

---

# The Corridor

---

Volume XXXII, No. 3

Newsletter of the Old York Road Historical Society

Fall 2023

---

## LECTURE SERIES

The Program Committee has arranged for the following presentations to be held on Wednesday evenings at 7:30 p.m. in the John Barnes Room of Abington Friends Meeting (520 Meetinghouse Road, Jenkintown). The programs will also be accessible via Zoom. The lecture series is sponsored by a grant from the Jenkintown Lyceum and all programs are offered free of charge.

**October 11 – Buried Secrets: Looking for Frank and Ida.** Journalist and author Anne Hanson will give insights to her book recounting her painstaking and detailed search for her paternal grandparent's families of origin. This real-life mystery is about her quest to discover the hidden past that her grandparents Frank and Ida took to their graves. When she finally unearthed their real identities, she learned that their tales were lies invented to conceal disturbing facts. *Buried Secrets* is both a suspenseful drama and a true story about love, sacrifice, and family relationships. Signed copies of her book will be available following the presentation.

**November 8 – Philadelphia's Lazzaretto: Forgotten Monument to a Hidden History.** University of Pennsylvania professor David Barnes will present a history of Philadelphia's 19<sup>th</sup> century quarantine station, the Lazzaretto, and the subject of his latest book. In the 1790s, four devastating yellow fever epidemics threatened the survival of Philadelphia. In response, the city built a new quarantine station called the Lazzaretto downriver from its port. From 1801 to 1895, a strict quarantine was enforced there to protect the city against yellow fever, cholera, typhus, and other diseases. Barnes shares the lessons of the Lazzaretto through a series of tragic and inspiring true stories of people caught up in the painful ordeal of quarantine. Spanning a turbulent century of immigration, urban growth, and social transformation, Barnes will explore the life-and-death debates and ordinary heroism that saved Philadelphia when its survival as a city was at stake. Dr. Barnes will have books available for signature following the lecture.

## - - FALL OUTINGS - - Saint John's Huntingdon Valley Church Cemetery

Sunday, October 29, 2:00 p.m.

We will tour the cemetery of Saint John's Episcopal Church in Huntingdon Valley. In fact, there are three distinct burial grounds associated with this site. The first corresponds to the founding of the church as the Fairview Methodist Episcopal Church in 1845. The second burial area relates to Saint John's Episcopal Church that was established in 1919. Edward E. Marshall bought the church building from the Methodist Synod and gave it to the Episcopal Dioceses. Marshall also founded the Meadowbrook School, which used the church building as its chapel. The third burial area relates to the Herkness family. In the 1920s, the Herkness family gave the church additional land while retaining land adjacent to the cemetery for use as a family burial ground. In addition to Marshall and the Herknesses, other noteworthy burials include members of the Elkins, Gribbel, and Tyler families, Wharton J. Sinkler, William C. Peace, and Joseph Wharton Lippincott. Cost is \$5 for members and \$8 for non-members. Please use the enclosed reservation form.

## The Bryn Athyn Train Wreck

Saturday, December 2, 1:30 p.m.

Join the Society as it partners with the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust for this annual program observing the anniversary of the Bryn Athyn Train wreck, which occurred 102 years ago on December 5, 1921. This head-on collision of two trains along the Newtown railway line resulted in the deaths of 26 persons.

Railroad historian Larry Eastwood will give a presentation on the train wreck with a Q&A period to follow. At 2:45, the assembled will commence a walk to the crash site led by Society President David Rowland. Pre-registration is required by December 1 through the Pennypack Trust web site ([www.pennypacktrust.org](http://www.pennypacktrust.org)). Pennypack Trust and Old York Road Historical Society members are free; non-members \$10. This program will be held at the Trust's Visitors' Center.

# A Bit of History – Montgomery Publishing Company Records

By Lily Wasserman

“Montgomery Newspapers tell a more effective story to more people in the buying suburban area than any other media.” So read a promotion in the records of Montgomery Publishing, a company that focused on publishing weekly local newspapers in Montgomery County. Their publications also included magazines for local businesses, anniversary magazines for organizations, and holiday celebration information.

Their newspapers, a few of which are still active, covered different areas of Montgomery County, and the company had various offices for the newspapers, including one in Jenkintown Plaza.

In 1952 William E. Strasburg purchased the Ambler Gazette. A few years later he merged with the Robinson Printing Company to form Montgomery Publishing. In 1959 the Times Chronicle Company merged into Montgomery Publishing. Each of these publishing company had a number of mastheads. Consolidation was the name of the game and as time went on, the Montgomery County publishing world consolidated into Montgomery Publishing.

The Society has a number of their newspapers in microfilm and hard copy formats, along with the surviving business records of the publishing company.

Montgomery Publishing’s newspapers included, at one point, the Times-Chronicle, Public Spirit, Montgomery Post, Glenside News, Ambler Gazette, The Globe, Willow Grove Guide, The Sun, and Sunday Post.

A new writer or reporter at Montgomery Publishing would have started their journey with the “new hire” folder in the personnel series. This included a packet on AP style

and writing, the principles of writing for Montgomery Publishing, and a list with maps and landmarks.

For freelance photographers, the company might have provided the freelancer’s contract, some photograph release forms (used to ensure the photographer’s permission for newspaper usage), and the guide to photograph sizes. Some might have entered a 1966 photography competition, whose flyer the company kept.

The personnel series is not only limited to what a new hire might have received, but papers related to work-life. On one Good Friday, year unknown, the workers were dismissed early. The group annuity manual details how a worker was paid, possibly for their lifetime. For the 100th anniversary of the newspaper *Today’s Spirit*, the company hosted a party; the Society’s collection includes the guest book. In various years, the newspapers won awards for stories; the collection has some of them.

To decide whether to change the distribution borders for the county newspapers, company analysts would have examined the circulation and distribution records, available in the financial series. The series also includes communications about wage increases for employees, insurance pamphlets, and lists of employee overtime for payment purposes.

Photographers might have consulted the departmental budgets before purchasing any equipment in the catalogues the Montgomery Publishing Company donated, and office workers might have done the same before purchasing any of the office equipment in the advertisements they kept.

A journalist begins a story with research, and in the company kept many of the files that journalists used to put together their stories. Prior to the internet, this research was done by traveling, interviewing, gathering relevant papers such as pamphlets detailing the history of a place relevant to the story, government studies, letters to the editor, maps, and pictures.

Some of the files are about court cases and trials, the Jenkintown revitalization project, and Turnpike route changes. These news stories are highly localized, describing the impact on Montgomery County or the specific area of the county that the newspaper focused on.

Some of these stories would have been features stories, stories that, rather than focusing on a recent event, are longform and usually written after an event. Montgomery Publishing, for example, kept files on historical locations and news clippings of stories about these specific places and their background.

Journalists with the company’s newspapers covered how different areas in the county celebrated holidays. Their files include pictures of Ambler decked out for Christmas, essays that local grade-school children wrote to the paper about the upcoming holidays, and news clippings about Glenside at the Fourth of July. Some of the holidays are county-specific, like Horsham Day or the June Fete.

Sports writers with the company covered high school sports in the area, both public and private, and followed the cycle of sports through the year. The Society has the company’s files on high school football, wrestling, basketball, baseball, lacrosse, and track. These include both scores, news clippings about games, and the

“yogi poll”, where sportswriters attempted to guess the outcome of championships before the end of the season. During a sports game, where the outcome can change by the second, journalists had to take detailed notes, make sure to mark player names, and rush to interview players, coaches, or referees before writing the article. Some of the game notes are in templates, while others are series of numbers in notebooks whose significance only the writers themselves know.

Some people wrote to the newspaper, either in the form of “letters to the editor”, or press releases. Letters to the editor are letters sent by readers of the newspaper, expressing their opinions on a recent event. The newspaper might then publish the letter, alongside a news article or other letters about the same topic. Press releases, on the other hand, are sent by organizations or persons to inform media outlets of upcoming events relevant to their organization. The submissions series also includes a letter written by a historian interested in Jenkintown’s history, who wrote an article about a hypothet-

ical time-machine trip to Jenkintown in the past.

Each year, the newspapers held a scholarship competition for students in the county. Students would submit information about themselves and an essay answering a question that the papers posed on topics such as tobacco or global economies. Each high school would have a finalist, and a journalist would interview each finalist for a profile published in the papers during the competition.

Beyond newspapers, Montgomery Publishing worked with local businesses and organizations to create special publications. Some of these were brand-based, such as the Hess advertisement publication, while others were for local organizations, such as the Wissahickon Fire Company, who created an anniversary booklet. One publication, *Art Matters*, was about art in the area, focusing on art news and local artists.

Beyond the company, the files include information on organizations they were part of. These two organizations were focused on news-

papers – the Interstate Circulation Manager’s Association and the International Circulation Manager’s Association. The company kept communications with them, and invitations to various events.

As Montgomery Publishing was formed as a result of industry consolidation, so too was its demise. The company was purchased by Journal Register Company in 2001, since rebranded as MediaNews Group. Its over 300 weekly publications throughout the United States appear on-line, and for the select few, in print format. (And yes, the Society still preserves printed copies of the paper.)

---

*Lily Wasserman is an incoming sophomore at Drake University in Des Moines Iowa. As part of her course work, she interned at the Society this past summer, helping organize the Montgomery Publishing Company Records. Her love of publishing is manifest at college where she is a Features Editor for The Times-Delphic, the college weekly newspaper.*

## Donations to the Archives

The Society has received a number of significant donations since February including the following:

- Papers, photographs, clippings, ephemera and works of art of artist Joseph T. Pearson, from Richard Hamilton.
- Wyncote Audubon Society records, from Wendy Clymer, to be added to the existing collection.
- A 1925 interior photograph of the A&P store on West Avenue in Jenkintown, from Joanne Brady
- Various regional history and architectural books, from the estate of Robert M. Skaler.
- A pencil on paper drawing by artist Xanthus Smith of the Neshaminy Creek at the former Rushland Station, from Peter Rudolph and the McClees Gallery.
- Architectural drawings of the Jenkintown-Wyncote Train Station Revitalization project by the Hillier Group in 1985, from Ed Landau.
- Programs and other ephemera of All Hallows Episcopal Church, from Albert Tedesco.
- Photographic negatives of aerial and construction progress shots for various regional construction projects of L.F. Driscoll Company, from Salvatore Boccuti, to be added to the Salvatore A. Boccuti Aerial Photography Collection.
- Research files on mills along the Pennypack Creek, from Robert Kilgore.
- Research files on the American Revolution including many images, from Clare Reilly.

In addition to the above gifts, the Society purchased the first ten volumes of House & Garden magazine (1901-1906). Funds for the purchase came from memorial gifts in memory of Stephen Costello.

# Jenkintown 150 Book

Next year, Jenkintown will be celebrating its establishment as a borough in 1874. Many of the local organizations are in the planning stages for events that promise to make a memorable 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Society, in partnership with Society member Marion Rosenbaum, is in the midst of compiling and writing an illustrated photographic history book to mark the occasion. The book, like the six prior books authored solely by the Society or in partnership with other authors, will be published by Arcadia Publishing in the spring of 2024. The book will contain roughly 210 historic photographs and will tell the story of this community that has served as a hub for commerce and culture for the surrounding region. If you have original photographs that you think would be suitable for the book, please contact the Society at 215-886-8590.

## Society Membership Information

### Membership Renewal

Now is the time to renew your membership! The membership year is the same as the school year; the advanced year being used to denote the year on your mailing label. So, for the membership year that runs from the fall of 2023 to the summer of 2024, the date on your label should be "2024". Annual dues have not increased this year. Please contact the Society at 215-886-8590 with any questions. As always, support at the Patron level or higher greatly enhances the work we are able to do.

### Matching Gifts

Did you know that the Society is eligible to receive corporate matching gifts? Several members have doubled the impact of their gift by submitting paperwork to their company for this purpose. Check with your employer to see if the Society qualifies.

### IRA Donations

For the past several years, many folks have taken the opportunity to donate their required minimum distribution (RMD) to charitable causes. The Society, as a 501(c)(3) organization, qualifies as a worthy cause for your IRA donations.

### Making a Bequest

Updating your will? Please consider including a bequest to the Society's general endowment fund in your will or estate plans. Your gift will help ensure a vibrant future for the Society.

## Events of Local Interest

The Society will have a table at the following local community events:

**Jenkintown Festival of the Arts**, Sunday, September 17 from 1:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Jenkintown Old Town Square and surrounding streets.

**Camp William Penn and Historic LaMott Day**, Saturday, September 23 from 10:00 am to 3:00 p.m. on the grounds and surrounding areas of the LaMott Community Center at the corner of Sycamore and Willow Avenues.

**Richard Wall Museum Open House**, Sunday, October 22 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Richard Wall House Museum at 1 Wall Park Drive, Elkins Park. A display featuring the history of the township's Police Department will be unveiled.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The following are the officers and directors for the Society's 2022-2023 program year:

President: David Rowland  
First Vice President: Thomas Wieckowski  
Second Vice President: Edward Landau  
Secretary: Eileen Koolpe  
Treasurer: Michael Czerwonka, CPA

Directors: Leslie Bell, Bryan Havir, James Rubillo, Stephanie Walsh and Mary Washington.

Directors Emeriti: Martha McDonough, Joyce Root, Elizabeth Smith, and Mildred Wintz.

## OLD YORK ROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Alverthorpe Manor, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
515 Meetinghouse Road  
Jenkintown, PA 19046

215 - 886 - 8590

### Archive Research Hours

Wednesdays, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Or by appointment. Please email the Society to make an appointment

Society's Website

[www.oyrhs.org](http://www.oyrhs.org)

Society's E-mail Address

[OldYorkRoadHistory@gmail.com](mailto:OldYorkRoadHistory@gmail.com)