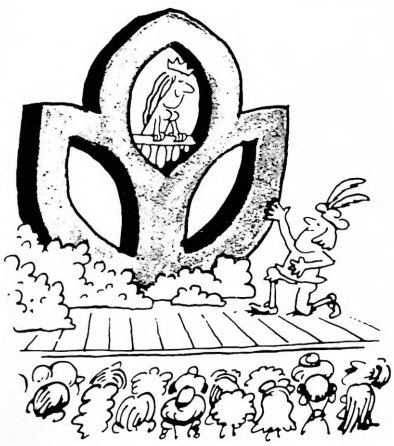
GERMANTOWNE CRIER



The Kerper Homestead
(Pastorius Park now occupies site)
See Page 73

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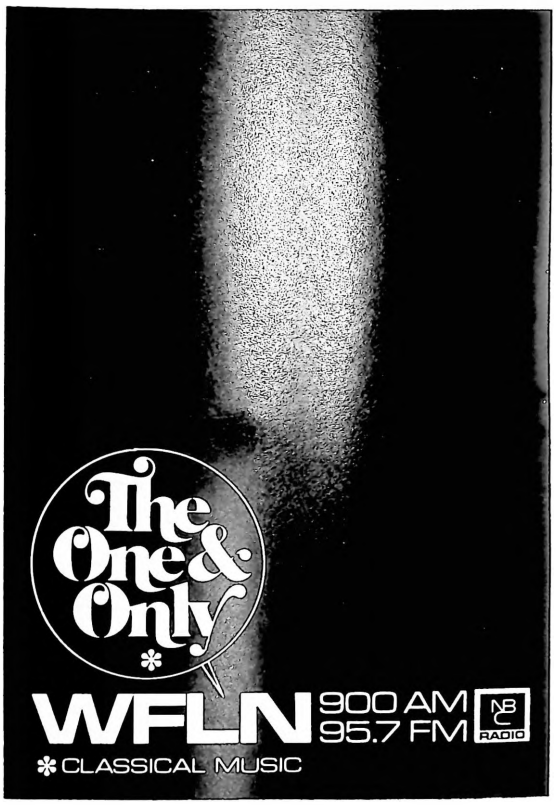
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Volume 28 | SUMMER, 1976 | Number 3

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It was prepared from a photograph taken about 1905 and made available to the Chestnut Hill Historical Society by a Kerper descendent living in Virginia. The old house burned down in 1915 and the photograph is therefore of great historic value. Editor

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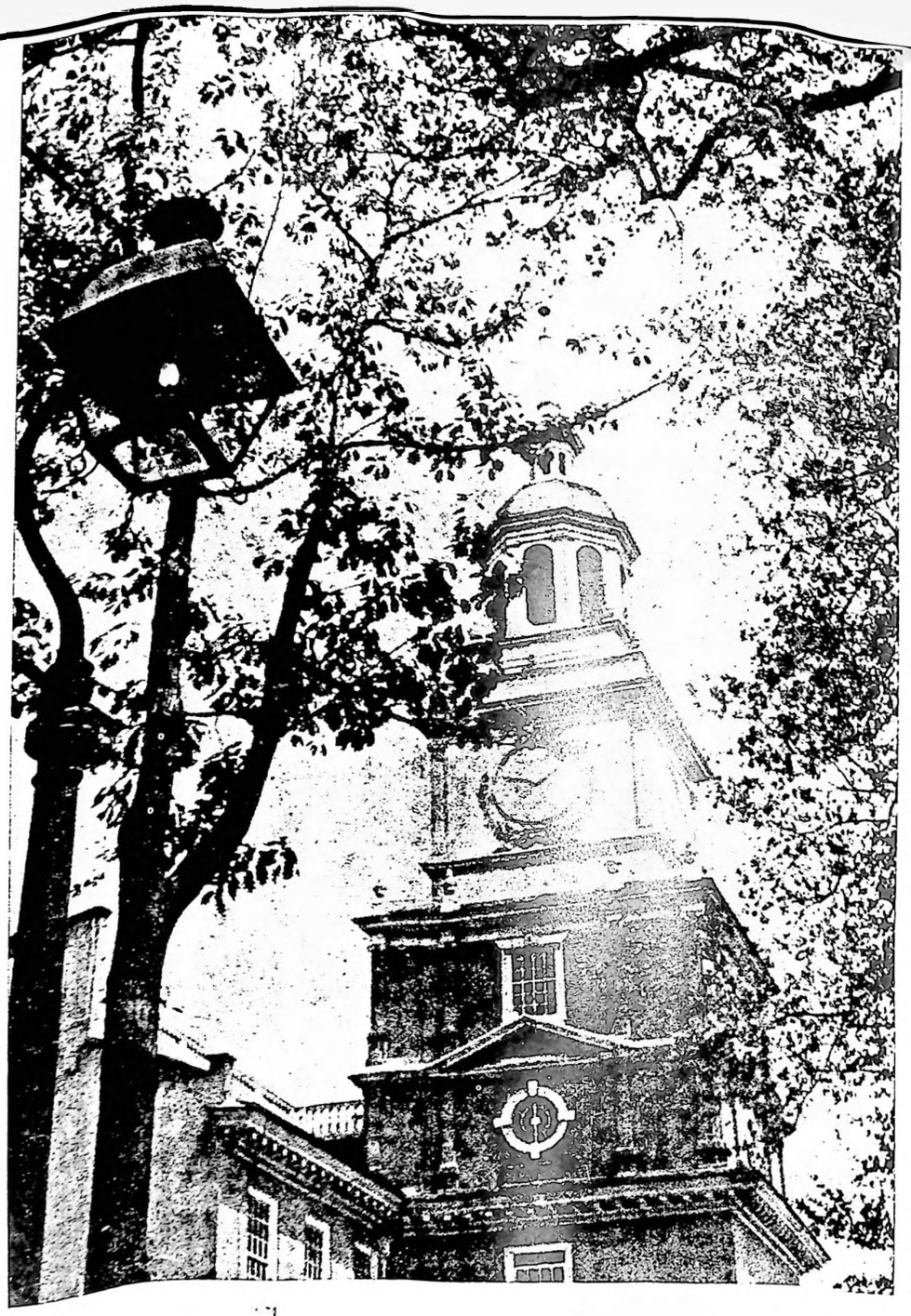
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PASTORIUS PARK

By JOHN MCARTHUR HARRIS, JR.

In 1687, a tract called "The German Township" was surveyed and a patent issued for the 5700 acres involved. Of these, 2700 acres were divided into 55 city holdings in Germantown. The remaining 2950 acres belonged to the owners of the 55 holdings but remained undeveloped until April 3, 1689 when they were divided into:

Cresheim	884 acres
Sommerhausen	900 acres
Crefeld	1,166 acres

Cresheim extended from about the line of the present Johnson Street to the Cresheim Creek and included the area of Mount Airy. Sommerhausen was the land between the Cresheim Creek and a line that crossed Germantown Avenue just north of the Chestnut Hill library, Crefield was the area from this line to Northwestern Avenue.

Somerhausen was divided into lots of which lots 1 to 5 included the land between Southampton Avenue and the Cresheim Creek, extending from the Roxborough county line on the west to Springfield Manor on the east. The northern part of this tract was destined to become Pastorius Park. The entire area was allotted to the Frankford Company in 1689.

Consider for a minute or two the many large springs near the summit of Chestnut Hill (Why should so much water emerge from the top of the hill??) There was the big spring near the Gravers Lane station of the Reading Railroad—a spring with sufficient flow to take care of Chestnut Hill's water supply for many years. There was the spring now under the tracks of the Chestnut Hill station of the Penn Central Railroad, whose waters were believed to be curative. There was the spring back of Caleb Cope's house at the corner of Rex and Germantown Avenues, in the famous "Cope's Grotto." There was the spring just east of Stenton Avenue at the end of Spring Lane. It was the source of a brook on which Michael Schlatter built a paper mill and thereby created our Paper Mill Road. Finally there was the famous spring, still flowing in Pastorius Park. In more elementary times its waters found their way through swampy ground to the Cresheim Creek, following the line of Lincoln Drive.

The records show that, in 1708, the Frankford Company sold lot No. 5, containing the spring and the land now the northern section of Pastorius Park, to Abraham Tunis and, in 1715, Lot No.4, the adjoining lot to the south, was purchased by Claus Braun who built a log cabin, apparently the first residence in the area.

Our earliest written record of the name "Chestnut Hill" is a deed of 1711.

In 1721 Braun moved to Hanover Township after selling his Chestnut Hill property to Johann Bernard Kepler. Kepler lived for a time in the Braun log cabin but later built a stone house near the lane leading to young Willem Dewees' paper mill on the Wissahickon (Hartwell Lane). During this period Chestnut Hill must have been a lonely place for, in 1734, there were nine persons living in Crefeld and nine in Sommerhausen. A little later, when there were "over 66 taxables" in Chestnut Hill, 60 of them were German.

In 1745, Peter Kock. from Karlskron in Sweden, purchased the property from Kepler. He also purchased the paper mill on the Wissahickon and created the "Avenue," plainly to be seen on the early maps, leading from Germantown Avenue to his home on land now in Pastorius Park.

On September 21, 1748, Peter Kalm, the Swedish naturalist, visited the plantation of his friend and fellow countryman, Peter Kock. He wrote of his visit in his *Travels in North America* and noted that,

> "Mr. Kock had a fine spring near his country seat: it came from a sandy hill and afforded water enough constantly to fill a little brook. Just above this spring Mr. Kock had erected a building from those abovementioned glittering stones into which were put many jugs and other earthen vessels full of milk; for it kept very well in cold water during the great heat with which summer is attended here."

Peter Kock died in 1753 leaving his estate in some confusion and, at the Sheriff's sale that resulted, Henry Schleydern bought the property only to sell it one month later (July, 1753) to Alexander Huston. By this time the area of the property had dwindled to 125 acres.

In 1762, Huston sold to Martin Thoman (or Thomas) who had come to America with his family, including his parents, in 1736. The parents joined the Ephrata Clois-

ters but Martin developed a farm in Berks County which became very profitable. As he grew older he thought more and more of his native Niederdorf in Switzerland and, selling his farm, he purchased Mr. Huston's Chestnut Hill property on which he lived for two years before returning to Switzerland. He was nearly 60 years old when he bought Mr. Huston's 125 acres for £600.

In 1764, M. Thoman sold to Julius Kerper for £1000. The Kerper family came to America in 1738. Julius (1730-1801), the son of Abraham Kerper, married Catherine Reimer of Frederick Township. They had six sons and three daughters. Hotchkin, in his book on Germantown, Mount Airy, and Chestnut Hill, says of them, "The family was long lived, they were a toilsome race." During the Kerper occupancy the property was improved and "The Avenue" became a thing of beauty between rows of cherry trees. When the British army visited Chestnut Hill, December 5 & 6, 1777, there was much looting and property damage. The Kerpers seem to have suffered more than the others; their bill for repairs was £1750, the largest in Chestnut Hill. Hotchkin tells of conversations with a member of the Kerper family who was a boy at the time and described, among other things, how the British, in the early-morning fog, mistook the corn shocks in the Kerper fields for soldiers and fired on them.

In 1795, Julius Kerper retired to a smaller house on Germantown Avenue and sold his farm to two French refugees, Aimié Marie Lavornier and Nicholas Jean La Bon D'Herbigny. In 1799, Lavornier advertised the property for sale and his description tells us what the plantation was like when it was at its peak.

Elegant Seat
And Valuable Lots For Sale

On Thursday, September 24 (1799), at two in the afternoon, that elegant seat whereon the subscriber now lives, situate at the foot of Chestnut Hill, 9 miles from the city of Philadelphia in the most healthy part of the country.

It has been divided into lots for the convenience of purchasers, on the largest lot is an elegant mansion of stone, the inside all newly finished in the most modern and approved style. It stands about one hundred perches from the main road from which a most beautiful avenue of cherry trees leads to it. Another large stone house adjoining the same calculated for a tenant or overseer, a large stone barn with stalls for 10 cows, two large stables for 8 horses, another stable for 5 horses with a coach house, a spring house, a smoke house, a fine garden in high culture set with the best of plants and vegetables, with a fish pond in it enclosed with a neat pale fence, and an orchard of best fruits. The lot adjoining, which will be sold herewith, contains about 40 acres of woodland of which 10 are watered meadow, 18 acres in clover sown this year. the rest arable land in the highest state of cultivation being lately thoroughly manured, 10 acres of woodland on the other part of the estate will be sold with it or less if it suits the purchaser.

D'Herbigny and Lavornier sold the property to Read and Pierce in 1800. Then came a succession of owners who sold off portions and the estate passed through a series of changes that have brought it to the condition in which it now exists. We know that Read and Pierce sold to Alexander Boadicea who, in 1803, sold to Louise Bollman. In 1850 George Hergesheimer was the owner and later John Sabin. The atlas of 1876 shows James Savens as the owner. Hotchkin says that, in 1889, Miss Bohien rented the house to some Italian workmen and elderly residents of Chestnut Hill remember seeing Italian women washing clothes in the creek as in the common practice in the "old country."

The drawing of the Kerper homestead, shown on the cover, was prepared from a photograph taken about 1905 and made available to the Chestnut Hill Historical Society by a Kerper descendent living in Virginia. The old house burned down in 1915 and the photograph is therefore of great historic value.

In the *Germantowne Crier* (Vol. 8., No. 3, p.13 [1956]) there is a brief "History of Pastorius Park" in which the land between the Kerper homestead and the Cresheim Creek is described.

> "The land was rolling meadow, partly wooded through which ran a stream, dammed at some seasons of the year to fill a series of ponds. When the dams were out the stream was low, rushes and other growth bordered the water and there were some willow trees. The ponds were once used for a supply of ice to fill Casey's ice house, a large stone building on the edge of the grounds at what is now the corner of Springfield Avenue and Lincoln Drive."

The ice ponds were known as "Casey's Upper" and "Casey's Lower" ponds. The ice was harvested during the winter and stored, packed in sawdust, in the stone building still standing on Springfield Avenue. After the Casey ice business closed down it was used for a studio by the Willet Stained Glass Co. It now houses three apartments. The ice was loaded onto refrigerator cars on a railroad siding which occupied the present parking lot on the eastern side of the tracks at St. Martins station. The dam for "Upper Casey's" ran parallel to and a few feet north of Springfield Avenue. The Casey ponds were popular with ice skaters who paid Mr. Casey 5¢ for the privilege. His younger customers soon discovered that Mr. Casey would not come onto the ice to collect his fee and could be easily eluded by simply leaving the ice at the point furthest removed from Mr. Casey. One wonders wether Mr. Casey billed the parents.

The development of refrigeration machinery that produced "artificial ice" followed by the electric refrigerator put an end to the "natural ice" business and the land involved became a problem. In 1911—13, Dr. and Mrs. George Woodward offered to present 9½ acres to the City of Philadelphia if the City would condemn two adjoining acres and convert the whole into a part to be called "Pastorius Park." This was carried out, making good use of the site of the Kerper homestead. The continuation of Lincoln Drive to Abington Avenue and the development of the properties along it have changed the area so that considerable

imagination is required to picture it in the days of Casey's ice ponds.

In 1933—34, the P.W.A. landscaped the park and confined the pond to its present limits. The open-air theatre and the guard house were built at this time. The spring that feeds the pond is now a gush of water from an iron pipe. The flow seems constant and adquate to keep the pond at the overflow level during the driest summers. Perhaps the flow is stimulated by a little help from the Philadelphia city water system? Old timers say that this was known as "Donat's Spring," but it has passed through the hands of so many owners that the choice of a suitable name is difficult. The water overflowing from the pond now disappears ignominiously into a sewer and becomes untraceable to the casual observer. The Kerper homestead, the spring house, the watered meadows, and the Casey ice ponds are history.

Note: The Kerper house that stood at the corner of Germantown Avenue and Hartwell Lane was built by Christopher Ottinger in 1743-45, for his daughter, Barbara, who married William Hicks. She died in 1818 and the property was sold to Henry Kerper. The building was occupied by the Kerper family until it was torn down in 1949. The Carr Ford Agency now occupies the site.

PATCHWORK PHILOSOPHY

I've been thinking some, Keziah,
While a-sitting at my work—
Though I ain't the sort of woman
To let thinking make me shirk—
Ez I say, I've been a-thinking
What a very curious way
Our lives is patched up together,
Cut and fit 'em as we may!

It's a square of blue or crimson,
Then a square of dark and light,
Then a half of red and yellow,
By a half of solid white;
And with all our kalkilations
Ez to how the patterns run,
We can never tell eggsackly
Until the quilt is done.

There's that bit of blue, jes yonder,
'Tis as bright as a June sky, yet
'Taint your flimsy kind of cambric
That you daren't as much as wet.
It's been five-and-twenty summers
Since that cambric gown was new,
And these withered cheeks had roses
That were best set off by blue.

Then that laylock, on the corner,
It belonged to Betsy Wade;
She was allus sort of shif'less,
Bought what was sure to fade.
But she somehow took folks' fancies;
For men ne'er are o'erwise
And the weakest sort of wimmen
Can throw sawdust in their eyes.

And that check, 'twas off a weskit
That I made for Abel Green,
We was - yes, chile - nigh to married,
When - when Betsy came between;
Wal, 'taint worth talking over,
Howsoe'er the square may fit,
Ye kin never tell, till j'ining,
Ez to how the colors hit.

For the blue will spile the purple,
And the laylock spile the gray,
And the squares ye matched so certain
Will match jes the other way.
And with all your careful patching,
You are allus sure to find
That the pattern, when it's finished,
Ain't exactly to your mind.

So, Keziah, I've been thinking,
Here a-sitting at my work—
Though I ain't the sort of woman
To let fancies make me shirk—
That our lives are like a patchwork.
With it's squares of dark and light,
And there's only One above us
Who can do the j'ining right!

Anon—From an old scrapbook—
Date not given.

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Mount Airy in Philadelphia: A Pioneering Community



By PHYLLIS KNAPP THOMAS

The following is the third portion of the series of articles entitled "Mount Airy in Philadelphia: A Pioneering Community." More will be published in up-coming issues of the "Crier." Editor

Part I. The Gingerbread Hornbook or How They Learned

Books were few, and therefore treasured. Paper was expensive and had to be used sparingly. In the early days of our nation's history, children were expected to repeat a lesson over and over until they knew it "by heart."

Often a small "hornbook" was made for the individual child by attaching to a board with a handle a sheet of paper protected by transparent cow's horn. Inscribed on a typical hornbook were the letters of the alphabet, Roman numerals, and perhaps the Lord's Prayer.

Hornbooks could be made of materials besides wood, such as cast lead, ivory, or stitched leather. At Christmastime children might even receive a hornbook made from gingerbread!

The One-Room Schoolhouse

What do Mount Airy's children know of the old-fashioned one-room schoolhouse without running water or electricity? More than their parents may think—if their class recently visited the old Concord School House at 6309 Germantown Avenue above Washington Lane. (Families and individuals may arrange for a visit by telephoning Kirk and Nice.) There the quill pens, candles, water buckets, slates, and wooden desks and benches tell a vivid story of learning in bygone times.

Two hundred years ago families in what is now Mount Airy objected to sending their children as far away as Germantown's Union School (located at what is now the southwest corner of Green Street and Schoolhouse Lane) on icy winter days. Besides, the main road later called Germantown Avenue turned into a morass of muddy wheel-ruts whenever it rained. In the spring of 1775 a group of determined neighbors met to plan for the new school building they needed. It was to be erected on a corner of the Upper Burying Ground property. Some people gave money; others promised to help with the work of construction without pay. By October the Concord School House was ready to open its doors.

The Revolutionary War soon caused the doors to close, but the school opened again in 1783 and stayed open for many years. Boys and girls of various ages paid the required fee and were taught in the same room. In 1814 the trustees' minutes reported that both black and white students were attending. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were the basic subjects, along with spelling, and possibly an occasional lesson in geography, history, or drawing.

Classroom discipline under the schoolmaster was strict. An uncooperative student could be expelled, for education was viewed as a privilege rather than as a necessity.

At first the fireplace was the only means of keeping warm, but eventually a small coal-burning stove was provided. Another change as time went on was the addition of the building's second story, used as a meeting place by various groups, including the Charter Oak Library.

Today's visitors will find exhibited in the classroom an old sled as well as samples of yesterday's toys that include blocks, jacks, dolls, and doll furniture. Also displayed are antique marbles, some of which were found by digging on the Concord School House grounds. (Those who want to learn more about toys of the past may visit the Germantown Historical Society Museum at 5214 Germantown Avenue.)

The Oldest School

Another even earlier school, said to be the oldest now in existence in the Greater Germantown area, stands below St. Michael's Lutheran Church (at the southeast corner of Germantown Avenue and Phil-Ellena Street) on a corner of the church property. This small low building—sometimes called "the Beggarstown School"—is easy to locate with its over-hanging roof and colonial two-part door. Built about 1740, it once served enough pupils to necessitate the hiring of two teachers. The famous gingerbread-maker and Baker-General for Washington's army, Christopher Ludwig, left money to aid poor schoolchildren here.

In 1817 the first Sunday school in Germantown met here as one response to neighborhood problems involving youth. Residents were concerned about fruit stolen from their orchards as well as more serious abuses of local property.

No Schooling At All

Before the battle for universal public education was

finally won, many children of Greater Germantown received no formal schooling at all. They helped their parents with the daily chores. Boys often worked for a neighboring family and learned a trade, or labored from sunrise to sundown in nearby mills. Whether women or black people should even be educated was then considered a subject for debate!

Fortunately, the early settlers had a strong sense of fair play. The first public protest against slavery in the country, signed by Quakers in Germantown as early as 1688, helped to pave the way for respect for human rights in the schools. (The table on which the protest was signed is now at Germantown's Mennonite Meeting House, on the east side of Germantown Avenue above Herman Street.)

Anthony Benezet, a Quaker who lived for several years in Germantown, pioneered in Philadelphia's education in the mid-1700's by educating black children himself. He also started a school for girls from poor families.

A Meeting At "Mount Airy"

Then as now, people had differing ideas about the education of the young. Not every experiment was successful.

The education of Pennsylvania's German children was the subject of a meeting held at William Allen's country home, "Mount Airy," in 1754. Soon afterward, six free schools were begun (none of them, however, in the Greater Germantown area). Immediately the powerful Sauer Press, aware of the political motivations that lay behind the plan, raised strong objections. The so-called "charity schools" never acquired sufficient public support and finally had to close.

All Kinds Of Schools

After the time of William Allen, a number of different educational ventures were launched at his Mount Airy country estate (where Allens Lane meets Germantown Avenue). A girls' school directed by Madame Chapron was held there for a brief time. In 1807 a seminary where French was taught was founded there by a French Roman Catholic priest, the Rev. Francis Xavier Brosius. Six years later the school came under the direction of another person of French background, Benjamin Constant, and was known as "Mount Airy College."

The story was told that one night the boys were in the midst of a lively pillow-fight when someone heard Mr. Constant coming. Instantly the boys leaped into bed and feigned slumber. Only Berrabi Sanchez from Mexico found himself unable to reach his bed in time. He stood still, then moved as though in a dream. With slow, trance-like motions he climbed back into bed. To the boys' secret delight, Mr. Constant was apparently convinced that Berrabi Sanchez was a sleep-walker.

When Colonel Augustus Roumfort became headmaster in 1826, he named the school "The American Classical and Military Lyceum." Under his leadership, students were given military training in preparation for West Point. Years later, graduates of Roumfort's school fought on both sides of the Civil War. Pierre Beauregard was a commander in the Confederate army and George Meade led the Northern troops at Gettysburg.

Another Mount Airy school of that day was James Ford's Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies, held at the former stagecoach stop called the Ship House. (James Ford and his wife had come to the United States from Scotland.) Located on the west side of Germantown Avenue below Duval Street, the old hotel building had a ship model decorating one of its gables. Many young women from well-to-do families were educated there in the 1830's.

In 1846 James Gowen, Irish-American agriculturist who helped to organize the Pennsylvania Agricultural Society, became owner of the Allen property. The "Mount Airy" mansion was torn down and Magnolia Villa was built as Gowen's new residence (today remodeled as Hagan Hall of the Lutheran Theological Seminary). The Gowen-Miller House (#7331) next door was then used by a school dedicated to the teaching of the latest farming methods. Part of each day was spent by the students in actual farm work. Called the Mount Airy Agricultural Institute, this school headed by John Wilkinson exerted its influence briefly between 1848 and 1853.

In The Midst Of Change

When the Lutheran Theological Seminary decided to move from central Philadelphia to the Allen estate in 1889, Mount Airy was still considered a peaceful suburb. Its setting of trees and fields and country air was regarded as ideal for young men concentrating solely on their studies.

The passing years brought many changes. Where an old barn had once stood, the Krauth Memorial Library building was completed in 1908. Soon afterward, oil lamps were replaced by electricity. In our time women are admitted to the student body on an equal basis with men. The seminary's wide lawns have been encircled by a diverse city neighborhood, and students are encouraged to be active in all aspects of community life.

Visitors will notice to the left of the entrance driveway a monument to Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, who came to Philadelphia in 1742 and helped to organize Lutherans in the Germantown area. Upon occasion Muhlenberg preached at Mount Airy's historic St. Michael's Lutheran Church.

Urgently Needed: Education For All!

The early schools located in churches—such as Christopher Dock's school at Germantown's old log Mennonite Meeting House, preceding the stone building of 1770—gave way to community-run schools like Concord that charged tuition. Still large numbers of children were growing up without the opportunity for an education.

William Penn had insisted from the beginning that the colonists live together in townships so that their

children could attend school. Francis Daniel Pastorius, sometimes called the "father" of early Germantown, exerted a lasting influence as a teacher and as one of the best educated men of his time. However, with so many different national and religious groups coming to live in Pennsylvania, it was years before a unified public school system became a possibility.

A conflict developed between those who supported an academic education for its own sake, such as the country gentleman William Allen, and others including Quakers who favored a more practical course leading directly to a vocation. In the years following the Revolution, the emphasis on the study of the useful predominated.

Children of low-income families of the Greater Germantown area began to receive schooling at public expense in 1818. In 1835 there was concern about the improvement of the schools and the feeling that everyone would benefit if public elementary schools served not only the poor but other groups in society as well. A number of community meetings were held. (A Mount Airy public school teacher, Joseph Bockius, headed the regional school board at that time.) The following year a state law was passed stating that children from low-income families would be segregated no longer; all children could now attend public school free of charge.

Most Germantown—Mount Airy children of the last century did not go beyond elementary school. Only the privileged few continued their education at Central High School or at Girls' High. (The Germantown High School did not open until 1915.) But as machines took the place of teen-age factory workers in the late 1800's, interest in high-school education increased. In 1901 a state law was passed requiring all young people between the ages of eight and sixteen to attend classes in the daytime. From then on, competition from public high schools forced all but the most outstanding private schools to close.

Nature study was introduced into the public schools in the latter part of the nineteenth century by Thomas Meehan, Mount Airy nurseryman, botany teacher, and for many years vice-president of Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences. Meehan is also noted for influencing the establishment of public kindergartens. Fond of children, he easily won their affection in return. Much of his attention was given to meeting the educational needs of black children in the Greater Germantown area.

(Meehan began his nursery business on Germantown Avenue near Carpenter Lane, where Meehan Avenue is now. Later he purchased farmland, including the Hortter property with its large pear trees, and moved his thriving nursery to Chew Avenue.)

Today's schoolchildren visit parks and nature centers and participate in science fairs. And the kindergarten is regarded as an essential part of the public school system.

The Quest For Quality

Now that everyone's right to an education has been firmly established, parents are demanding *quality* education. In spite of well-stocked libraries, audio-visual aids, and some innovative programs, our schools of today continue to struggle toward this elusive goal.

The day of the gingerbread hornbook is long gone. But our awesome task remains the same as always: to equip the leadership of tomorrow.



Part II. Main Street Through Mount Airy

Well-marked trail of Lenni-Lenape hunters—winding its way through laurel . . .

Long, narrow dirt track, tying farmhouse to farmhouse and neighbor to neighbor; linking weaver with dyer, shoemaker with tanner, innkeeper and shopowner, flour-miller and bread-baker . . .

For families, the way to weekly "meeting" . . .

For barefoot children on the run, the way to the schoolhouse and back again . . .

By day, busy thoroughfare for carriages, carts, stagecoaches, and endless lines of Conestoga wagons, rumbling along in swirls of dust . . . At night, deserted roadway disappearing into darkness; sounds of peepfrogs and crickets and a dog barking in the distance, with now and then the gleam from a bobbing lantern, carried by someone on foot . . .

Today's GERMANTOWN AVENUE, as alive as ever, its old-fashioned trolley tracks still in use, was once known over back fences as "the Great Road,"
or "the Germantown Road,"
or "Main Street"
—or even "the worst road in the United States!"

Something had to be done about the road. How much longer could people tolerate a central roadway that became unfit for travel either by carriage or on foot every time it rained?

Caspar Haines of Wyck* took the lead. Through his efforts the Germantown and Perkiomen Turnpike Company became incorporated in 1801. The company's first president, Benjamin Chew, Jr., and its first treasurer, John Johnson, Jr., were well-known residents of Upper Germantown, now part of Mount Airy.**

Strangely enough, not everyone favored the projected improvements. Farmers feared increased competition from the farmers of outlying districts. Shopkeepers worried about losing customers if travel into the city became too easy. Once the road was "macadamized," however, the obvious benefits for all caused opposition to cease.

Also opposed by some people at first were the sidewalks. In 1834 a law was passed requiring German-

town residents as far north as Trullinger's Lane, now Carpenter Lane, to build sidewalks of bricks or flat stones along the front of their properties. In case the landowners refused to cooperate, a Board of Sidewalk Commissioners, including Daniel Billmeyer,*** was to see that sidewalks were constructed for any negligent owners at the owner's expense. Apparently everyone shouldered the extra burden and took pride in the result. The sidewalks in the section of Mount Airy above Carpenter Lane were added in 1850.

Great numbers of toll-paying travelers used the Germantown turnpike. From the country to the north came farmers, bringing their produce for sale, and "drovers," leading their cattle, hogs, and sheep to market. Local hotel-taverns thrived. The Farmers and Drovers Hotel at the northwest corner of Main Street and Carpenter Lane was an inn of the last century that catered to farmers' needs. Another farmers' inn, the Washington Hotel at the southeast corner of Washington Lane and Main Street, regularly turned its wagon yard into a marketplace.

Conestoga wagons brought heavy loads of farm products, then returned home stocked with groceries and "dry goods" from local stores. Drawn by at least four horses and sometimes by as many as eight, these wagons were impressively large. Their blue, boat-shaped bodies were covered with a curved white cloth, stretched over hoops. The upper woodwork and also the wheels were painted red. Travelers by Conestoga wagon usually brought with them their own bedding, ready to spread on the floor of an inn's common room at night.

As early as 1763 a stagecoach had begun making a trip weekly between Philadelphia and Bethlehem via the Germantown area's main road. Better-class inns, such as the Ship House (once located on the west side of Germantown Avenue below Duval Street), became stagecoach stops. Typically, the arrival of the stagecoach at an inn was announced by galloping hoofbeats and the tooting of horns. While mail and messages were delivered to the innkeeper's care, villagers crowded around to hear the news from faraway places.

At first, "stages" had no springs and must have been very uncomfortable. Later on, the passengers jounced over the bumps on spring seats. By 1830 the stagecoach could travel about ten miles an hour if the horses were changed after every strenuous twelve-mile stretch.

Even after Main Street was paved, its upkeep continued to be a problem. Road conditions gradually worsened until public concern reached a peak in the 1870's. Loose stones, it was claimed, covered the entire roadbed, and water tended to collect at street crossings until it was several inches deep. Finally in 1877 the city took over from the turnpike company the street's management and began the task of paving it with blocks of stone known as "Belgian blocks." Years later, in the 1920's, Germantown Avenue was improved again for the use of the automobile.

The inadequacies of Main Street—as well as a universal desire for progress—spurred public interest in the railroad. On November 13, 1830, a meeting was held in Mount Airy at the "Sign of the Swan" tavern with Reuben Haines of Wyck acting as chairman and Benjamin Chew, Jr., of Cliveden as secretary. Leading Mount Airy citizens went on record in support of a railroad line to connect Philadelphia with Germantown. A year and a half later, in June of 1832, horse-drawn cars were in operation on the newly built track between Lower Germantown and the city. Each car, pulled by a single horse, was shaped something like a stagecoach, had seats on top as well as inside, and could accommodate as many as twenty passengers.

Only a few months later, crowds of curious spectators gathered in Germantown to watch the nation's first steam-engine at work. "Old Ironsides," as it was called, could pull four cars attached together for a distance of six miles in twenty-eight minutes. From that time on, steam was the railroads' chief source of power until electricity took its place in 1933.

The railroad formerly known as the Chestnut Hill Branch of the Reading Railroad was constructed east of Germantown Avenue in 1854, and the Pennsylvania Railroad's Chestnut Hill line opened on the west side in 1884. Today many Mount Airy residents—commuters who work in central Philadelphia and shoppers bound for city department stores—depend on one or the other train line daily.

The street car has been a familiar part of Mount Airy life for well over a hundred years. The first car, decorated with flowers and flags and pulled by four horses, arrived here from Philadelphia on October 1, 1859. From then on, street cars provided slow but regular service as far as the terminal, on Germantown Avenue opposite Westview Street. Horses were used until almost the end of the century, when small trolleys with four wheels were introduced. Soon white trolleys delivered mail, black trolleys were employed for funerals, and special trolleys were reserved for groups of picnickers on a day's outing.

Did you know that in 1968 Germantown Avenue was declared a national historic landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior—all the way from Germantown's Loudoun mansion to Mount Airy's old Beggarstown School (from Apsley Street to Phil-Ellena Street)?

*The old Wyck house, 6026 Germantown Avenue, is south of Mount Airy at Walnut Lane.

**The Johnson House is #6306 and the Chew mansion, Cliveden, 6401 Germantown Avenue.

***The Daniel Billmeyer House is 6504 Germantown Avenue.





"The Signers' Walk"



A Recently Created Historic Landmark in Germantown

By GEORGE E. NITZSCHE

The following article is reprinted from the December, 1951 issue of the "Crier." Many of our readers know that Mrs. Charles F. Jenkins passed away recently—also that the property is now owned by the Fairmount Park Commission. Editor

THIS BEING the One Hundred and Seventy-fifth Anniversary Year of the birth of the United States, it would seem eminently fitting to publish some information about "The Signers' Walk" on the Germantown estate of the late Charles F. Jenkins, one of the founders of the Germantown Historical Society and one of its past Presidents.

For many years I had taken groups of students from the University of Pennsylvania, as well as visiting distinguished guests, to "Far Country" by which name the attractive home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles F. Jenkins on Kitchen Lane at Scotforth Road, west of Wissahickon Avenue, is known. Such visitors were always welcomed by the genial Mr. Jenkins, whose gracious cordiality made them feel at home immediately. They were soon absorbed in their host's varied collections of rare books, autographs, his world famous Hemlock Arboretum, his historic stepping stone walks, and his many unusual trees, shrubs and plants. Most of these groups, however, seemed especially interested in, and thrilled with, his "Signers' Walk", which he had completed within the last fifteen years. For the purposes of this article, therefore, we shall confine ourselves to this interesting historic project.

Mr. Jenkins usually assembled these visiting groups at the head of his "Signers' Walk" where he had placed, most appropriately, a Pennsylvania Marble slab from Independence Hall. Here, after a few preliminary remarks, he would, occasionally, with a twinkle in his eyes, take delight in asking which of his guests knew how many signatures there had been to the Declaration of Independence. It always surprised me that so few people could answer correctly. Then, sometimes, he would follow with easier questions, such as who drafted the Declaration, how many were on the Drafting Committee, when was the Declaration signed. After such pleasantries he would take his guests leisurely over the walk, pausing at each of the stepping stones, and in his inimitable manner, give a brief account of the signer, the place from which the stone came and how it had been associated with the signer.

As stated before, the beginning of this historic stepping-stone walk is the slab of Pennsylvania Marble which had been the door sill of the south portal of Independence Hall. This old sill had become worn so thin by the millions of visitors to the ancient shrine, that eventually it had to be replaced by a new one. That was in the early 1930s. One day Mr. Jenkins, when walking from his Washington Square office through Independence Square, noticed that the discarded sill, along with other débris, had been dumped against the side wall of Independence Hall. He paused, what was to become of that discarded marble stone? Realizing its importance, and fearing that through carelessness or indifference, the stone might be lost to posterity, he took steps to prevent it. As one of the leading historians in Philadelphia he had no difficulty in procuring it for his Germantown estate, which already had historic significance.

Mr. Jenkins had been collecting autographs of the signers of the Declaration of Independence for many years; and he finally succeeded in completing the collection by acquiring a signature of Button Gwinnett, the signer from St. Catherine's Island, Georgia, which I have been told, was the rarest autograph of the signers. Mr. Jenkins, having achieved his goal, seemed to feel that he had too much capital tied up in this collection of autographs of all fifty-six signers, so he sold the collection in New York. With part of the proceeds he purchased four antique candlesticks that had been the property of the Earl of Clare and presented them to Mrs. Jenkins as an anniversary gift. Just about this time the old marble door sill from Independence Hall arrived at "Far Country," and Mr. Jenkins conceived the idea of creating a garden stepping-stone walk, each stone of which would in some way commemorate one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. This project also afforded him a most appropriate opportunity to devote the remaining proceeds from the sale of the signers' autographs, to acquiring the necessary stones. Such a substantial and permanent collection of memorial stones, he felt, might be enjoyed by a greater number of persons, and probably be just as impressive, if not more so, as was his autograph collection. This view-

point already has been shared by the thousands of guests and visitors who have trodden over those historic stepping stones.

After years of collecting, Mr. Jenkins succeeded in getting a stone for every one of the fifty-six signers. Each stepping stone in the "Signers' Walk" was at one time associated with the life of a signer, coming from his home, his birth place, his estate, or his burial place.

To accumulate these historic relics, Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins made many trips throughout the eastern part of the United States, and their quest aroused the interest and generous co-operation of the donors to the enterprise. Some of the stones were contributed by Chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution; some by custodians of historic shrines; others by public officials; a number were secured from descendants of the signers who co-operated by supplying the relics in which they had a particular personal interest; and then, many were purchased outright. Thus, finally, stones closely associated with each of the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence were given a permanent setting in the now famous historic "Signers' Walk." They form a path in the Jenkins gardens from the terrace of the house to the path which leads to his Hemlock Arboretum. At the twelfth stepping stone of the "Signers' Walk" a branch path goes off to the right and forms a walk which ends at the road leading to the dwelling. The two paths, and a short curved one of the last six stones, also partly encircle a gorgeous specimen of a Tree Wistaria.

Fortunate, indeed, are those who have had the experience of going over this unique walk with its creator, Mr. Jenkins, to have been carried away by his enthusiasm, and to have been spellbound by his art of the raconteur, as he told the stories connected with the finding, securing, transporting, and placing each of these historic relics. Some of these historic stones were shipped to "Far Country" by their donors, others came by rail or truck, but most of them were brought back by Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins in their own car after their various trips. Indeed, Mr. Jenkins had a little story or anecdote connected with the finding, securing, transporting, and finally the placing of each of the stones, but I fear that many of these have not been preserved, and even if they were available at this writing they would make this article unnecessarily long.

While the stones are not numbered, they are placed in the following order in the "Signers' Walk". The old Pennsylvania marble sill from Independence Hall, at the terrace of the Jenkins home, marks the starting point. Then follows the stone associated with Thomas Jefferson, who played such an important part in drafting the Declaration of Independence; Mr. Jenkins secured this stone from the graveyard enclosure at Monticello, near Charlottesville, Virginia. The next stone is from the home of John Adams at Quincy, Massachusetts; then one from Stratford, Virginia, the birthplace of Francis Lightfoot Lee; then a stone from "Chantilly", the ruined residence of Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia; then comes a stone associated with Benjamin Franklin, who was also one of the committee of five on the drafting of the Declaration of Independence. The other members of the committee were Jefferson, John Adams, Livingston and Sherman. At the Franklin stone, whenever I had a university student group with me, I would remind them that Franklin was also the founder of the University of Pennsylvania, and that there were at least nine of the signers closely associated with the University; and that it was John Nixon, of the University, who, on July 8, 1776, read and proclaimed publicly for the first time, before a great gathering of people in Independence Square, the Declaration of Independence.* The next stone in the walk is from the birthplace of William Whipple, Kittery, Maine, signer from New Hampshire. The next is a stone from the home of Josiah Bartlett at Kingston, New Hampshire; the next one is a stone from the home of Matthew Thornton at Londenderry, New Hampshire; the next two stones are associated with George Ross and John Morton, both signers from Pennsylvania. The next stone is from the birthplace of Benjamin Rush, at Byberry, Philadelphia, another Pennsylvania signer. Robert Morris, of Pennsylvania, is represented by a stone from "The Hills," his country estate. James Smith, another Pennsylvania signer, is represented by a stone from the old Cocorus Furnance in York County which he owned. The next four stones represent signers from the state of South Carolina, viz: Edward Rutledge, of Charleston; Thomas Lynch, Jr., whose marker consists of two tiles set in cement, from the interior of his home, "Peachtree"; then a stone commemorating Arthur Middleton; then a piece of wall, bricks and "tabby mortar" from "White Hall", the home of Thomas Hayward, Jr. The next stones represent three signers from Delaware, viz: one from the birthplace of Thomas McKean, New London, Chester County, Pennsylvania; one from the birthplace of Ceasar Rodney, near Dover, Delaware; and the third associated with George Read. The next three represent signers from North Carolina. viz: John Penn; Joseph Hewes, whose memorial stone came from his birthplace in Kingston. New Jersey; and William Hooper, whose marker came from his burial place at Guilford Court House, North Carolina. The next stone is a doorstep from the home of William Ellery, Newport, Rhode Island. Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, Maryland, who was the last survivor of the Signers, is represented by a stone from his home, "Dougheregan Manor". George Clymer is represented by a stone from the foundation of his home at Morrisville, Pennsylvania; and George Taylor, another Pennsylvania signer, by a stone from Durham Cave, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, once owned (in part) by him. The next stone is a memorial to William Floyd, Long Island, New York. Then come the memorial stones to four signers from Virginia, George Wythe, Thomas Nelson, Jr. Carter Braxton, and Benjamin Harrison; the Wythe stone came from his garden at Williamsburg, Virginia. The next four stones memorialize signers from New Jersey, viz: Abraham Clark, Richard Stockton, whose

marker came from the Stony Brook Graveyard near Princeton, New Jersey, his burial place; a stone from Princeton University is a memorial to Dr. John Witherspoon, its President, and Francis Hopkinson, from Bordentown, New Jersey. The next four represent signers from Massachusetts, viz: Robert Treat Paine, Taunton, Massachusetts; John Hancock, the President; Samuel Adams; and Eldridge Gerry, Cambridge, Massachusetts. The next four represent four signers from Connecticut, viz: William Williams, Samuel Huntington, of Norwich; Oliver Wolcott, Litchfield; and Roger Sherman. The next three are stones representing signers from Maryland, viz: Samuel Chase, from his home in Annapolis; Thomas Stone, from Port Tobacco; and William Paca. Then Philip Livingston, New York; then three from Georgia, viz: George Walton, Augusta; Dr. Lyman Hall, Midway; and Button Gwinnett, of St. Catherine's Island. The fifty-third stone is that of Stephen Hopkins, Rhode Island, followed by those of Lewis Morris, New York; Francis Lewis, New York; James Wilson, Pennsylvania; and the last stone in the walk, the fifty-seventh, is from the home of John Hart, of New Jersey.

Through the years, as an ever-increasing number of pilgrims step their way back into the past over these stepping stones in the "Signers' Walk", their hearts will throb with a rekindled patriotism echoed by the memory of the courage, the determination, and the singleness of purpose of those early patriots when they attached their signatures to that greatest of all American documents of freedom, the Declaration of Independence.

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*Note. The Declaration of Independence was drafted largely by Thomas Jefferson in a house which stood at the southwest corner of Seventh and Market Streets. All of the first drafts, the revisions, and the final copies were in Jefferson's neat and fine handwriting. The most perfect of the original final drafts reposes in the vault of the American Philosophical Society. The Jefferson draft, with but few alterations, was unanimously adopted on July 4, 1776. It was not until July 19, 1776, that Congress ordered it to be engrossed and then signed by every member of Congress. The Declaration was then engrossed by Timothy Matlack, of Philadelphia, so that many of the signers did not attach their signatures to the engrossed document until August, 1776.

Watches of Other Days

INVENTION AND HISTORY. In the early days of watchmaking, from their comparatively high price, watches were great rarities, and were found only in the hands of the very wealthy, but it soon became the rage among those who could indulge in such a luxury to make collections of them, and among others Charles V, who, it is said, after retiring from his throne to a monastery, spent much time in trying to make a lot of watches all keep time alike, which he could not do, from which he sagely drew the conclusion that he must have been a great fool to spend so much blood and treasure as he had done to make men all think the same way, when he could not even make a few watches agree. The story further states that one of the monks entering the king's cell accidentally upset the table on which the watches were placed, upon which the king remarked that the monk had easily accomplished what he himself had vainly tried to do—to make the watches all go together.

Mary, Queen of Scots, is said to have had several, and she gave one to Mary Letoun in 1587, which is still in existence. It was made by Moyse, of Blois, France, and has been thus described: The watch has a silver casing in the form of a skull, which separated at the jaws so as to expose the dial, which is also of silver, occupying about the position of the palate, and is fixed in a golden circle with the hours in Roman letters. The movement appropriately occupies the place of the brains, but is enclosed in a bell, filling the hollow of the skull, which bell is struck by the hammer to sound the hours. The case is highly ornamented with fine engravings, showing on the front of the skull Death standing between a cottage and a palace; in the rear is Time devouring all things; on one side of the upper part of the skull are Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden with the serpent tempting Eve; on the opposite side is the Crucifixion. Inside on the plate or lid is the Holy Family in the stable, with the infant Jesus in the manger and angels ministering to him. In the distance are the shepherds with their flocks, etc. The works are said to be in good order and to perform astonishingly well.

Many of the watches of this period, besides being made of peculiar shapes, were set in crystal cases, so that their works might be seen in motion; others were set in perfume and snuff boxes, saddle pommels, canes, and at a later period, in finger rings, shirt studs, bracelets, and other articles of personal wear; and it is said that a striking watch, small enough to be mounted in a ring, was made by an Italian goldsmith as long ago as 1542.

Queen Elizabeth had a large number of watches, many of which were presented to her by her favorites, or those who wished to become so. There is a list extant of over a score of these articles which she owned. Many of these are mentioned as "clocks," but it is evident from the context that most of them were watches.

An English lady, who has several remarkable watches of different periods, has one of Elizabeth's time which is in the form of a silver duck. The lower part opens to expose the dial-plate, which is of silver encircled with a gilt design of floriated scrolls and angels' heads. At the back of the neck is a ring to which a chain is attached. The same lady has one representing Jupiter and Ganymede, with the movement contained in the body of the bird. It is so made that, when not suspended

to the girdle by a ring in the bird's beak, it will stand on its claws. She has also a cruciform watch of about 1700, covered with elaborate engravings of a delicate character. The centre of the dial-plate has a representation of Christ's agony in the garden, the outer compartments being occupied by the emblems of the passion and the lowermost by a figure of Faith.

A watch said to have been made by Hans John, of Konigsburg, about the seventeenth century, is stated to have the earliest known instance of a chain on the fusee, and it is peculiar in other respects, as it has a small wheel-lock pistol to serve as an alarm.

Watches were such rarity in 1630 that it is said that a Dr. Allan, who had the reputation of being a wizard, happening to leave his watch in a bedroom in a house where he was visiting in the country, came near losing it because the chambermaid who found it thought it was the Doctor's "familiar spirit." She therefore took it up with a pair of tongs and threw it out of the window into the moat "to drown the devil"; but as "one who is born to be hanged cannot be drowned," the watch, when search was made for it, was found hanging on a bush growing on the bank of the moat, on which it had accidentally caught in its flight through the air. This failure in her attempt only the more confirmed the girl in her idea, and she could not be prevailed upon to touch the watch. Thirty-five years after this, Pepys, in his diary (December 22, 1665), made the following entry, which shows that even then the sight of the internal mechanism of a watch was so much of a curiosity that he was "mightily pleased and satisfied with it."

Watches after this period and during the eighteenth century came gradually into use among the wealthier people, but they were still of great cost, which was further increased by excessive ornamentation and by many of them being made as repeaters, which were then the fashionable watches. Another style of watch was also then in vogue, called "touch watches," with which the time could be felt in the dark. These watches were made of different styles, one of the best of which had projections on the back corresponding to the different hours on the face, and a movable or independent hand which could be turned round with the finger until it was opposite the hour hand, when it could be moved no further.

In 1769 George II had a watch presented to him, of which one hand took a year to make a revolution, and was used to point out the month and day of the month. It also had a brilliant to represent the sun, set on a plate which regularly revolved to perform its apparent diurnal revolution. On the plate was a movable horizon to show the variation of the days according to the season of the year.

In the same year Ranzonet, a Lorraine watchmaker, made a watch of the common size, containing a musical instrument that played on air *en duo*, and none of the parts of the musical mechanism interfered with the time works.

In the Musuem of Dover, England, is a watch of about the same date as above, of an oval shape, like the Nuremberg eggs, having two movable dials, one having the numerals of the month, etc., and near the centre are the signs of the zodiac; the fixed part around which it revolves has the abbreviated names of the months. The outer dial has merely the hours upon it. There is also a revolving plate below the surface bearing upon it the days of the week. Other apertures show the month and the day of the month, and another the moon's position. The hands move in the opposite direction to those of the watches of the present day.

During the reign of Catharine II of Russia, Kalutin, a peasant, made a musical repeating watch about the size of an egg, which had within it a representation of Christ's tomb with sentinels on watch. On pressing a spring the stone would be rolled from the tomb, the sentinels fall down, the angels appear, the holy women enter the sepulchre, and the same chant which is sung in the Greek Church on Easter eve accurately performed.

About 1770 it became the fashion to wear two watches. In a rhyming receipt of this date, "To Make a Modern Fop," appear the lines:

"A lofty cane, a sword with silver hilt,
A ring, *two watches* and a snuff-box gilt."

The ladies soon adopted this fashion, but as watches were still very expensive, mock watches were often substituted, some being of costly materials, while others were cheap imitations. The Chinese of many years ago wore two watches for the reason "suppose one get sick and die" the other one "still lives." Chinese timekeepers have twenty-four hours shown on the dial.

Keyless watches have long been known, but have not been used much until of late years. Napoleon I possessed one that at every step he took caused a weight to act on the end of a lever having a weak spring under it, which was attached to a click working into a ratchet wheel on the barrel arbor and so wound up the main spring. In the Kensington Museum in London there is a pedometer operated in a similar way, combined with a watch, so that the same instrument tells the time and also the distance walked by the wearer during the day. A watch in the United States Patent Office is wound up by closing the case after looking at the face to see the time. It has an attachment to throw the winding device out of gear when the spring is wound up.

When speaking of curious watches we should not forget that the commonest watch made would, if it were the only one in existence, be considered a marvellous piece of workmanship, hardly second to any of man's creation, but as every one now carries a watch it barely excites more curiosity than a pocket-knife. Independent of the completed watch as an automatic machine, let us consider some of the curiosities of its manufacture. Take, for instance, the small screws, some of which are so small that they look like grains of fine sand, and will require 150,000 to weigh a pound, yet all of these when examined under a microscope look like finely finished little bolts, each having a perfect thread, although so fine as to take 250 turns to measure one inch. These screws are now made by the American

Watch Company by an automatic machine, which only requires to be supplied with the necessary quantity of wire and power to keep it in motion, to turn out these infinitesimal screws all complete, except tempering. If we examine the chain used in most English watches we find it to be only about six inches long, and yet it has 630 pieces in it.

The hair-spring may also be considered as one of its curiosities. To the naked eye it looks like a hair, but under a glass it is shown to be a flat steel ribbon, which a suitable gage will show to be only two-twenty-five-hundredths of an inch thick, or about one-half the thickness of a hair; and although from six to eight inches long, yet it is said that it takes about 25,000 to weigh a pound. It has been frequently cited as an instance of the value given to raw materials by manufacturing into finished articles, as a pound of finest hair-springs, selling for thousands of dollars, may be made from metal which in its crudest state costs only a few cents.

Leaving the component parts of the watch and considering the number of ticks the completed article will make, we arrive at some extraordinary figures. Many watches make five ticks per second, 300 each minute, 18,000 in every hour, and 432,000 per day. Thus we see that by a half dozen turns of the key once a day, occupying a few seconds, we store up a modicum of power in the spring that is cut up into nearly a half million of beats, which are spread over the whole day, any successive two of which are precisely the same distance of time apart as any other succeeding two at any time of the day or night. If, now, we multiply the daily beats by 365½ we shall obtain the number of beats in a year, which are 157,788,000—a number of which we can have but a slight conception, except from some calculation of this kind, although it may help to give us some idea of our national debt. If our worthy Secretary of the Treasury should engage to pay off this debt and should detail a sufficient number of clerks to put down a dollar for every tick of a watch, night and day, it would be over thirteen years before they would get through with their job of paying off the principal—to say nothing of the interest. This, however, is a digression, and we had better return, as the French say, "to our *moutons*"—or rather, to our *montres*.

Many of our elderly readers no doubt remember the printed "watch papers" that used to be put by the watchmakers, as business cards, into the bulky watches used by our grandfathers. These were sometimes enlivened with a couplet or verse, some of which seem worth preserving, for instance, this one, which hath a flavor of worldly wisdom:

"He that wears a watch, two things must do:
Pocket his *watch* and *watch* his *pocket* too!"

Or this one, which savors more of heavenly things:

"I labor here with all my might
To tell the hours of day and night;
Therefore example take by me
And serve the Lord as I serve thee."

From an old scrapbook of newspaper clippings—no date

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The Germantown Historical Society

Privileges of membership include attendance at all lectures, tours, and other functions sponsored by the Society.

It is the Society's aim, in conjunction with other civic groups, to preserve and protect the existing evidence of Germantown's great past. Interested persons may obtain further information by writing to the Chairman of the Membership Committee.

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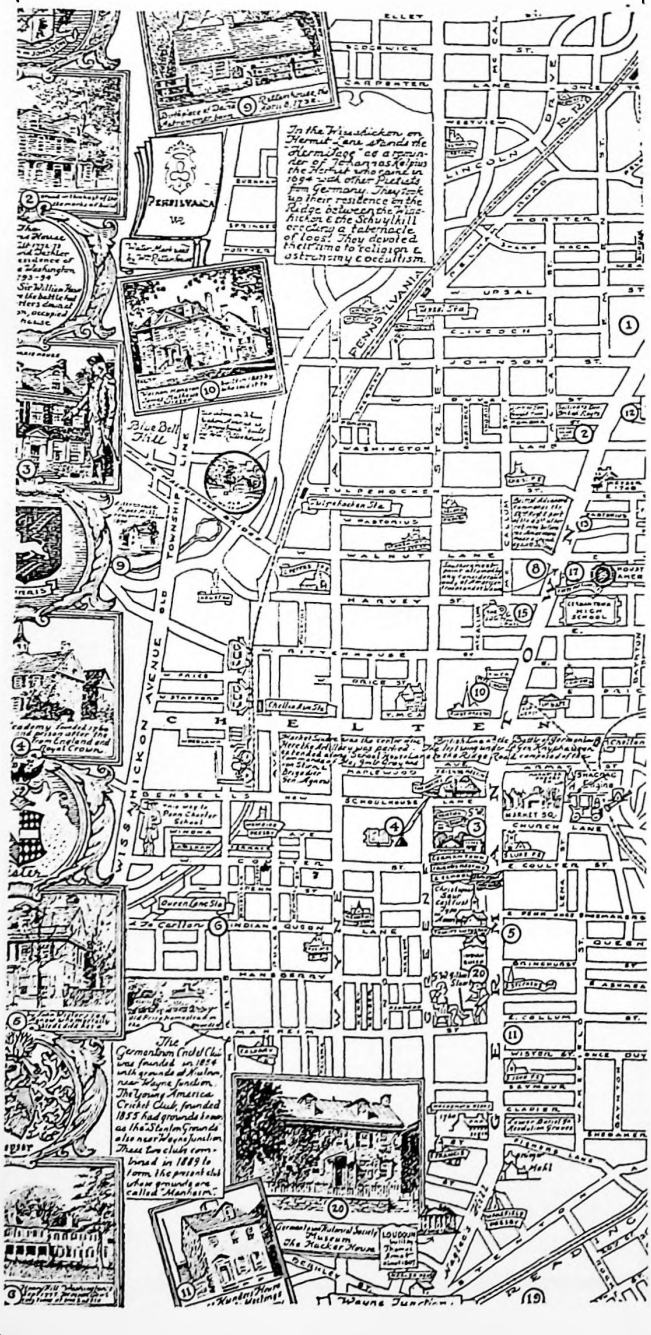
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