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www.springfieldhistory.org

The Challenge

PRESERVATION • RESEARCH • EDUCATION

Fort Washington Artists of the Early Twentieth Century

A Presentation by Trudy and Lewis Keen

MAY 2008

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At the dawn of the twentieth century, Fort Washington played an historic role in the development of modern American art. Many Neo-Impressionist artists of the early 1900's lived in the Philadelphia region and took inspiration from the nature and scenery of this beautiful area of Pennsylvania. Violet Oakley was one of the first artists to live and work in the area years before she was commissioned to create murals for the new Pennsylvania State Capitol. Sculptor Alexander Stirling Calder spent time in the same cottage that served as home to Oakley. American realist's painters Thomas Anshutz and Hugh Breckenridge ran an art school in Fort Washington which lured students from around the world to study in the local woods. Other artists such as American landscape painter Daniel Garber and John Sloan, who is recognized as one of the most important American painters of the twentieth century,

lived and worked in the Fort Washington area. This presentation will introduce us to many of these famous local artists, and gain an appreciation of their work and contribution to our local and American art history.

Please join us for an enjoyable night as STHS is proud to host a presentation by Trudy and Lewis Keen. This program will introduce the artists, their work, and their place in local and American history. You won't want to miss this presentation of local history focused on a little known but important topic.

The Keens are members of the Fort Washington Historical Society and have spent years researching local history in and around the Fort Washington area, including Camp Hill Hall and the history of the Fell and Drexel families.

This promises to be an exciting and educational program. The public is invited to attend, and there is no charge for



Two panels from Violet Oakley's paintings, "The Creation and Preservation of the Union."

The left panel represents Washington presiding over the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in May 1787.

The right panel shows Lincoln at Gettysburg in November 1863. Oakley is one of the first women in the history of American art to have been commissioned for the mural decoration of a major public building.

Oakley was commissioned to paint the Senate Chamber as well as the Supreme Court Chamber and the Governor's Reception Room.

admission. Reservations are not required. Light refreshments will be served. **For more information call 215-233-4600.**

A PRESENTATION OF

Fort Washington Artists of the Early Twentieth Century

Trudy and Lewis Keen

Thursday, May 29th, 2008 – 7:30 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church

Bethlehem Pike and East Mill Road in Flourtown, PA

President's Corner

A long time dream of bringing together area historical societies for a workshop to share best practices and lessons learned, was finally realized on a recent Saturday morning in late March. In attendance at the Clifton House in Fort Washington were the Historical Societies of Chestnut Hill, Fort Washington, Lansdale, Lower Merion, Old York Road, Springfield, and Wissahickon Valley, comprising twenty people. The half-day session provided an excellent opportunity to meet and network with others who have the same organizational goals as we do: historical research, preservation, and education. We also have the same long-term goal of assisting one another to build overall stronger organizations for the future.

The topics covered included the following: Membership & Programs, Preservation, Communications & Public Relations, Finance & Fund Raising, and Archives/Collections. The following is a summary of some of the actionable ideas that came out of each session that our society either already has, or will be looking into, pursuing this year.

Membership & Programs – Partner with other township service organizations on events such as speaker presentations, to attract new people to our society. Conduct programs in the local schools, in order to introduce and interest the next generation coming up about our history and the organization.

Preservation – Three years ago we prepared the initial wording for an historic preservation (demolition-based) ordinance. The ordinance currently resides with the Planning Commission and is awaiting action. When we pick this up again, we'll leverage the lessons learned from the Fort Washington society who successfully ushered through such an ordinance in their district.

Communications & Public Relations – Further utilize our website (www.springfieldhistory.org) for publication of current and archived newsletters, display and access to our archives, and for links to other historic sites of interest. Leverage both local and regional newspapers and cable television stations to advertise and cover our events. Partner with local businesses to sponsor our programs and publish our promotional materials such as *The Challenge*.

Finance & Fund Raising – Design and execute a program of regularly scheduled fund raising events, such as house tours, garden tours, and walking tours. Apply for grants to subsidize expenses for specific projects. Evaluate an annual giving campaign that would target the entire township and those outside the township who have participated in our events in the past.

Archives/Collections – Continue to catalog the items in our collection in our computer for easy access by our researchers. Begin scanning our pictures and documents in order to make them available via our website for both local and remote researchers.

Each of the societies rated the day's workshop as very informative and the ideas very actionable. It is the hope and intention of each of the societies to reconvene again later this year to share the lessons learned from the new ideas that each was able to apply. The end goal is to allow each society to build upon the successful ideas of the others, to ensure viable historical societies well into the future.

Keeping the past in the present,

Ed Zwicker

REMEMBER WHEN

Beginning this fall, *The Challenge* will launch a new column featuring things that aren't there anymore in Springfield Township. Our editors will be interviewing local residents to document their recollections on former eateries, entertainment venues and other commercial or institutional establishments that once served our community.

Do you remember where the township library was located before the current one opened on Paper Mill Road and Hawthorne Lane in 1966? Information in our archives tells us that in 1945 the Women's Club of Flourtown established the first library in one room of a house on Wissahickon Avenue. From there it was moved to the basement of the old Flourtown school and was later relocated to the "weigh station" at the old McCloskey coal yard. While these facts are well documented in our archive, we are lacking the personal recollections of those who may have visited the former library locations and could provide the personal experiences, memories and reflections that are useful to our understanding of the development of local institutions.

We will be soliciting story ideas over the next few months. Anyone with recollections that they are willing to share is encouraged to call STHS at 215-233-4600.



STHS in the Schools

In April, STHS participated in Erdenheim Elementary School's Multi-Cultural Extravaganza. Students spent the day learning about the way of life in countries around the world and were entertained by storytellers who told tales of distant places. Parents brought in traditional foods representing each country and the students happily took part in tasting. STHS president, Ed Zwicker, gave an interactive presentation on local history, featuring many recognizable local landmarks seen through both current and historic views. Local resident Roddy Davis also participated in the event by talking with the students about Springfield's past.



STHS President
Ed Zwicker presenting at
Erdenheim Elementary School's Multi-Cultural Extravaganza.



From the
March 27th
Program

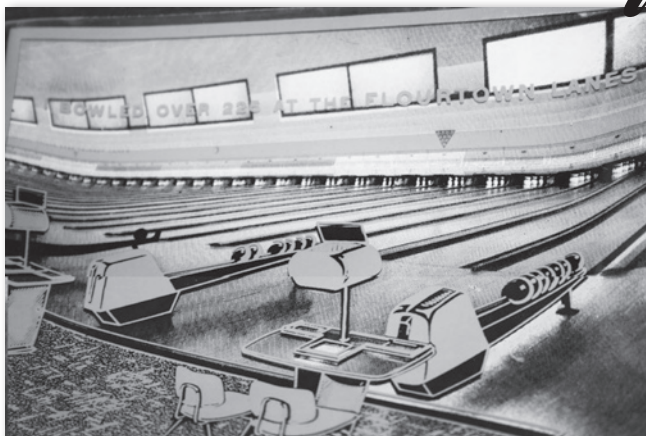


Mrs. Benjamin Franklin
— a.k.a. **Jo Ann Tufo** — chats with guests Edith Prout and Roy Roberts after her March 27 lively presentation on the wife of the early American statesman. During the program, Tufo described Benjamin Franklin's childhood, his success in the printing business, his start in politics and Mrs. Franklin's life during the more than 15 years she remained in Philadelphia while Benjamin Franklin was in England. Because very little is known about Mrs. Franklin, much of Tufo's presentation was based on extensive research on colonial life and early American history.



Archives Update

For this edition, we have a mystery for our readers.



This image appears on a 1950s ashtray which was awarded for bowling 225 at the Flourtown Lanes. We encourage anyone with recollections of bowling at the Flourtown Lanes to call STHS (215-233-4600) to help in our efforts to record recent history.



Can anyone identify the young man shoveling snow in this circa 1940's photo?



And what about the adorable children saying the Pledge of Allegiance? What grade was this and at which school?

Anyone who would like to spend a few hours a week in the archives is encouraged to contact Susan Anthony at SAnthony_sths@comcast.net or 215-247-0417.



**Join the
STHS**

Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

I would like to become a member in the following category:

☐ Individual/Couple _____ \$20 ☐ Student _____ \$5 ☐ Contributing* _____ \$40 ☐ Organization* _____ \$65

*These membership levels receive a 6" square commemorative trivet with a drawing of Springfield Mill (at the Morris Arboretum) by local artist Sally Yates.

Please make your check payable to **STHS** and mail this form with check to **STHS, PO Box 564, Flourtown, PA 19031**

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Springfield Township Historical Society
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If you haven't visited the STHS website, you are missing out on a great resource for news, events, and links to other history-related organizations. Beginning soon, we will post *The Challenge* to the site. Also on the website is our gift shop which is a great source for gifts for history-minded friends and neighbors. Please visit us!

