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The Challenge

PRESERVATION • RESEARCH • EDUCATION

Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square

*A Presentation by
Thomas Keels and Robert Skaler*

**Thursday, October 2nd, 2008
7:30 p.m.**

First Presbyterian Church
*Bethlehem Pike & East Mill Road
in Flourtown, PA*



During America's Gilded Age, New York had Upper Fifth Avenue, Boston had the Back Bay, Washington had DuPont Circle, and Philadelphia had Rittenhouse Square.

Rittenhouse Square is one of the five original open-space parks planned by William Penn during the late 17th century in central Philadelphia. Originally named Southwest Square, Rittenhouse Square was renamed in 1825 after 18th century astronomer and instrument maker David Rittenhouse. The square became popular in the years before the Civil War as Philadelphia's upper classes escaped its tightly packed waterfront for its sparsely settled spaces. The city's best-known architects, including John Notman, Samuel Sloan, and Frank Furness, designed elegant residences on and around Rittenhouse Square. The brownstone and marble mansions lining the Square itself were inhabited by the city's wealthiest families, with names like Biddle, Cas-

satt, Drexel, Van Rensselaer, and Wanamaker.

Please join us for this presentation as STHS welcomes back Tom Keels and Robert Skaler who will present a history of Rittenhouse Square, based on material from their recent book on this topic. Keels and Skaler will bring the Square's history to life with concise, insightful anecdotes about its personalities and institutions.

Thomas H. Keels is the author of numerous publications, including "Chestnut Hill" and "Philadelphia Graveyards and Cemeteries". A member of the Springfield Township Historical Society, he has spoken to the Society in the past on topics such as Philadelphia architecture and Laurel Hill.

Robert Skaler is an architect and local historian. He is a graduate of the University Of Pennsylvania School Of Architecture and has served as the Chapter President of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Victorian Society in America. He is



Views of the Square.

also on the board of the Old York Road Historical Society and is a consultant to Maxwell Mansion, Philadelphia's only Victorian house museum.

This promises to be an exciting and educational program on an interesting topic of Philadelphia history. The public is invited to attend, and there is no charge for admission. Reservations are not required. Light refreshments will be served.

*For more information call
215-233-4600*

President's Corner

The Black Horse Inn is over 260 years old and now after almost two decades of vacancy, is within a year of opening its doors again! When you drive by the Inn you'll see the exterior restoration activities are just about finished and looking great. Structural reinforcement work in the basement has already been completed. Interior restoration of the first and second floors to accommodate occupancy will occur as fundraising efforts produce successful returns throughout the upcoming year. We are in the stretch run to see this multi-year project through to its envisioned completion.

The Inn has traveled a long road to bring it to its current state. Originally built by Abraham Wakerly around 1744, it consisted of a two-and-a-half-story building with a one-story kitchen in the rear. This first section served farmer, lime-carrier, and traveler, and after 1763, stagecoach passengers on the Philadelphia-to-Bethlehem line. With the growth of trade and travel, the new owner Jacob Meninger added a three-story addition on the north end in 1833. Prior to 1840, it was known as the *Sampson and the Lion*. It was a stop for farmers on their way to local flour mills in Flourtown and later used for meetings of the Society for the Apprehension of Horse Thieves, township commissioners, public voting, and horse-trading. The McCloskey family owned and operated the inn for three generations, from 1880 to 1990, and as late as 1980, cattle still grazed on the inn's side lawn.

After Robert McCloskey's death in 1992, his estate began a search for a buyer, finally securing one in 1993. Several proposals were put forth for development of the building and property, but when they proved fruitless, it was sold again in 2003. When threat of demolition was raised as early as 2001, the Springfield Township Historical Society formed an ad-hoc group, headed by one of our Board members, to find solutions for preservation. They joined forces with the newly created Friends of Historic Bethlehem Pike to raise community awareness, interest, and a call to action. When ownership of the Inn itself was transferred to Springfield Township in 2004, all three groups joined together for a historic public-private coalition to save the Inn.

Once options for demolition and physical movement of the Inn were discarded, a concerted fund raising campaign began. Over the past three years, over \$1.3 million has been secured from public donations, a dinner/silent auction, and public and private organizational grants. The next major public event to be held will be *Heritage Day*, on September 28th, at the Inn site. Additional details on this exciting event are included in this newsletter. You can stay abreast of future activities surrounding the Inn by checking out the following Internet site: www.ushistory.org/blackhorse.

The Historical Society will continue to play an active role in the preservation and restoration activities of the Inn. This includes our participation on the Black Horse Inn Advisory Committee (BHIAC, reporting to the Township Commissioners), supporting BHIAC sub-committees (construction, public relations, fund raising, and usage), and acting as treasurer for all fund raising revenues. The Historical Society will be occupying the Inn as our permanent home, serving as a museum for our archives, a safe and secure storage area for those archives, a research center, historical gift shop, and community gathering place to discuss our local history.

Prior to the building of the first churches, schools, and township buildings, taverns frequently were host to gatherings for worship, education, and public meetings, given their capacity to hold relatively large numbers of people. They were places where people came to share local news with their neighbors and to catch up on more regional and national news from people rooming there as they passed through from out of town. Very soon the Black Horse Inn will again serve some of these same purposes, three centuries after its humble beginnings! Please continue to support the final stage of the restoration activities through your generous contributions. These can be sent to us at P.O. Box 564, Flourtown, PA 19031. Thank you for all you have done already to make this dream a reality!

Keeping the past in the present,

Ed Zwicker

Volunteer Needed to Research Inns and Taverns

Are you interested in local history? Do you enjoy doing research? The Springfield Township Historical Society is looking for a volunteer to undertake research on the inns and taverns that stood along

Bethlehem Pike from the mid-18th century into the 20th century. This research will add immeasurably to our understanding of community life in Springfield. No experience necessary. Choose your own hours. Anyone interested in helping the STHS should call us at 215-233-4600.



REMEMBER WHEN

Over the next few months, we will be continuing to solicit story ideas featuring things that aren't there anymore in Springfield Township. Anyone with interesting stories or recollections on former eateries, entertainment venues and other commercial or institutional establishments is encouraged to call STHS at 215-233-4600.





In our last issue of *The Challenge*, we asked our readers to share their recollections of the **Flourtown Lanes Bowling Alley** that was located at the corner of Bethlehem Pike and Haws Lane (now operating as a car wash) in Flourtown. Oreland resident Robert Lindquist responded to our request and provided important information that allowed us to piece together the following history:

This structure on the corner of Haws Lane and Bethlehem Pike has had many uses over the years. Although the building may have been built prior to the 1930s, the earliest deed research in our archives goes back to 1931 when it operated as the Erdenheim Garage. It was bought by Franklin and Violet Hodges in 1945 and they operated it as Hodges Motors until 1951 when it was sold to Adolf Lindquist. Lindquist converted the building into the 8-lane "Flour Bowl" bowling alley. In 1961 a larger bowling alley in Flourtown put the Flour Bowl out of business, and Mr. Lindquist converted the building into the "Comet" car wash, which opened in 1962. In 1969 he rented the building out to another car wash operator, who bought him out at the end of his lease in 1971. It has remained a car wash to this day in 2008.

Our thanks to Mr. Lindquist for taking the time to call and share this interesting account.

HERITAGE DAY



THE
BLACK HORSE INN

1432 BETHLEHEM PIKE • FLOURTOWN

EVENTS ARE FREE AND INCLUDE

- LIVE ENTERTAINMENT
- ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES
- DISPLAYS OF MEMORABILIA OF OUR LOCAL HISTORY
- FOOD AND DRINK
- TOWN CRIER AND REENACTORS

SEPTEMBER 28, 2008

2:00PM — 5:30PM

Memorial Day – Historical Society president Ed Zwicker drove a corvette



in the American Legion Post Memorial Day parade. His granddaughter McKayla rode in the car with him and tossed candy to folks along the parade route. The society also had a booth at the community gathering at Veterans Park that followed the parade.



**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**

PO Box 564 • Flourtown, PA 19031
Springfield Township Historical Society
PRESERVATION • RESEARCH • EDUCATION

The Challenge

Sunday, September 28, 2008
2:00–5:30 p.m.

*Heritage Day at the
Black Horse Inn*



Thursday, October 2, 2008
7:30 p.m.

*Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square
Program Presented by STHS*



The historical society presented its second annual Marie Kitto Award to Don Mitchell, former president of the Friends of Historic Bethlehem Pike, at its meeting on May 29. Don was honored for his work for the Friends of Historic Bethlehem Pike, the Black Horse Inn restoration project and for historic preservation. Don, who recently stepped down as president of the Friends, has been involved in fundraising and construction as well

as communications for the restoration of the Black Horse Inn. The friends are working to raise awareness of historic preservation along Bethlehem Pike. In his acceptance remarks, Don thanked many people who have helped these efforts. The award is given in memory of Kitto, who helped to found the historical society in 1985, to a person who has made significant contributions to Springfield Township that exemplify the historical society's tenets of research, preservation, and education. Last year, the award was given to Richard J. Meyer, Jr., who was a general contractor specializing in historic restoration before his retirement in 1987 and has been part of many restoration projects in the Eastern Montgomery County area, including the Black Horse Inn.



The Springfield Township Historical Society presented its second annual history scholarship award to Jonathan Zaikowski, a recent graduate of Springfield Township High School. Historical Society president Ed Zwicker presented him with a check; he was also given a certificate at the school's senior awards assembly. Jonathan, son of Janine and Mike Zaikowski, of Wyndmoor, plans to major in history and

political science at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C. He credits history teacher Peggy Zehner for his interest in history and his participation in the school's Youth & Government Club. This past summer, he volunteered for the historical society, scanning photos for the archives. The award is given to a graduating senior who plans to major in history or a related field and for scholastic achievement. The historical society established the award to recognize the importance of education about the township's past.