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PRESERVATION • RESEARCH • EDUCATION

STHS ANNUAL HISTORY IN MOTION: Carson Valley & Erdenheim Farm: Fantasy Village & Country Estate

Thursday, November 1 at the Ambler Theater

103 E. Butler Pike, Ambler

Doors open at 7pm; presentation to begin at 7:30pm

The Carson Valley School and Erdenheim Farm, once parts of a single property, are places of unparalleled beauty and serenity at the edge of Philadelphia. Speaker Dr. David Contosta will tell the story of how this unlikely pairing has been shaped and preserved over several centuries.

The program will begin with the evolution of Erdenheim Farm as it expanded and contracted before taking something like its final form when the Widener family took over in 1917.

The farm had been established in the 18th century. By the late 19th century it was a gentleman's farm similar to an English country estate. Horace Trumbauer, who designed Whitmarsh Hall in Springfield Township, designed the stone bridge over the Wissahickon Creek in the 1920s, as well as the sheep barn, and enlarged the house at the top of the hill. The Wideners also tore down some unsightly buildings on the estate, Contosta said.

"Robert N. Carson owned the Erdenheim property in the early 20th century when he wanted to start an orphanage," according to Contosta, who said that 87 acres were detached for the school, then called Carson College for Orphaned Girls.

Opened in 1918, Carson enrolled orphans from ages 6 to 18. Elsa Ueland, the institution's founding president, was a former settlement house worker who wanted a school based on the principles of progressive education.

As it turned out, elementary school-age girls were educated at Carson while those of high school age attended Springfield Township High School.



The Sheep Barn at Erdenheim Farm was built when the Widener family owned the property. Photo by Carol Franklin.



The stone bridge at Erdenheim Farm was designed by Horace Trumbauer. Photo by Carol Franklin



Red Gables Cottage at Carson. Photo courtesy of Carson Valley Children's Aid.

At the time, many orphaned boys attended Girard College in Philadelphia. Now, children assisted by Carson are there for only six to eight months, as there are more solutions for them. And they no longer go to the local high school, Contosta said.

Contosta, a Professor of History at Chestnut Hill College, is the author of more than 20 books, many of them about the Philadelphia region. These include "Suburb in the City: Chestnut Hill Philadelphia;" "A Philadelphia Family: The Houstons and Woodwards of Chestnut Hill;" and "Metropolitan Paradise: Philadelphia's Wissahickon Valley," co-authored with Carol Franklin. Contosta has also written about Henry Adams, Abraham Lincoln, and Charles Darwin. His most recent book is "America's Needless Wars." In addition, he has lectured at universities in China and South Korea. At present he is working on a documentary film about the Wissahickon Valley.

A complimentary wine tasting will be provided by Chaddsford Winery.

Proceeds of History in Motion5 will benefit the Springfield Township Historical Society, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that seeks to collect, preserve, and promote the history of Springfield Township.

Tickets are \$25 per person. To purchase tickets visit the historical society's website, www.springfieldhistory.org to order tickets under the Event Tab, History In Motion or send a check payable to the Springfield Township Historical Society to the historical society at PO 564, Flourtown, PA 19031.

For more information, call the historical society at 215-233-4600.

STHS ANNUAL HISTORY IN MOTION:

We would like to extend special thanks to the sponsors for History in Motion 5.

Below is the list of sponsors as of the date this issue went to press:

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Catherine Worrall

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\$100

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Special thanks to Chaddsford Winery for hosting the complimentary wine tasting.

Archives UPDATE

Over the last few months, STHS has received into its holdings:

- The Chestnut Hill Conservancy donated four (4) photographs of the Carson Valley School.
- A "Wash-a-Month Club, Good for 12 Washes" punch card from the Flourtown Car Wash was sent to us from Glendinning Contractors on behalf of Joan O'Reilly.
- Board Member, Cynthia Hamilton has added to the STHS Papers with material pertaining to Board activities.
- Issues of The Springfield Sun, Enterprise, and Pennsylvania History, which have long since been in storage, have now been accessioned. Issues of Pennsylvania History, have been cataloged and are available for research, the others are still in process.

We are extremely thankful for all of our dedicated volunteers. In the last few months, they provided approximately 75 hours of service.

- On-going efforts by volunteers Ray Smith, Barbara Coleman, and Steve Lester to sort organize, scan, catalog records in the Society's collection, as well as assist researchers, have made a significant contribution to the accessibility of the STHS holdings. The Zwickers continue to scan through the Whitmarsh Hall photos for corrections and updating descriptions.
- We are also happy to welcome Julie Lawson as a new archival volunteer. Julie started in July and is helping to input collection material into the collection database software.

STHS has had several inquiries:

- Vance Koehler visited STHS to conduct on-site research of our Enfield Tile material.
- Several requests have come in from those doing genealogical research.
 - The family of Elizabeth Gertrude Haig Smith (wife of Charles K. Smith, founder of Woodmere Art Museum) are looking for more information into their grandmother's life.
 - Marshall McCloskey is researching his great grandfather, John McCloskey who worked as a trainer and breeder at Erdenheim farm in the late nineteenth century.



If you are interested in volunteering, researching a topic, or have items you wish to donate to the Society, please email us at archives@springfieldhistory.org.

The Archives are **OPEN** to the Public

TUESDAYS 7pm – 9pm

WEDNESDAYS 1pm – 5pm

SATURDAYS 9am – 12noon

For more information, call 215-233-4600

President's Corner

This summer, we lost another historic building in Springfield Township. If Springfield Township had a Historic Preservation Ordinance, the house at 8600 Montgomery Avenue in Wyndmoor might still be standing.

The house at 8600 Montgomery Avenue was quite unique. The house was built in 1954 for Russell and Elizabeth Medinger. In collaboration with the Medingers, the house was designed in the mid-1930s by Miles Dechent, a well-known architect and painter from Reading. The house was designed as a circa-1700 hillside farmhouse and was true to historical scale, proportion, and furnishings. The windows were glazed with hand-blown glass. The hardware and nails were hand-forged. The terra cotta roof tiles were manufactured between the mid-1700s-1868 at the Black Cat Pottery in Olney, PA.

In April 2018, the owner of the property submitted plans to the Township and a building permit was approved for the construction of an addition to the house. The addition did not require any variances. So, there was no requirement for Zoning Board or Planning Commission review. On July 11th, the Township staff confirmed to me that the plans called for the demolition of the small attached garage at the rear of the house and a large addition, but not complete demolition. In late July 2018, the owner altered the plans, which resulted in the removal of more of the existing building than what was previously proposed. Updated plans were submitted, but there was no further permitting required or review by the Zoning Board or Planning Commission. The house has now been completely demolished.

The Township Commissioners have received a draft of a Historic Preservation Ordinance from the Planning Commission. At their September working meeting, the Commissioners agreed to move the process forward.

While it's not certain that the house at 8600 Montgomery Avenue would have been included in the list of historic properties created as part of a Historic Preservation Ordinance, it certainly would have been considered. Please contact your Township Commissioner to request that they make adopting a Historic Preservation Ordinance a priority. Thank you.

T. Scott Kreilick

President, Springfield Township Historical Society

Whitemarsh Hall in Wartime

During the bulk of World War II, Whitemarsh Hall, the former mansion of Edward T. Stotesbury which sat high on the ridge east of Paper Mill Road in Wyndmoor appeared to be abandoned and forgotten. After Mr. Stotesbury's death in May 1938, and the subsequent closure of the house by his wife in November of that year, the house had been maintained by a skeleton crew, with minimal activity, as the huge estate awaited a buyer in the slow real estate market of the late Depression and early war years.

Secretly, however, there was quite a bit of activity, starting in January 1942, and continuing through March 1944, because the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York City had quietly leased the mansion, and moved its 15,000 most valuable art objects there for safekeeping – protected from the

German air raids that the Museum much feared.

During most of that time, no activity could be seen by the casual observer – the Museum's



Ruth Ellen Larson, granddaughter of William P. Chapman, walking down the stairs from the Upper Terrace, in 1942. In the background, three of the doors to the Ballroom are visible – covered by heavy steel security shutters that give no hint of the hundreds of millions of dollars of paintings hidden inside.

©2018 by Family of William P. Chapman

notion that the house was vacant.

Now, however, we can see a few examples of brief happy times at Whitemarsh Hall during that period, thanks to the family of Mr. William P. Chapman, the Superintendent of Buildings for the Metropolitan Museum, who resided at Whitemarsh Hall during virtually the entire duration of their lease. Mr. Chapman and his wife Agnes moved from their home in Yonkers, NY, into the Terrace Suite which had formerly been used, during the mid-1920s, by General Douglas MacArthur when visiting Whitemarsh Hall with his bride, Eva Stotesbury's daughter. Being responsible for the secret repository, and unable to leave Wyndmoor, the Chapmans encouraged their daughter to bring their grandchildren for periodic visits, which were thankfully captured on home movies.

The photos included here are still frames taken from those home movies, allowing us a glimpse of a time in local history that was otherwise so secretive.

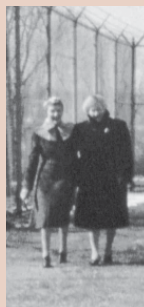
Thanks are due to the Chapman family for allowing us to share these images.



Agnes Chapman and her grandson, at right edge of photo, feeding chickens at a chicken coop installed by the Metropolitan Museum between the East Belvedere and the security fence added by the Museum, in 1942. The security fence is just off this photo, to the right, as would be the main garden.

©2018 by Family of William P. Chapman

William P. Chapman, Superintendent of Buildings for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in the Service Court at Whitemarsh Hall in 1942. Chapman was in charge of the Museum's use of Whitemarsh Hall as a secret repository, and managed all of the people on-site.



Ruth Larson and her mother, Agnes Chapman, walking around the west side of the mansion, by the Sphinxes that guarded the entrance to the Tea Room, in early 1944. Note the ten-foot-tall security fence in the background.

Photos ©2018 by Family of William P. Chapman



William P. Chapman, his granddaughter Ruth Ellen, daughter Ruth, and grandson William, in the somewhat-overgrown south-east corner of the main garden at Whitemarsh Hall, in 1942.

©2018 by Family of William P. Chapman

employees and guards were careful to remain inside and out-of-sight most of the time, and they erected a ten-foot-tall chain link fence, topped with barbed wire, immediately around the mansion's perimeter, to ward off anyone that might try to visit, including enterprising local children. At night, the area between the mansion and the fence was patrolled by men and dogs. Blackout shutters on the windows helped to promote the

LIBRARY HIGHLIGHTS

Written by Ray Smith

Looking ahead to the upcoming "History In Motion," we're going to take a look at a Widener family biography, *Without Drums*, written in 1940 by Peter A B Widener II.

The book shows that the Wideners were a remarkable, close knit family, with interests and fortunes that parallel what we have seen with the Stotesburys. Both families acquired massive fortunes quickly, through hard work, brilliance and cultivating friendships with the right people. They both progressed from Philadelphia mansions, which they outgrew, and subsequently built mega-mansions in Montgomery County to house their huge art collections and entertain Royalty, the super wealthy and other leaders of the world. Not being from old-money, both families weren't immediately accepted in polite society. Peter Widener started out with a Butcher shop but his fortune was largely made through the development of traction companies, similar to how Robert N. Carson acquired his wealth.

Without Drums is a reference to the author's wartime experience. Fabulously wealthy and never lacking for anything, he was, in his youth, indulged by his Grandfather, his mother, Uncle George and household staff, but not his father. Even with private tutors, he found it hard to excel in studies and couldn't fit into schools with other students of lesser means.

As war approached, he, like many young men of that era, had a sense of duty to country, and attempted to enlist, but was rejected. Rather than accepting this defeat, he and his father took off for Washington to see the surgeon general and they wouldn't take 'no' for an answer. He enlisted as a private in the medical corp. Finding he was fluent in French, he was tasked with being a translator in addition to the gruesome duties of taking care of the wounded and gassed troops being brought back from the front lines. A portion of the book describes many encounters in France, and his reasoning to oppose

Continued on page 4

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<http://www.facebook.com/groups/WhitemarshHall/>

LIBRARY HIGHLIGHTS *Continued from page 3*

entering war again, 20 years later.

The book is full of stories and observations taken from the author's life and that of his family.

At a dinner party hosted by the author, for the Earl and Countess of Athlone, the question came up about whether Americans should curtsy when meeting royalty. "When the Earl and Countess entered the drawing-room, all but one woman present swept into a spontaneous bending of the knee. The single exception was Philadelphia's favorite hostess, Mrs. Edward T. Stotesbury."

"Mrs. Stotesbury possesses great charm, and an infallible social asset in a remarkable memory. She has apparently never forgotten a name, and this endears her to everyone."

On Eva Stotesbury's daughter-in-law, "International society has another star, Doris Duke Cromwell. Doris Duke is a sound business woman, and is one of the few persons I know who has not been spoiled by

money. She does not throw money away. I have seen her on occasion spend as much time choosing a good steak as she would in choosing a gown for a court presentation. She's as excellent a housewife as she is a charming hostess. Her popularity in society lies in her great independence, her sagacity, and her sense of humor."

Peter Widener amassed a huge art collection at Lynewood Hall. His

son Joseph subsequently took over the management and acquisitions of the collection. Joseph was commissioned by the Philadelphia Museum of Art to purchase a new piece, but with a limited budget.

"The money was not sufficient to buy anything but a second-rate Rembrandt, but it was enough for a first-rate Cezanne, Father chose one of the many "Bathers" by that French artist. The picture had hardly been hung before Dr [Albert] Barnes

pounced upon it. He had insisted that father had chosen a fifth-rate "Bather." He, himself had a first-rate one, he announced. He accused father of picking an inferior Cezanne and paying an exorbitant price. He said Father had been cheated. Father was furious."

"Sometime later, on the Normandie, imagine Father's amusement when he discovered our deck chairs adjoined Dr. Barnes and his secretary. Father made no move to have our chairs changed. And he sat in them every day. Dr Barnes sat in his too. But the battlers over the "bathers" remained dryly silent the entire voyage. Neither would be the first to speak."

While looking into Widener - Stotesbury connections, we noticed that if you run a straight line from the main house at Lynewood Hall to the main house in Erdenheim Farm, then find the midpoint, it is just a few feet from the gatehouse at Whitmarsh Hall.

Family tree with descendants of Peter A B Widener

1	2	3	4	5 [GENERATION]
Peter A B Widener (1834 – 1915) +1858+ Hannah Josephine Dunton (1836 – 1896)				
Harry Widener (1859 – 1874)				
George Dunton Widener (1861 – 1912) +1883+ Eleanor Elkins (1862 – 1937)				
Harry Elkins Widener (1885 – 1912)				
George D Widener Jr (1889 – 1971) +1917+ Jessie Sloane Dodge (1883 – 1968)				
Eleanor Widener (1891 – 1953) +1912+ Fitz Eugene Dixon Sr				
Fitz Eugene Dixon Jr (1923 – 2006) +1952+ Edith Bruen Robb				
George Widener Dixon (1953 -)				
Ellin Dixon				
Joseph E Widener (1871 – 1943) + Eleanor Holmes Pancoast (1874 – 1929)				
Peter A B Widener II (1895 – 1948) +1924+ Gertrude T Douglas (1897 – 1970)				
Peter A B Widener III (1925 – 1999)				
Ella Anne Widener (1928 – 1986) + Cortright Weatherill (1923 – 1988)				
Joan Peabody (1919 – 1995) [adopted daughter of Gertrude]				
Josephine "Fifi" Widener (1902 – 1961)				

Notes: 1912 Deaths were on the Titanic, Eleanor Elkins Widener was rescued, Marriage date denoted by +yyyy+

Spotlight on Springfield COUPE FLOWERS

Written by Katie Worrall

Coupe Flowers, 625 Bethlehem Pike, Erdenheim, sells flowers and custom arrangements for all occasions – birthdays, sympathy, prom, anniversary, congratulations, gift sets, grandparents' day and more.

The business, now owned by Bill Coupe, has been located in Erdenheim since 1970. It was founded by his father, Frank Coupe, in Germantown in October 1949. Bill Coupe's grandfather, George Coupe, opened the first car dealership outside of Philadelphia. That dealership, Coupe Chevrolet, which was located in Glenside and later moved to Flourtown, was run by Frank Coupe's brothers, George and Jim.

"My father loved gardening. He was not into cars. This was called Malcolm Robertson & Sons," Bill said, as he sat in the shop in Erdenheim. "It was called F. R. Coupe Flowers in Germantown and the name changed to Coupe Flowers after he died in 1988."



People gather at the opening of F.R. Coupe, in Germantown



Bill Coupe and his father, Frank, outside the shop in Erdenheim

Frank Coupe had a garden growing up and worked in gardening and landscaping while he was in high school. He went to Villanova University for a year before transferring to Penn State. He served in the U.S. Army in the South Pacific during World War II.

He was terminally ill at the end of his life and Bill Coupe was 25 years old when he started running the company.

"We send flowers all over the world, a good amount to weddings and funerals. We work with local funeral homes," said Bill.

He said that there has been more competition in the past 20 years, because flowers are now sold online, in supermarkets and in other businesses. Thirty years ago, there were 55,000 florists locally; now there are less than 20,000. "Part of it is the way people shop. More high end markets carry nice flowers," he said. "We are a full-fledged florist and at Christmastime you can pick out a plant."

The busiest time of year for Coupe Flowers is Christmastime. "Sometimes we must work on Christmas Day because of funerals the following day. Many people don't know what is involved," Bill said.

"I've been making deliveries since I was 12 years old. We're grateful to the community for letting us exist as long as we have," he said.



Bill Coupe

Whitemarsh Hall Urns

Written by T. Scott Kreilick, President STHS

Eighty years ago, after E.T. Stotesbury's death in 1938, his wife Eva donated a portion of the Whitemarsh Hall sculpture collection to the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA). The donation of 18th century French sculpture, included two large 9 1/2-ft. tall urns that were subsequently placed inside the West Entrance of the Museum.

As part of the upcoming renovation of the West Entrance, the PMA will be deaccessioning the urns and has offered them to the Springfield Township Historical Society. PMA is not selling the urns. The only stipulation is that PMA bear no cost for re-locating the urns. In partnership with Springfield Township, the urns will be moved to the new Municipal Campus in January 2019.

Each of the urns is a composite of carved limestone and a cast cementitious material. The cast elements, including the top rims and bases, appear to be modern additions to earlier ornamental limestone sections. The decorative frieze of one urn depicts the Greek god Apollo (*Figures 1 & 2*), while the other urn shows marine deities (*Figures 3 & 4*). It is possible the urns were produced in the workshop of Jules-Édouard Visseaux (1854-1934), whose work was introduced to the Stotesburys by English art dealer Sir Joseph Duveen. Visseaux and his artisans operated out of a studio in the Saint-Ouen district on the northern outskirts of Paris, producing urns, statues and fountains of terra cotta, stone and lead.¹

While at Whitemarsh Hall, the urns were positioned at the southeast and southwest corners, respectively, of the Main Fountain (*Figures 5-7*). As shown in *Figure 7*, the urns were used as planters.

The Commissioners of Springfield Township have agreed to provide space on the Municipal Campus, and to fund the design and fabrication of poured concrete foundations for each of the urns.

There will need to be conservation of the urns. The scope of the conservation will include



Figure 1 Apollo deity urn



Figure 2 Detail of Apollo urn



Figure 3 Marine deity urn

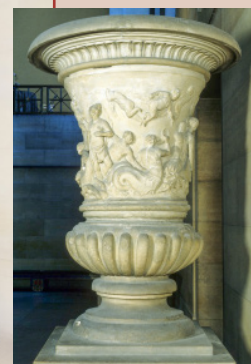


Figure 4 Detail of Marine urn

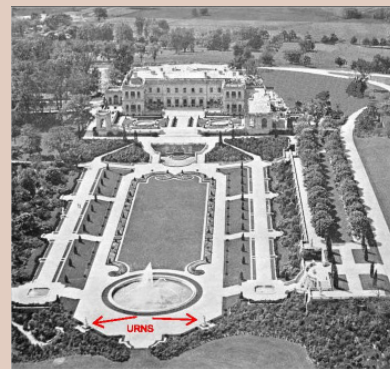


Figure 5 Aerial view of Whitemarsh Hall.

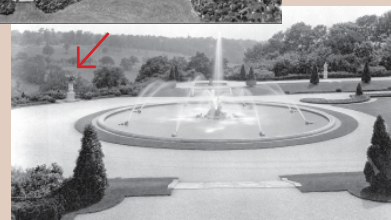


Figure 6 Photo looking south toward the Large Fountain of the Main Garden.



Figure 7 Detail of southwest urn.

¹ Wayne Willcox, <http://stotesbury.com/art/artpost1897/SculptureGardens.html>

cleaning, consolidation, minor repairs, repointing, and conservation oversight of the de-installation, transport, and installation. Kreilick Conservation will donate all necessary conservation. Kreilick will also prepare a report documenting the effort. The report will include recommendations for subsequent maintenance.

The final expense is the cost associated with physically

moving the urns. This task will include moving the urns out of the Museum and preparing them for transport. The urns will be slowly driven to the Municipal Campus and installed on the new foundations. This expense will, in part, be off-set with funds remaining from the completed restoration of the Black Horse Inn. The Historical Society will establish

a GoFundMe page to raise the remainder of the funds needed to return the Whitemarsh Hall urns to Springfield Township. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to this effort.

Become a Friend of

S T H S

FOR DETAILS PLEASE VISIT:

www.springfieldhistory.org

CALL FOR ARCHIVES VOLUNTEERS

Our dedicated group of volunteers are continuing to catalogue our collection. Our volunteers provide a valuable service to the historical society and are vital to carrying out our mission. If you like history and working with computers and have an hour or two to spare each week please contact the archives at archives@springfieldhistory.org or 215-233-4600.

FROM THE *Archives*



*The First Presbyterian Church on Bethlehem Pike,
Flourtown, PA circa 1950. Springfield Township
Historical Society Collection 2011.29.2.*



The Historical Society is
on Facebook; find us at
***Springfield Township
Historical Society.***

*Reserve
the Date*

Thurs., Nov. 1, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.

***HISTORY IN MOTION 5:
Carson Valley & Erdenheim Farm***

**Presented by Dr. David Contosta
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