

# The Wall Paper

Summer 2010

A Publication of the Cheltenham Township Historical Commission

Volume XIII Number 14

## Market Day --A Gala Event

Market Day, in its 27th year, is an annual fund raising event sponsored by the Cheltenham Township Historical Commission. Market Day will be held on the grounds of the Richard Wall House Museum on September 11th, 2010 (Rain Date, Sunday, September 12th) from 9 AM to 4 PM. The event features numerous vendors of collectibles, arts, crafts, memorabilia and antiques. Throughout the Day, the Richard Wall House Museum will be open for self-guided tours from 10 AM to Noon and from 1 PM to 4 PM. Refreshments will be available for purchase on the grounds. Admission to the grounds and the museum are free. All proceeds benefit the restoration and maintenance of the museum. For more information or to serve as a dealer for this Cheltenham Township Fund Raiser please call 215-887-9159 or visit the Township website at [www.cheltenhamtownship.org](http://www.cheltenhamtownship.org). The Richard Wall House Museum is located on 1 Wall Park Drive, Elkins Park, PA.

## World War II Tribute

*Exhibitions commemorating the 65th anniversary of World War II are being presented through the collaborative efforts of several community organizations here and in the UK, including Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel and its Temple Judea Museum, the Richard Wall House Museum, the Elkins Park Library, and the Old York Road Historical Society. This multi-organizational memorial is a tribute to the lives of families on the home front and the men and women who fought in the global conflict that was the "War to End All Wars."*

### Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel Temple Judea Museum

The exhibition at the Temple Judea Museum remembers that fateful time in history with selections from the Silver Family World War II Home-front Ephemera Collection, a visual response by members of the Keneseth Israel (KI) Artists' Collective and students of the KI Confirmation Academy, a photographic tapestry, and selections from the Temple Judea Museum permanent collection mounted by museum director, Rita Poley under the direction of Guest Curator, Marlene D'Orazio Adler. The exhibition will be presented from September 3, 2010 to March 5, 2011 at Temple Judea Museum, Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, 8333 Old York Road, Elkins Park, PA at the corner of Township Line Road and Washington Lane.

### Richard Wall House Museum

The Richard Wall House Museum will exhibit memorabilia from the home front and war time life overseas. The exhibit was mounted by Dorothy Spruill, curator of the Wall House with the assistance of Cynthia Breen, archivist and Louse Cohen, conservator. Opening September 5th between the hours of 1 - 4 PM, visitors can see "Life on the Home Front and "War Front." Displays of the home front will feature ration books and rationed items, copies of newspapers, wartime wedding party finery, a USO Canteen Tableau, war time music, photos of Civil Defense teams, and the polio epidemic. "The War Front" will feature photos of the Pearl Harbor bombing, copies of President Roosevelt's notated war time speeches, GI and officer uniforms, a field organ, and other wartime memorabilia. Of special interest will be a collection of mini photographs from wartime England, donated by our sister community in Cheltenham, United Kingdom. On December 11, 2010, the Museum will be open from 10 AM to 4 PM for self-guided tours of the exhibit. The exhibit will be open from September through March 2011.

### Multi-Faith Memorial Service

*The public is invited to participate in a special multi-faith service in tribute to the memories of World War II, Friday evening December 10, 2010 at 8 PM at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, officiated by Rabbi Lance Sussman.*

### Elkins Park Library

The Elkins Park Library will host a lobby exhibit of World War II memorabilia also

opening in September 2010. The exhibit "World War II Remembered" under the direction of Cathy McCoy, will feature library books and keepsakes of library staff and its patrons.

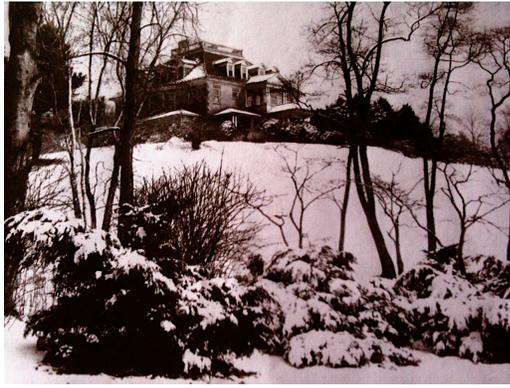
### Cheltenham, PA Committee and the United Kingdom's Twinning Committee Assist Richard Wall House Museum Exhibit

The Twinning Committee of Cheltenham and Gloucestershire, UK and the Cheltenham Committee, PA have collaborated to facilitate the display of photos (at the Richard Wall House Museum) depicting life on the home front in the sister community of Cheltenham, England during WW II. Permission to share these photos was made possible by the Gloucestershire newspaper, "The Echo." The committees foster an ongoing relationship due to the bond that exists between them because the founding fathers of Cheltenham Township emigrated from Cheltenham and Gloucestershire, UK. The Twinning Committee, UK is accessible to all interested Cheltenham Township PA residents who visit. For more information contact Nancy Gibson (215) 887-1000.

### Old York Road Historical Society

The Old York Road Historical Society, under the direction of its President David Rowland, will display photographs of the "Home Front" from communities along and adjacent to the Old York Road Corridor from Philadelphia to New Hope at the Richard Wall House Museum Library in September.

*World War II Tribute continued on page 2*



## The Lore and Lure of Old Wyncote

*“There are many good reasons for studying history. One of them is to help restrain the unwarranted romanticism that pondering past times incurs. Ah, the good old days! Life was slower, less complicated, cleaner, then. Wasn’t it? I can smell the fresh country air of Olde Wyncote now”.*

----Thomas Wieckowski

To be sure, given the chance, I would be the first in line to tour the Wyncote of a century or so ago. Seeing the old Mather mill in its heyday along a rustic country road would be a wonderful event. I yearn to experience what one early 19th century visitor described as “the click-clack of the old mill’s mechanism” which could be heard as soon as one started descending the narrow and rutted dirt path known first as the Abington-Germantown Road, then renamed Washington Lane in honor of our great national hero who trod the route several times in the storied autumn of 1777.

The grassy fields and thick woods that lined the way supported Isaac Mather’s family for one hundred and fifty years, then hosted department store magnate John Wanamaker’s prize herd of Alderney cows for another fifty. There’s a sight, cows in Wyncote! His mansion, Lindenhurst, was one of the most sumptuous homes in the entire country - until it burned to the ground in 1907, victim to the ever-present scourge of uncontrolled fire. The small stream that meandered through Wanamaker’s field and fed a pond before emptying into the Tookany exploded in wildflowers in the spring and summer. Annie Heacock, who lived in the 1749 farmhouse on the hill overlooking today’s eponymous road described the sylvan setting in the mid-19th century: “The bluffs were blue with the viola pedata, saxafrage, columbine, arbutus, anemones-what a wealth of spring flowers grew along the banks of the Tacony Creek.”

Another sure winner would be the chance to sit in 1898 with attorney and neighbor, John I. Rogers, on the veranda of his majestic hilltop mansion, Dunluce, overlooking Greenwood

Avenue. What a treat to discuss the prospects for his latest investment, a professional team in the new sport of baseball, which he named the “Phillies”.

Would he have guessed that in the far off 21st century it would be the oldest one-name, one-city franchise in all of professional sports? We could step down to the Diehl Oyster house in the tiny commercial area on the corner of Glenside Avenue for a tasty lunch and then go next door to the fountain at Eckles Pharmacy for a refreshing drink. But the pastoral setting was, alas, far from idyllic by our standards today.

Preservation of food, and the milk from Wanamaker’s, Sharpless’ and Heacock’s cows, depended on the supply of ice blocks cut from ponds like Heacock’s between the new Glenside Avenue and the railroad tracks. Filling the icehouse every winter was the cause for a celebration. The modern improvement in 1899 represented by ice blocks manufactured and supplied by the Hygeian ice company on Glenside Avenue marked a step forward in the comfort of home and the safety of eating.

When the “Syndicate” started building houses on the other side of the township line (there was not a road by that name then), they simply allowed household runoff, and sewage was so extensive in the new village that typhoid was an annual problem in the summer. The two churches were closed at times of contagion, and resident Joseph Hellerman of Greenwood Avenue was reported “very low” with typhoid on August 24, 1896. He was dead a week later, one of many who succumbed to this now unknown disease in our country.

The watchman at the Cheltenham Hills railroad crossing, William Mack, was struck by a train in 1896. Who doubts that, given a choice he would have preferred a 21st century five-minute ride to the future Abington Hospital rather than being put on a train headed downtown to the nearest hospital at the time, The Jewish Hospital. He died on the way.

We can’t go back except in our studies and reveries, and this, we might reluctantly concede, is a good thing. But it is important to know and ponder what our ancestors accomplished and what they suffered to build the beautiful communities of Cheltenham we enjoy today.

*Thomas Wieckowski’s new book, “Making Marathon”: A History of Early Wyncote, chronicles the growth of Wyncote from William Penn to 1900. Mr. Wieckowski is a member of the Cheltenham Township Historical Commission.*

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*World War II Tribute continued from page 1*

## Philadelphia USO Canteen

During World War II a USO Canteen was situated in an open area near Philadelphia City Hall. Here, dances were held for the servicemen. Not only did the US servicemen enjoy the hospitality but so did the servicemen from France and Great Britain whose ships docked in the Philadelphia Naval Yard. Their partners were young ladies who volunteered from the city and suburbs including local Elkins Park girls. The young ladies danced all summer long with servicemen in the open air canteen. In winter, the canteen was moved to a nearby office building basement. There was an airfield in the vicinity of Atlantic City which also provided entertainment for servicemen. On one memorable evening a bus was chartered for the Philadelphia Canteen ladies to venture to Atlantic City. As the ladies stepped off the bus they were faced with pitch black darkness due to a coastal black out. Each lady put her hand on the shoulder of the one in front of her to guide herself to a brilliantly lighted auditorium with Glen Miller and his Orchestra. The orchestra played long into the evening giving the servicemen a good time prior to their embarking on a tour overseas.

## CHELTENHAM TOWNSHIP AWARDED KEYSTONE HISTORIC PRESERVATION GRANT

Cheltenham Township was recently awarded a \$72,781 Keystone Historic Preservation Grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to undertake a long term restoration and rehabilitation project involving the wood windows, doors and related exterior woodwork at the George K. Heller School located at 439 Ashbourne Road, Cheltenham, Pennsylvania.

The building was constructed in three campaigns, 1883, 1893 and 1906 as a public school. The building was last used as a public elementary school in 1953. The Township acquired the building from the Cheltenham Township School District in 1954. From 1955 to present, the building has been leased to the Cheltenham Center for the Arts and used for instruction in the visual and performing arts serving well over 500 students (young children as well as adults) annually.

The restoration and rehabilitation project is scheduled to commence in September, 2010 and be completed by the end of the year. All the existing wood windows and doors will be restored. Also, at least nine new synthetic replacement windows will be removed, new wood windows will be added, and the wood cornice and cupola will be restored and painted. All other exterior wood and trim will be scraped, primed, and painted. This restoration and rehabilitation project will improve the overall function, condition, and operation of the building and will extend the life of the original historic fabric and architectural elements for future generations to enjoy and appreciate when visiting the Cheltenham Center for the Arts.

*Bryan T. Havir, P.P., AICP*  
*Assistant Township Manager*

## Cheltenham Township Wins \$20,000 Preserve America Grant

*Cheltenham Township recently won a \$20,000 Preserve America Matching Grant to document, inventory, and catalog the costume, clothing, and textiles collection of the Richard Wall House Museum. This project will enable the township-owned museum, which is listed on the national Register of Historic Places and dates to 1682, to better interpret Cheltenham's 300 years of local history.*

This matching grant was one of 43 awarded to 23 states under the Preserve America Grant Program. The program began in 2006 and is administered by the Department of the Interior's National Park Service in partnership with the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation. Preserve America is a White House initiative that encourages and supports community efforts to preserve and enjoy the nation's heritage. More information on Preserve America, including a complete list of grant recipients can be found at [www.PreserveAmerica.gov](http://www.PreserveAmerica.gov).



Karen Karuza, a former Historical Commission member, has been named by the Historical Commission to inventory and catalog the Wall House

collection. Ms. Karuza is a professor at the Art Institute of Philadelphia where she teaches textile and design studio courses. In 2008-09 she was given the distinction of Honored Faculty. Ms. Karuza holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Moore College of Art and Design and a Masters of Liberal Arts from the University of Pennsylvania.

## Salute to Women's History



SPECIAL OPEN  
HOUSE TOUR AT  
THE RICHARD  
WALL HOUSE  
MUSEUM

Sunday, October 24,  
2010, from Noon to 5

PM visitors can tour the Richard Wall House Museum and glimpse the clothing styles and acquaint themselves with the accomplishments of prominent women in history. ADMISSION is free and light refreshments will be served.

## Precious Places

*Conceived as a way to mark the 20th anniversary of Scribe Video Center, the Precious Places video documentaries celebrate the richness of neighborhoods, buildings, public spaces and landmarks. Precious Places is a community oral history project in which members of the community who know its history create video documentaries about the special places that help define a community, hold community memory, or may be in danger of being forgotten or lost due to suburban development. Elkins Park's High School Park, and La Mott's, La Mott Community*



*Garden are two of nine Delaware Valley community groups that have been accepted for participation in Scribe Video Center's 2010 "Precious Places" Community History Project.*

Scribe Video Center is a non-profit organization founded by filmmaker Louis Massiah and is located in West Philadelphia. Scribe provides each community group with production support and equipment to create an oral history documenting the people and places that make



communities unique. Philadelphia joins New York and Los Angeles in having a citywide oral history project.

The 2010-2011 **Precious Places** series which includes High School Park and La Mott Community Garden documentaries will premiere at the Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts at the Kimmel Center. For more information contact Corey Chao, Community Programs Coordinator at [corey@scribe.org](mailto:corey@scribe.org).

## Richard Wall House Museum

The Richard Wall House Museum 1 Wall Park Drive Elkins Park PA is open Sundays, 1-4 PM. Weekday group tours are available. For more information please call 215-887-9159.

To donate items circa 1682-1980 or to volunteer please contact the curator, Dorothy Spruill, 215-884-4306.

# The Cheltenham Township Historical Commission

*The rich history of Cheltenham Township is being made available to its residents through the Township Historical Commission's Outreach Program.*

The Commission's first endeavor was a lecture during the then annual Antique Show at Cheltenham High School. It dealt with little known points of interest at the turn of the century.

In the years 2004 and 2005, the Commission sponsored township bus tours which were highlighted by viewing homes of township notables, mill sites, mill workers lowly abodes, and stately mansions. Patrons visited historic St. Paul's Church, the Dominican Retreat House, and the site of Camp William Penn, the first and largest federal training ground for Civil War "US Colored Troops". From this beginning, Curtis Hall became the scene for two lectures a year. Lecture topics have included salutes to Black History Month (celebrated in March) and to Historic Preservation Month (held in May). Lectures have been given by historians, authors, and residents. Those concerning black history have included township history of the Civil War era with emphasis on the "colored troops," the underground railroad, the relationship between Germantown and Philadelphia, and the genealogy of a prominent black family.

National Preservation lecture topics have included East Cheltenham, township architecture and architects, mills and mill work along the Tookany Creek, and the history of the Lenape Indians who originally inhabited the township. The May 13, 2010 lecture featured author and historian, Dr. Thomas Wieckowski who discussed his most recent book, "Making Marathon: A History of Early Wyncote."

Historical Commission Lectures take place at Curtis Hall, Greenwood Avenue at Church Road, Wyncote at 8 PM. Historical Commission meetings precede lectures, and begin at 7 PM. All meetings and programs are free and open to the public.

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\* **Contributions to this edition of the Wall Paper were made by: Dorothy Spruill, Thomas Wieckowski, Louise Cohen, Bryan Havir, Diane Williams and Rita Poley.**

\* **Compiled and edited by Susan Axelrod**

# Richard Wall House Museum Acquires Period Pieces

The Richard Wall House Museum has acquired period furniture from the Cliveden and Upsala Mansions in Philadelphia. These acquisitions enable the Richard Wall House Museum to mount a permanent Victorian exhibit. The transfer of items of historical significance from one museum to another is



sanctioned by the National Trust. Among the new acquisitions are side chairs, a secretary, settees, a sewing cabinet, blusher, and pewter inkwell, all circa 1800-1830. The

**OPENING** to view these marvelous acquisitions is Sunday September 5, 2010 starting at 1 PM.

## Recent Acquisitions

*The Richard Wall House Museum has received numerous donations since the last publication of the Wall Paper in the Summer of 2005.*

*Please note this is an abbreviated listing of what has been donated since 2005.*

1937 formal tail suit, shirt, tie, suspenders, gloves and white pearls studs and cufflinks

19th century skis

19th century apothecary scales

1914 mahogany crib

19th century cobbler's iron shoe repair stand and 3 iron shoes

Victorian hair ornament

Early 19th century french ivory hair ornament

Evening suit

1940's tuxedo suit, shirt, black pearl studs and cufflinks

1960 evening gown

Autographed book, Camp William Penn

Book, Willow Grove Park

Book, Information and History: Cheltenham, England

Family Tree depicting the marriage of Sarah Wall and George Shoemaker donated by a direct descendant, Lettice Moon

Relics from the Cheltenham Township Health Department

Portable spectator's chair, circa unknown

Shovel, circa unknown, Cheltenham Township School District

2 grey wool shawls belonging to the descendants of Sarah Wall, circa 1875

Pearl seeded bag

1960's short black dinner dress

## Mark Your Calendars

*Please visit the Cheltenham Township website for a complete listing of events occurring in our community. Visit: [www.cheltenhamtownship.org/events/index.htm](http://www.cheltenhamtownship.org/events/index.htm)*

**OPENING** exhibits of newly acquired period pieces and displays featuring "Life on the Home Front and Overseas." Richard Wall House Museum. Sunday, September 5, 2010 from 1-4 PM.

**Market Day** at the **Richard Wall House Museum**, Saturday, September 11, 9 AM - 4 PM. Rain Date, Sunday, September 12th.

**Congregation Reform Keneseth Israel Temple Judea Museum Exhibit** September 3, 2010 to March 5, 2011.

"**World War II Remembered Exhibit**," Elkins Park Library, September 2010.

**Community Harvest Festival**, October 9, 2010, Curtis Arboretum, Wyncote.

**Salute to Women in History**, Richard Wall House Museum, Sunday, October 24, 2010 from Noon to 4 PM.

Richard Wall House Museum **Holiday Party**, December 9, 2010, 8 - 10 PM. An evening, featuring from the Richard Wall House collection, the changing styles of holiday decorations throughout its history.

**Interfaith Memorial Service**, Friday, December 10, 2010, **Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel** at 8 PM.

**Richard Wall House Museum World War II Memorial**, self-guided tours Saturday, December 11, 2010, 10 AM to 4 PM.

**Black History Month** celebration, Sunday February 24, 2011 at 2 PM. Curtis Hall, Wyncote.

Premiere, "**Precious Places**," April 2011 at the Kimmel Center, Philadelphia. Date and time to be announced.