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OCTOBER 2013

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The Challenge

PRESERVATION • RESEARCH • EDUCATION

MAKING MARATHON: A History of Early Wyncote

A Presentation by Mr. Thomas Wieckowski
Vice-President, Old York Road Historical Society

Thursday, October 3rd, 2013 – 7:30 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church

Bethlehem Pike & East Mill Road in Flourtown, PA

Facetiously called “Marathon” by a famous author and resident, Wyncote is a close neighbor to Springfield Township. Life had continued largely unchanged for one hundred and sixty-eight years from the granting of the first deeds from William Penn. Interrupted only by the turmoil

of the Revolutionary War, the verdant countryside supported several generations of farmers and millers in relatively comfortable circumstances. By the 1850s the old Wyncote tract was on the verge of change.

The area was discovered by wealthy industrialists and capitalists who made it the first outpost of the Gilded Age. This program follows the development of the land from William Penn’s green countryside, through Gilded Age resort, to the village for “the rest of us.” Nationally known bee-keepers, international bankers, entrepreneurial congressmen and dabblers in the novel sport of baseball made the community we know as Wyncote today. They flocked to the new village for the clean air, lush landscapes, and picturesque rolling countryside that promised “calm contentment and restful influences of country homes.”



Mill built by Isaac Mather 1769 at the corner of Washington Lane and the Warminster Septa rail line (originally the North Pennsylvania RR). Demolished 1958.

Join us as Thomas Wieckowski presents the evolution of Wyncote. Tom is Vice-President of the Old York Road Historical Society and a member of the Cheltenham Township Historical Commission. He received his B.S. at Villanova University and Ph.D. in Higher Education from The

Catholic University of America, Washington D.C. He recently retired from Drexel University after twenty-seven years where he was Associate Dean of the College of Business among other positions. He currently devotes his time to his lifelong hobby, historical research and writing, and is the author of *Making Marathon*, published in 2009 and, *A Spectacle for Men and Angels*, a narrative documentary of Camp William Penn, published this summer.

All are invited to attend as Springfield Township Historical Society proudly hosts Thomas Wieckowski’s history of Wyncote. There is no charge for admission and reservations are not required. Light refreshments will be served.

For more information call 215-233-4600

PLEASE NOTE:

Attendees to the October program are encouraged to bring a canned food item to donate to the First Presbyterian Church’s neighborhood food pantry. Please help us to support this important cause.

Plans Underway for Yeakel Cemetery Restoration

Plans are being made to keep the effects of Mother Nature from destroying a 260 year old cemetery in Wyndmoor.

The burial ground, known as the Yeakel Cemetery, is located behind a rehabilitation center on Stenton Avenue and is owned by the Central Schwenkfelder Church. Surrounded by private property, the cemetery has eluded public eye for nearly a century.

The cemetery began as a family burial ground by the Mack family prior to 1752. In 1802 it was purchased by Christopher Yeakle and his sons. Christopher was a Schwenkfelder, a Protestant sect of exiles from Germany. They sought religious freedom in Pennsylvania and made the voyage here in 1733.

Research shows that 53 known burials took place in the cemetery,

where there are 86 head and footstones. The earliest inscription is Maria Yeakel, who died in 1752, and the latest is Matilda Heydrick, who died in 1902. Tradition states that soldiers killed in the Revolutionary War are buried here, casualties from the skirmish that took place on this site in December, 1777. Some other family names that appear on stones are Heeber, Neff, Schubert and Schultz. Other burials may include members of the Kriebel, Nice and Mack families, though no tombstones mark their graves.

The cemetery is surrounded by a stone wall built in 1881. Two wrought iron gates complete the enclosure. A polished granite monument placed by the Schwenkfelder Church to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Schwenkfelder migrations is located in the



(above) Yeakel cemetery headstones.



(right) Jack Yeakel and daughter, descendants of the Yeakel family.

center of the cemetery. The monument, unveiled in 1931, is inscribed with the names of the original immigrants buried in the Yeakel cemetery as well as the Hood Cemetery, in Germantown, and the Pilgrim Cemetery, a potter's field, the location of which is unknown.

The project to survey, assess and conserve grave markers and improve site conditions is being organized by the Yeakel Cemetery Preservation Committee, a committee that is independent from the church.

The committee, chaired by STHS board member Jack Yeakel, is seeking to raise \$72,000 to cover the project's costs. Using its 501(c)(3) status, The Central Schwenkfelder Church will be managing the funds for this project. The church has already pledged money as has Bowman Properties, Ltd., a Chestnut Hill developer, which is asking for other stakeholders to match its \$8500 pledge. How much of the project is completed will depend on how much money is raised, Yeakel said.

Conservator of the project will be Kreilick Conservation, LLC, an Oreland firm headed by T. Scott Kreilick. Kreilick, who is president of the Springfield Township Historical Society, recused from any decisions or votes regarding the financial aspects of the project.

The Springfield Township Historical Society has set up a committee to work with the Preservation Committee. The Chestnut Hill Historical Society is partnering with the committee to raise awareness of the project.

BECOME A FRIEND OF STHS

The officers and directors of Springfield Township Historical Society invite you to become a member of our society as a FRIEND. As a Friend, you will help to support our mission of "Research, Preservation and Education," and you will receive:

- Four issues of our newsletter, "The Challenge."
- Discounts on programs and activities (bus trips, tours, etc.).
- Discounts on gift items such as books, maps, prints and tiles.
- Recognition of your contribution in our year-end issue of "The Challenge."

To sign up as a Friend, please visit our website: www.springfieldhistory.org or complete the form below and send it to: **Springfield Township Historical Society, PO Box 564, Flourtown, PA 19031**

Check here if you do NOT want your name included for recognition in the newsletter.

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| \$100+ William Penn | \$50 Penn's Manor of Springfield | \$15 Penn Oak |
| \$75 Maria Springett Penn | \$25 Friend of Penn | \$_____ Other amount |

For more information, visit the Yeakel Cemetery Preservation Committee's website, www.yeakelcemetery.com.

Archives UPDATE

We would like to thank all of our volunteers for their outstanding work and dedication to the STHS Archives. We could not continue to serve the Springfield Township community without their help.

In particular, we would like to thank **Frank Vitale**, a student at Dickinson University, who is pursuing a major in history with a minor in art history. Frank has dedicated four weeks of his summer vacation to volunteer in the STHS Archives. He logged in over 90 hours of volunteer time this summer and thanks to his efforts and expertise, the Archives is now 90% organized and cataloged. Frank also works in the Dickinson University archives and worked at the Carlisle Indian School as a Dana Research Assistant on a multi-year document digitization project from May-July 2013 before volunteering at the STHS archives. He was also the 2012 recipient of the STHS Scholarship Award. We were very fortunate to have Frank join our wonderful volunteer staff this summer.



FROM THE Archives

STHS volunteer Frank Vitale, who has been working in the archive while on summer break from college, discovered this photo while sorting through a folder in the collection on the Springfield Police Department. In the folder was this photograph of the Springfield Mill, which is the grist mill on the Morris Arboretum property. The photograph is believed to date from the mid-20th century.

The Archives are OPEN to the Public

Tuesdays 7pm – 9pm
Wednesdays 11am – 1pm
Saturdays 9am – 12noon

For more information,
call
215-233-4600



Erin Agnew, a recent graduate of Springfield Township High School, was presented with the Springfield Township Historical Society Scholarship Award by historical society president T. Scott Kreilick at the school's Class of 2013 Senior Awards Assembly. The winner of the award is chosen by school officials based on vocational interest, and is given to the student who is planning to pursue history or political science. Erin has volunteered at several historic sites, including Morgan Log House, Graeme Park, Hope Lodge and Carpenter's Hall. She plans to major in international relations at George Washington University.



The archives is in need of a computer that is recent enough to run our cataloguing software. Anyone with a computer to donate is encouraged to call 215-233-4600 or email STHS at archives@springfieldhistory.org.



PHOTOS: JOHN GROSS

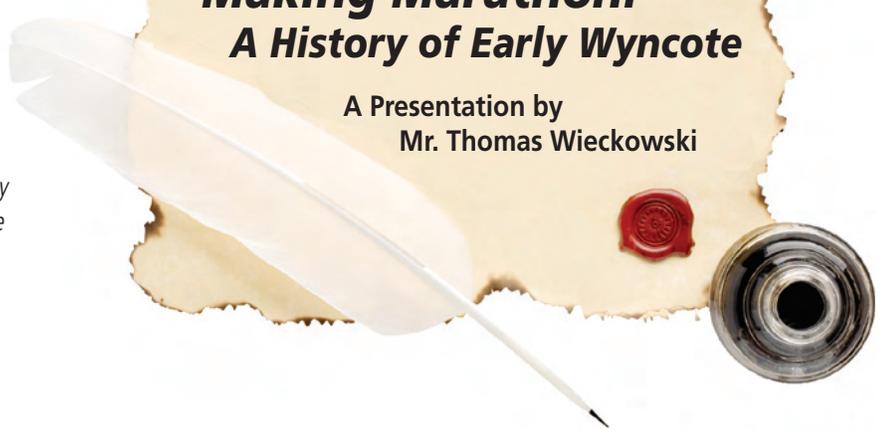
The Springfield Township Historical Society was represented in the Oreland Lions Club Fourth of July parade with the participation of a pony cart owned by Diana and John Gross and driven by Diana Gross; the pony's name is Daisy. The historical society extends many thanks to the Grosses.

Reserve the Date

Thurs., Oct. 3, 2013 – 7:30 p.m.

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