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NOVEMBER 2009

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The Challenge

PRESERVATION • RESEARCH • EDUCATION

Houses of Philadelphia: Chestnut Hill and the Wissahickon Valley, 1880-1930

A Presentation by Mr. James Garrison

**Thursday, December 3rd, 2009 – 7:30 p.m.
First Presbyterian Church**

Bethlehem Pike & East Mill Road in Flourtown, PA

Winding its way southward through the Philadelphia communities of Chestnut

Hill and Mount Airy, as well as the verdant rural countryside of Gwynedd, Whitemarsh, and Wyndmoor, the Wissahickon Creek flows through a region of both unsurpassed natural beauty and some of the nation's most exquisite residential architecture. The marvelous landscape that attracted early travelers and settlers became the setting for glorious estates that celebrated the connection between the natural and the built environment. From the mid-19th through the mid-20th century, three generations of prominent regional and national architects designed houses that have endured as magnificent examples of their own time, and remain eminently livable homes to this day.

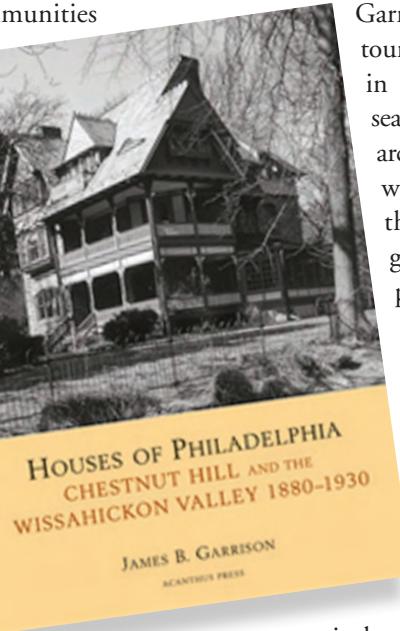
Please join us as the Springfield Township Historical Society hosts Mr. James Garrison, author of *Houses of Philadelphia: Chestnut Hill and the Wissahickon Valley, 1880-1930* (published by Acanthus Press as part of its

Suburban Domestic Architecture Series). Mr. Garrison will take us on a virtual tour of many of the local estates in this area, sharing his research and knowledge of local architecture. This presentation will provide insights into the family history of these great homes and estates, photographs of interior, exterior and landscapes, and architectural elements and design.

James Garrison is an architect at RMJM Hillier in Philadelphia. He specializes in historic preservation and has written and lectured

extensively on the history and architecture of southeastern Pennsylvania. In 2004 he published *Mastering Tradition: the Residential Architecture of John Russell Pope* (Acanthus Press).

This promises to be an exciting and educational program, focusing on the golden age of grand American residential architecture in our area. 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 visit www.springfieldhistory.org or call 215-233-4600.

President's Corner

Over the past six years as President of the Historical Society I've written my President's Corner article on a variety of diverse topics. Looking back over them now, I must admit that this one may be the most unusual. A couple of months ago I was contacted by the Philadelphia Area Paranormal Society with a request to be able to conduct an investigation of the Black Horse Inn for paranormal activity. After performing some research on this group to confirm their authenticity and validity, and after obtaining permission from the Township as owner of the Inn, they were granted access to perform their investigation. Having grown up in houses which exhibited unexplained paranormal activity, I was intrigued by this investigation to be conducted at the Inn, and asked to join them.

On a Saturday night in early October, just one night removed from a full moon, a small group of us assembled at the Inn. The Paranormal Society members proceeded to setup up their equipment for this research. It included infrared motion sensors, digital camcorders with night vision, EMF meters (to detect electro-magnetic fields), digital voice recorders, infrared thermometers, and a PC based system to capture video feeds from five key locations within the Inn. The locations chosen included the basement, 1st floor bar room, 2nd floor bedrooms, and the 3rd floor. Also participating was a reporter and cameraman from Channel One Network, who recorded the evening's events for a show to be aired in late October. We set out to see if there were still tenants residing in the 265 year old Black Horse Inn.

Each member of the Paranormal Society took their role in the night's activities very seriously. This is a group whose mission is to attempt to debunk pranks, hoaxes, and environmental phenomenon, and to obtain and report on evidence of true paranormal events. Paranormal Society members, working in groups of two and three, would occupy a room, and ask a series of inquiring questions of prospective spirits, trying to draw them out into our dimension for visual and verbal contact. Video cameras and voice recorders operated throughout the questioning, as did thermometers to track fluctuations in temperature. While we did not experience any visible



manifestations of spirits, a couple of us did experience an unusual phenomenon in two of the older rooms of the Inn.

As I walked through one of the upper floor rooms, I experienced a distinct and noticeable cool sensation on just the front of my body. If I took a step to one side or the other, I felt only the normal room temperature. I experienced a similar sensation in an adjoining room. One of the Paranormal Society members slowly waved their hand through the nearby air and felt distinct differences in temperature from one point to another. A search for the cause of a possible draft came up empty in both rooms. Upon leaving these rooms and then returning some time later, the temperature in those same spots felt the same as the rest of the room. While this is certainly not proof positive that a departed spirit was among us, it certainly left me with a situation that I could not explain or rationalize.

The Paranormal Society will now take all of the data collected over a six hour time period, and review the audio and video output in great detail. Experience indicates that what was not visible to the human eye or received by the ears can at times present itself in a frame-by-frame breakdown of the video, or be heard on the audio recording. By the time you read this, the Historical Society should have received a copy of their full report. That could reveal whether any of the Black Horse Inn's former visitors or tenants has made the Inn their permanent home. Of course, there could also have been shy spirits that avoided us that night, waiting until you visit the Inn later on to make themselves known!

Keeping the past in the present,

Ed Zwicker

Help make STHS a bit greener:

In our efforts to save trees and postage, and to see *The Challenge* in full color, provide us with your email address and future issues and special notices will be sent electronically.

Emails should be directed to:
contact@springfieldhistory.org.
Please remember to include your name and address.

BECOME A FRIEND OF STHS

To continue to receive newsletters, either in paper format or our e-newsletter, readers must sign up 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*.

Members contributing at the William Penn level will also be invited to attend a year-end party held at an historic Springfield home.

To sign up as a Friend, please visit our website: www.springfieldhistory.org

HISTORY IN MAPS

A high level view of the development of Springfield Township and surrounding areas is available to us in the form of maps. Using an internet connection, you can examine them from the 1700s up through modern times. Some of the early maps are simple road maps, showing towns and villages with the names of roads in that era. Later maps have more detail, showing where buildings were located, names of property owners, rail lines and various other items that will fascinate many of us.

To begin, you'll need a computer with a high-speed internet connection, a fairly current web browser and a current Adobe PDF viewer. Maps contain large amounts of details, so viewing them with dial up connections would be very slow and frustrating. To get the most out of these maps, you'll also need to be comfortable with "scrolling" and "zooming" in a web browser. Folks who aren't computer wizards or don't have high-speed connections may want to visit the library or ask neighbor High School and College students for consultation.

When looking at maps, keep in the back of your mind that older maps aren't as accurate as the newer ones. Some of the maps were intended for planning purposes and contain roads that were to be built in the future, and never built. Also, map makers would imbed errors in maps, so that if they were illegally copied, the errors would be copied, proving the theft.

An impressive source of maps and aerial photographs is www.philageohistory.org. While it is targeting Philadelphia, our township is adjacent and included in many of the maps. If you visit this site, you'll see two main sections, a "Resource Browser" containing individual maps and aerial photographs and an "Interactive Maps Viewer" which lets you overlay maps and photographs, so you can see the differences between them. The resource browser should be your starting point. It is much easier to use and contains a larger variety of maps. Some of the maps are books of maps. You'll need to identify the "Plates" for our township. A list for guidance is posted on the STHS website.

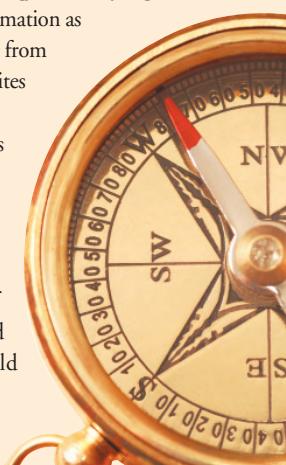
All of the maps are dated. This should help you find things such as "Chestnut Hill Park" or the "Fort Washington railroad" since they had known life spans.

www.andysantiqueatlases.com is another source of maps with interesting details. Springfield Township is contained in three maps. Click on "Pennsylvania" then click on "Montgomery" then "1893." You'll then see a list of plates. Springfield is in one plate and Whitemarsh in two plates. The Whitemarsh plates will cover the edges of Springfield.

Montgomery county has a web site, <http://propertyrecords.montcopa.org>, for tax records. In addition to information tracing prior ownership of land parcels, the site has mapping of the plots that can be "zoomed." I'd use this as a "current" view of Springfield Township.

NOTE: Visit our website at www.springfieldhistory.org and click on "Archives" to see the above information as well as a descriptive list of maps in date order from 1792 to 1934, and links to access the websites referenced in this article.

If you have any additional links or information regarding Springfield Township maps, please forward them to rgerysmith@navpoint.com for STHS. The author of this article, Raymond Gery Smith, has been a resident of Springfield Township for 21 years and a longstanding member of Springfield Township Historical Society.



Stotesbury from the Archives – This photo of Edward T. Stotesbury was taken at the Mayor's box at the 1919 World Series, Philly Athletics vs. Chicago Cubs. Athletics won.

Notice of Elections

At the December 3rd program, we will ask our members to vote on the slate of officers and directors with terms beginning January 1, 2010.

The Slate, prepared by the Nomination Committee, follows. Additional nominations may be made by any member of the Historical Society, *in writing, signed by 10 additional members*, and filed with the nominating committee at least 15 days prior to the Annual Meeting (by Nov. 18, 2009).

No nominations will be accepted from the floor.

Address nominating petitions to the Nominating Committee,

Springfield Township Historical Society, PO Box 564, Flourtown, PA 19031.

SLATE

Directors also Serving as Officers – 2-year Terms

President	Edward C. Zwicker, IV
Vice President	Charles Zwicker
Treasurer	Scott Armington

Directors – Terms take effect on January 1, 2010

Board Members for Re-Election

Barbara Coleman	2010-2013
Cindy Hamilton	2010-2013
Elizabeth Jarvis	2010-2013
Phoebe Rosenberry	2010-2013
Edward C. Zwicker, IV	2010-2013

Board Member Candidates

Vincent Bruner	2010-2013
Ed Welch	2010-2013
Alessandra Cartelli	2010-2013

Board Members Serving 4-Year Terms (*elected December 1, 2007*)

Scott Armington	2008-2011
Dorothy Cutler	2008-2011
Dolores Jordan	2008-2011
Katie Worrall	2008-2011
Joseph Timoney	2008-2011
Charles Zwicker	2008-2011

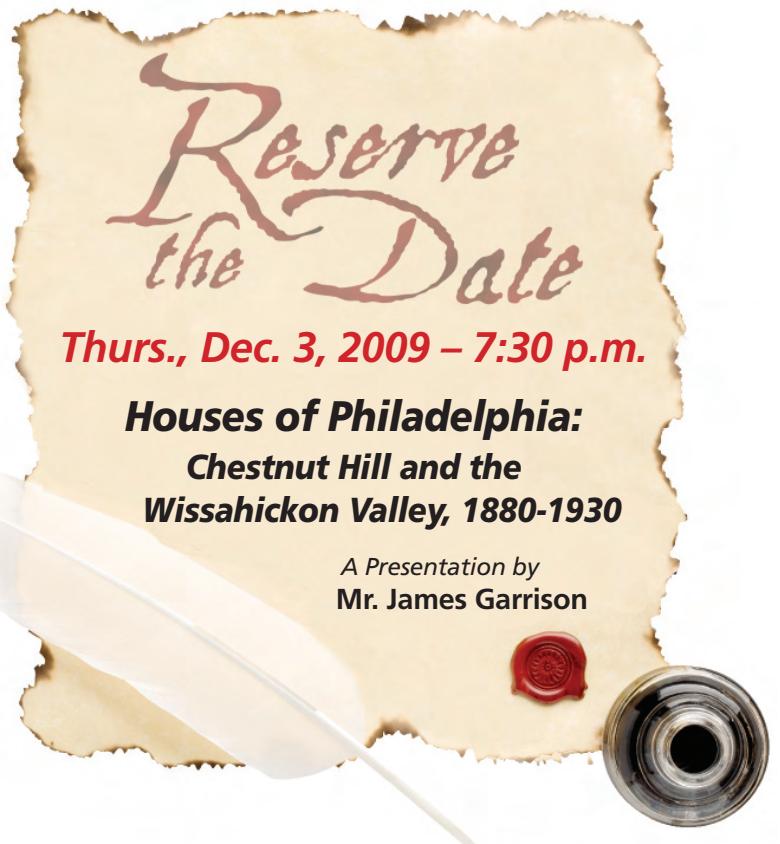
Fall for Arts –

Christine Smith (right) was among the board members of the Springfield Township Historical Society who chatted with visitors to the society's table at the Chestnut Hill Business

Association's Fall for the Arts Festival. Visitors asked questions about historic sites in the township, shared memories of some of them and bought crafts made by the board members.



At the recent Chestnut Hill Fall for the Arts Festival, Ed Zwicker (left), president of the Springfield Township Historical Society, showed visitors pictures of township sites in one of two books he, his brother Charles and the historical society published. The books are *Whitemarsh Hall: The Estate of Edward T. Stotesbury* and *Springfield Township, Montgomery County*, both printed by Arcadia Publishing. For information about purchasing copies of the books, visit the historical society's website, www.springfieldhistory.org or call 215-233-4600.



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