Reinhold designs, as are others that exhibit similar traits. Unfortunately there is very little documentation to prove exactly which homes came from specific architects.

### A Possible 18th Century Landmark

The home purchased from Sim by John McBrearty consumed Sim's original lot 11 and part of lot 12. Sources differ as to whether it was newly built or an alteration of an existing dwelling. Katharine Hewitt Cummin noted the possibility that the home was the James mansion house in *A Rare and*

*Pleasing Thing: Radnor Demography (1798) and Development*: "By tradition, a large stone house at 138 Montrose Avenue is considered the James mansion. It stands where the survey placed the old house, but has been so altered, improved and enlarged as to raise doubt of its antiquity."<sup>3</sup> References in the *Philadelphia Real Estate Record & Builders' Guide* are also contradictory as to whether Reinhold or his partner Clarence Schermerhorn did the architectural work for Sim. What's not in dispute is that Reinhold included an image of the finished work in his personal monograph.

The most direct evidence of the James mansion connection comes from a reference in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* from October 30, 1901. It only describes Reinhold's work as interior remodeling of a house in Rosemont that "was originally built in 1740." No owner or precise location is noted, and perhaps the exterior renovations were part of later work.<sup>4</sup>

If the stone house at 138 Montrose was in fact the James mansion, the building had a long and important past. According to histories of the Radnor Methodist Church, it was where Methodists met and held classes prior to 1780. The establishment of a Methodist community in this section of the township led to the construction of the Radnor Methodist Church a short distance west



The McBrearty house as it was pictured in Reinhold's monograph.

on today's Conestoga Road, a landmark and community so important that Garrett Hill was at one time called "Methodist Hill."<sup>5</sup>

Assuming this home was indeed the historic James mansion, the appearance it took on after Sim purchased it was a significant change from its initial 18th century design. Reinhold (or Schermerhorn) added three large dormers on the front roof slope, two with triangular gables and the larger center dormer taking a semicircular form with a circular cutout in the middle. The new Sim house at 115 Petrie Avenue may have been designed to resemble this home in miniature with some material differences.

By 1920, 138 Montrose was owned by Percival Parrish, who called it "Tanglewood." Unfortunately its condition deteriorated over the subsequent decades, and it was demolished and replaced by the Montrose townhouse complex in the mid-1980s. The coach house, which was pictured under construction in Reinhold's monograph, still stands as the pool house serving the townhouse complex.

### Homes by Savery & Scheetz

Sim continued to build on the remaining lots using a variety of architects. References to Reinhold contributing designs for homes continue through 1905.<sup>6</sup> However, on Montrose Avenue Sim kept the lots larger than those on Petrie and hired a different firm with an exceptional pedigree, Savery & Scheetz, to design homes for them. This phase is believed to include at least two homes on the east side of Montrose Avenue and one on County Line Road. 115 Montrose Avenue is an example still standing, and architectural plans that are likely for its next door neighbor survive at the Athenæum of Philadelphia. 1100 County Line Road matches the look of these houses and may be among Savery & Scheetz's contributions to the neighborhood.

Within a few short years of his initial land purchase, Sim's choice of location would prove fortuitous. In 1907 the Philadelphia & Western Railway opened for operation with a new Rosemont Station (now called Roberts Road Station on the Norristown High-Speed Line) less than 1,000 feet from Old Lancaster Road. The new railroad cut through the southern section of the former Tobias property, which by then had been purchased by Samuel Vaucain, Jr. for his estate "Cold Spring." This gave residents of every home Sim had built convenient access to the new station, and with it a route by fast electric train to Strafford or Upper Darby with connections to Philadelphia, and in 1912 a route to Norristown as well.

The McBrearty coach house under construction, as pictured in Reinhold's monograph.



Pictured here in summer 2021, the coach house is the only remaining structure from the McBrearty property, serving as the pool house for the Montrose townhouse complex.



Front elevation of a house designed for Charles Sim by Savery & Scheetz in 1902. This is believed to be 103 Montrose Avenue. (Hutton-Savery, Scheetz & Savery Collection, Athenæum of Philadelphia)



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### The North Side of Montrose Avenue

Almost 20 years after Sim purchased the land, he still had unbuilt lots on the west side of Montrose Avenue. In 1913, he hired architects Harris & Richards to design three homes for those lots, designated 104, 106 and 108 Montrose Avenue. This firm had a lineage of architectural royalty in Philadelphia. It had previously been known as Wilson, Harris & Richards, which had evolved from the Wilson Brothers Company. The talents of that firm's architects are credited for some of the great Main Line mansions and Pennsylvania Railroad stations of the 19th century.



Opposite page: 1914 advertisements in the *Evening Public Ledger* and *Inquirer* extoll the virtues of the area. Above: The block has retained its streetscape appearance despite additional units having been built behind, which are visible on the rear cover aerial photograph.

The style of these homes was different from their predecessors in the development, in keeping with the quickly changing architectural trends of the time. They were larger and made extensive use of stone as a facade material with stucco on upper floors. While the Savery & Scheetz houses utilized similar materials, the half-timbering and other flourishes of those homes was not emulated.

Today all three of these large houses survive and in the late 1980s were split into multiple condominium units. Additional townhomes were built behind these houses, known collectively as the Village of Montrose Square, but the residential streetscape was maintained by the retention of the three original homes.

### Endurance Amidst Changes

In February 1984, Petrie Avenue residents became concerned about the conversion of 107 Petrie Avenue, one of the four original Sim homes on that block, into a multi-family rental. Neighbors were worried about the erosion of the consistently single-family nature of the block and the lack of parking due to the tightness of the properties, which did not conform with modern-day zoning requirements. Dozens of residents of the surrounding area hired a lawyer and signed petitions to disallow the boarding house from remaining and to change the zoning designation of the neighborhood. The issue spurred



Seen in 1984, the brick house is 107 Petrie Avenue. (*Suburban & Wayne Times* archive, RHS)

a wider conversation in the Township about zoning, rental properties, and the preservation of the characteristics of older neighborhoods.<sup>7</sup>

In November 1999, Radnor Township purchased 107 Petrie Avenue, demolished the home and opened Petrie Park on the lot a year later.<sup>8</sup> Although an original Sim development home was lost, the neighborhood gained an amenity as well as some welcome space to breathe.

The neighborhood's zoning designation has allowed for density greater than some other residential areas, resulting in the redevelopment of some properties for townhouses. The largest such project resulted from the combination of Sim's two largest original lots: "Old Orchard" and the James mansion, to create the Montrose townhouse complex. On the south side of Montrose Avenue, just one Sim-era house remains. Its neighbors were replaced with denser single-family and townhouse residences.

With the exception of 107, Petrie Avenue has remained intact. So too have the lots facing South Roberts Road and County Line Road, including the unusual building constructed as Dr. Crowther's home and dental office.

Together, the homes that owe their existence to Charles Sim contribute to the overall fabric of the Rosemont community that spans both sides of County Line Road. Though the immediate area is best known for its landmarks, including the Church of the Good Shepherd and ca. 1831 Henry Lawrence Building (until recently Yang Ming), residential neighborhoods are truly the heart of Rosemont. **B**

## End Notes

1. "Lower Merion Politics." *Philadelphia Times*, January 9, 1899, p. 2.
2. "The Latest News in Real Estate." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 30, 1901, p. 7.
3. Cummin, Katharine Hewitt. *A Rare and Pleasing Thing: Radnor Demography (1798) and Development*. Philadelphia: Owlswick Press, 1977, p. 389.
4. "The Latest News in Real Estate." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 30, 1901, p. 7.
5. <http://www.jamesfamilyarchives.net/page90.html>
6. *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, v. 20, n. 9, p. 129 (3/1/1905)
7. *Suburban & Wayne Times*, various articles from February and March, 1984.
8. Radnor Township webpage for Petrie Park: <https://www.radnor.com/Home/Components/FacilityDirectory/FacilityDirectory/42/216>

Reinhold, Henry L. Jr. "Work of Mark: Architectural Work by Henry L. Reinhold, Jr." Philadelphia: Hathaway and Brothers Printers, 1903. Images from Reinhold's book are courtesy of the Athenæum of Philadelphia, which owns an original copy.

All present-day photos by the author.



The north side of Petrie Avenue, 2021.

## Programs of the Year

### **Bruce Mowday, author of *Stealing Wyeth***

*Wednesday, January 8, at the Winsor Room, Radnor Memorial Library*

*Video of this program is found at [radnorhistory.org](http://radnorhistory.org)*

*Stealing Wyeth* recounts the theft of 15 famous works of art worth millions of dollars from the estate of Andrew Wyeth in picturesque Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. The new book, written by award-winning author and newspaper reporter Bruce Mowday, details information about the Wyeth family, the theft, the criminals, and the law enforcement team. The former reporter, who has covered murder trials and criminals, is a huge fan of the Brandywine River Museum. When those two things intersected, he knew it was a story he had to write.

### **Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement**

*Sunday, January 12, at the Winsor Room, Radnor Memorial Library*

The League of Women Voters of Radnor Township was proud to sponsor a lecture presented by Radnor High School teacher Mr. Ed Ruby. How can history deepen our understanding of democracy and prompt civic engagement? Mr. Ruby demonstrated how the case method can do just that. Using primary sources and research materials developed by the Harvard Business School, Ruby used questioning techniques to broaden our knowledge, prompt critical thinking, and guide our examination of the past.

### **An Evening with Syndicated Editorial Cartoonist Signe Wilkinson**

*Wednesday, February 12, at the Winsor Room, Radnor Memorial Library*

Signe Wilkinson is the first female cartoonist to win the Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Cartooning (1992) and her work is described as having a unique style and famous irreverence. Born into a Quaker family in Texas, Wilkinson graduated from the University of Denver and later attended the

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. She also worked for the Quakers and the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University before working for a housing project in Cyprus. This job ended due to a coup d'état followed by a military invasion from Turkey. Realizing her interest in both art and politics, Wilkinson began her career in journalism, working for numerous publications in West Chester, Philadelphia, and at the *San Jose Mercury News*. She has also launched a syndicated comic strip and published collections of her work. Wilkinson was once named “the Pennsylvania state vegetable substitute” by the former speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

### ***Under the Bonnet*, a play by Shelli Pentimall Bookler presented by Beacon Theater Productions**

*Tuesday, March 10, at the Winsor Room, Radnor Memorial Library*

Lucretia Mott was a Quaker, wife, mother, teacher, orator, friend, activist, and a symbol of strength and determination. A tenacious woman who spent her life fighting for the rights of women and African Americans, Mott abided by the Quaker tenet that all people are equal. Lucretia and her husband James Mott, along with celebrated orator and champion Frederick Douglass, were among the signers of the Declaration of Sentiments at the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. This 40-minute play was presented by Beacon Theater Productions and co-sponsored by Radnor Memorial Library and the League of Women Voters of Radnor Township.

### **Women's Suffrage and the Equal Rights Amendment**

*Sunday, April 26, online via Zoom*

The League of Women Voters of Radnor Township was proud to sponsor a lecture presented by Radnor High School teacher Mr. Ed Ruby, cosponsored by Radnor Memorial Library and Radnor Historical Society. After decades of advocacy, women won the right to vote in 1919—just one hundred years ago. How does this struggle deepen our understanding of the decades of delay and controversy surrounding the Equal Rights Amendment? Using research materials and primary sources developed by the Harvard Business School, Ruby helped us make the connections.

### **Play Ball! A Double Header Featuring Mitchell Nathanson and Ben Yagoda**

Wednesday, May 6, online via Zoom

Video of this program is found at [radnorhistory.org](http://radnorhistory.org)

Baseball season is here! Radnor Memorial Library and Radnor Historical Society co-sponsored this doubleheader featuring writer and Villanova Professor of Law Mitchell Nathanson, author of a new book on famed Yankee Jim Bouton. Mitch was joined by writer Ben Yagoda, a Swarthmore resident and author of *About Town: The New Yorker And The World It Made* and many other books. Booklist calls the Bouton book “a witty biography” that is in part “an inside-publishing exposé,” providing “fascinating details on Bouton’s post-Ball Four life.”

### **Tom Clavin, author of *Tombstone: The Earp Brothers, Doc Holliday, and the Vendetta Ride from Hell***

Wednesday, October 21, online via Zoom

Tom Clavin, #1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author, presented his new book *Tombstone: The Earp Brothers, Doc Holliday, and The Vendetta Ride from Hell*. The author of many bestsellers, Clavin has worked as a newspaper editor, magazine writer, tv and radio commentator, and as a reporter for *The New York Times*. Tom Clavin lives in Sag Harbor, New York. If his name sounds familiar to you it is because he co-authored *Valley Forge* in 2018 and the Winsor Room author event for that book attracted a big crowd. *Tombstone* is the true story of the Earp Brothers, Doc Holliday, and the famous Gunfight at the O.K. Corral in Tombstone, Arizona. On the afternoon of October 26, 1881, nine men clashed in what would be known as the most famous shootout in American frontier history. Clavin, the journalist, briskly sketches dozens of historical figures in his book and separates fact from fiction.

### **History of The Supreme Court, Presented by Jim Segrave-Daly**

Wednesday, November 18, online via Zoom

With the confirmation of a new Justice upon us, local historian Jim Segrave-Daly discussed the history of the Supreme Court. He described its creation and the roles that Chief Justices Marshall, Taney, Warren and others have played, as well as some of the Court’s landmark decisions.

### **The Philadelphia Print Shop on The Main Line**

Wednesday, December 2, online via Zoom

Since its founding in Chestnut Hill in 1982 by the former curator of Revolutionary Maps with the Library of Congress, Dr. Don Cresswell, the Philadelphia Print Shop has earned a national and distinguished reputation for its extensive collections and excellent customer service. While much of the Philadelphia Print Shop’s business is conducted online, proud owner and local collector David Mackey believes his new storefront is essential to all who share his enthusiasm for finding antique prints, historic maps, rare books and more. In this live Zoom presentation, David opened the Wayne doors to the iconic print shop and shared his joy of collecting, his passion for local history, and showed examples from his vast collections.

### **There’s No Place Like Home, with author Irene Levy Baker**

Wednesday, December 9, online via Zoom

Although we weren’t traveling much in 2020, there were still ways to have lots of fun in the Philadelphia region. And Irene Levy Baker, author of *100 Things To Do In Philadelphia* and *Unique Eats & Eateries of Philadelphia* explained how. Attendees heard stories about where to have adventures including good places to social distance, secret destinations even long-time locals don’t know about, where to create fun family memories and how to help restaurants survive with limited capacity.

### **Washington’s Crossing, Presented by Jim Segrave-Daly**

Wednesday, December 16, online via Zoom

Local historian Jim Segrave-Daly joined us once again for a discussion of one of the most pivotal times in American history, Christmas 1776. From Washington’s reading of Thomas Paine’s *American Crisis* to his troops to the Battle of Trenton, Segrave-Daly uncovered why Washington’s plans, fraught with danger, helped to save the American cause in the Revolution. **B**

*Selected programs were recorded by Tom Ellis.*

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### Barbara McDonnell

- Radnor High School yearbooks from 1941, 1943, 1945, 1946, 1951 (2)

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- Certified Copy of Award of Real Estate for Lainshaw Lodge dated February 5, 1959

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**Wednesday, May 11, 2022**

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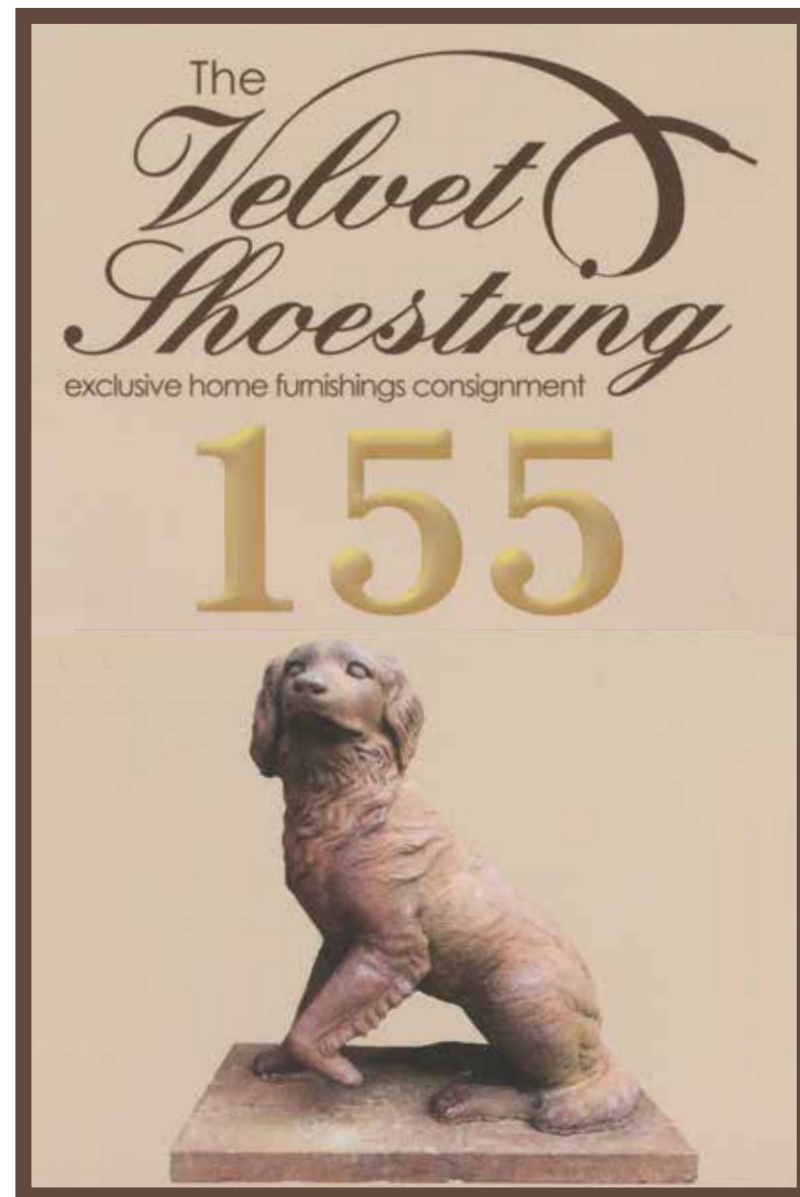
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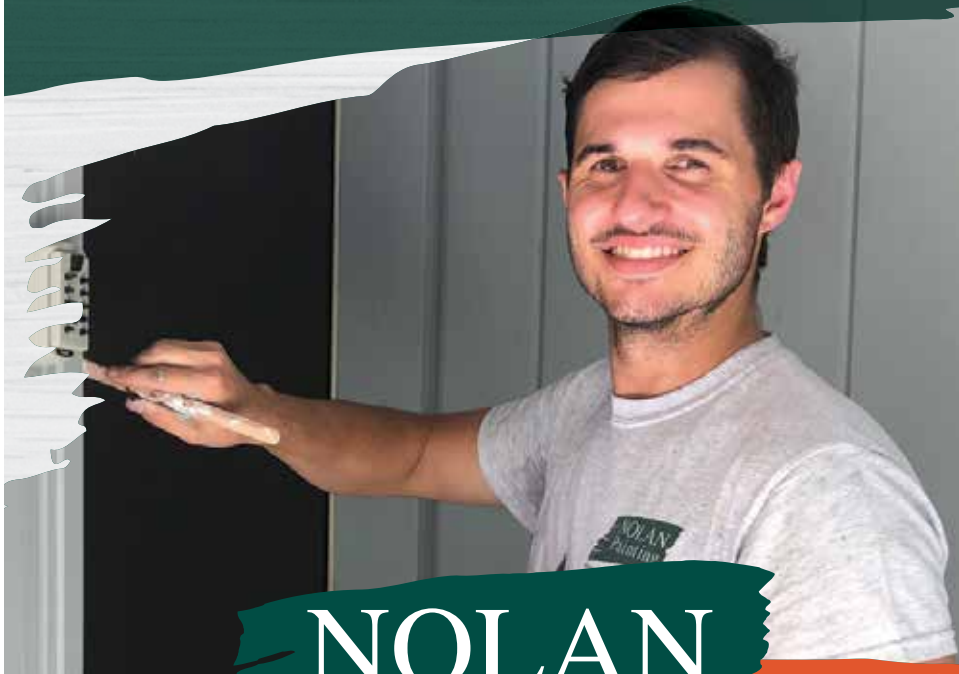
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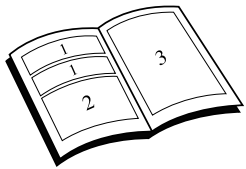
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