

THE BULLETIN

of the

RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME VII

2017

No. 7



LANDMARK HOMES ISSUE

Prairie School Design on the Main Line: Architect George W. Maher in St. Davids
Louella House at 150

LANDMARK HOMES ISSUE

Table of Contents

RHS News

A Plan for the Finley House 2

Prairie School Design on the Main Line 4

By Kathleen Cummings

Louella House at 150 12

By Greg Prichard

Radnor Historical Society 2017 Report

• Programs of the Year 26

• Membership Report 32

• Volunteers & Guides 35

• Accessions & Acquisitions 35

Advertising Section 36

On the Cover

The three houses on St. Davids Avenue designed by Chicago architect George W. Maher, the subject of this issue's featured article by architectural historian Kathleen Cummings, also of Chicago.



THE BULLETIN OF THE RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME VII

2017

No. 7



INCORPORATED APRIL 30, 1948

HEADQUARTERS AND MUSEUM

THE FINLEY HOUSE
113 WEST BEECH TREE LANE
WAYNE, PENNSYLVANIA 19087

TELEPHONE (610) 688-2668 | www.radnorhistory.org

Visitors Cordially Welcome.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MARY MCGINN, *President*

LYNN ELLIS, *Vice-President*

GREG PRICHARD, *Secretary*

NANCY FISCHER, *Treasurer*

BEVERLEE BARNES

JENNIFER BEACOM

DOUGLAS BROWN

EVIE GIEGERICH

JUSTIN HENRY

PHIL GRAHAM

HOWARD HOLDEN

EDWARD POLLARD

F. HARRY SPIESS

JOHN DALE, *Emeritus*

A Renewed Commitment to the Finley House

In 1976, countless historical organizations across the United States undertook a variety of projects in preparation for the Bicentennial on July 4. The Radnor Historical Society, having been stewards of the Finley House since 1964, began extensive renovations that created the museum exhibit room and made other changes that modernized (by 1970s standards) the building's interior.

The Finley House has been updated in various ways ever since, including the conversion of the basement into an interpretive space depicting the Colonial-era kitchen. However, the majority of publicly accessible spaces, including all of the main floor, remain largely as they were after the house's reinvention of 1976.

Now, more than 40 years later, those spaces are showing their age. Lighting fixtures, paint, and carpeting all reflect an outdated way of presenting a public face to a house museum and an organization. While some museum displays have rotated, most of the objects in our cases have been there for decades, which is not good for the objects or the freshness of the displays.

Those of us who are responsible for the upkeep of the Finley House, the Board of Directors broadly and Buildings & Grounds Committee specifically, are now thinking deeply about how to reinvigorate the public spaces of the Finley House. The house is a responsibility in various ways: it is simultaneously our functional headquarters and the largest "artifact" in our collection. It is a historic object that deserves the care and delicate attention given to any relic in a display case.

With that dedication to historic preservation in mind, the Board hired Frens & Frens Restoration Architects, a long-established and well respected firm based in West Chester, to prepare a maintenance study and funding plan for the Finley House. Frens & Frens associates Dale Frens and Carol Quigley examined the entire house in-depth, using their experienced eyes to study every aspect of the building's condition.

Frens & Frens's resulting report was formally presented to the Board of Directors during a special meeting on the evening of Wednesday, February 21, 2018. Mr. Frens and Ms. Quigley identified several areas where maintenance is necessary, including exterior stucco and rotted trim. Interior upgrades may include central air conditioning which, though expensive, will be advantageous for the maintenance of RHS's collections as well as the comfort of visitors.

The other portion of the report was a detailed spreadsheet outlining the timeline and costs of maintenance and repairs spread out over the next 20 years. This professionally-prepared guide will be of great assistance to the board in the planning and execution of the renovation as well as regular upkeep.

The beginning of this work coincides with the recent departure of the Finley House apartment's longtime tenant, which will allow the Buildings & Grounds Committee to consider modifications for easier access to the house's attic storage areas and refurbishment of the apartment. RHS has identified a need to use the attic space for additional storage as well as for placement of potential new mechanical systems.

This work will be made possible thanks to the generosity of the Society's members, those who attended and sponsored the wildly successful Ardrossan fundraiser (detailed on page 26), and contributions from Radnor Township.

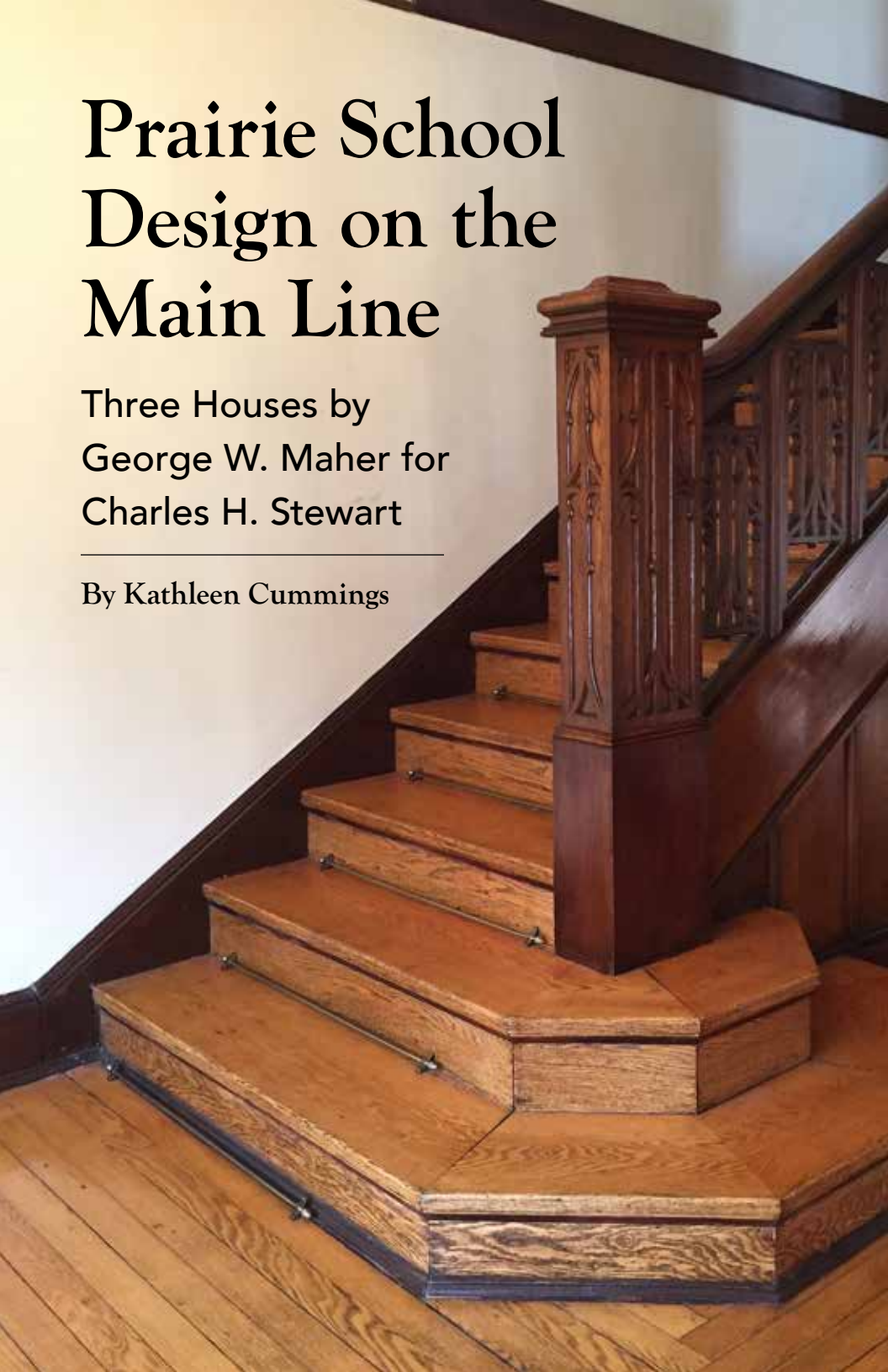
Currently, the Society's reserves will only allow us to catch up on deferred maintenance. As the Board addresses the challenges presented by the Frens & Frens assessment, there will be opportunities for the Radnor community to assist the Society by funding projects. Possibilities range from the mundane (an endowment to fund our annual maintenance reserve of \$10,000 per year) to pie-in-the-sky (a geothermal HVAC system that would provide long term sustainability). Members who are interested in more information or in reviewing the report are invited to inquire at info@radnorhistory.org. **B**



Prairie School Design on the Main Line

Three Houses by
George W. Maher for
Charles H. Stewart

By Kathleen Cummings



The Stewart residence, "Hilaire," built in the 1880s from a design said to be by John Fraser.

Preserved directly north of the St. Davids railroad station are three houses designed in 1897 by notable Prairie School architect George W. Maher (1864 – 1926), who practiced in Chicago and its suburbs. Charles H. Stewart, son of Maher's half cousin, commissioned the group on property next to the Hilaire estate that his father created in 1884. These buildings tell a fascinating story that interweaves family history with changing, late 19th century architectural taste.

On July 31, 1883, Philadelphia snuff manufacturer Robert Stewart signed an agreement with Thomas Williams, Jr. to purchase land north of St. Davids Station along the Pennsylvania Railroad. The next year his house Hilaire was underway. The *Philadelphia Record* reported on May 22, 1884 that near St. Davids, "Mr. Robert Stewart, of Stewart, Ralph & Co., is putting up a handsome building to cost fifty thousand dollars." The estate contained the grand house attributed to Philadelphia architect John Fraser as well as a carriage house and gardener's cottage built on 13 acres. It must have been Robert's wife Julie who chose the name Hilaire, to honor her step grandfather Edouard St. Hilaire Maher

Left: The main staircase of 502 St. Davids Road.



Detail of Plate 23 from the 1900 Main Line atlas, showing the Hilaire (spelled “Hillaire”) estate and the three homes designed by George Maher, two of which were then owned by C.H. Stewart and one owned by J. Trimble.

(1783 – 1845). Two decades later, her half cousin George Maher used the name Hilaire again for his summer retreat in Michigan.

Robert Stewart added to his Hilaire property by purchasing the adjacent land at the corner of Chamounix Road and St. Davids Avenue in 1888. When he died in 1896, the land was still vacant. Stewart left his property in equal shares to his wife Julie Antoinette Niemann Stewart and his son Charles. Julie Stewart transferred her interest in the corner property to her son Charles, opening it up to development, and he hired Maher to design houses for the property.

Maher drew plans in the spring of 1897 for three houses to cost a total of \$18,000. They represented his current thinking about domestic architecture in a suburban setting. As the Charles Stewart houses were under construction in 1898, a photograph was taken of 506 and 502 St. Davids Avenue that shows the site just before the houses were to be plastered. Bundles of wood to be used as lath, barrels and buckets for delivering ingredients and mixing plaster, and various hand tools are scattered in the front yard. Both houses are scaffolded, ready for workmen to access the second stories.



502 and 506 St. Davids under construction. This mounted photograph was preserved by successive owners of the home in the foreground, 506 St. Davids Avenue.

While exterior plaster may seem unusual compared to wood shingles commonly used for nearby houses of the 1890s in Wayne and St. Davids, it was not a novelty in the Midwest. Prairie School architects like Maher favored it since they could create simple, unadorned surfaces usually minimally trimmed with stained wood.

Each of the Charles Stewart houses incorporates exterior plaster walls set above different foundations: robust ashlar stone at 502 St. Davids, Roman brick at 506, and rubble masonry at 510. The house at 502 St. Davids is similar to Maher’s house in Kenilworth with its plastered walls and steeply pitched roofs. On both houses, Gothic brackets are inserted on the entrance porch, and inside 502 St. Davids a beautiful staircase carved with similar Gothic ornament is preserved.

The center house, 506 St. Davids, is a symmetrical design entirely finished with exterior plaster. Its broad hipped roof is echoed by the generous porch that stretches across the front. Its design relates to George Maher’s John Farson House in Oak Park, Illinois, known as “Pleasant Home,” a grand mansion being developed by Maher at exactly the same time. Under the eaves of 506 there is a fine decorative cornice



502 St. Davids Avenue.



510 St. Davids Avenue.



506 St. Davids Avenue.

embossed with a running floral pattern. As in Midwestern Prairie School houses Roman brick is chosen to emphasize the horizontal disposition of the houses.

The third Charles Stewart house at 510 St. Davids has a steeper hipped roof with dormers and is varied by its one story porch of rubble masonry set off-center and curving around the west side. In all three houses remain the original fireplaces, handsome custom-made staircases, and remarkable, large paneled pocket doors.

Charles Stewart knew Maher's work first hand. A handful of letters written from Hilaire in 1893 by George Maher's father, Theophile, describe his summer-long stay in St. Davids. He and his wife, Sarah, came to visit relatives and they traveled to the "old home in Frankford," made a trip to Germantown by rail to see relatives, and went to Riverton where Sophie Fraser, another half cousin of Maher's and wife of the architect John Fraser, lived.

While Theophile and Sarah remained in St. Davids, Robert, Julie and Charles Stewart left for a time to see the World's Columbian



George Washington Maher Residence, Kenilworth, Illinois. (Historic Architecture and Landscape Image Collection, Ryerson and Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago. Digital File # L018361)

Exposition and stayed with Maher, who remained in Chicago to supervise work on his new Kenilworth house. Theophile encouraged his son to take the Stewarts to Kenilworth to see the progress he was making on the new house. Theophile hoped that his son would come to Hilaire to see how St. Davids was changing. Theophile wrote,

“It has verily blossomed as the rose under the careful management of this great Pennsylvania R. R. So should all railroads in Chicago do for their suburban properties to crowd them with settlers and handsome homes, and thus increase their revenues.”

In 1893, Kenilworth was just emerging as an early railroad suburb on Chicago’s North Shore under the watchful eye of Joseph Sears, who founded it in 1889. Sears promoted it as an ideal suburb, and Maher designed 40 buildings there during a thirty-year career, including many houses, the community’s assembly hall, and three schools. As the village grew, Maher continued to build into the 1920s. Later in practice with his son Philip, Maher created the Kenilworth Community Development plan in 1922 as the village expanded across the railroad tracks. Today he is highly regarded for his impact upon Kenilworth’s development.



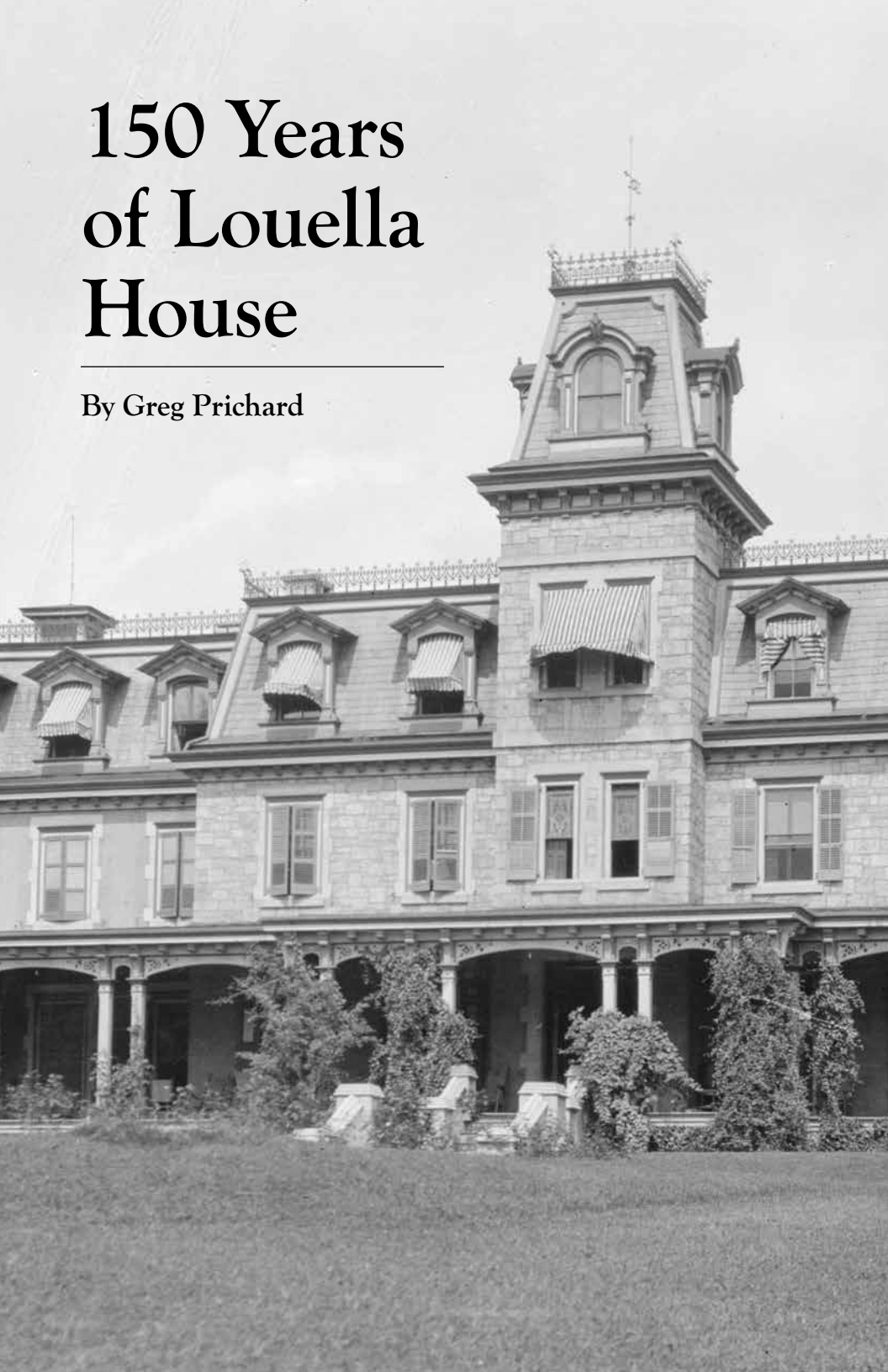
“Pleasant Home,” residence of John Farson, Oak Park, Illinois. (Courtesy of Pleasant Home Foundation, Oak Park, Illinois)

This story shows the importance of these three houses in preserving a unique chapter in the development of St. Davids. With Hilaire demolished and the estate redeveloped in the 1920s for a new subdivision, only the three Charles H. Stewart Houses remain to tell the story. Wallace & Warner, who platted the new subdivision, did name the principal drive Hilaire but only Robert Stewart’s coach house, now remodeled, and the gardener’s house survive. Charles H. Stewart died in 1936, but his widow, Florence Scott Stewart, lived at 510 St. Davids until she died in 1971. Fortunately, all three of the houses that Charles H. Stewart built have been lovingly preserved, important landmarks in the development of St. Davids. **B**

Kathleen Cummings is an architectural historian in Chicago who is writing an architectural monograph about George W. Maher and his buildings. She serves on the Board of the Pleasant Home Foundation, whose mission is to preserve and maintain Pleasant Home and its grounds as an historic house museum and exhibition facility.

150 Years of Louella House

By Greg Prichard



It could be called Wayne's most contested property. Since the town's beginnings, the boundaries of the area known as "Louella" have been whittled down from an entire village to a mere lawn. The mansion at the center of it all has seen so many permutations, so many uses and has been home to so many, it is, in a way, remarkable that it has survived at all. Aside from the Anthony Wayne Theatre, there is perhaps no other building so symbolically representative of Wayne.

The Beginning

The Civil War was over, and the wounded nation could finally focus on rebuilding – and building anew. By the 1860s, the Pennsylvania Railroad had owned the thirty-year-old Philadelphia & Columbia Railroad for a decade. The railroad would soon be seen as a gateway to resort communities where wealthy and middle-class Philadelphians could escape to the open, airy country. A few pioneers among Philadelphia's elite sought the solitude of the rural Main Line for their own country residences during this time, one of whom was the very first to see commercial opportunity in the farmland of Radnor Township.

James Henry Askin (1823-1900) was a real estate broker and banker who made a name for himself in Philadelphia. Onetime president of the Fourth National Bank of Philadelphia headquartered at 723 Arch Street, Askin also had political ambitions, having served on the state legislature in 1857 and run as Democratic nominee for Congress in 1871.¹

Until Askin's arrival, what we now know as "Wayne" was a community of farmers fortunate enough to be close to both the main toll road and railroad connecting Philadelphia with the west. They shipped their goods, including milk, to the city via a freight platform supposedly called "Cleaver's Landing," after a prominent local farmer. The Pennsylvania Railroad established Wayne Station in the 1860s, adopting the name of Paoli native Anthony Wayne likely because of his nearby burial place at Old St. David's Church.

Starting in 1864, Askin purchased a group of large farms totaling about 300 acres, reserving the highest spot on a hill between the Lancaster Turnpike and Pennsylvania Railroad (and a mere dirt

¹ "Blinded by Jealous Doctor." *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov 2, 1899, p. 3.

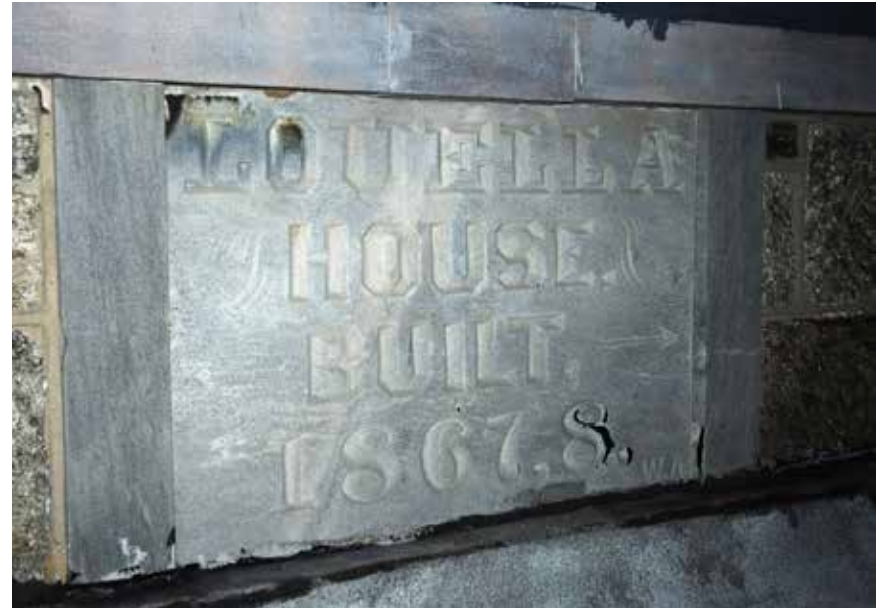
path away from Wayne Station) for his own residence. His impressive home was designed in the fashionable French-inspired Second Empire style, a look most easily identified by mansard roofs. The house was sizable, built completely of stone, with a verandah around three sides and an attached greenhouse. Its high tower with ornamental ironwork and weathervane was surely unlike anything the sleepy farming community had ever seen. On the front of the tower, between the second and third floors, a marble datestone visible from the ground read “Louella House. Built 1867,8.”



Who Designed Louella?

One of the enduring mysteries of Louella House is the simple question of who designed it. Architectural records from the 1860s are scarce, though it seems Askin chose someone of excellent skill and experience. The mansion’s Second Empire architecture is very typical of the time period, making identifying the designer by appearance alone difficult. Homes of similar scale and style are common in the region. The Thomas Atherton house in Wilkes-Barre, designed by Philadelphia’s John Fraser (then of the firm Fraser, Furness and Hewitt) was also built in 1867 and featured a tower nearly identical in appearance to Louella’s. Fraser had established himself in Philadelphia in 1865 with the construction of the Union League on Broad Street, which is tied with City Hall for being considered the region’s preeminent example of Second Empire architecture. The south side of the Union League also features a tower closely resembling Louella’s. Another work of Fraser is also prominent in Wayne: 25 years after Louella, his Wayne Presbyterian Church was built on Lancaster Avenue next to the original chapel.

Another possible designer is David S. Gendell, who was hired by Askin in 1870 and ‘71 to design the original Presbyterian Church and Lyceum Hall in the center of his new village. Gendell’s exquisite hand colored plans for the Lyceum are in the collection of the Smithsonian.



The Louella House datestone bears a signature: the initials “W.A.” appear on the lower right corner of the stone. Records of the construction of the Lyceum indicate that a William Anderson supplied the marble for that building.² It seems most likely that the “W.A.” is not the mark of an architect, but rather that Anderson left his mark for posterity, having furnished marble – including the datestone – for Louella House.

Of course the architect of Louella House may have been someone else entirely. Its features may resemble other buildings of the time simply because they were typical Second Empire elements – details that could have been taken right out of an architectural “pattern book.” Without a direct reference, the architect of Louella House may never be known.

Askin and the Village of Louella

The 1870 census gives a peek into the residents of Louella House in its heyday. J. Henry Askin, his wife Louisa (nee Somerndyke, 1824-1898), then aged 45, and daughters Louisa (21), Ella (17), and Mary (11). Three servants kept the house in order: Irish immigrants Bridget Kelly

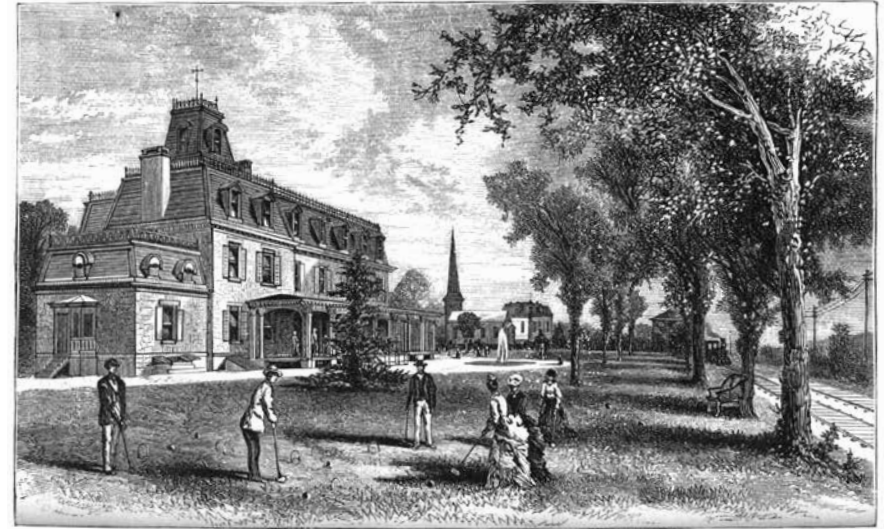
² “Wayne Lyceum Hall.” *The Wayne Gazette*, October 28, 1871.



This is believed to be the earliest extant photograph of Louella House, as shown in an album commissioned by Askin and produced by prominent Philadelphia photographer Frederick Gutekunst.

(26) and Ellen Somers (34), and Russian Ann Kline (29). Also residing on the property were J. Henry's brother, George Askin, who ran the farm, and his wife Elizabeth.

Askin's ambitions were much larger than simply creating a homestead. He had the foresight to see opportunity in the area's ideal location along prominent transportation corridors. The Pennsylvania Railroad's Wayne Station (which was never called "Louella") was in operation by the end of the 1860s, if not before. The railroad did not generate much noise or other nuisances in the day – at least when compared to fifty years later when it was a major freight route – so Louella Houses's siting just a few hundred feet from the right-of-way seems intentional. From the Turnpike, the mansion was on the highest spot around; from a passing rail car, it was perhaps the closest mansion to the tracks outside the city, there for all passing through to admire. The building's unusual angle was actually parallel with the railroad, which



An engraving showing lawn sports behind Louella House, with the original orientation of the railroad at the right. (*Suburban Stations and Rural Homes on the Pennsylvania Railroad*, Second Edition, 1875, p. 32)

was realigned to its current position in the early 1880s.

By 1871, downtown Wayne had a Lyceum Hall, Presbyterian Church, and town hall, all financed by Askin. All existing residences dated from the town's agrarian era (including the impressive Hughes farmhouse farther west on the Turnpike) until a surveyor named Kauffman laid out several roads. Homes were built on Bloomingdale Avenue between 1871 and 1873 in the Second Empire style that mimicked Louella House. Builders Duncan and Richardson did the construction, but work beyond the one avenue was halted by the Depression of 1873 and Askin's own financial troubles.

Setback and Tragedy

The Depression stymied construction throughout the nation, and it took nearly a decade for the economy to regroup. The bank Mr. Askin led, the Fourth National Bank of Philadelphia, was robbed of a significant sum in 1871 and Askin supposedly lost his remaining fortune in his attempt to save it.³

Though details were not adequately documented at the

³ "Blinded by Jealous Doctor." *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov 2, 1899, p. 3.

THE LOUELLA MANSION

Is one of the greatest attractions in Wayne. It is a splendid stone structure replete with every modern convenience and the best possible sanitary arrangements. The rooms are large, light, well ventilated and handsomely furnished. Broad halls extend along the entire building on each floor.

The Mansion is surrounded by a spacious porch looking out upon seven acres of finely kept lawn that extends along Lancaster avenue, and is decorated with shrubbery, fine

old shade-trees and flower beds. The building has been thoroughly renovated, re-painted, re-papered and re-carpeted. It is handsomely furnished throughout. The ladies' and gentlemen's parlors and the dining-room particularly being models of neatness and refined taste.

Charmingly located, with its broad front overlooking Lancaster avenue; a southern exposure and close proximity to

WAYNE STATION, make **LOUELLA MANSION** one of the most attractive and best patronized of the many Summer Resorts on the line of the Pennsylvania Railroad.



LOUELLA MANSION.

ADDRESS, MISS E. BOUGHTER,
WAYNE, DELAWARE COUNTY, PA.

Advertisement for the Louella Mansion, from an 1880s issue of the *Wayne Signal*. (RHS)

time, Askin's personal life seems to have been further complicated in scandalous ways that irreparably damaged his family life and contributed to the need to abandon his plans. A few clues in contemporary sources suggest the scope of these problems. Askin had assumed the title of president of the Wayne Lyceum Association, a literary and arts club, at its formation in October 1870. During the association's meeting of January 16, 1872, Askin removed himself of the responsibilities of the office. The *Wayne Gazette's* account of the meeting cites vague "rumors" that "have been afloat during the past week," without going into any further detail.⁴ Indeed, without sources, it would be improper to recount those rumors nearly a century and a half later, no matter how consequential to Wayne's development the resulting events were. Though consistently replete with sermons, the *Wayne Gazette's* articles on topics such as "fidelity" and "dead beats" around this time may have been related to the rumors.

Askin remained in residence at Louella House though the development ceased. In November 1899 he revealed to newspapers that in 1875 he sought treatment for vision problems from two doctors. One doctor, being jealous of the other, poisoned Askin's medicine, and

⁴ "The Lyceum," *Wayne Gazette*, Saturday, January 20, 1872, p. 2.

within three months he was totally blind, never to recover. According to Askin's account, the doctor who deliberately blinded Askin confessed to the second doctor on his deathbed. "I am sorry I destroyed Mr. Askin's life," were supposedly his last words, remorseful that Askin suffered over jealousy for his professional rival. Askin never revealed the doctor's name in sympathy for the man's family.⁵ Newspapers as far away as Kentucky retold the sensational story.

As a result of his misfortunes, Askin may have wished to sell his remaining land for years before George W. Childs and Anthony J. Drexel purchased the property, prized mansion and all, in 1880. Drexel and Childs' plan for Wayne (they chose that name rather than Askin's "Louella") would take another two decades to fully execute, but the old Louella House was central to their vision. Among the first tasks Drexel and Childs undertook was to expand Louella House, giving it side wings and extending the verandahs. Its conversion to a hotel was a supplement to the brand new Bellevue Hotel they built west of the train station. Despite the expansion, the 1868 mansion remained intact as the central core of the hotel, with its tower still dominating the Wayne skyline. Miss Elizabeth R. Boughter leased the building in 1883 to run as a boarding house and operated it as such until around the turn of the century.

In 1884 Askin was reported to be living in a newly-built brick cottage on the corner of North Wayne Avenue and West Lancaster Avenue (now the site of Wayne Jewelers).⁶ Within a short time, his blindness confined him to the Masonic Home on Philadelphia's North Broad Street. Askin died February 21, 1900, and was interred in a mausoleum at Mount Moriah Cemetery.

Life as a School

As work progressed on Drexel and Childs' massive Wayne Estate development, essentially fulfilling a dream Askin could not, Louella House became the target for a new venture. In 1889, it was reported that Drexel planned to use Louella House as the Drexel Industrial College for

⁵ "Patient Made Blind by Jealous Doctor." *The World* (New York), Nov 3, 1899, p. 4.

⁶ Article in the *Germantown Telegraph*, July 2, 1884, as reprinted in "The History of Delaware County" by Henry Graham Ashmead.

Women, a venture for which he set aside \$1.5 million. As one educational publication reported:

“The institution is for the instruction of girls between the ages of thirteen and nineteen years, in all duties pertaining to the care of a household, and to teach such trades and business as will make them practical women, able to earn a respectable livelihood.”⁷

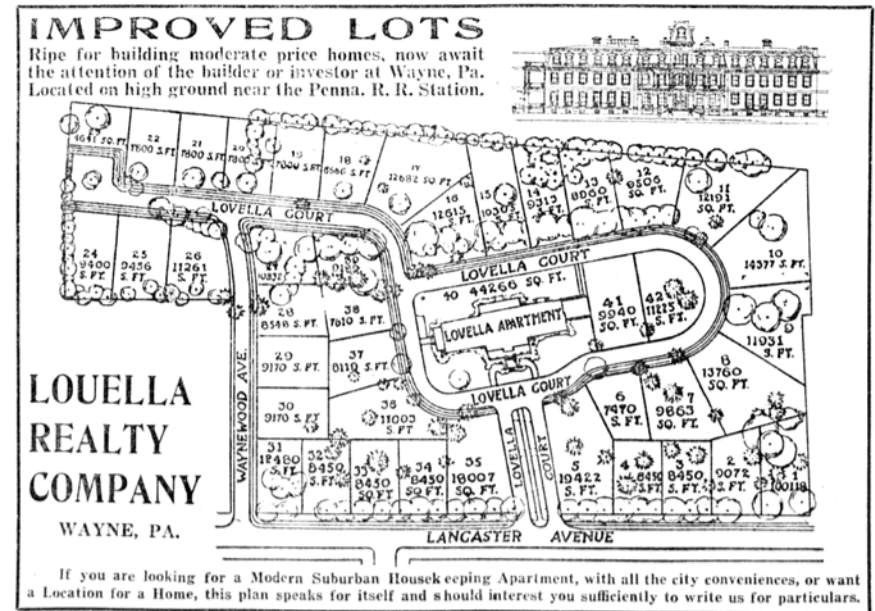
The Episcopal church was to be affiliated, and the selection of a site for St. Mary’s Church may have been related to its close proximity to the mansion. The Bishop of the Diocese was to be the school’s president, with daughters of clergymen to be given first choice to attend.⁸

By September of 1889, Drexel’s plans shifted to Philadelphia, where a co-ed Drexel Industrial Institute was planned. Opened in 1891, the Institute is now known as Drexel University, with over 25,000 students enrolled. It’s shocking to imagine how Wayne would be different today if Drexel’s original vision had come to be: the town could have been a college town resembling Villanova, Bryn Mawr or Haverford, with Louella House as its iconic centerpiece.

Even though Drexel’s educational vision shifted, Louella House would indeed serve as a girl’s school. Miss Harriet C. Armitage operated the Armitage School there beginning in 1898. Similar to the Wayne Estate’s real estate advertisements, promotion for the school touted Wayne’s ideal water and fresh air. When school let out in the summer, the mansion returned to seasonal use as a hotel.

Developing Louella Court

References to the Armitage School date through 1915, which coincides with the mansion’s conversion into apartments. In August 1914, the *Suburban & Wayne Times* announced that Philadelphia investor John W. Plank purchased the building and surrounding land, and then sold it to the locally-operated Louella Realty Company. The article states that the mansion had been neglected for a few years, and that its owner



Site plan, from the *Evening Public Ledger*, April 24 1915.

after Miss Armitage was an investor from New York, coincidentally named George W. Childs (though apparently not related to the George W. Childs who co-purchased the mansion in 1880).⁹

Noted Wayne architect Francis A. Gugert drew a plan dividing the property into lots, with a boulevard on the mansion’s front lawn and a residential block wrapping around the mansion. Gugert also designed several alterations to the mansion, the most notable of which was the addition of a second story porch supported by concrete piers on the front facade. This new balcony covered much of the mansion’s signature stone tower, and obscured the view of its datestone from the ground.

The contractor hired for the work was prolific Wayne-based builder J.D. Lengel, who also built many of the homes surrounding the mansion on the newly-branded Louella Court. Though not very well documented, most of the homes were likely designed by Francis Gugert and his partners, David Knickerbacker Boyd and Victor Abel.

The lots lining the boulevard leading to the mansion from Lancaster Avenue may have been intended as residential lots, but

⁷ “Potpourri,” *The Kindergarten - For Teachers and Parents*, April, 1889, p. 379.

⁸ *The Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register*, April, 1889, p. 328.

⁹ “Big Realty Operation.” *The Suburban & Wayne Times*, August 28, 1914, p. 1.



April, 1964 photograph of the Louella Court Apartments, by James C. Massey. At this time, the building was just short of 100 years old.

by around 1926 were occupied by brick commercial buildings with apartments above. Aside from the center of the boulevard, the last remaining green area at Louella House was a yard east of the mansion. A property once the size of a village now consisted of a plot only about a few times the area of the building itself.

The Apartment Era

Following the 1915 renovations, Louella House spent the majority of its existence – nearly a century – as a rental apartment building. The earliest advertisements for the building’s 18 units call them “housekeeping apartments” with various city amenities and a public dining room. Initially rents were \$30 to \$90 per month. While this use mostly kept the mansion in a kind of stasis, this time period was not without its controversies.

In 1955 the mansion was called the Louella Court Apartments, and its owner, Herman Grossman, proposed modernizing the building and erecting a group of garages on its east lawn. The plan would have reconfigured interior spaces to create more apartments, enclosed the porches, installed an elevator, and allowed for 22 garages on the lawn.

The residents of Louella House were upset about the plan, which would have at least temporarily displaced them. Louella Court residents were likewise unamused, for the garages would, as they put it, deprive them of open views and remove a “recreation spot.”¹⁰

Mr. Grossman made several public presentations to the Radnor Township Board of Adjustment, since his proposal would have required a variance. The Court was built before Radnor Township adopted zoning restrictions, thus making the mansion technically in violation of setback requirements. In addition, Grossman’s garages would have violated setbacks on two sides. Grossman pleaded for hardship given the expense of keeping the old building in good condition. He would not agree to give tenants exclusive use of the garages, and neighbors complained that his plan amounted to the commercialization of the neighborhood. In the end, the Board of Adjustment did not approve Grossman’s proposal, and his plan was not undertaken.

¹⁰ “Louella Court Tenants Rap Landlord Over Plans to Remodel Ancient Bldg.” *The Suburban & Wayne Times*, February 11, 1955, p. 1.

Rebirth as Condominiums

Life as an apartment house continued unabated for several more decades. Though the mansion underwent no major renovations, a lack of upkeep led to disrepair on various fronts which accumulated to threaten the landmark's existence. Starting in 2011, local developer C.F. Holloway, III & Co. began to propose a complete renovation of the mansion as high-end condominium units, with a large garage structure on the east lawn similar to Grossman's proposal. Much like in 1955, neighbors protested the plan, and those in the historic preservation community expressed concern about changes to the mansion.

By this time, Louella Court was recognized by Radnor Township as a local historic district, and thus it was under the purview of the Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB). In a series of meetings, Holloway and his architects presented their plan for the mansion, and residents spoke their minds. The original garage proposal was eventually rejected, and an underground garage with formal garden on top was proposed in its place and eventually approved. With the necessary approvals, the project proceeded through 2013, and the newly delineated 12 units were sold for around \$1 million each. Gone were the days of Louella as an affordable place to live.

Gone also were original architectural elements that dated to the mansion's beginning. Exterior details, some of which truly were badly deteriorated, including porch millwork, dormers, and wood windows, were re-created in modern materials with varying degrees of accuracy. The top of the iconic tower with its intricate 19th century details became essentially a reproduction of the original. Interior woodwork and details were also replaced en masse, though fixtures like marble mantels were retained. Elsewhere on the exterior, blue marble window surrounds were revealed from decades' worth of paint.

Though very little original fabric of Louella House is visible from its exterior today, it is a great benefit to the community that Louella House still stands at all. Its tower remains a beacon on the Wayne skyline, an immediately recognizable reminder of how the town began and of the man who initiated its modern history. **B**



Mid-construction, December 2012. (Photo by the author)



Aerial view of Louella Court looking west, 2014. (Pictometry.com)

Programs of the Year

Program Spotlight

***Ardrossan: The Last Great Estate on the Philadelphia Main Line* by David Nelson Wren.**

Wednesday, November 8, at Ardrossan

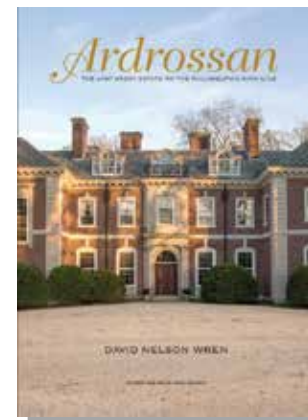


RHS and our headline sponsor Archer & Buchanan were delighted to present the first public event to celebrate the launch of a book that had been 20 years in the making. While *Ardrossan* has been used in recent years as a venue for a wide range of private and corporate events, this was the first to celebrate its very own existence.

Around 200 attendees – Society members and non-members alike – gathered for this special RHS fundraiser to hear David Nelson Wren conduct one of four separate tours among the colorful paintings and splendid artifacts that tell the story of the Montgomerys, perhaps

Radnor's best known family. Champagne, fine food and piano accompaniment, including tunes from *High Society*, the musical version of *The Philadelphia Story*, emanated from the ballroom where playwright Philip Barry found inspiration and where the family regularly entertained throughout the last 100 years. Family members mingled with curious guests, many of whom knew the Montgomerys and privately exchanged tales of their friendships and encounters. The book's author, David Nelson Wren, told legendary stories, signed books throughout the evening, and a special souvenir program was distributed to commemorate this unique night of classic Ardrossan-style partying.

Sixteen sponsors supported the event, contributing to a substantial sum to go towards the refurbishment of the Society's headquarters and museum, the Finley House. For two years the Radnor Historical Society was instrumental in conducting research for Wren's book, reading and re-reading manuscripts for accuracy, and restoring and supplying historic photographs to the publishers. The first edition was an instant sell-out and a second edition was published hot on its heels.



More English Than England: An Illustrated Lecture by Jeff Groff

Tuesday, January 10, at the Radnor Fire Company

By 1900 cricket, golf, lawn tennis and hunt clubs were ubiquitous along the Main Line. Many of our recreational pastimes, houses and public buildings were modeled on the English style and indeed it was no coincidence that Radnor's Ardrossan mansion was one of several that had its interiors decorated by White, Allom & Co., who were also responsible for many rooms in London's Buckingham Palace. Groff's presentation examined the growth of the Main Line from 1865-1930, with photographs and information he has researched over many years. He is currently Estate Historian at Winterthur. Co-sponsored by RHS and Radnor Memorial Library.

History & Architecture of the Church of the Good Shepherd

Sunday, March 19, at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Rosemont

Historian Bennett Hill presented a tour of this magnificent church, “built in the best English Gothic style of a country house of the 14th century.” It was completed in 1894 after relocating further along the pike, from the location of the stadium of the Villanova Wildcats.

RHS Annual Dinner at Beaumont, with Special Guest Jim Garrison

Wednesday, March 29

Video of this program is found at www.radnorhistory.org

The RHS Annual Dinner was held in the former Liseter Hall (later Beaumont), built in 1912 for William Liseter Austin, President of the Baldwin Locomotive Works. He built his estate on this magnificent 67-acre plot, and his Aeolian Organ, showcased for the guests by Jeff Fowler, is one of very few remaining worldwide. After dinner, Main Line historian Jim Garrison spoke about his new book, “At Home in the American Barn.”

Dotty Brown, Author of “Boathouse Row: Waves of Change in the Birthplace of American Rowing”

Tuesday, April 4, at the Radnorshire Room, Radnor Township Building

Video of this program is found at www.radnorhistory.org

Former *Inquirer* reporter and rower Dotty Brown delved into the history of the city’s rowing culture and the landmark clubhouses built to further it, as well as some of the city’s most enduring characters. It is the first book to lift the curtain on the little-known culture and history of Philadelphia’s iconic Boathouse Row, revealing stories of passion and perseverance along with hard-won victory.

Vintage & Weird Gardening Tools

Tuesday, April 25, at Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens

Video of this program is found at www.radnorhistory.org

Dr. Harold Sweetman, Executive Director of Jenkins, gave a lecture about strange old gardening tools that was both entertaining and informative. There was also a display and discussion of his own

collection of unusual, useless and downright hilarious tools which were marketed over many decades in the guise of making gardening easier.

Nancy Lynch, Author of “Vietnam Mailbag: Letters From the War”

Tuesday, May 16, at the Radnorshire Room, Radnor Township Building

Video of this program is found at www.radnorhistory.org

Nancy Lynch, author of ‘Vietnam Mailbag,’ read letters from servicemen who served in Vietnam from 1968-1972. From the early 1960s through 1973, hundreds of thousands of men and women served in Vietnam in an undeclared and highly controversial war. During the peak years of that conflict, a young reporter, Nancy Lynch, relayed the hopes and fears, the joy and tears of hundreds of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines from the state of Delaware through the “Vietnam Mailbag” column she wrote in the *Wilmington Morning News*.

Thomas H. Keels, Author of “Sesqui! Greed, Graft, and the Forgotten World’s Fair of 1926”

Wednesday, September 27, at the temporary Radnor Memorial Library

Noted historian Thomas Keels returned to open a wide, insightful and revealing historical lens on Philadelphia. In 1916, department store magnate John Wanamaker launched plans for a Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. However, when the “Sesqui” opened in 1926, in the remote, muddy swamps of South Philadelphia, the first visitors were stunned to find an unfinished Fair, with shabbily built and mostly empty structures. Crowds stayed away in droves. Philadelphia became a national scandal. Keels demonstrates at length how the fair was entangled with local and state factional politics. Co-sponsored by RHS and Radnor Memorial Library.

A Preview of Stoneleigh: A Natural Garden

Wednesday, October 25, at Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens

Video of this program is found at www.radnorhistory.org

For nearly 80 years, Stoneleigh was the home of the Haas family, who donated the property to Natural Lands Trust in 2016 so that it

would remain preserved forever. In the spring of 2018, Stoneleigh opened to the public. Ethan Kauffman, the new Director of Stoneleigh, gave a presentation and talk about the past, present and future of this long-anticipated public garden. Stoneleigh is a 42-acre property that includes stately trees, winding pathways, and lush gardens that were designed by a number of notable landscape architects over the past century—including the Olmsted Brothers, sons of the famed Frederick Law Olmsted. Natural Lands transformed the former private estate to a public garden with many improvements to the landscapes, facilities and infrastructure. Kauffman also gave an overview of the Natural Lands preserves in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Co-sponsored by Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens, Radnor Conservancy, and RHS.

Caring For Paintings: Craft Informed By Science, with Mary McGinn

Tuesday, December 5, at the Radnor Middle School Library

Video of this program is found at www.radnorhistory.org

Mary McGinn, Chief Conservator at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and President of the Radnor Historical Society, shared stories from her 25 year career working on paintings, murals, frames, and decorative objects in museums and private collections. Prior to the position at PAFA, Mary was Paintings Conservator at Winterthur Museum and managed a successful private practice in the Philadelphia area. Her clients included Brandywine River Museum, Eastern University, Morven Museum & Garden, Naomi Wood Trust (Woodford Mansion), Ryerss Museum, Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center and Woodmere Art Museum. **B**

Selected programs were filmed by our videographer, Tom Ellis.

View videos of many of these programs on our website: radnorhistory.org

PHOTO APPEAL! Please help us preserve Radnor's History...

Your family is part of our history. We are launching an appeal for old photos and home movies taken in and around Radnor. Do you have ancient black & whites or celluloid film tucked away in a closet, attic, basement or garage?

WE WANT TO DIGITIZE THEM!

We will make copies and return them to you along with scans you can use, store, print, or distribute. We are looking for any old-style albums, films, loose photos or negatives that contain a local building, landscape, view or scene – with or without people.

Give us a call, bring them to us, or we will collect and return them intact.

610-688-2668



Radnor Historical Society,
113 West Beech Tree Lane, Wayne.
Open Tue. & Sat. 2-4pm
or by appointment.



or email: info@radnorhistory.org

Membership Report

Benefactors

Abiri Family Foundation
Nancy & John Fischer
Gulf Coast County Foundation
Susan & Steve Kelly

Collin F. McNeil
Rosalind Pendergast
Charles W. Stuard III
Helen S. Weary

Patrons

James Averill
Beverlee Barnes
Jane N. Beatty
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Beebe Jr.
Karen & Doug Brown
Janice & Michael Carson
James Cavanaugh
Valerie & Peter Craig
Donna Crane & Neal Cutler
Nancy Bare Davis
Lynn & Tom Ellis
John Faust

Pedie & Bennett* Hill
Debbie & James Lofton
Mary McGinn & Laurence Smith
Erin & Jeff McRae
Kathleen Papa
Christina & Matt Reichert
Katherine Ryan
Mortimer N. Sellers
Meg & Steve Shreiner
Cathy & Bill Siple
Cheryl & John Tumola

Business Members

Archer & Buchanan Architecture
Bauer and Dean Publishers Inc.
Camera Shop (EBX Corp)
Capri Water Ice Inc.
Chanticleer Foundation
Cottage Industries
Dayton Lock Company
Duffy Real Estate
Eadeh Enterprises
Fetter & Pulliam Dentists
Gardner/Fox Associates Inc.

Gerrity Agency Inc.
Godshalk Welsh Capital Management
Janiczek Homes LLC
Jim's Berwyn Auto Repair Center
Main Line Center for the Family
Nolan Painting Inc.
Pennsylvania Trust
Team Pulos
Trosini Landscape Management
Weiss & Associates
Wharton Advisory Group

Sustaining Members

Ellen & George Aman
Kathryn & Stephen Bajus
Mary Fran & Don Ballard
Dr. William F. Barr
Barbara & Kevin Blackney
Maria F. Brooks
Willo Carey & Peter Benoliel
Mary B. Coe
John L. Dale
Tracey & Michael Delfiner
Joyce & Larry DeYoung
Eleanor Carson Donato
Samuel F. Etris
Kathy R. Fisher & Mordecai Schwartz
Evie & Jim Giegerich
Jeff Groff
Bart Harrison
Bonnie & John Haughey
Maria & Colin Hingley
Howard Holden
Elizabeth & Jamie Holt
Jill Huentelman & John Fisher
Marjorie & Joel Jensen
Pamela J. Jensen
Sandy Klein & Charles Crawford

Susan LeBoutillier
Patricia E. Lee
Lois & Art Lewis
Mary & John Lord
Wendy & Wade L. McDevitt
Elizabeth T. & Howard R. Morgan
J. Michael Morrison
Brenda & Michael Noone
Ann & John Osborne
Lauren Palcho (and Starbuck)
Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Paul
Andrea & Bill Pilling
Barbara & David Prescott
Joyce S. Prichard
Mr. & Mrs. Randolph Roberts
Lemuel Ross
Elaine Paul & John Schaefer
Barbara & Tom Schraudenbach
F. Harry Spiess Jr.
Margaret & Jonathan Sukonik
Mr. & Mrs. Bruce W. Tharp
Mary & Bruce Wilson
Susan & Michael Wolf
David Nelson Wren
Susan & Robert Zelten

Special & Institutional Memberships

Allen County Public Library
Bateman Gallagher American Legion 668
Cabrini College
Chadds Ford Historical Society
Chester County Historical Society
Eastern University
Easttown Library
Friends of the Grange Estate
Friends of the Swedish Cabin
Genealogical Society of Philadelphia
Haverford Township Historical Society
Historic Waynesborough
Historical Society of Newtown Square

Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Lower Merion Historical Society
Marple Newtown Historical Society
North Wayne Protective Association
Pennsylvania Federation of Museums
Paoli Library
Radnor Memorial Library
Sharon Hill Historical Society
Tinicum Township Historical Society
Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society
Tredyffrin Public Library
Upper Darby Historical Society

Members

Bannard P. Ackerman
Jenelyn H. August
Susan & Warren Ayres
Jennifer & Daniel Beacom
Julie & Henry Berkowitz
Geoffrey Berwind
Deirdre Greenwell Blain
Lavalette M. Boles
Caroline Yarnall Brandt
Nancy E. Breitling
Kathy Bright
Virginia Brookins
Lois* & Michael Brooks
Brittany & Lucas Clark
Connie & Jon Congleton
Marianne J. Cook
Gladys & Jim Corrodi
William M. Denny
Christopher Dieckhaus
Kimberley Donches
Dawn Fastiggi &
Dr. Kenneth Doroski
Lisa Dunhour & Joe Makous
John J. Dziedzina
Andrew B. Etris
Jack L. Foltz
Sandra & Bruce Gilbert
Barbara J. Gord
Anne & Phil Graham
Nancy K. Hanlon

Elizabeth M. Hannan
Alisan & Richard Henderson
Justin Henry
Joseph M. Hilger
Elizabeth F. Hopkins
Kerstin & Francis Humann
Torben Jenk
JoAnn & George Jenkins
Mr. & Mrs. Edward Kennedy
Peter Kingsbery
Robert J. La Rouché
Barbara Miller Lane
Steve Lane
Jacqueline C. Lassen
Norma Jean & Robert Le Clair
Betsy & Tony Leiper
Dayton M. Lummis
Joan Mackie
Erin & John McMeekin
Jane M. Meldrum
Gail & Alexander
Middendorf
John L. Montgomery II
Kay Mooney
Elizabeth Mosier
Leslie F. Moss
Barb & John Nagle
Linda & Brian Noll
Katrina & John Ogilby
George J. Peckham, M.D.

David Peirce
J.F. Pirro
Edward Pollard
Greg Prichard
Hugh M. Ravenscroft
Russell L. Risden
Katie Scannapieco
Kathleen & Roy Schollenberger
Pam Sedor
Robert J. Sims
Anne Weldon Sims
Susan Brown Smith
Cordelia Stone
Kathy M. Techner
Traudie & Bob Thomason
Peter C. Trenham
John C. Tuten
Helen Vinick
Anne Von Hertsensberg
Donna Walker
Cristine Watrous
Ann & Ross Watson
David Weigel
Janet & Charles White
Roberta L. Winters
Lillian H. Wister
Nancy & Donald Wood
Margaret G. Zehner

Associate Members

Ward R. Barnes
Lou D'Amicantonio
Ruth & Bill Davis
Lisa DiGiovanni
Clarissa F. Dillon, PhD
Doug Felske
Caroline Hummel

Lynne Ives
Judy Love Keogh
Dr. Mojdeh Keykhah
Lois Mamourian
Mary Anne Carlson Morgan
Joe Romano
Sally Ann & Richard Spargo

* Deceased

Radnor Historical Society 2017 Report

Volunteers & Guides

House Guides

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

Jennifer Beacom • Charles Crawford • John Dale
Lynn Elli • Evie Giegerich • Phil Graham
Bennett Hill • Cathy Siple • Sally Spargo

Other Volunteers

Tom Ellis: Video recording our programs
Jane Meldrum: Library

Accessions & Acquisitions

Donations

Margaret Forrest

- Radnor High School yearbooks, 1939, 1943, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968
- Lafayette College yearbooks, 1921, 1924
- Books on the history of King of Prussia

Joanie Mackie

- Main Line atlases: 1887, 1892, 1908, 1920

Jelena Mitrorovic

- Lengel family books, letters and photos

Madeline Wyckoff

- American Red Cross WWII Production Corps. uniform, ca. 1941-48



TROSINI
Landscape
Management

610.995.9950



610.688.5150



195 E. LANCASTER AVENUE

WAYNE, PENNSYLVANIA

www.cowansflowers.net



Thomas A. Dooner
REALTOR®

Office (610) 254-9292

527 E. Lancaster Ave. • St. Davids, PA 19087
www.DuffyRealEstate.com
Tom.Dooner@DuffyRealEstate.com

BRAXTON'S ANIMAL WORKS

A family tradition since 1938

620 West Lancaster Avenue • Wayne, PA 19087

610.688.0769 • 800.281.4820

www.braxtons.com

Hours: Mon-Sat 9-7 • Sun 10-5

JOHN BRAXTON



JOHN BRAXTON

620 W. Lancaster Avenue
19087

john@braxtons.com

Tel 610.688.0769

Fax 610.688.0384

BRAXTON'S ANIMAL WORKS

Purveyors of Quality

Merchandise for

Dogs

Cats

Small Animals

Wild Birds



620 West Lancaster Ave.
Strafford, PA 19087

A family tradition since 1938

Jenn Braxton 215-688-0769

**Braxton's Animal Works,
a part of Radnor's history
since 1938, supports
the work of the Radnor
Historical Society**

At the intersection of Lancaster Pike and N. Wayne, one of the most beautiful sections of the area--graded streets, sewers, water, etc.--a grand location inside the Opera House! Currently a retail establishment, this fine property is perfectly suited and located for any respectable concern! Price reasonable, terms to suit.

This phony old ad, featuring our Opera House (Lyceum Hall) at 101 E. Lancaster Ave, is brought to you by Eadeh Enterprises | 511 Old Lancaster Rd, Berwyn PA 19312 | 610-647-1776

via
bellissima

the most beautiful way

viabellissima.com

CONSIGN WITH CONVERSE AUCTIONS

Whether you want to sell one item or a whole houseful,
Call now for a complimentary consultation: 610-722-9004!

CONVERSE offers the convenience of a local business combined with an international presence, so your items generate competitive bidding and maximize your returns.

**Just Curious? Bring your items to
 FREE APPRAISAL TUESDAYS 10-4**

Conveniently located at 57 Lancaster Avenue, Malvern, PA 19355.
 email: info@converseauctions.com or visit: www.converseauctions.com

Converse Auctions is solely owned and operated by M. Todd Converse #AY-000131-L.



Buyers & Sellers

Coins & Currency of Wayne

PAYING TOP DOLLAR

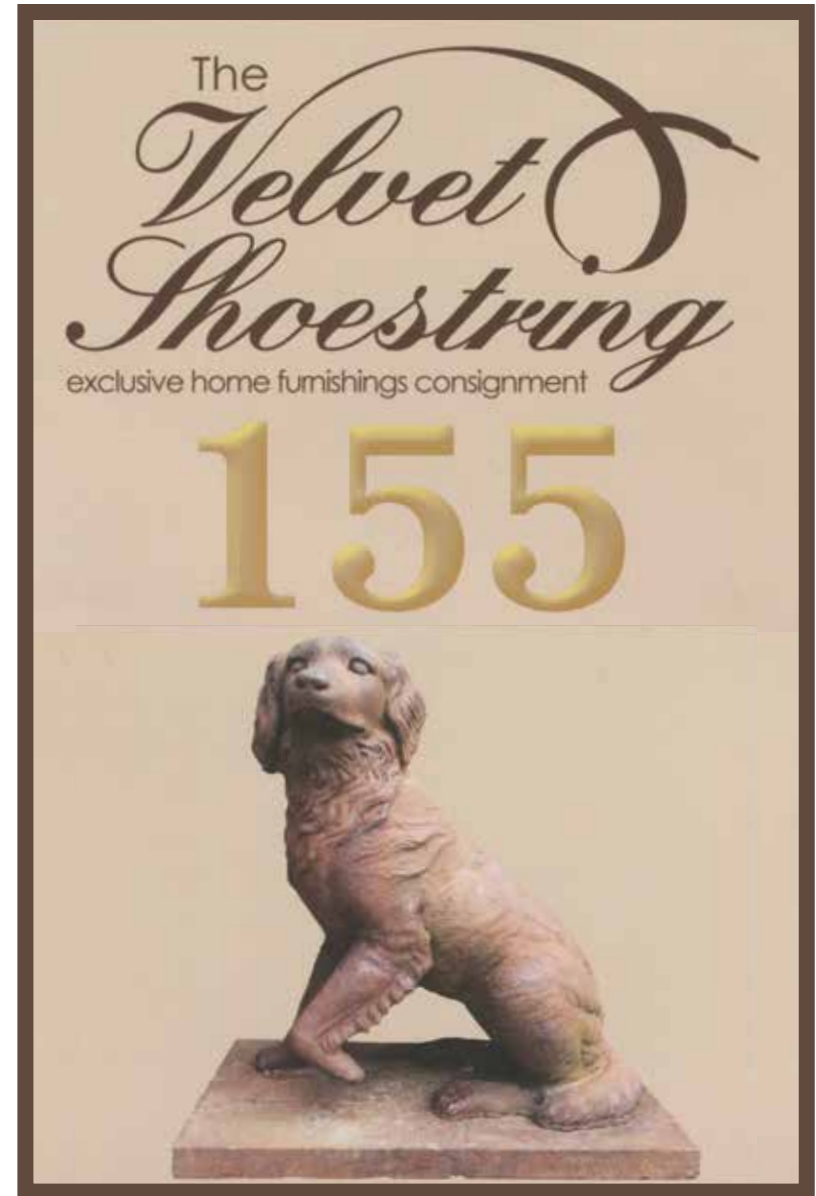
BUYING ALL U.S. and World coins
Including Gold, Silver and Platinum
Collectible and Bullion coins

Buying Precious Metals
Jewelry, Flatware and Hollowware

Also seeking to purchase
STAMPS and AUTOGRAPHS

**231 E. Lancaster Ave.
Wayne, PA 19087
610-688-6655**

**Monday-Friday 10am - 6pm
Saturday 10am - 3pm**



The Velvet Shoestring
155 E. Lancaster Avenue, Wayne, PA 19087
610-995-0300
velvetshoestringmainline@gmail.com
Open Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 11-4



Consistently Adding Value



WEALTH MANAGEMENT SERVICES FOR OVER 30 YEARS

RADNOR, PA

CALL NAN LANSINGER
610.975.4303 | PENNTRUST.COM

The **BEST** Little Home Center on the Main Line
Hardware Plus II, Inc.
143 Pennsylvania Ave
(Between Aberdeen & N Wayne Ave)



In Addition to Super Outstanding Service
and ALL of your Hardware needs:

- WEBER Grill Premier Dealer
- SCOTTS LAWN PRO Dealer
- PROPANE Filling Station
- SOILS & MULCHES
- LADDERS 2ft. to 40ft
- LYRIC Bird Food
- LUMBER & BUILDING Materials
- KITCHEN Cabinets
- WINDOWS & DOORS
- WINDOW & SCREEN Repairs

Shop us online: www.bestlittlehomecenter.com

Open 7 days a week / 610-995-2977

THE GARDEN SHOPPE

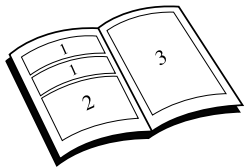
David & Gerri Whetstone
Proprietor



616 W. Lancaster Avenue
Strafford, PA 19087
(610) 687-8800



We are now accepting advertisements for the next *Bulletin*! The *Bulletin* is distributed to over 250 Radnor Historical Society members, and is accessible online to a wider audience a few years after publication.



1. Quarter page (5" wide x 1.75" tall): \$35
2. Half page (5" wide x 3.5" tall): \$60
3. Full page (5" wide x 7.5" tall): \$100

Business cards can be adapted for quarter page ads.

Ads will be due by December 1, 2018. Contact the editor at info@radnorhistory.org for more information!

Registered non-profit organizations receive a 20% discount

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

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 the year following 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 July, 2018.

Digital editions of past *Bulletins* can be found on our website:
www.radnorhistory.org/bulletin

