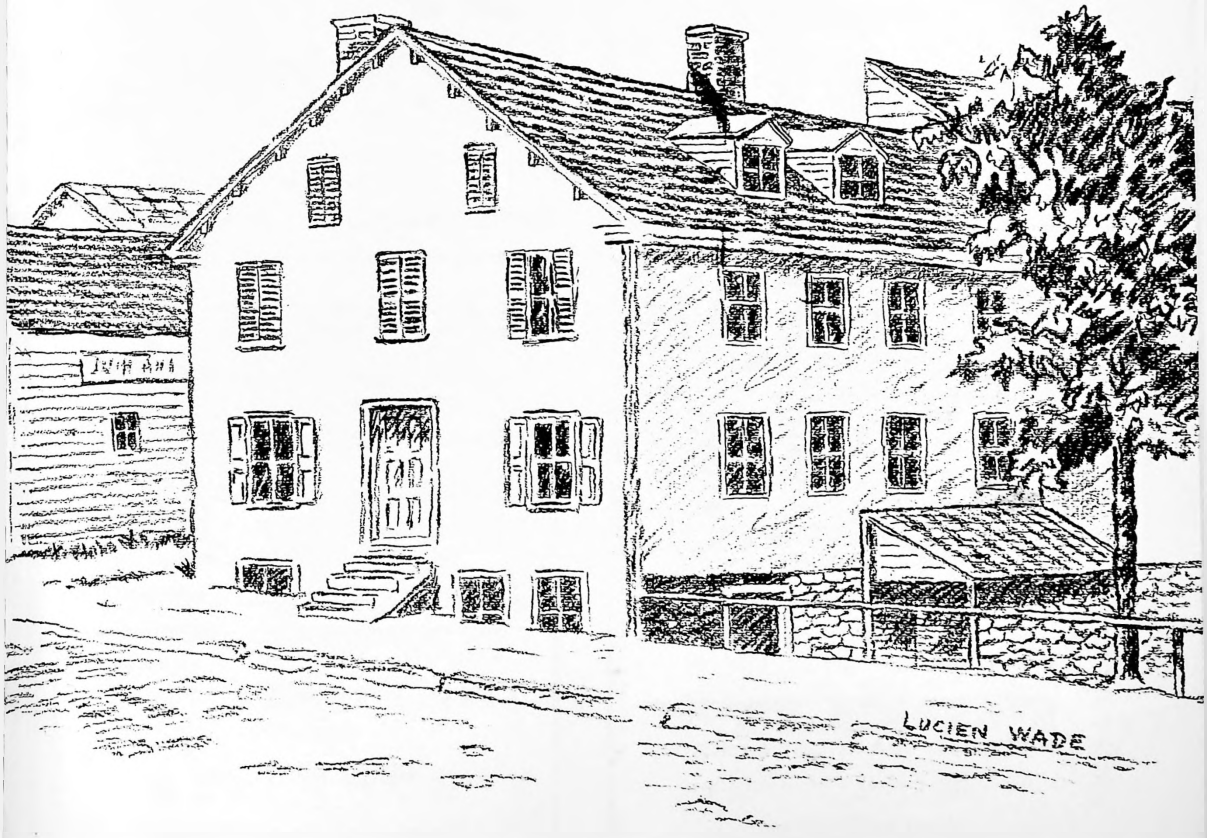
GERMANTOWNE CRIER



Germantown Poor House

(Story on Page 15)

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 1

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The Germantown Historical Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to sustaining and promoting the cultural traditions of Germantown—through the preservation of historic landmarks; the maintenance of a museum of relics, a costume museum, and a library; the sponsorship of lectures and tours; and the publication of articles relating to local history.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

April 21, 1966—Visit to a Museum—Buten Museum of Wedgewood, Merion, Pa. Mr. Harry Buten, patron, will speak on the history and evolution of Wedgewood and later, visitors may see the 7,500 pieces of rare Wedgewood displayed in the Museum.

June 2, 1966—Garden Party: 7.30

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GERMANTOWNE CRIER



Volume 18 | MARCH, 1966 | Number 1

CONTENTS

	Page
Report of the Library Committee	8
Anselm Hall *by Brother Robert G. Steck, F.S.C.*	9
Baptist Children's House Revisited	13
Anti-Poverty in Early Germantown *by Richard S. Fuller*	15
Don't Tuck Your Tucker Away! *by Jane Carl*	17
Do You Remember?	20
The Almost Lost Art of Spinning *by Marguerita Phillips*	21
A Lady's Adieu to Her Tea Table	22
An Unusual Decision *by Elizabeth Reeves Humphreys*	23
A Famous Family Fight About Real Estate *by J. Solis-Cohen, Jr.*	26
Historic Tour	28
Report of the Relics Committee *by John Welthall*	28

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Published March, May, September, December—Germantown Historical Society

5214 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia, Pa. 19144
VI 4-0514

Report of the Library Committee

By Francis Shunk Brown III

It is with much regret that the Committee reports the death of our Librarian, Mrs. Florence Nason. Because of failing health she found it necessary to resign effective April 15, 1965. Mrs. Nason's many years of teaching experience, her keen interest in old records and documents, and her knowledge of Germantown and its history, eminently qualified her for the position which she held since the resignation of the late Edward W. Hocker in December of 1960. For some time prior thereto, she assisted Mr. Hocker in serving those who came to the Library for serious study and research. The Committee is grateful for the excellent service she rendered over the past six years.

As of the writing of this report, the Society is without the services of a librarian, and your Committee would welcome inquiry from those interested, not only in serving as librarian, but as an assistant, on a full or part-time basis. It has been suggested that the library be open at times other than Tuesday afternoons, from 1 to 5, but this has not been feasible or appeared to be necessary. The Committee has always attempted to accommodate persons who cannot attend the library on Tuesday afternoon by arranging another convenient time. Comments that will further the library's usefulness are always welcome.

Most of the people who come to the library are seeking historical information about Germantown and environs or genealogical information about former residents of the area. In addition the mail brings requests for information on varied topics, but mostly seeking genealogical information which we are unable to answer. Any qualified member who would like to do genealogical research should communicate with the Library Chairman, since such inquiries, because of lack of trained personnel, are referred to the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania.

Members and residents of the area continue to remember the library and to contribute to its collection. Particularly valuable material has been uncovered in the settlement of estates; seemingly worthless clippings, scrapbooks, postal cards, and pictures of this area may be of much value to the library. The committee would be glad to pick up any such material or it can be left at the Library on Tuesday afternoons.

Of many recent accessions, the following are of particular value to the Society's library:

Deed from Jacob Stremback, Sheriff, to Jacob Emhardt, dated Dec. 28, 1828, for property on the north side of School Lane, adjoining lots 4 and 6—Gift of **Mr. Frank Deacon.**

German calendars and almanacs for the years 1851 and 1852—Gift of Mr. A. D. Sipp, Massillon, Ohio, courtesy of **Capt. Crenshaw.**

Administration bond of Dewald Ent, Christopher Sower and Caspar Wistar to Peter Evans, Register of Wills, in the estate of Andreas Gesel, dated October 14, 1732—Gift of **Mrs. Lawrence M. C. Smith.**

Notice of sale of the Buttonwood Hotel, held November 14, 1854, and also a newspaper article of November 19, 1916, referring to the sale of the same property.—Gift of **Samuel Lander, Esq.**

(*Continued on page 29*)

Publications of the Germantown Historical Society

Magazine

The GERMANTOWNE CRIER, published in March, May, September, and December, is available at the subscription rate of $1.00 annually.

Nearly all of the sixty-sevenpast numbers of the CRIER are currently available. A complete assortment of available back issues may be had for $6.00, plus a mailing charge of 75¢.

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ANSELM HALL

Brother Robert G. Steck, F.S.C.

DRIVING from Philadelphia to Elkins Park, one is amazed to see the sudden change from a city atmosphere to a country one. The small close town houses give way to large, spacious, highly individual estates. Anselm Hall is one of these landmarks in the rolling green hills of Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County. The house rests on what now comprises fifty-two acres of land bounded by Spring Avenue, Washington Lane, Rock Lane, and Ashbourne Road. The original property extended from the extremities of Washington Lane, Ashbourne Road, and Church Road over an area of a hundred and fifty acres.

Before the Brothers of the Christian Schools purchased the estate in 1950 as a house for student Brothers of the Baltimore Province, the property belonged to Mrs. Eleanor Widener Dixon. The name Ronaele Manor, as it was then called, is derived from spelling Eleanor backwards. Across the street is Lynewood Hall, the ancestral home of Mrs. Dixon's family. She grew up there with her parents Eleanor Elkins Widener and George Dutton Widener. Her father and brother were drowned on the *Titanic* in 1912 on their way back from Europe with her wedding trousseau. Her mother survived the shipwreck. Eleanor was not aboard. In keeping with a family tradition not to let calamities alter major plans of the family, she was married to Fitz Eugene Dixon shortly after the tragedy. Mr. Dixon was a prominent man of the area and a noted tennis player who once competed in the Olympics.

The ground for the house was a wedding gift, and in 1923 the house was completed by the architect Horace Trumbauer, the designer of Logan Library and Lynnewood Hall. Eventually the Dixons were divorced and Mrs. Dixon lived at Ronaele Manor with her two children. She continued to reside there until the Brothers' occupancy.

Expansive sloping lawns border the driveway on the way to the manor house as one passes through a small forest and over a picturesque granite bridge. In the springtime huge clusters of multicolored azaleas and rhododendrons line this main route as well as many other areas on the property. The lawns banking the front of the house are characteristic of the informality of English gardens with shrubs and trees placed at random. However, formal gardens expand in the rear of the house. Tall black iron gates allow access through half-walls of brick surrounding the garden. Here bloom boxwoods, irises, periwinkles, peonies, sages, snowballs, ferns, and many other flowers. A flagstone walk encircles and connects these gardens. Directly behind this garden and separated by a concrete balustrade that encloses its perimeter is the rose garden. Beyond the rose garden is another rectangular garden of peonies surrounded by a hedge. A small reflecting pond of tile is situated in the center of the rose garden and a larger pond in a natural setting at the end of the peony garden.

Behind the larger pond is the ruins. This is a structure of sharp edged stone, covered with wisteria. Tradition has it that Abraham Lincoln met here with

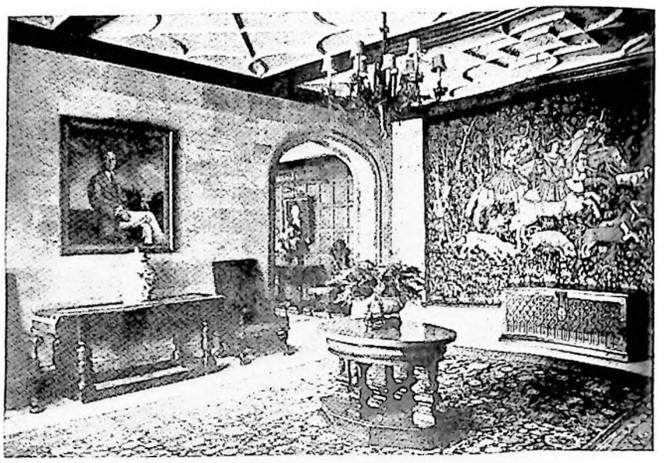
two prominent financiers of the Civil War. The Ogontz School for Girls, attended by Amelia Earhart, was once situated near this building.

Beyond the ruins is the back of the house of Mrs. Dixon's social secretary. When the Steele family owned it before them, it was known as "Ballenreas." This house, now a dormitory, has a neighbor, a contemporary one story building, St. Joseph's Hall, recently built to house the junior and senior Brothers. In back of the secretary's house is a small stone two-car garage and a tennis court surrounded by a fence covered with forsythias in the spring. The courts were constructed by Mr. Dixon as a practice spot for entrees in the Davis Cup tournament. Opposite the tennis courts is the bath house of the same design as the manor house. It houses a recreation room, kitchen, indoor basketball court, and dressing rooms. Outside is a volleyball court. On the way from the bath house to the manor house can be seen a six-room chalet-type house nestled among the tall trees. Formerly this was the butler's house. A small tea house sits in the woods near another pond and connected with the main building by a flagstone path. The twelve-car garage and six guest cottages overlook it from a hill. Both these buildings carry out the Tudor theme. A green house once stood near the garage to shelter Mrs. Dixon's rare tropical plants. Another green house stood in the orchard near Washington Lane.

Anselm Hall is an excellent reproduction of the famous "Compton Wynyates" in Warwickshire county, England, a few miles north of Stratford-on-Avon. Dating from before 1520, Compton Wynyates is often presented in books as the typical model of Tudor Architecture. It still stands in the best of upkeep and is a most attractive tourist stop. The house was the one-time host to such dignitaries as Henry VIII and James I.

The entry doors—four inches thick—are believed to be cheek-pieces of choirstalls from an unidentified European monastery.





The stone entry hall with colorful antique tapestry and wrought-iron chandelier from a 16th century convent.

To reach Anselm Hall, one must approach it by riding on the curving driveway that leads to the front doors. The ivy-clad house cannot be seen directly from the entry gate or any other position along the driveway. It looms into full view all at once after the last turn of the road. In it can be found all major features of English Tudor architecture; the house is acclaimed as one of the best examples of this style here in America.

The forty-five room house is typically Tudor. Characteristic of English architecture are the low, rambling, ground-hugging, informally balanced exteriors. These features are readily captured in Anselm Hall. Besides these, however, can be found those belonging to Tudor architecture in transition from Medieval to Renaissance forms. The warm brick work is carried out in a delicate diamond-pattern design. To achieve this effect, two colors of brick are used. An abundance of nails project as supports for climbing ivy and roses. The windows, doorways, and cappings are of sandstone to provide accent and relief. Varicolored slate of blues and grays crown the massive roofs while rich dark half timbering accents the gables and their hand-carved bargeboards throughout the third floor. In many areas, embattlements border the second floor as well as the gables of the third floor. Probably what is most striking about the exterior of the house are the many tall chimneys. These as well as the battlements and brickwork are characteristic of Tudor architecture. There are twenty-eight in all, arranged in pairs, no two of which are alike. Many are worked out in a fine twisted pattern. Only a few are dummies. The chimneys

are exact reproductions of the originals. They were made in England and imported at a cost of several thousands of dollars apiece. Mullioned casement windows are distributed about the walls. Although most are rectangular in shape, some cusped ones may be found immediately above either the front porch or the west wall of the servants' porch. Very identifiable of this period are the bay windows and oriel windows showing the growing emphasis on light for the interior. Large bay windows accentuate the front of the house in addition to the sides and back. Extending from the second to the third floor are a number of oriel windows to provide ample light. The corbeling of the one in the master bedroom is worthy of special note. Coats of arms in stained glass, also imported from England, once were distributed among the windows but since removed by the original owners. They now are kept at the Philadelphia Art Museum. The final outcome of all these components is a beautiful, accurate Tudor mansion of restrained wealth.

Surrounding the entry porch are sculpted a number of animals and various devices believed to be indicative of a country house, e.g., sporting equipment and animals. The Tudor rose also is inlaid in the brickwork. Above the door is the motto of the house: "Fortas Fortuna Juva" (Fortune favors the strong). Crowning the entry is the coat of arms and seal of La Salle College showing Anselm Hall's relation to it as an extension.

The foyer is reached through two huge four inch thick entry doors supported by special hinges. The panels on them are believed to be the cheek-pieces of choirstalls from some European monastery or church. Plain stone walls, polished stone floors, and white ornamental plaster ceiling with wood trim characterize the foyer as one of Gothic influence. A wrought iron chandelier from a 16th century convent, bearing a statue of Our Lady in its shaft, hangs in the room. A door opposite the large fireplace gives access to the men's smoking room beneath the main stairs. To the left of the foyer is the main staircase. A bay window over fourteen feet high provides natural light while a large sixteen candle chandelier provides artificial light. The stairway itself is of carved oak with unusual lantern-like posts at intervals along the banister. The magnificent plaster ceiling here, like the one in the dining room, displays large hanging keys.

The next two rooms reflect the Gothic-Renaissance style. Large oak double doors provide access into the card room. The morning room, or card room, exhibits a wide bay window on the side of the house and an unusual fireplace of carved wood and stone. Another set of large double doors gives access to the adjoining library. The dark panelling of the library affords sharp contrast to the white plaster ceiling as well as the many tall leaded windows in the room. The huge fireplace in the library dates from 1616 and bears the motto "Dieu et Mon Droit" (God and my strength). On the fire wall is the symbol of the Knights of the



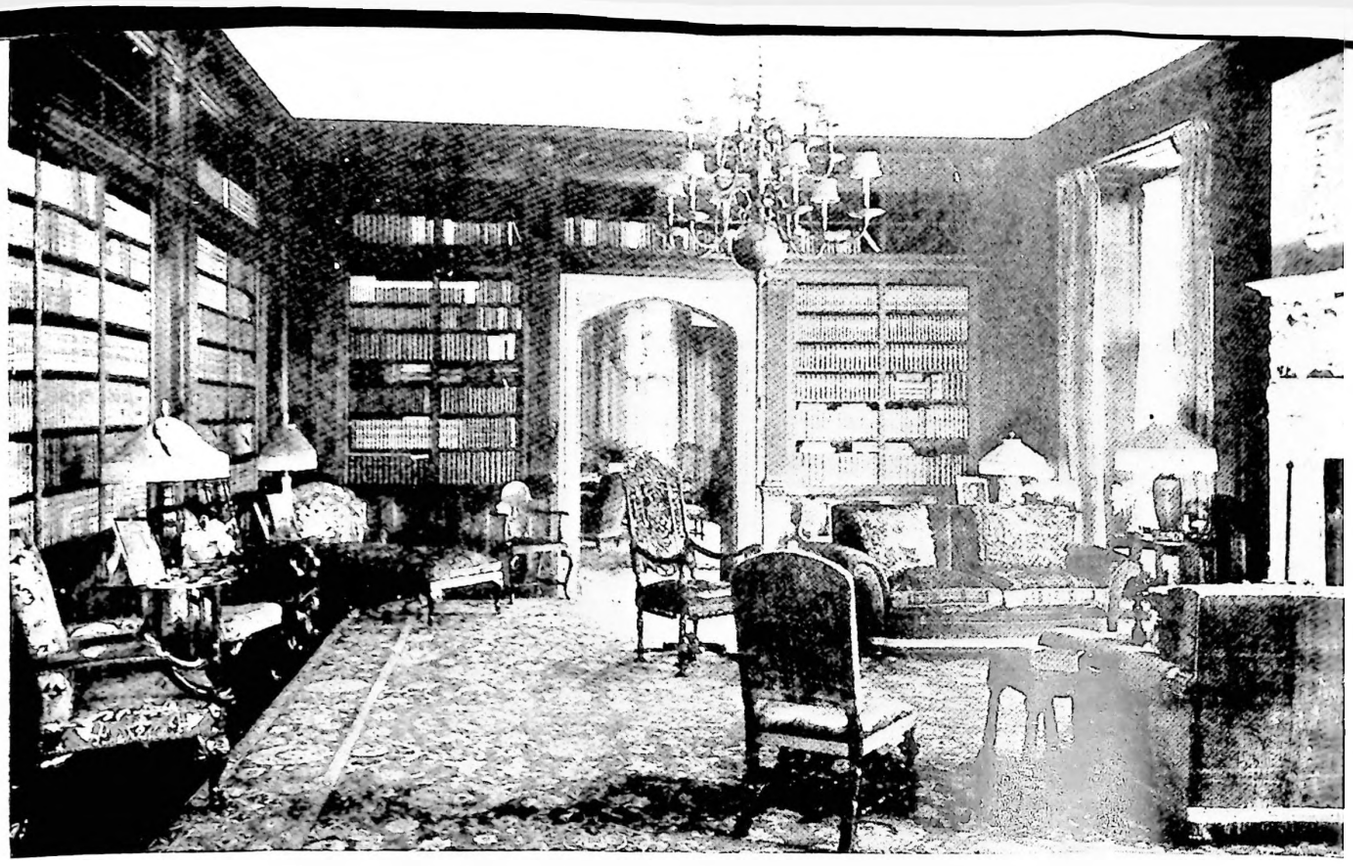
The intricately carved oak staircase.

Garter. The doors at either side of the alcove of this room open to either the formal gardens or the patio on the side.

Tall double doors again lead into the next room, the drawing room. Mrs. Dixon took the exquisite linen-fold panelling and beamed ceiling out when she moved. However, a glimpse may be seen of it by looking at the wainscoating of the parlor and the doors of the chapel. The drawing room is now the Brothers' chapel. The two bay windows that overlook the formal gardens in this fifty by twenty-five foot room have been replaced by stained glass.

Next to the drawing room is the elegant dining room paneled in dark oak. The white plaster ceiling with its hanging keys and medallions of a warrior with the inscription "Josue Dux" (Josue leader) accents the darkness of the walls. Here too is a large brass chandelier. The bay window also overlooks the formal gardens. Of special interest in the room is the mantle piece, which is constructed from the hunting box of James I of England. It is believed the paneling in the room is also from his hunting lodge.

Across from the dining room is the small parlor. In it is a fireplace which is a miniature of the one in the great hall of Compton Wynyates. On either side of it are two beautifully carved cupboards imported from England. The linen fold wainscoating is a reproduction of the paneling used throughout the interior of Compton Wynyates. The decorated beams



The oak paneled library whose massive stone fireplace dates from 1616.

in this room are done in the style of French provincial. The remaining rooms on the first floor are either work rooms, utility rooms, or servants' rooms.

The second floor hall continues the English theme. The second and third floors are constructed on different levels reflecting the English mind. The family's rooms are on one level; the guest rooms constitute another level. But there is a hierarchy here too as to quality in each room. Connecting the family quarters with the servants' quarters is the housekeeper's room and office. She was the link between the owners and the hired help. The position of head butler enjoyed distinction and so he had his own house as previously mentioned.

The walls of the hall are wainscoated in carved wood and the charming ceiling is done with the Tudor Rose as is the card room. Besides the ten large bedrooms opening off this hall, there was a sitting room connecting the two master bedrooms. Each of the beautifully paneled bedrooms has its own bath of white marble. Originally the plumbing fixtures were gold plated. Also each major bedroom is equipped with its own marble-faced fireplace. A few steps down from the hall are the servants' wings reached by two sets of back stairs.

The third floor also served as servants quarters but contains many large store rooms. It housed a tailor shop, cedar room, a play room, yacht equipment room, numerous smaller storage areas and, of course, a lengthy attic.

Studying any of the myriad points of interest outside or inside, or seen at any time of the year, the viewer is never disappointed at the charm and harmony of so majestic a mansion in so peaceful a setting.

NOTE:

All of the illustrations of the present Anselm Hall—except that of the entry doors—appeared in an out-of-print magazine called "The Spur."

The luxurious furnishings and appointments were an integral part of the mansion during the Dixons' occupancy and have since been removed. However, the valuable architectural features still remain and provide an old-world atmosphere in this day of modern living. The rare paneling, beautifully executed plaster art on the ceilings, handsomely carved mantels and smooth stone floors are just as they were when the Dixons lived there.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Germantown Historical Society welcomes new members. Privileges of membership include attendance at all lectures, tours, and other functions sponsored by the Society. Members also receive current issues of the GERMANTOWNE CRIER without charge. Society dues are as follows:

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Baptist Children's House Revisited

IN PALE winter sunlight one morning in 1879, the Baptist Orphanage opened in Philadelphia. Children pale as the sunlight fit the image of another day when Victorians rode in carriages along the broad sweep of Diamond Street. For the Victorian child dwelt in a milieu of melancholy deepened by the prevalence of fatal childhood illnesses. In the three years following the great Centennial celebration in the City of Brotherly Love early deaths were still commonplace, particularly due to influenza, and in many homes an empty chair at the dinner table held the small ghost of a child who had died as quietly as he had lived.

Mrs. Laura Easton Wells, writing in the Germantown Crier ("Eleven Coins," September, 1964), tells of one such child, especially touched with the plight of homeless children, who died, leaving a legacy of eleven coins. The mother, tempering her grief with concern for others, gave the small bequest to Miss Mary Weatherly, a Baptist Sunday School teacher at the Immanuel Mission, who initiated the plans from which the Baptist Orphanage evolved.

From the rented property at 17th and Diamond Streets, the Orphanage soon moved to a larger house at 45th Street and Silverton Avenue. By now, Mrs. Marené Chase, president of the Orphanage's Board of Managers, was firmly convinced that the "cottage system" of care, which permitted groups of children to live together under the supervision of a "housemother," was far superior to standard institutional life. To obtain this objective, a larger property was needed that would be situated ideally in a spacious, bucolic setting.

In 1885 just such a property was found.

In the Westland beyond Mill Creek and the Satterlee Military hospital, where Dicken's pensive statue now contemplates the faded charm of Clark's Park, the land stretched free of garages and parking lots, apartment buildings and the cacophony of modern living. The area was called Angora after a woolen mill built during the Civil War. Rolling and free to Kingsessing, where the Swedes made inroads in the sixteen hundreds, and westward to the banks of old Cobbs Creek, this quiet suburb was distinguished chiefly by the Whitby Mansion. Here the Baptist Orphanage was to find a permanent home.

Today, the sun sets behind the ancient gables of an administration building raised in the eighties. Modern residence cottages built some seventy years later are clustering silhouettes. In 1964, the name Baptist Orphanage was changed to Baptist Childrens House, and more progress is imminent.

According to the constitution and by-laws, the Baptist Childrens House was founded to aid "orphan and half-orphan children of Baptist families, ministers and missionaries; orphan or half-orphan children without regard to the religious belief of their parents and other deserving children for whom care is especially needed."

Millard B. Norford, administrator of Baptist Childrens House explains, "Great changes have modified our Society since we were chartered as the Baptist Orphanage on January 4, 1879. Fewer children are being orphaned by death and rarely come to us on a permanent basis. Now more than eighty per cent of the children we care for are "emotional orphans"—children from broken homes where illness, financial or other problems make child care uncertain or impossible." The administrator and the House's social

Miss Mary Weatherly who iniatiated the plans from which the orphanage evolved.



service department make every effort to restore these children to their homes.

Because Baptist Childrens House was founded to help children in need of care, it is essential that it adapt its facilities and programs to the changing needs of children. Thus, the needs change much, the children, never.

The Development Program for Baptist Childrens House will comprise three phases:

1. An administration building adapted to modern office needs, with additional space for the social service department, a modern library, group dining room, and a new chapel convertible to auditorium use.
2. A Mechanical Arts and Maintenance building to meet several current and future needs, and,
3. The acquisition of a handsome house across the street from the campus for the use of high school graduates. To be called Graduate House, the building will provide a transitional environment for young adults, no longer the responsibility of Baptist Childrens House who, nevertheless, will have immediate access to the guidance of the institution's counselors. Baptist Childrens House has seen a need for this type of "bridge to the world," for many young people, launched upon the unfamiliar sea of self-sufficiency. This particular phase of the program has been hailed by professionals.

Significantly, the decision to embark upon a development program on the present eight acre campus at 58th and Thomas Avenue was made at a time when most neighborhoods are undergoing progressive decay from near-suburbs to residence-business to mere shabby memories of "yesterday."

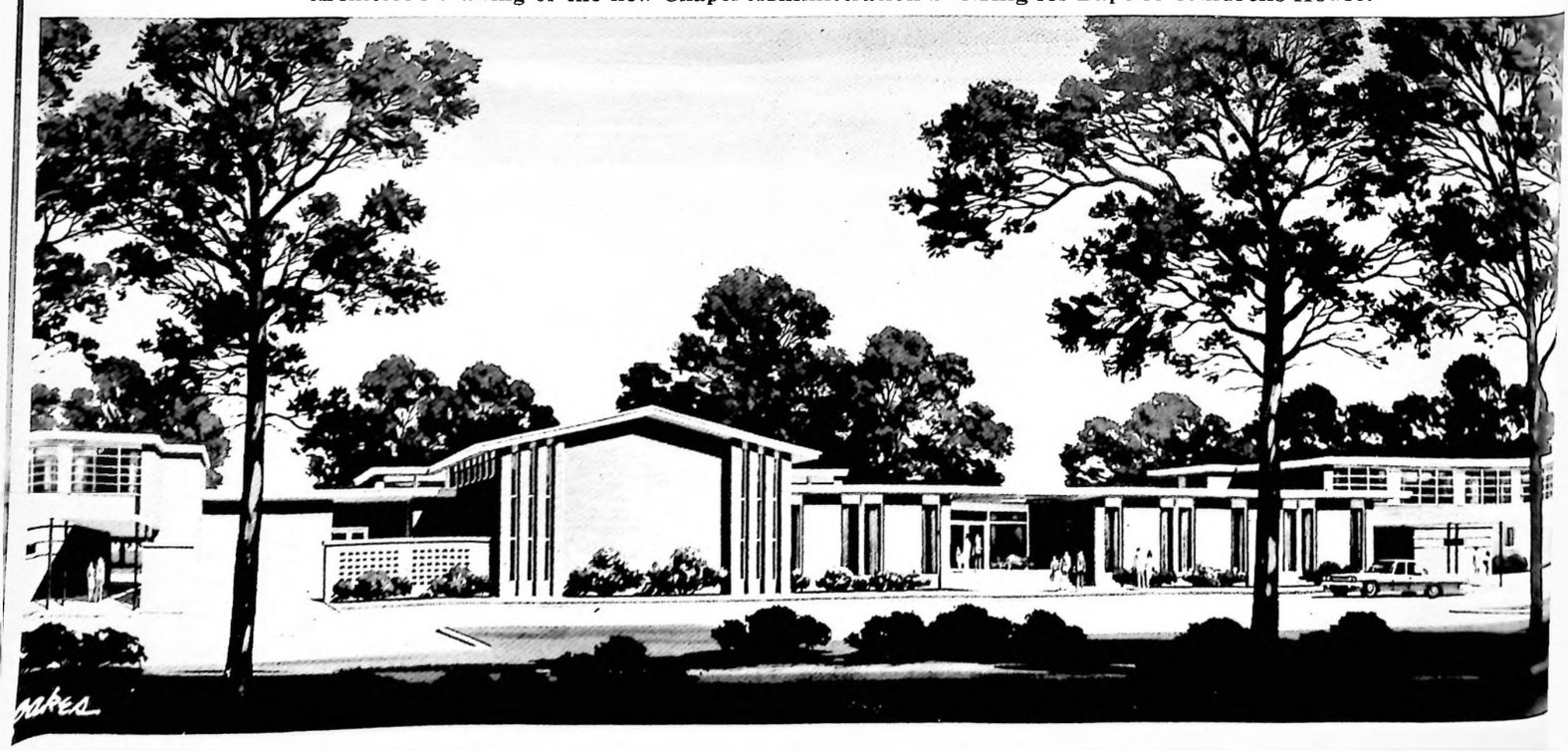
A house of worship or an institution frequently is a symbol as well as a landmark for a neighborhood, presenting as it does an air of stability and dedication. Soon Baptist Childrens House will show a new face to its neighborhood—a sleek, contemporary outline of buildings softened by the warmth of brick and heavy foliage, and mellowed by sunlight. There will be those who regret the passing of the gables and the shadow patterns they cast at the end of day, but there will be others who see hope in change without departure. Perhaps Baptist Childrens House will set a seal of hope upon a neighborhood rich in family memories.

The eighty or more children from eight counties in eastern Pennsylvania who live at Baptist Childrens House may witness a new spring for the area from which they can take heart. It is a tribute to administration and staff that these children are just about as normal young Americans as it is possible to be, although faced with personal problems not of their own making. With growth and expansion taking shape around them, they will witness the stirrings of new life for a beloved institution.

Baptist Childrens House remains in a strange area almost untouched by historic drama in the sense of war and legislations, battles and judgements. Children study, play and dream childhood's immemorial dreams just four blocks from Darby Road. Along that road—the link with the Grays Ferry coach road—Washington travelled to his inauguration. Just off the main stream, peaceful and residential; just the place for the Grays family who owned Whitby Mansion to host many a fashionable Colonial gathering. In the wilds of Whitby, the laughter of guests would compete with little more than cowbells shattering the country quiet from a neighboring pasture.

Where the honored great of a new nation were entertained, children play who represent much of the fulfillment of the promise of that nation. Today, tomorrow and forever bright banners of hope stream in cloud formations over once peaceful countryside as children grow "in grace and favor with God and man." (Luke 2:52).

Architect's drawing of the new Chapel-Administration Building for Baptist Childrens House.



Anti-Poverty in Early Germantown

By Richard S. Fuller

IN DAYS of old, long before medicare, social security, welfare, and the current national crusade against poverty, paupers, as they were indelicately cal'ed, were a parochial concern. Arrangements for the care of the destitute in Germantown Township were made by a local board of elected officials, known as overseers of the poor. As Edward W. Hocker notes in his book *Germantown, 1683–1933*, the arrangements for the support of needy persons often involved placing them in the custody of more fortunate residents, who would volunteer to aid their fellow men. Sometimes the overseers found, however, that the more substantial citizens in town would accept the responsibility of caring for paupers only in return for a fee. Then bids were accepted by the overseers, and, in the familiar, time-honored tradition of government, the lowest bid won. In any case, the custodian, charged with providing food, clothing, and shelter, expected his pauper to work. If possible, a return would thus be realized on the investment.

This loosely-arranged anti-poverty program was changed in 1775, when the overseers adopted the almshouse system, thereby centralizing the housing accommodations for paupers. To this end, the shrewd overseers—John Koch, Christian Duy, and Jacob Paul—purchased a property at a sheriff's sale, obviously determined to keep the almshouse in the black. The property, containing three acres and seventy-five perches of land and including a messuage, or house, cost them £128. It was situated just west of the Main Street in Germantown, on the north side of a thoroughfare which came to be called Poor House Lane (the present Rittenhouse Street). There is no record of whether John Adam Hogermoed, from whom the sheriff took the property to satisfy a debt of six hundred dollars, was able to make use of his indirect contribution to impoverished colleagues.

Another significant change in the administration of relief for the poor took place in 1809, when the overseers were incorporated by an act of the state legislature. In a small, square volume, now in the library of the Germantown Historical Society, one can read the "Minutes and Proceedings of the Managers for the Employment relief and support of the Poor of the township of Germantown." This volume of minutes covers the years from 1809 to 1822. The initial entry in the minute book notes the reorganization, under state jurisdiction, of the local overseers of the poor:

> Pursuant to an Act of the Legislature of Pennsylvania, passed during the last session, Entitled "An Act for the better employment, relief and support of the Poor within the township of Germantown, in the county of philadelphia" the following Managers appointed by said act met at the house of George Peters 5th Mo 1st 1809. viz. Samuel Mechlin, Jacob Summers, Anthony Johnson, Jacob Holgate and Joseph Miller, for the purpose of organizing themselves as a board of Managers, and to appoint the necessary officers. . . .

As a rule, the Managers met monthly, usually near the end of the month, although some special meetings were held during the early days of organization.

The book of minutes is valuable as a record of the human problems encountered in the administration of the Germantown almshouse. It also serves as an uncomfortable reminder of problems which remain to be solved today. Provision of food, medical care, and employment, suppression of excessive drinking, assistance for unwed mothers—all are detailed in the pages of the minutes. History, apparently, does repeat itself.

As one might surmise, money to support the almshouse program came from taxes. An entry for July 28, 1810, states the tax rate:

> Resolved that a Tax of twenty cents in every hundred dollars be laid on the Estates and Inhabitants within the Township of Germantown, and a personal Tax from twenty cents to one dollar, to be applied to the use and support of the Poor of said township—and that Saml Fleckenstein be requested to prepare a Book agreeable to the above rates.

In 1814, the tax rate was lowered to twelve cents in every hundred dollars. In addition to this tax on property, there was also levied "a Personal Tax on young men." And in 1817, a tax on dogs was "appropiated to the funds of the poor."

The essential matter of food is mentioned early in the pages of the minutes. Anthony Johnson "is authorised and requested to purchase three fat hogs, & send them to the Poor house—to be salted by the Steward for the use of the poor." At the next meeting, his purchase of "three very fat Hogs" is duly noted, as well as the weight—627 pounds—and the cost—six dollars. Later, Johnson "reports that he purchased the Pork as directed—he is requested to purchase 200 lb. more for the use of the family in the Poor house." The word *family*, regarding the paupers, is an interesting one, and suggests that the Managers were concerned to make their charges at home in the poor house.

One of the earliest entries, dated May 15, 1809, takes up the important problem of medical care:

> A proposal was received from Doctor G. Bensell offering to attend the Poor in the poor house,

as physician, whenever his services may be wanted for thirty five dollars Pr. annum—the out doors paupers to be paid for seperately at the discretion of the Managers Whereupon Resolved that the said proposal be accepted.

The arrangement was obviously satisfactory, and, nearly a year later, at a stated meeting on May 26, 1810, Dr. Bensell again offers his services, in competition with a colleague:

> Proposals from Dr. Bensell & Dr. Runkle for attending the Poor in the Poor house for the ensuing year, were read—Whereupon Resolved that Dr. Bensell be and he hereby is appointed Physician for the Poor, in the Poor house for the ensuing year, for which he is to be paid, Pr. his proposals the sum of twenty five dollars.

Dr. Bensell's drop in salary from thirty-five dollars to twenty-five dollars a year is interesting, low bid winning once again, it would seem. This arrangement with Dr. Bensell continued at least through 1816 and may have continued through 1822, the last year of the available recorded minutes. After 1816, however, he is mentioned only in 1820. In any event, Dr. Bensell provided continuous medical care for at least eight years and probably longer.

Employment, surely, is one of the major ways in which man defines what, as well as perhaps who, he is. Another early entry in the minutes, dated June 26, 1809, takes up this problem:

> In order to give the Poor under our care some employment, the following committee was appointed to call on the Hatters in this township, and endeavour to engage the carding or breaking of wool for them, under the care of the Steward, viz. Jacob Summers, Samuel Mechlin & Jacob Holgate—the same committee are also authorised to purchase a Machine for carding wool.

And in an entry dated September 30, 1809: "Resolved that the Steward be directed to purchase some wool, in order to employ the female paupers in knitting stockings for themselves & the men." In the almshouse environment, the carding of wool or the knitting of stockings may have been a bitter reminder of what and who the paupers were; but the latter activity, self-employment of a sort, must have been an improvement over the work for a low-bidding custodian. A visit to the poor house by Anthony Johnson and John Johnson in December of 1809 indicated that "the paupers generally conducted themselves well—and that several of the Men are employed in making bread baskets."

All did not run smoothly, however, as this entry in the minutes indicates:

> The Steward having informed the Managers that several of the Paupers in the house continue frequently to leave the poor house, and by some means obtain spirits, and become intoxicated, & consequently very troublesome & unruly—Therefore Resolved that the Managers will now proceed to the poor house, and inform the paupers that in future they shall not be at liberty to leave the house, without permission from the steward —and that if they do so offend, they shall be kept in close confinement 24 hours upon bread and water—And that if either of them become's intoxicated in future, they shall be kept in close confinement three days and nights on bread & water—and for the second like offence seven days & nights on bread and water.
>
> The Managers proceeded to the poor house and collected the paupers, & informed them of the foregoing resolution.

One can appreciate the desire of the Managers to run a tight, dry almshouse; but the punishment of close confinement plus bread and water seems a bit excessive, although understandable in a country that would later make prohibition a law. One can perhaps also appreciate the paupers' wanting to leave the poor house, as well as their needing to leave their particular world via spirits. Carding wool and making bread baskets may not be richly fulfilling jobs under the best of circumstances. That final quoted sentence, noting that the paupers are "collected," suggests that the Managers, or at least the writer of the minutes, did not quite consider the paupers to be human beings and certainly not a "family."

In many needy situations, however, the response of the Managers is humane and considerate. The wife of George Brown, applying for some wood, receives half a cord because "she is very poor and deserving of the same." A Catharine Omensetter, having lately moved from New York State to Germantown, with three small children, "is very poor and in immediate want of fire wood." A cord of wood is sent to her. As a rule, the Managers were concerned only with residents of the township and they "endeavour to obtain information where her last residence in this State was." But she needed wood and she received it.

Other needy situations involve unmarried mothers, who are mentioned frequently in the pages of the minutes. Susanna A—, for example. One reads this notation for July 27, 1811: "It was Report By Michal Keyser that Susana A— is pregnant with Child by Jacob P— . . . to whome She swore the Child." And, on December 20: "Susanna A— was Deliver'd of a Female Child and the Child was put out to nurse for want of milk the 27th Istant." Bad luck seemed to pursue Susanna, already unlucky in love and motherhood. An entry for February 29, 1812, tells us that "Susanna A— be Sent to Phillidelphia to Tend Cort for Trial." Experience, in theory the Great Teacher, does not always instruct wisely, especially in matters of the heart or the flesh. Susanna, following her old ways, again crops up in the minutes, this time to be "examined before a Magistrate and have her Quallified as to the father of an illigetimate Child that she appears to be pregnant with and bring the Computed father to Justice."

(Continued on page 22)

DON'T TUCK YOUR TUCKER AWAY!

By JANE CARL





SO YOU are one of the lucky ones! You actually possess a piece of Tucker china—a valuable antique that has no peer when it comes to quality and workmanship! Don't tuck this beautiful piece of American porcelain away between layers of cotton batting—bring it out, display it and share the story of Philadelphia's most famous china-manufactory with all of us who aren't so lucky as you!

The story of Tucker china is one we hear little about because there's so little Tucker about these days. Most of these treasures are to be found on display shelves at the Philadelphia Museum of Art or the Chester County Historical Museum in West Chester and a few are displayed at our own Museum. Because this china was manufactured for a relatively short time, it was never mass-produced in large enough quantities to be a glut on the market. But, let's start at the beginning. . . .

The story of Tucker china might be said to start at Ninth and Market Streets, somewhere in the vicinity of today's Post Office. Benjamin Tucker, a Quaker who was a teacher as well as a merchant, had an unpretentious china shop on this site. In the rear of his shop he built a small kiln for the use of his son, William Ellis Tucker, who had shown some skill at decorating the white chinaware imported from Europe. Time spared from tending shop was spent in painting floral decorations on the china which was then fired in the kiln behind the shop.

While these floral decorations were rather crude and left much to be desired as a form of art, they *did* have a sidebar advantage. Working on ready-made imported china awakened in William Tucker a desire to make chinaware literally from "the ground up"! Now, time spared from tending shop was filled with a double activity—painting floral designs on white imported china *and* experimenting with local clays in the vicinity in an attempt to develop his own formula. Clays of all types in and around Philadelphia provided him with a wealth of raw materials but all of his early experiments were singularly unsuccessful. The *best* he produced at this stage of the story was a fair quality of opaque queensware—far inferior to the white English china he decorated.

More combinations were tried and met with the same result—either opaque queensware or ordinary earthenware—just like the inferior products produced by others in and around Philadelphia. A dual discovery, however, changed the tide! A field of kaolin clay turned up in Chester County and a lode of feldspar was found in New Castle County, Delaware. The addition of these two clays to his existing formula resulted in the combination he was seeking—a hard paste porcelain that was the equal of any of the European imported wares! The final product was beautifully translucent, had great hardness and was capable of withstanding extreme changes of temperature.

These experiments were conducted in the backyard of his father's china shop. During the trials, William was repeatedly annoyed by the complaints of the neighbors who objected to the odors wafting from the small kiln. And now that he'd finally come up with an unbeatable formula, he was confident that he could produce chinaware in Philadelphia—and at a profit! Consequently, he looked around for a building large enough to house a full-time, regular size china manufactory.

In 1825, the old waterworks at Schuylkill-Front (Twenty-Third Street) and Chestnut were taken over from the city, the kilns were built and William Ellis Tucker embarked on the business of making porcelain as a business venture.

For a time it looked as though the business was destined to fail before it got started. Kiln after kiln of the ware was burned with disastrous results. Practically all the finished pieces had to be consigned to the junk heap because they were either broken or misshapen—a far cry from the perfection he'd achieved while experimenting in the small backyard kiln. But

the culprit was discovered—a workman employed by a European firm was seen to be tampering with the raw ware before it was fired! Whatever the cause—a romantic story or the addition of other ingredients to the closely guarded formula—the problem was so well cleared up by 1827 that the Franklin Institute awarded a silver medal to Mr. Tucker for the *best porcelain made in Pennsylvania!*

The following year saw another honor as well as personnel additions that were to prove both lasting and beneficial. A younger Tucker, Thomas, joined the firm and began to learn all the facets of the business. During the same year, Thomas Hulme invested a sufficient sum in the business to warrant a partnership. And, in 1828 the Franklin Institute awarded the firm another medal—for the *best porcelain made in the United States!*

After Hulme joined the firm, a number of the beautifully gilded white pieces of porcelain were marked "Tucker & Hulme, China Manufacturers, Philadelphia, 1828." However, many pieces made during this time are *unmarked*, supposedly to better compete with the imported French pieces which they so closely resemble. Tucker china of this period shows a vast improvement in decorating—the rough, rather amateur brown daubs are replaced by artistic groupings of flowers and fruits painted in glowing natural colors. We've been unable to learn whether this is the time that foreign artists were first brought over to do the decorating or if some talented young Philadelphians were hired. It is evident that our founder, William Ellis Tucker, had no hand in this phase of the operation!

The partnership lasted only a short time—about a year—and when Hulme withdrew his funds, Tucker was faced with severe monetary problems. Far ahead of his times in this respect, he applied for governmental aid and wrote to no lesser person than the President of the United States! The reply he received is shown here:

"Washington, April 3, 1830.

"Sir,—

"I have had the honor to receive your letter of the 3d of March, and, since, the porcelain which it offered to my acceptance. I was not apprised before of the perfection to which your skill and perseverance had brought this branch of American manufacture. It seems to be not inferior to the finest specimens of French porcelain. But whether the facilities for its manufacture bring its cost so nearly to an equality with that of the French as to enable the moderate protection of which you speak to place it beyond the reach of competition in the markets of the world, is a question which I am not prepared to answer. If Congress could be made acquainted with the experiments on the subject, and they should confirm your favorable anticipation, there would be scarcely a doubt of its willingness to secure the important results of the manufacture. I do not see, however, any mode by which this can be effected on any other principle than that of protection. You would probably have a right to a patent for the discovery, but this right would have to be determined in the usual way. Congress have refused to make a donation to the heirs of Robert Fulton for the national benefits resulting from his discovery, upon the principle that the Constitution does not provide any other reward for the authors of useful discoveries than that which is contained in the article in relation to patents. The same objection would of course defeat your application for twenty thousand dollars as a remuneration for this discovery, or as a reward for its free communication to the world.

"It will give me much pleasure to promote the objects you have in view, so far as they are within my constitutional sphere. There is no subject more interesting to me than that which concerns the domestic economy of our country, and I tender you my sincere thanks for an example of its success so creditable to yourself.

"With great respect, believe me
"Yr. Obt. Svt.,
"Andrew Jackson.

"Mr. Wm. Ellis Tucker,
"Philadelphia."

A new partner—and considerable funds—were acquired in 1831 when Judge Joseph Hemphill joined the firm. Hemphill had travelled extensively in Europe where a study of porcelains indicated that the best was to be found right here in his home town of Philadelphia! At this time, Tucker china was considered superior to almost every European ware, even rivalling Sevres which was freely copied. As a consequence, the business was thriving and expanding more rapidly than at any period since it was founded. Hemphill looked upon Tucker china as a good thing—a business for him now and a still larger business for his sons in years to come.

The finished ware now had another name—"Tucker and Hemphill china!" The partners had great plans and, feeling they'd soon outgrow the old waterworks



'Grecian' Pitcher.

building, they purchased the property at Seventeenth and Chestnut, erected a factory, three kilns and a storehouse. Naturally, the expanded quarters enabled them to greatly increase production to meet the ever growing demand for the now famous Tucker china.

Even though they didn't hesitate to copy the designs and shapes of foreign china, the Tucker and Hemphill China Company wanted protection from foreign competition which could produce almost comparable ware for substantially less money. In 1832 they appealed to Congress for a tariff that would give them this protection and received this reply to a letter written about the matter to Henry Clay:

WASHINGTON, 23d June, 1832

GENTLEMEN,—

I received your favor of the 21st inst. on the subject of your manufacture of porcelain. I had been previously aware of its existence and had seen some beautiful specimens of its production.

When the Tariff bill shall be taken up in the Senate, I will take care that its attention shall be drawn to it. Such is the state of parties here, however, the friends of protection combating against the Treasury bill, sustained by the whole weight of the Administration, that it is extremely difficult to anticipate results or any part of the Tariff.

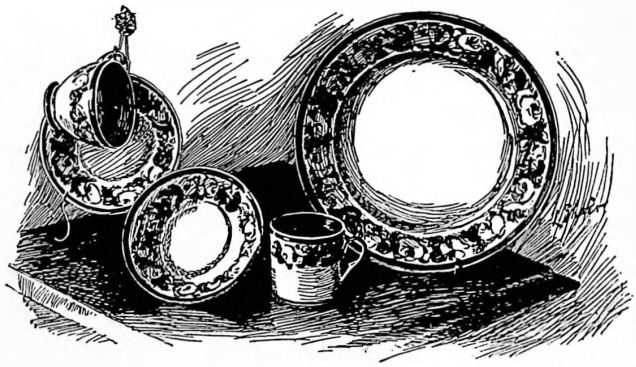
With great respect,
I am your ob. serv.
H. CLAY

Messrs. Tucker & Hemphill
Porcelain Manufacturers
Philadelphia.

Whether this letter and Clay's interest in the matter carried any weight is a matter for conjecture. Hemphill continued to work to defeat a bill in Congress which proposed the removal of all duty from imported china and finally rested easy because the bill *was not passed.*

Unfortunately, William Ellis Tucker lived only a short time after the expanded factory and storehouse were opened at 17th and Chestnut. At his death in August 1832, Hemphill bought out the rest of the business and for a time, as sole owner, he produced china that was known as "Hemphill china." Thomas Tucker continued to superintend the factory and the judge's son, Robert Coleman Hemphill was shortly installed as a partner. It was during the time that the Hemphill's were the owners that the designs became more elaborate, following the French methods of pretentious decorations. To authenticate their china painting and styling, the Hemphills brought artists and potters from both France and England with the result that now, more than ever, it was impossible to tell the china made in Philadelphia from that made in Europe.

Never mass-produced for the middle-class trade, the ware was sold extensively to the moneyed families of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. Most of



Hemphill porcelain table-ware.

these purchases were made to order—one of a kind pieces or dinner services, principally—with initials, monograms, medallions, coats of arms, etc., encircled by wreaths of flowers or bands of gold, worked in an intricate design. Many pieces have beautifully executed floral borders and centers, with the tulip, rose or forget-me-not playing a prominent part. So well did they reproduce some of the old French forms that when they were still available, they were sold as antique French bric-a-brac!

While flowers were by far the most prolific decoration, other decorations were used by the firm. Portraits of prominent men—Anthony Wayne, George Washington, Napoleon and Lord Byron are just a few who have been preserved for posterity in this unusual medium. Once in awhile, a building might be shown but for the most part, buildings didn't offer the flamboyancy and color that could be found in flowers or people.

Destined for even more ups and downs, the manufactory continued under the Hemphills until 1835 when it was incorporated under the name of the American Porcelain Company. Unfortunately, the people who should have been most interested in the welfare of the company had other unfortunate business undertakings and were unable to give the necessary time to running the china-works.

Thomas Tucker kept the business going for a short time. He took a lease on the factory and purchased all the fixtures and materials—including all of the unburned ware on hand. A very wise businessman was Thomas Tucker! From the time he took over the manufactory in 1837 until he closed it in 1838, he had a ready outlet for his finished ware—the family china shop which he kept fully stocked!

Not counting the years when he experimented with local clays plus the kaolin from Chester County, the feldspar from Delaware and the blue clay found near Perth Amboy, New Jersey, the Tucker China Factory —under many names—lasted just about thirteen years. During that time, it produced the most beautiful china of its time—or of the time since—right here in Philadelphia. And it all started with a young man who knew nothing about china except how to sell it. We have our own Horatio Alger story—except our hero is named William Ellis Tucker!

DO YOU REMEMBER . . .

WHAT MAIN STREET was like at the turn of the century? Were there trees spreading their limbs over the cobblestones and hitching posts in front of the stores? What kind of stores were they and what did they sell? What were the storekeepers and the clerks like—affable and friendly or distant and too business-like? I remember Germantown Avenue only as a shopping place, with automobiles parked bumper to bumper along both sides of the street and their owners always digging into their pockets or their purses to feed the ever-hungry parking meters. The storekeepers and the clerks don't know me—I'm one of hundreds of people who sort of bore them when I ask for something..

What houses stood on the grounds where the big supermarkets sprawl? Were they elegant homes with gracious doorways and shining windows? Were they old, historic, worthy of preservation? Should they still be standing in the spot where huge plate glass windows are plastered with large-lettered signs advertising this week's specials?

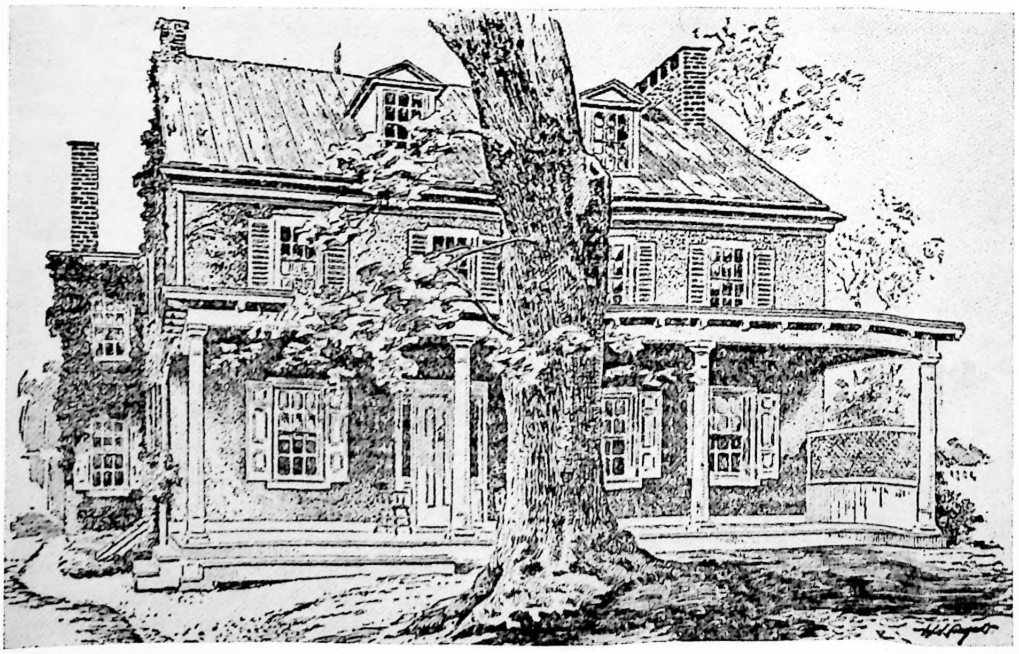
Who built the big stone house at the corner of Greene Street and Harvey? And when? Instead of a mighty stone fortress all I see there now are rows of garden apartments—homes for many, it's true—but I miss the grandeur of the big farmlike house in the town.

These are just a few questions that could be answered by our readers because many of you were there at the time in question and could tell us the when, the why and the what of an era that's almost forgotten. If you will share your memories with us, we'll all be the richer. And, remember, most of us are not of the well-chosen few to whom earth-shaking events are likely to occur. It's the simple, everyday sort of thing that just doesn't happen any more because of the times that we'd like to hear about. Just write us a note, give us your telephone number and we'll take it from there.

In every one of us there's something that makes us say

"Do You Remember . . .?"

An example of the sort of memory to which we're referring is the Gilbert Stuart House which was demolished to make way for a parking lot and supermarket.



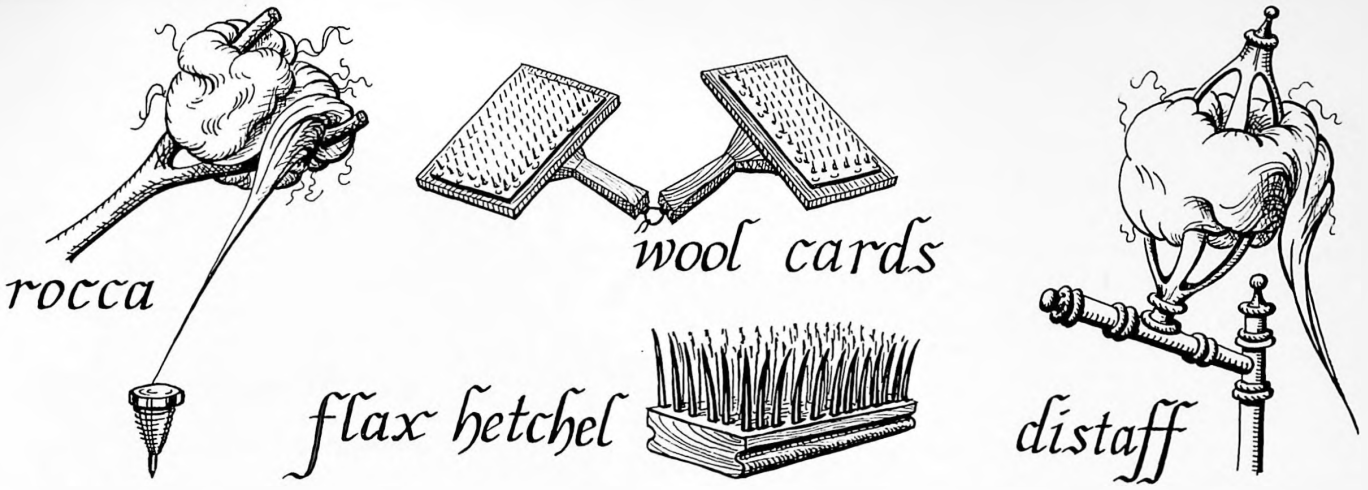


Illustration by Charles Gimpel

The Almost Lost Art of Spinning

By Marguerita Phillips

THE heraldic device of our venerable Germantown depicts a trefoil enclosing a grapevine, a weaving shuttle, and a flax flower, all vastly important to our forefathers. Since Jan Lukens whose name appears among those of the first weavers in Germantown was a maternal ancestor, it was natural that I should become interested in weaving. With me, it is a hobby; for him, it was bread and butter. But he was diligent and frugal. People brought to him pieced strips of rags and he wove them into rugs for their cold, bare, floors, and before he died, he was able to build a fine house, somewhat similar to Mt. Vernon, on the site where the Jewish Hospital now stands in Olney.

I shall not dwell on hand weaving because many still do it. But spinning is almost a lost art—one about which only a few know a lot and most know very little.

Many expressions still in use today relate to early textile industry, such as "dyed in the wool," meaning colored before weaving, "keeping on tenterhooks" which was a process of stretching linens on a rack to bleach them. It implies being taut and uncomfortable. And the term "spinster" goes away back to early England, when every woman, *before* she could marry, had to spin, weave, and make for herself a set of body, table and bed linen. The term Spinster is still the legal appellation of all unmarried women in England.

In the Colonies, sometimes unmarried women without any family, hired themselves out as spinners for 18 cents a day, plus board and lodging, and for this pittance, they would, in the process of spinning wool, walk back and forth a distance of 14 miles a day! In her left hand, she held a small puff of carded wool at just the right tension so it wound up on the bobbin of the Great Wheel, without tangling. She twirled the wheel usually with her right hand, but sometimes she used a short stick. All the while she kept the thickness of the spun yarn fairly uniform. These small rolls of pure wool were formed by "carding" it after it was first washed cleaned, dried, and then picked over by the young children. It took 8 old people carding to keep one energetic young woman supplied with rolls. The carding combed out all tangles and laid the tiny fibres in one direction. "Cards" greatly resemble curry combs used to groom horses.

When the bobbin on the great wheel was full, it was slipped off and a spare put on. Often goose quills were used as spools, so these smaller rolls were known as "quills." Then the spinner reeled off the yarn she had produced on a device known as a "clock reel" or a "click reel" (40 times around made it click once. This was a skein, or "slipping"). The mortality among these "click" reels has been appalling, for they were extremely attractive to small children. After the skein was produced it was usually triple-twisted on a thing called a "swift." There are floor swifts, and table swifts (which look like bare umbrellas) and are now used to wind your knitting wool. If you examine modern wool by untwisting an end, you will see it is still made of three strands.

There are few people in the United States who still do spinning,—oh, maybe a handful in the mountains of Tennessee, but they are all *old* people and in a few years will be gone. There may be plenty of foreigners from other lands who can spin, but can they tell about it? I know of only one other person besides myself in Philadelphia who spins, and she was my roommate at Westtown Boarding School! Yet spinning is one of the most basic of industries! Man's first covering was hides and skins. Then a primitive sort of spinning, using nothing but a stick with wool tied on it and a whirling plummet, was invented. It was done this way in Egypt during Biblical times and is still done in Greece today. The distaff is called a "rocca."

The art of using flax is more advanced than wool, even though thousands of years old, and going back to earliest Egyptian times. The Egyptians were very expert with it, and grew fine long-fibred flax, the longer the better. When this was woven, it could be made as thin as organdie, or as coarse as burlap or sailcloth. Linen, called the "Cloth of Kings," has proved its right to the name—especially in the linen curtains at

the entrance to King Tut's tomb. These linen hangings outlasted all other materials!

In America, during Colonial times, every farmer of the 13 colonies raised flax, and villages conducted spinning bees, with prizes awarded by the Parson.

The flax was planted very early, and weeded sometimes while the snow was still on the ground. The women workers had to wear layers of woolen socks, because boots would crush the delicate plants! Summer brought the lovely blue flax flowers. If people wanted flax for seed, as they do today for lin-seed oil used in mixing paints, it was planted far apart so it became bushy and had lots of flowers and seeds. If they grew it for linen, it was sown close together so stalks would be tall and thin.

Flax exhausts the soil and the same field must not be sowed to flax for 6 years. It is only grown today in North and South Dakota and in Oregon, on a prison farm, for linseed oil. All of our flax for other uses is now imported and we have to pay a heavy tariff. It is used in a variety of unexpected ways such as in the manufacture of our paper money, in cigarette papers and for thread used in Army and Navy shoes and mail pouches.

In Washington's day and long before, the small wheel was used for flax spinning. This was what Priscilla was using when she looked up and said "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?"

Flax was harvested by the men, who pulled it up by hand to keep the fibres as long as possible. Then it was tied in bundles, placed in a running brook for 3 weeks till the outside skin was loosened, a process known as "retting" which one early author described as a "vile and naughty practice" (because it smelled so). This is akin to our word, "rotting." Then the bundles were dried, crushed on a heavy log device known as a "flax breaker" when the pithy inside fell through slits, leaving the long thin skin. This was then pulled across a hackle (English) or Hetchel (German), a long, sharp toothed iron comb, until it was as smooth and as free from tangles as human, flaxen hair. It was next loosely tied upon the distaff, and ye ladye began to spin. If she went for a visit, she took her small wheel apart, tied it to the saddle, and spinning wont on her way for her hands were never idle.

These little spinning wheels are really very ingenious but to operate, they need loving care and oiling. Two bands of string go around two grooves in the wheel, one gives the flax the twist the other reels it up on the bobbin. The foot treadle furnishes the power, as the raw flax is gently pulled from the distaff.

There is nothing difficult about spinning, but you *must* have every part of the machine present and working properly. It is only by practice that you learo just how much tension to exert. For if you pull ton hard, the thread breaks, and if not hard enough it will snarl! Patience! Although I have spun and woven a suit, I am very thankful we can now buy goods by the yard!

A Lady's Adieu to Her Tea Table

Farewell the tea board with your gaudy attire
Ye cups and ye saucers that I did admire
To my cream pot and tongs, I now bid adieu
That pleasure's all fled, that I once found in you.

Farewell pretty chest that so lately did shine
With hyson and congo and best double fine.
Many a sweet moment by you I have sat
Hearing girls and old maids to tittle and chat,
And the Spruce coxcomb laugh at nothing at all,
Only some silly word that might happen to fall.

No more shall my tea pot so generous be
In filling this cup with this pernicious tea
For I'll fill it with water and drink out the same
Before I'll lose LIBERTY, that dearest name.

Because I'm taught (and believe it is fact)
That our ruin is aimed at, in a late act
Of imposing a duty on all foreign teas
Which detestable stuff we can quit when we please.

Liberty's the Goddess that I do adore
And I'll maintain her right, until my last hour
Before she shall part I will die in the cause
For I'll never be governed by tyranny's laws.

AUTHOR AND SOURCE UNKNOWN

While there's nothing to prove it beyond the words of the above poem, it appears to have been written after one of the famed Colonial "tea-parties" when the cargo was dumped in the harbor.

Anti-Poverty in Early Germantown

(Continued from page 16)

If one can choose from among the many instances of poverty mentioned in the minutes, the situation of unmarried mothers is perhaps the most pathetic, because of the children involved. Poverty at any point in a person's life is a shriveling experience, but the prospect of a child's future being determined by its impoverished past is a bleak one indeed.

The almshouse Managers, with a limited amount of money, did their best for the "relief and support of the Poor of the township of Germantown." The various names that occur and recur in the minutes suggest an intimate concern for the poor of early nineteenth-century Germantown. Once a parochial concern poverty has now escalated into a national, presidential concern. Poverty, it would seem, has increased in direct proportion to population; and with the increase in population, people are known more by social security number than by name. Otherwise, the problems are similar. In the richest country in the history of the world, this persistence of poverty is ironic. History, alas, does repeat itself.

An Unusual Decision

By Elizabeth Reeves Humphreys



IT WAS the gentle hour of sunset in Salisbury, Maryland, and the glory in the sky spread a soft glow over the plantation with its white house sheltered by venerable trees and flanked by flowering shrubs. It gilded the stable, the slave quarters, the ice house as submerged in the earth as an iceberg in water, and touched the mill on Humphreys Lake which, in a later day, would be called picturesque. It turned to liquid gold the waters of the rippling Wicomico River which bound one side of Dr. Cathell Humphreys' property, Mill Grove, and he strolled along its bank thinking on a subject which had bothered him for sometime.

He looked up at the mansion which had been designed by a Philadelphia architect and built by his brother General Humphrey Humphreys. It was a comfortable, gracious home and life was pleasant there; everything was running smoothly, and yet, and yet—

Dr. Humphreys was born on March 23rd, 1797, the son of Brigadier General Thomas Humphreys and Mary Cathell Humphreys, and broke the family tradition of lawyers and soldiers by studying medicine.

His first wife was Leah Dorman Walker, and they had six children, Eliza Jane born in 1822, Mary Frances, Virginia who died in infancy, Leahnora, Elizabeth Virginia and Thomas born in 1839. In 1841 Leah died and two years later Dr. Humphreys married Isabella Huston, daughter of Dr. Huston of Poplar Hill whose beautiful home was not far from Mill Grove. They had three children, Sally, Isabella and Huston so the house was filled with activity and laughter.

Like all aristocratic Southerners of the era Dr. Humphreys owned slaves but he had a growing conviction that as an institution it was not right. Of course, his slaves were treated with kindness, given plenty of good food from the plantation, their living quarters, clothing and medical attention. He was there day and night and took good care of the sick. They were taught Christianity, cleanliness and useful work. It was a good life, especially in contrast to the horrors of their jungle existence, but he thought the power of buying and selling was wrong. He knew there had been slavery all through history, far more harsh than practiced in the United States, and that it was a fact of life in many countries, but it still seemed wrong so he came to a decision that would mean great financial loss as well as the disapproval of some of his family and friends. He decided to free his slaves.

On a clear starlit night with fireflies flicking their lanterns and the lake lapping against its shore he told the assembled Africans that he was going to give them their freedom; then he handed each one a precious bit of paper. "Henceforth," he explained, "I will pay you wages for your work in the house and on the plantation." Then he retired to a good night's sleep.

When the family arose the following morning the house seemed strangely silent with no delicious fragrance of hot cornbread and coffee so Isabella hastened to the kitchen her mind racing with questions. Finding it empty and lifeless she immediately went to the slave quarters where she found everybody lolling around.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"Nuthin', mam," drawled the cook. "The Doctah, he giv' us owah freedom and we doan wunna work no mo'."

"But" replied Isabella, "He is going to pay you money."

"We's free,we doan wunna work, mam."

" 'Mary Lou," said the exasperated lady, "the Doctor is ready for his breakfast and he has patients to see. Now come and get his breakfast."

"No'me, I'se free."

But they had no thought of leaving this pleasant place where they were treated with such kindness and given everything they needed. Quite evidently they expected the doctor to support them and one wonders when he faced such colossal inertia, irresponsibility and ingratitude if the busy, idealistic Doctor regretted his sacrificial act. If he did, who could blame him?

The first of his children to leave Mill Grove was Elizabeth Virginia who married Irving Spence of Snow Hill, Maryland, in 1864, and it was she who proudly presented her father with his first grandchild.

In the early autumn of 1866 Dr. Humphreys went to Prayer Meeting, the "early candle light service," with his remaining family. He was an Elder in the Wicomico Presbyterian Church and he had something he wanted to say to the congregation. He stood a moment looking over the expectant faces lifted to his then said, "We are here in the presence of God"—paused—and fell dead.

He was laid to rest in the churchyard, the beloved doctor, whom all of shocked Salisbury mourned.

But life went on at Mill Grove and the following year his son Thomas who had graduated from Princeton married Virginia Freeney and brought her to the mansion. Here their three children were born, Walter Cathell, and a twin brother and sister, Fredrick William and Maria. Only Walter lived to grow to adulthood; and in 1883 their mother died too.

By this time the only ones left in Mill Grove were Thomas, his son Walter and two sisters, Frances and Leahnora, who were inseparable and said to have been the prettiest girls in Salisbury. Miniatures of them hang in the Washington, D. C. home of Dr. Humphreys' great granddaughter Adele Price Welch (Mrs. William Welch) who has inherited the charm and humor characteristic of this outstanding family.

In 1887 Thomas married Laurena Townsend, daughter of Soloman Townsend, a young lady of Philadelphia who also had charm and with whom he fell deeply in love. She had an exquisite complexion, beautiful hazel eyes and a sparkling sense of humor which blended happily with his so Thomas brought a second bride to Mill Grove.

As Dr. Humphreys had told his son to take care of his sisters they continued to live there and the assorted family lived harmoniously although occasionally with trying experiences.

Laurena found that her very tall husband, 6'3" was interested in good government as well as law. He was mayor of Salisbury for two terms and then became State Senator, doing many things of tremendous value for Maryland. He was also Treasurer of the Library Association and an Elder in the Wicomico Church.

Their only child, Thomas Jr., born on September 13, 1889 was the last child to be born in the old mansion. He inherited the gay humor of both parents, their love of books and a double share of charm. He spent happy childhood years on the beautiful plantation which were deeply etched in his memory.

After the death of his father on April 13, 1897 Laurena and Thomas Jr., came to Philadelphia to live at 1711 Spruce Street with her widowed mother, bachelor brother George and two unmarried sisters, Adelaid and Ida Townsend.

Thomas was educated in the Episcopal Academy and the University of Pennsylvania. In 1924 he married Elizabeth Reeves, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Morgan Reeves of 1916 Spruce Street and Spring Lake, New Jersey. He spent the last forty years of his life in Germantown where he became identified with its business life being a Trust Officer of the Germantown Trust Company, Treasurer of the Germantown Historical Society and a member of the Germantown Community Council among many other activities.

Like his father and grandfather he was a member of the Presbyterian Church.

When he died suddenly on January 8, 1962 the whole community was as shocked and grieved as Salisbury had been over the death of his grandfather, Dr. Cathell Humphreys, almost a hundred years before.

EPILOGUE

Poplar Hill Mansion, where Dr. Humphreys married Isabella Huston, is the only Colonial house left in Salisbury after two great fires. It is built of white clapboard with a handsome palladian window over the pillared portico at the entrance.

Laurena Humphreys used to tell of the wild excitement of a fire she witnessed. Men were rushing frantically into the flaming house carrying out valuable furniture but what held her fascinated gaze was the sight of the Episcopal clergyman who had hurried over to help. He raced into the house and came out with a pot de chambre which he held in front of him like a collection plate, and continued to hold in a sort of daze as he wandered around. What a fillip it would have added to the occasion if some jovial soul in the crowd had dropped a clinking coin into it and brought him back to reality! Laurena and her son Thomas, Jr., who was my husband, always saw the humorous side of things and told many amusing stories of their happy days at Mill Grove.

On the wall of my Victorian house hangs the silhouette of Dr. Cathell Humphreys and in the fireplace of my library are his massive brass andirons complete with tongs, poker, shovel and stand, also a particularly beautiful brass fender. Complementing the set is a brass wood box with raised tavern scenes which belonged to my father Dr. Reeves.

The picture of Senator Thomas Humphreys hangs near his father's silhouette and shows a fine scholarly face. His wife, Laurena's beautiful photograph is here too, and many of their son who resembled them both in appearance and character.

Frances and Leahnora died within a week of each other in 1907 and their nephew Walter, who never married, sold Mill Grove.

Today, on the exact spot where so much of life had been lived, where the gamut of life's joys and sorrows had touched so many people, a fine Public Library has been built. In it is a Maryland Room where many family records are stored.

The street named for Isabella is still there, its name unchanged, and also the house General Humphrey Humphreys built on Broad Street for his son Dr. Eugene one hundred and ten years ago (1885). His granddaughter Miss Betty Humphreys is still living in this house of twenty rooms where she was born.

Elizabeth Virginia Spence's son Thomas Humphreys Spence, who married Charlotte Calvert, descendant of Lord Baltimore, was Dean of Classical Languages at the University of Maryland, a post he held for forty years.

His three daughters Virginia Spence Lescour, Charlotte Spence Wilton and Mary Spence, as well as four grandchildren, William Lescour, Craig Wilton, Charlotte Wilton Smith and Thomas Humphreys Spence Wilton all live in Washington or its envisions.

Elizabeth Virginia's daughter Adele married Dr. Thomas Malcolm Price, and two of their three children Adele Price Welch and Thomas Malcolm, Jr., and his daughters Carol Lorraine Price and Patricia Spence Price also live in Washington. Their sister Virginia Price Truesdale resides in Davenport, Iowa, and her twin sons Donald and Paul live in New Orleans, Louisiana and Phoenix, Arizona, respectively, with their families. Although only three of Dr. Cathell Humphreys' nine children married his descendants down to great, great, great grandchildren are scattered widely over the United States.

His daughter Isabella, known and loved for her lively humor, married Purnell Jones of Salisbury. Their only child died at the age of four months.

A Map of

Historic Germantown

Designed by J. Riegel, Jr.

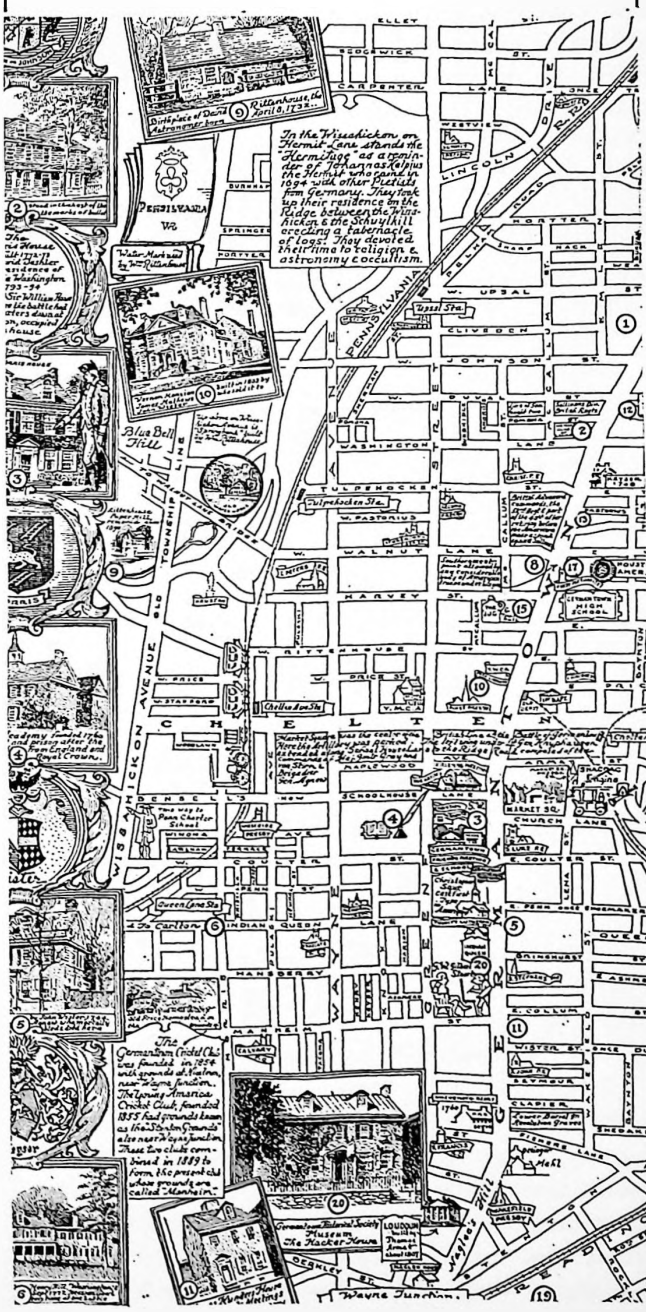
This detailed map, a portion of which is shown below, shows the locations of streets, historic buildings, churches, etc. It is replete with data concerning local people, places, and events.

Size: 19 by 25 inches
Price: Black and white, $3.00
Beautifully hand-colored, $25.00

The map may be ordered from:

Captain Edmund A. Crenshaw, Jr.
519 Pelham Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19119

Checks should be made payable to Captain Crenshaw.



A Famous Family Fight About Real Estate
Gratz vs. Cohen

By J. Solis-Cohen, Jr.

A GRATEFUL client, some time ago, presented me with an old document, yellowed with age, the ink as legible as the day it was written, and dated January 1787. The paper was a promissory note, given by one Moses Cohen of Philadelphia to Benjamin Nones, for a loan of $168.00.

It intrigued me; so I decided to try to find out something about the signers. It is well known that Major Benjamin Nones, who was president of the Mikveh Israel Congregation of Philadelphia in 1791, was a patriot and a soldier who is reported to have served on the staffs of both General Washington and General Lafayette and later was very active in American politics, being identified with the party of Thomas Jefferson. It was gratifying to know that a predecessor as Parnas of Mikveh Israel was sufficiently affluent to loan money even in modest sums, and particularly pleasing to learn that there were Cohens living in Philadelphia in 1787, over 150 years ago, with sufficient credit to obtain an unsecured loan.

It was then necessary to investigate who was Moses Cohen. This was very difficult since even in Colonial times in America, Cohen was not an unusual name. Morais's "History of the Jews of Philadelphia" mentions one by that name as a broker and shopkeeper living on 2nd Street near Market, in 1785. My city directory of that year confirms this statement.

For further information, I sought the advice of a man with an unfailing encyclopedic mind on early American Jewish history, the distinguished President of this Society. He suggested looking up a celebrated lawsuit of Gratz vs. Cohen. It was this research that resulted in the disclosure of a most dramatic and remarkable series of events concerning descendants of this same Moses Cohen, beginning with the purchase of land in Pennsylvania before the Revolution by a group of men well known in Colonial history and concluding with a suit in the highest court of the United States in 1850. Within this span of nearly 100 years is encompassed a story of success in land speculation beyond the fondest hopes of the promoters, profits making the partners so congenial that one is gladly accepted as the husband of a favorite daughter of the other. In time, however, the scene shifts from profits and unearned increment to losses and liabilities. The partners now begin fighting over divisions and titles so that court litigation between father and son-in-law results in the daughter being disinherited. Nor does the story end there. The controversy is carried on by cousins "unto the third generation," undismayed by the death of all the original participants in the litigation.

Finally, disgusted and disheartened by the years of litigation and impoverished by the lack of income from large real estate holdings, the record discloses, a daughter, one of the legatees, grown old and feeble, tries to settle the family squabble. Thereupon she and her nephew, Simon Gratz, are angrily accused by another nephew, Joseph Simon Cohen, of all sorts of fraud and collusion. It is gratifying to record that her integrity and mentality were endorsed by the United States Supreme Court in such unequivocal language as "though aged, she has proved to be intelligent and capable," and "wisely put an end to a protracted family litigation as expensive and ruinous as it was derogatory."

Fully to appreciate the true significance of this case, it must be borne in mind that the late 18th Century was one of the "heroic" periods in American real estate. The purchase of land in the western part of Pennsylvania, particularly in the neighborhood of Pittsburgh, resulted in controversies over title with George Washington and his real-estate agent, which have been recorded in papers presented before this Society in former years. Prior and subsequent to the Revolution, land companies were organized in which Washington, Jefferson, Franklin and Robert Morris were financially interested, as well as Sir William Johnson, George Groghan and William Trent. Some of these men had as their partners in speculation Joseph Simon, David Franks, Aaron Levy, Bernard and Michael Gratz. Deeds signed by these Jewish pioneers and their distinguished associates, early speculators in American real estate, date back to 1750. Many of the real estate minded citizens of Colonial days purchased acres of ground "sight unseen," of which their only knowledge was through reports secured from trappers, Indian scouts and their local real-estate agents. Unfortunately this condition no longer exists, and an investor in real estate today insists on personally inspecting his property. With the rationing of gasoline, it must now be within walking distance.

The early history of the real-estate transactions here under consideration, according to the official records, covers a period of almost 100 years and concerns three generations of the same family. It starts with a real estate speculation made by Joseph Simon of Lancaster. He was also well known in Philadelphia, particularly to the members of the Mikveh

Israel Congregation, to whom he willed his Sepher Torah, which is still in the possession of the Congregation.

In 1760, Simon, after many successful land deals, entered into a partnership to buy some more land in Pennsylvania with William Trent, for whom the city of Trenton is named, David Franks and Levy Andrew Levy. This partnership was unfortunately not successful and when dissolved in 1769, had lost in its real-estate transactions nearly 9500 £ sterling, a very substantial amount. Of this sum, the court records disclose that Wm. Trent owed Franks and Simon about 4000 £ and gave them as collateral, a mortgage on 7500 acres of ground in the southwestern part of Pennsylvania, which he had acquired in a former and more lucrative transaction.

David Franks originally was loyal to the American cause, having been a signer of the Non-Importation Resolution in Philadelphia in 1765. He became a Loyalist during the Revolution and his activities resulted in his arrest by the American military authorities. Apparently he possessed a rather elastic memory, for in 1786, while in the hands of the Sheriff of London, (according to defense presented by Simon Gratz), unknown to his partner, Joseph Simon, he signed an indenture conveying "divers lands" in Pennsylvania to Tench Coxe and Isaac Hazlehurst in payment of a debt due to Amos Hayton. On May 18, 1790, Franks again assigned his interest in the mortgage given by Trent to Simon and himself to Michael and Bernard Gratz, Michael Gratz having married Joseph Simon's daughter Miriam. The Gratzes and Simons had been friendly and partners in numerous real estate transactions. It is interesting to present-day Philadelphians to note that the "divers lands" include two "water snuff mills," one about 5 miles from Philadelphia on the Wissahickon Road, and the other in a certain creek called Cobb's Creek near the town of Darby.

The mortgage, consistent with the record of many other mortgages on unproductive ground, became delinquent in interest payments. As a result, Joseph Simon, apparently not aware that his astute partner, Franks, had already twice assigned his interest, foreclosed, and bought in 10 tracts at a sheriff's sale on July 6 and 7, 1790.

Like all good men, Joseph Simon departed this earth in 1804; and when his will was read, his two daughters, Bilah, who had married Solomon M. Cohen, and Leah, who had married Zaligman Phillips, were his principal heirs. The estate included his right title and interest to the 7500 acres secured by the defaulted mortgage of the famous Wm. Trent.

There had been bad blood over business deals between Joseph Simon and the Gratzes prior to Simon's death, as disclosed by the Court Records, and Clause 16 of his will has a pungent paragraph which I quote in part: "and whereas I have received many hardships from son-in-law Gratz and his sons, and in the settlement of our accounts they have taken an unfair advantage of me, by reason whereof they have in an indirect way received a full proportion of my estate ... I order my executors to pay to my said daughter, Miriam, 100 pounds specie at the same time declaring that I do so from a sense of justice, having no dislike for her personally, still retaining all my love and affection to my dear daughter Miriam . . . ."

Time went on. The Gratzes, Joseph Simon's descendants, Isaac Hazelhurst and Tench Cox, all claimed ownership to these various tracts. The court records disclose that, finally, in February 1833, two weeks after the death of her sister, Bilah, Leah Simon Philips, for a paltry $1500, signed an agreement with Simon Gratz, her nephew (his father, Michael Gratz having died), conveying any interest her father had possessed in certain of these tracts. The land was later disposed of by the Gratzes.

When sister Bilah's children subsequently learned of this, there was the very devil to pay. Among them was a lawyer, Joseph Simon Cohen, named after his distinguished grandfather. He got his brothers and sisters to permit him to start legal proceedings against the Gratzes. In January 1839, he started suit and his brief not only named the Gratzes as defendants but included many other distinguished members of the Philadelphia Jewish Community—John Moss, Isaac Phillips, Lyon J. Levy and Isaac B. Phillips—for "entering into a conspiracy to defraud."

The case dragged on for years—Simon Gratz died during the litigation in 1841. Testimony was taken before a master, Oliver Hopkinson, member of a distinguished Philadelphia family. Technical rulings of procedure were signed by the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, Roger B. Taney.

Papers relating to the matters were lost for years, until finally, in June 1843—83 years after the original transaction, Lyon J. Levy discovered the missing papers in a trunk in the garret room of a house recently occupied by him. He protests in an affidavit, I quote . . . "He has no recollection nor knowledge of the time when nor the means how the said trunk and its contents came into said late dwelling and he verily believes that they were put there without his knowledge . . . ."

Then the United States Court ordered a jury trial to decide the value of the lands as of 1833, when Simon Gratz and his aunt, Mrs. Leah Phillips, entered into an agreement, "to end all family fights."

So testimony of real estate experts was heard, and they varied greatly—then, as now, and finally in 1848, a verdict against the Gratzes was handed down in the sum of "$9,415.29 with interest from October 14, 1843 and costs."

An interesting side-light is one of the comments made by the Judge, Robert C. Grier, relating to allegations against the late Simon Gratz. I quote . . . "Everyone acquainted with the phraseology of the law

is well aware that the epithets 'fraudulent' and 'collusive' are often applied in courts to transactions which in common parlance would be characterized but as *adroit speculations* or *sharp bargains* where the party who gained an advantage thereby would not subject his character to any imputation of moral obliquity."

On instructing the jury, the following paragraph is rather pertinent: "The measure of Gratz liability must be the cash value of these lands as ascertained by a jury, not the price which *was* obtained for them."

When referring to further litigation, the judge said: "If it is thought advisable to continue this litigation through another half century" . . .

The Gratzes appealed this decision to the United States Supreme Court and the Lower Court was reversed. In its final decision the Court said: "But in the family settlement it is proper to look to equitable circumstances and not to expect all technical formalities as prevail between strangers."

"In fine, we are at a loss to see any strong indications of fraud in any part of this transaction either by Simon Gratz or Mrs. Phillips and most of what appears, at first, in some degree objectionable, seems reconciled with the perfect integrity when we advert to the legal presumption in favor of those charged with mis-behavior and to the family connections between the parties and the preponderating equities for the case."

Thus this bitterly contested law-suit came to an end after having gone through the courts of Philadelphia and Lancaster, the District Court of Eastern Pennsylvania, and to the Supreme Court of the United States. While a printed copy of the "paper book" of this great law-suit, known as Gratz vs. Cohen, is in the archives of the rare book collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, it is not readily available to the prying eyes of any inquisitve investigator. Fortunately, another copy was found on the shelves of the Law Library in the City Hall of Philadelphia. The brief recital of the facts presented here does not, of course, exhaust the human interest of which these documents are full. For behind the story of the real-estate transaction lies a chapter in the expansion of the United States, in the history of some of our best Jewish and Christian society and, not least, a story of human conflicts such as may be used by some novelist of the future to weave a tale as fascinating as Hugh Wynne or Oliver Wiswell about the formative period of the American Jewish Community.

Editor's Note:

The foregoing is the text of an address delivered June 16, 1942, before the American Jewish Historical Society.

The manuscript is from the von Trott collection.

Historic Tour

THE ANNUAL spring tour of historic homes in Germantown will be held on Sunday, May 15th, between one and five. Please note your calendar so you'll keep the date open for this gala event.

No matter what part of historic Germantown appeals most to you, there will be *that* section included on the tour. All of lower Germantown—from Loudouin, first home at the start of the hill to Morris House just below School Lane—will have points of interest that you won't want to miss.

As always on the day of the tour, the clocks will be turned back to Colonial times with pretty girls in costume acting as hostesses or just lending atmosphere as they stroll up and down hill in lower Germantown.

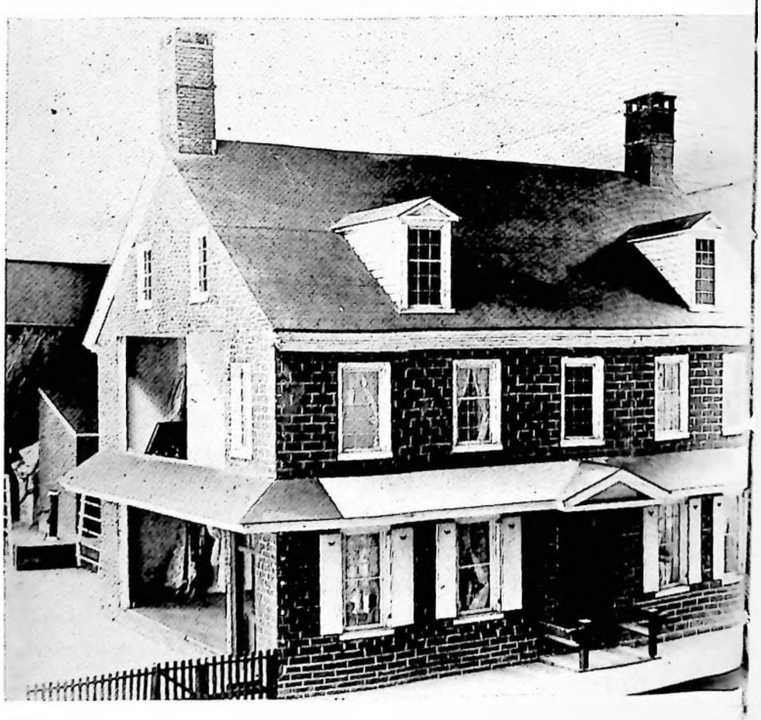
Report of the Relics Committee

by JOHN WELTHALL

The Johnson House replica—largest single exhibit in the Annex—has now been completed. The doll house was cleaned and has been furnished with the Litchfield pieces originally made to order for this wonderful toy.

So that visitors may enjoy seeing the furnished interior, glass walls have replaced the original side walls of the house. And to add another note of authenticity, landscaping has been started on the area surrounding the buildings.

The Committee wishes to thank **Mrs. Margaret Boswick** for the work she did in completing the doll house and **Capt. Edmund A. Crenshaw, Jr.,** for his time and effort in making it possible to fully enjoy the entire picture of the miniature Johnson House.





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(*Continued from page 8*)

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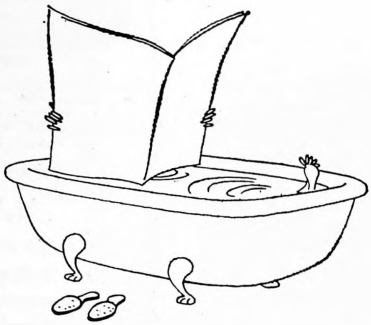
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