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IN THIS ISSUE:

- President's Corner
- From the Archives
- Call for Volunteers
- In Memoriam,
STHS Board Member,
Frank Griffin
- Word of Thanks

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The Challenge

PRESERVATION • RESEARCH • EDUCATION

Shipwrecks of New York and New Jersey Coasts

Presented by Mr. Gary Gentile

Thursday, May 7th, 2009 – 7:30 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church

Bethlehem Pike & East Mill Road in Flourtown, PA

Enter the wild, exciting, and exotic world of Gary Gentile: author, lecturer, photographer, explorer, and deep-sea wreck-diver. Gary has specialized in wreck-diving and shipwreck research, concentrating his efforts on wrecks along the eastern seaboard, from Newfoundland to Key West, and in the Great Lakes. Of the thousands of decompression dives that Gary has made, over 180 of them were on the Grand Dame of the Sea: the Andrea Doria. He was the first scuba diver to enter the First Class Dining Room, from which he recovered many examples of elegant china.

Please join us for an enjoyable night as STHS is proud to host a presentation by Gary Gentile on "Shipwrecks of New York and New Jersey Coasts." This is an overview of various wrecks along the bi-state coast, from shallow water to deep, including histories of the shipwrecks and presentations of some of the significant artifacts which were recovered and restored. The presentation will include wrecks from both nineteenth century and from ships torpedoed by German U-boats in WWII.

Gary Gentile has written 52 books, published over 3,000 photographs, discovered more than 40 shipwrecks, and led a life of adventure. Over the years he has rescued from the ravages of the sea many thousands of shipwreck artifacts, making him a leading authority in recovery techniques. He has gone to great lengths to preserve and restore these relics from the deep, and to display

them to thousands of interested people, divers and non-divers alike. Gary has written scores of magazine articles, and has published thousands of photographs in books, periodicals, newspapers, brochures, advertisements, corporate reports, museum displays, postcards, film, and television. He lectures extensively on underwater topics, and conducts seminars on advanced wreck-diving techniques, high-tech diving equipment, and wreck photography.

This promises to be an exciting and educational night on an interesting local topic. The program is open to the public. Donations are kindly accepted from non-STHS members to support ongoing funding of these programs. Reservations are not required. Light refreshments will be served.

*For more information call
215-233-4600*



Speaker Gary Gentile on a dive.



The R.P. Resor was a tanker ship built in 1936 by the Federal Shipbuilding and Drydock Company of Kearny, New Jersey for the Standard Oil Company. She was torpedoed by U-boat U-578 on February 28, 1942 and began sinking as seen in this photograph.

President's Corner

When the Springfield Township Historical Society was founded in 1985, its original audience was primarily the residents within the township. But over the past five years, through both print and electronic medium, the Society has reached far beyond the borders of Springfield Township to the world at large! I was recently reminded of this when I was contacted by Martin Jenkins from the town of Rochdale in Greater Manchester, England.

Mr. Jenkins is actively researching the life and work of his ancestor, Frank Lynn-Jenkins (1870-1927), a prominent member of the sculptural establishment in England at the turn of the century. He was a founding member of the Royal Society of British Sculptors, who moved to New York in 1916 to continue his practice. Frank secured commissions from many wealthy art patrons of that time, including our own Edward Stotesbury of Whitemarsh Hall.

Martin Jenkins came across the Society's web site (www.springfieldhistory.org) in his research. He saw that my brother Charles and I had presented a talk on Whitemarsh Hall last December. Mr. Jenkins reached out to us to share his research and to solicit additional information and pictures. After sharing some information back and forth through e-mail, we finally met in person when he and his family traveled to the Philadelphia area. We spent some time at my home reviewing Stotesbury materials from my private collection, and then we visited the remains of the Whitemarsh Hall estate, including of course the statuary. The extant statuary on Claridge Road is attributed

to Henri-Leon Greber of Paris, as confirmed by his name and the year of commission, which are clearly carved into it. The statuary, that at one time adorned the formal gardens and fountains around the mansion, appear to be in part the work of Frank Lynn-Jenkins, based on Jenkins family photographs of the clay models used for the finished work. This work matches up perfectly with pictures of the Stotesbury statuary in its heyday. Additional research needs to be conducted by Mr. Jenkins, including a visit to the Society's archives, before he heads for home to continue his quest. Mr. Jenkins will share the final version of his research with us, further enhancing our Whitemarsh Hall collection for others to reference in the future.

This story of Mr. Jenkins is just one example of how the Society has reached beyond the township to share Springfield Township's history with the world. If you haven't had an opportunity to visit our website, please take a couple of minutes to see what it has to offer. Board member Christine Smith, who originally designed it, does an excellent job keeping the content fresh and up to date. Once you have viewed it, let others know about it as well! I look forward to the next person who reaches out to us from another part of the world, so that we can share the rich history of our great township!

Keeping the past in the present,

Ed Zwicker

From the Archives...

At the turn of the 20th century, a world of fun and music was alive and well in Springfield Township. On the site of the current Cisco Park and former Springfield High School, sat Chestnut Hill Park, more commonly known as White City, an amusement park featuring a carousel, a roller coaster and other rides. The grand Casino in the center of the park did not offer gambling, but was the scene of formal dining and dancing while the park's grandstand saw performances by popular bands

of the era, including John Phillip Sousa.

The STHS archive has a great number of color postcards of the park as well as photos of guests enjoying the facilities in their long dresses and straw boater hats. We also have several artifacts from

the annual Farmer's picnic, including a poster announcing such exciting events as the Fat Women's Race (judges will determine who is fat enough) and the Buck Sawing contest (first prize – a donkey).

Though the park closed in 1916, its history lives on

at the Springfield Township Historical Society. More information and many images of the park can be found in the book *Springfield Township, Montgomery County* by Ed and Charles Zwicker. Books are available in our archives or by calling 215 233-4600.



Call for Volunteers

Would you like to help the STHS build its archives?

Volunteers are needed to organize records and catalog items into our computer system. If you can email, you have the computer skills!

Volunteers generally work one day a week for 2-3 hours (daytime during the week).

If you would like to help, please email or call our Archivist, Susan Anthony, at SAnthony_sths@comcast.net or 215-233-4600.

Word of *Thanks*

Our archive is now settled into our new home on Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill, and we owe a debt of gratitude to our staff and volunteers who have been working diligently since the move. This dedicated group has given freely of their time to create a welcoming space for our researchers and visitors.

Volunteer **John Franz** donated a large glass display case which is now filled with Enfield tiles, White City artifacts, Black Horse Inn photographs, and Whitemarsh Hall memorabilia. We are grateful to have a place to display some of the more interesting items in our collection. Longtime volunteer **Dulie Gray** has frequently been on hand to continue the unpacking, organizing, hanging of framed items, and made certain that our new space was up and running without delay. Finally, our dedicated staff archivist, **Susan Anthony**, has attended to the many details that might otherwise have been overlooked. Susan's personal commitment to the archives was evident throughout this transition.

STHS relies on the generosity of volunteers and we are fortunate to have this dedicated group overseeing our archives. The outpouring of time and talent and the generosity of these individuals is indicative of the passion in our community for preserving our local history. We simply could not have an active archive without the generous support and active involvement of our staff and volunteers.



IN MEMORY OF

STHS Board Member

Frank Griffin

1928-2009

Frank Griffin, STHS Board Member since January 2008 died suddenly on March 22, 2009. Mr. Griffin grew up in Germantown, later moving to Springfield in 1959. After graduating from LaSalle College High School, Mr. Griffin entered the U.S. Navy in 1946, beginning active and reserve service totaling thirty-four years. He taught United States history at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School for twenty-nine years, retiring in 1987, and then taught history and government at Gwynedd-Mercy College for two years. In 1989 he successfully ran for District Justice of Springfield Township, becoming the first Democrat to hold a township-wide office since Reconstruction in the nineteenth century, serving until his age-mandated retirement in 1998.

Living in the township for fifty years, Mr. Griffin actively served his community, holding leadership positions in numerous organizations including St. Genevieve Church, Oreland Swim Club, Erdenheim Civic Association, Springfield High School Booster Club, Flourtown-Erdenheim Little League, and most recently, the Historical Society.

The Board fondly remembers Frank Griffin for his years of active community service in Springfield Township.



Look for STHS in the *Wyndmoor Memorial Day Parade* and at the *Community Gathering at Veterans Park*

following the parade. Meet some of our board members, view historic images from our archives, share memories and stories of the past, and learn about the work of the Society in preserving the history of our community.



Also look for STHS at the *Chestnut Hill Garden Festival*

on May 3, 2009 from 11-5. We will have tables set up in front of our new location at 8428 Germantown Avenue where we will have book signings, historical displays and Colonial toys and crafts for children. Join in the festivities and stop in at our new home to see our archives.



Reserve the Date

Thursday, May 7, 2009 — 7:30 p.m.

Shipwrecks of New York & New Jersey Coasts

A Presentation by
Mr. Gary Gentile



The Chestnut Hill Historical Society (CHHS) recently provided STHS with digital copies of two historic views of the Hillcrest Hotel on Stenton Avenue that were part of a larger collection that was recently donated to CHHS. These photographs, which show the hotel still surrounded by undeveloped land, were part of a collection of images from the Charles Davis family who built a house on Meadowbrook Lane in Chestnut Hill in 1924.



Local actress and historian JoAnn Tufo with Edward Zwicker, President of STHS. Ms. Tufo, in her character of Mary Todd Lincoln, presented to the society a first person interpretation of the life and times of Mrs. Lincoln. A crowd of over 130 people were in attendance for this presentation.