

Penn's Manor of Springfield

An historical presentation
written under the auspices of
the Bicentennial Committee,
a committee created by
the Board of Commissioners
to develop a Bicentennial Program
in Springfield Township
to commemorate America's 200th birthday

1976

Text by

Velma Thorne Carter

Dedicated to

Aubrey H. Williams

whose lifetime research on
the history of Springfield Township
was invaluable to this
presentation



The new seal, above, embodies:

The 339 year old Penn Oak Tree which stood on E. Mill Rd., Flourtown, until Dec. 10, 1975.

The shield of the Penn Family.

Hand of Penn "treating" with the Indians.

Sheaf of wheat—early farming and milling industry.

Shovel & pick—lime and iron-ore quarrying.

1681 "Manor of Springfield" created.

Sun rays project bright future for Springfield.

A contest to develop a new Township seal was held in the public and private schools. The winning designs were submitted by:

1—Karen Braun, Enfield Jr. High

2—Susan McGarvey, Springfield High

Runners -up— Jamie Agnew

Linda Braun

Denise DeLaurentis

Cathy Low

Russell Souders

The official seal, illustrated above, was adapted from the winning designs by John F. Stillmun, Jr., artist.

Preface

Drawing upon existing historical records the author has attempted to tell the story of a place in America where roots are embedded in the earliest development of the country. The place is Springfield Township, which was set aside by William Penn for his own family's use. The materials and records used are gratefully acknowledged in the bibliography.

The Springfield Township Bicentennial Committee hopes that every resident of the Township who reads this story will walk with a new feeling of pride and an increased sense of history.

Springfield Township, 6.16 square miles in area, and situated in southeastern Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, is the smallest and most irregular township in the county. It is bounded by Upper Dublin on the north, Cheltenham on the east, Philadelphia on the south, and Whitemarsh Township on the west. The principal places are Flourtown, Erdenheim, Oreland and Wyndmoor.

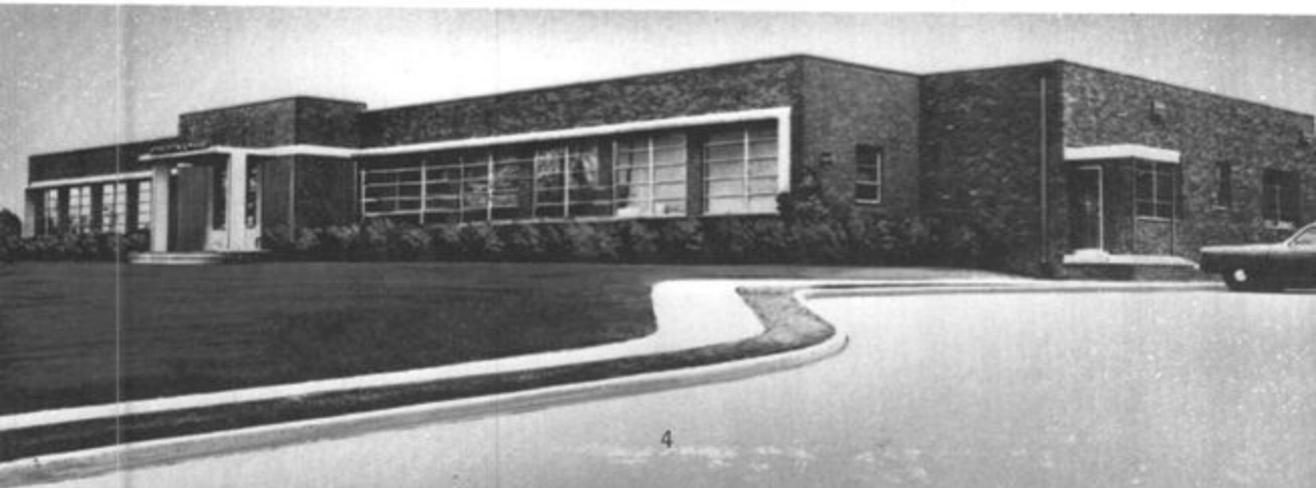
Yesterday



The original Township building located at 402 Bethlehem Pike, occupied from March 4, 1908 until 1955.

Today

New Township building erected in 1955 to fill greatly expanded needs of the community.



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- Aubrey Williams, a former member of the Springfield police department, and who wrote the very first history of the township. His work has been used extensively in this piece, and has been extremely valuable;
- Marie Kitto, local historian has provided much of the technical information included here and is responsible for collection of the interesting array of photographs;
- Mrs. Gilbert Rex for the generous loan of some historic records of the Rex and Cleaver families;
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Many other persons have aided the writer in gathering bits and pieces of information, and they are also gratefully acknowledged.

Finally, to E. B. and R. W. Thorne, loving thanks for giving the writer an appreciation of history and a home where the “spirit of place” gave her roots.

V.T.C.

Gulielma Maria Penn's Manor of Springfield (Springfield Township)

Introduction

Each place, like each person, bears certain distinctives which set it apart. Physical characteristics—fingerprints, for example—help to identify persons, but it is the responses we make to surroundings and events that determine the “personality” of the individual. Similarly, there is an uniqueness, an abiding spirit about a place, even though its residents and its appearance may change from time to time.

There is more to the uniqueness of a place than the geology, topography and climate of the land, or the genetics, economics and politics of its population.... We still respond to such phrases as “the genius of New England” or “the spirit of the Far West”.... The widespread acceptance of the words genius and spirit to denote the distinctive characteristics of a given region or city implies the tacit acknowledgement that each place possesses a set of attributes that determine the uniqueness of its landscape and its people.¹

It is to identify, to celebrate those characteristics which distinguish Springfield Township that this history is undertaken. That may be a complicated task, however, since even the map-makers designate four principal “places” within the township as Flourtown, Erdenheim, Oreland and Wyndmoor. A “fifth” place should be noted, North Woods, a part of which is within the township limits, though it bears a Glenside postal zone. Still more confusing is the fact that

Erdenheim and Wyndmoor are served by a Philadelphia post office. Another factor which has bearing on the township's identity is the fact that there is a Springfield, Delaware County, and a Springfield, Bucks County. Undoubtedly, there are many of us who identify much more with the communities than with the township.

As the research of the history of Springfield began, the Bicentennial Committee became convinced that all the people in the township should be aware of the heritage we all share. Although surely there is strength in our diversity, there can be pride in our commonality of purpose.

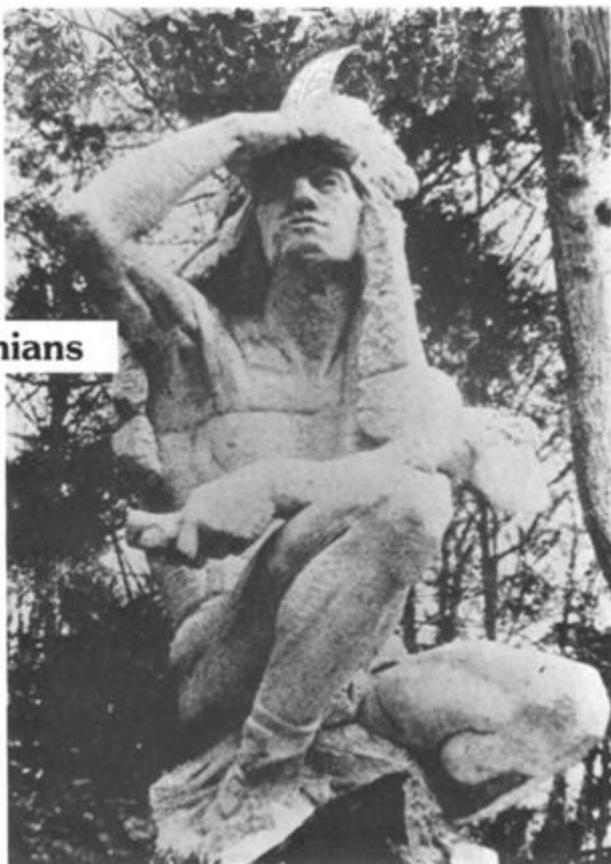
William Penn selected Springfield as one of his manors, and named it for his beloved wife. He chose its first residents and his family retained ownership of most of the land for nearly 50 years. When at last the land was opened for sale, the earliest settlers were farmers who loved the land and reaped its bounty. They responded to the call to protect their new-found freedom here by raising an astounding number of volunteers to oppose the British.

Improved transportation brought significant numbers of people to the township. They came seeking refuge from "cart and countinghouse" in the city. Later, some of the most prominent members of Philadelphia society selected this township for their homes. Many of us came to escape the clamor of the city, finding here a quiet place, a sanctuary, with open space, green lawns, exceptional schools, and all those many attributes we seek in a place to raise our families.

Is there, then, some identity of place that we can point to which encompasses the whole of the township? What is the common heritage we share? Who were some of the people who have lived here during these nearly 300 years of history? How did they live? What values did they hold?

The reader is urged to search for those clues throughout this narrative, perhaps to answer the questions we have posed about this place, this *PENN'S MANOR OF SPRINGFIELD*.

The Native Pennsylvanians



*Statue of Tedyuscung
—Chief of the Lenni-
Lenapes.*

Approximately 8,000 Delaware Indians, or as they called themselves, “the Lenni-Lenapes,” lived in Pennsylvania by the time William Penn arrived in America. They occupied both sides of the “Great Tide Water River” (the Delaware) and lived in communities of two or three hundred along the creeks and rivers during the summer and in winter moved to their hunting grounds in the interior. No better account of them can be found than Penn’s description in *A Letter from William Penn, Proprietary and Governor of Pennsylvania in America to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders*, published in London in 1683:

They are generally tall, straight, well-built, and of singular proportion; they tread strong and clever, and mostly walk with a lofty chin. Of complexion black, but by design, as the gipsies in England. They grease themselves with bear’s fat clarified, and using no defense against sun and weather, their skins must



Early Indian Map

needs be swarthy. Their eye is livid and black.... Their language is lofty yet narrow...like shorthand in writing, one word serveth in the place of three, and the rest are supplied by the understanding of the hearer.²

Penn found their language to have words of greatness and sweetness; he relished the sound of it, citing names of places the Indians used—*Rancocas, Oricton, Shakamaxon, Poquessin*—as having “grandeur” in them; words of sweetness—*anna* is mother, *issimus*, a brother; *netap*, friend, *hatta*, to have, *payo*, to come.

As soon as the children were born, they were washed in water, and while still very young, plunged into the rivers in cold weather in order to harden them. The small child was fastened to a board with swaddling cloths, which according to Penn, accounted for their having flat heads. The children walked very young, about nine months usually. They wore only a small cloth around their waists until they were big. The boys fished as a pastime until they were about 15 at which time they were allowed to go hunting. As soon as they could prove their manhood by “a good return of skins” they were allowed to marry.

The girls stayed with their mothers, hoeing, planting and carrying “burthens.” The wives were the true servants of their husbands, although Penn found the husbands otherwise very affectionate. Most of the girls married when they were about thirteen and fourteen, the boys seventeen and eighteen.

Their houses are mats or barks of trees, set on poles in the fashion of an English barn, but out of the power of the winds...they lie on reeds or grass....

Their diet was maize or Indian corn prepared in various ways, sometimes roasted in the ashes, sometimes beaten or boiled with water, which they called *homine*. They made cakes “not unpleasant to eat.” In addition, they had several sorts of beans and peas, “and the woods and rivers are their larder.”

...In liberality they excel; nothing is too good for their friend...the most merry creatures that live, feast and dance perpetually. They never have much nor want much...we sweat and toil to live; their pleasure feeds them—I mean their hunting, fishing and fowling...they eat twice a day, morning and evening, their seats and table are the ground.

William Penn described their ceremonies, their customs and religious beliefs with remarkable understanding and respect. He learned their language, shared their festivals, and gained their confidence.

It is evident from the amount of attention given to it, that Penn was especially taken by their tribal laws and their system of justice. Their government, he wrote, was headed by kings which they called *sachema* and those by succession, but always on the mother's side. The king was very powerful, but benevolent, distributing equally among his people all of the bounties of the tribe, hardly leaving himself an equal portion at the end.

Every king hath his council, and that consists of all the old and wise men of his nation, which perhaps is two hundred people. Nothing of moment is undertaken, be it war, peace, selling of land, or traffic, without advising with them, and which is more, with the young men, too. *'Tis admirable to consider how powerful the kings are and yet how they move by the breath of their people.*

Penn's agreement with the Indians was that in all differences between them six from each side would judge the matter. He cautioned the settlers who followed him to treat the Indians with justice and they would win them. He felt strongly the impact the white man was having on the Indian, and found it "yielded them tradition for ill and not for good things."

Penn's fair dealings with the Indians often has been cited as a model and is felt to be the reason the colonist and the natives



Penn Oak—Photo taken about 1912—This tree was 46 years old when Penn came here in 1682 (White Oak Quercus Alba) Girth, breast high in 1959—16 feet.

of Pennsylvania lived in harmony. Only one incident is recorded with some skepticism as to its fairness. In 1686, William Penn completed a deal with the Indians for a tract of land “as far as a man can go in a day and a half.” His son, Thomas, the second Proprietor of Pennsylvania, carried out the terms of the sale (now often referred to as the Walking Purchase). He had a trail cleared, then hired the best runners he could find and started them off at dawn. He sent along pacers who rode horseback and some Indians to guarantee that all was fair. Having tried in vain to persuade the runners to slow down, the Indians gave up before noon. One of them said, “No sit down to smoke, no shoot squirrel, just *lun, lun, lun*, all day long.” Only one of the runners completed the time, the second having drowned when he fell into a creek and another quitting early. By noon of the second day, the Penns had half a million acres of Indian cornfields and hunting grounds.³



William Penn at age of 22.



Penn's wife Guilielma Maria Penn to whom the Manor of Springfield was given.

Penn's "Holy Experiment"

No colony or state in the Union so well fits Emerson's dictum, "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man," as Pennsylvania. William Penn not only founded it but obtained settlers from Europe and firmly established the principle of religious liberty which is the cornerstone of the American political system. The Penn tradition still exerts a beneficent influence, even as his statue on top of City Hall dominates Philadelphia. Of our colonial founders he was one of the most able, and with Roger Williams, the best loved.⁴

It is hard to imagine that any Pennsylvanian can forget that William Penn founded the state, yet researchers recently reported that of one hundred and fifty students tested, forty-three thought Ben Franklin founded Philadelphia.⁵

William Penn was the son of a wealthy British naval officer, Admiral Sir William Penn. He was born in Essex in 1644 and attended school there. A part of the "landed gentry," he was sent to Christ Church College at Oxford in 1660, but the students' behavior and their dress disgusted him. He believed in religious freedom and in the individual's right to worship as he pleased, and rebelled against the university's rule that all students attend the Church of England. He embarrassed his father by being expelled along with other rebellious students in 1662.

Sir William, seeking a way to reform his son, sent the boy to study at a Protestant seminary in France and when he returned to London in 1664 attired in "new French pantaloons" and wearing a rapier, it appeared the plan had worked. The "new" William was described in Samuel Pepys' diary:

After dinner comes Mr. Pen, and stayed an hour talking with me. I perceive something of the learning he hath got, but a great deal, if not too much of the vanity of the French garbe and affected manner of speech and gait—I fear all real profit he hath made of his travel will signify little....

Ready to settle down, he went to study law at Lincoln's Inn in London.

William's father was a friend of both Charles II and his brother, the Duke of York. Charles II had given Admiral Sir William some confiscated estates in Ireland, and young William was sent to look after them. While visiting Cork, he heard a speech by a Quaker preacher on the text from I John v.4, "There is a faith that overcometh the world." William was deeply impressed by what he heard and became a convinced Quaker. George Fox had founded the Quakers as a liberal Puritan sect about 1650. Because of the great influence this group had on American life, it is well to note their beliefs. They believed that all men are created equal, and though they respected the Bible, they found the direct word of God in the human soul. They called themselves the Friends, addressed each other as "thee" and "thou" and took the commandment "Thou shalt not kill," literally.

Some Quakers were imprisoned in England for their belief, but they survived and grew and spread throughout the British empire and into many countries of Europe, including Holland, Germany and even Russia. They were tortured and imprisoned in some of the American colonies. Yet their passive resistance finally brought tolerance for their beliefs.

Many of the Quakers were unhappy with the corrupt government in England and wanted to leave for America. After his father left him a small fortune, William Penn traveled through Northern Europe and found there many thousands of Quakers and other Protestants who also were eager to go to the new land.

Charles II had borrowed money from William's father and now William chose to remind him of the debt, requesting payment in the form of land in America. For the £16,000 debt, he was granted a huge proprietary colony—all the land west of the Delaware River between 40° and 43° north latitude, and extending west for 5°. A charter was granted by Charles II guaranteeing possession of the land.*

During the next year, Penn was indeed a busy man. He issued pamphlets aimed at encouraging his English, Welsh, German, Dutch and French friends to join him for the journey to America. His writings were unlike those promoting the New England Colonies—they understated rather than overstated the quality of life to be expected. He offered complete religious liberty and easy purchase of land—50-acre head-rights as in Virginia, 200-acre tenant farms at a penny an acre rent. A man could have a 5000-acre country estate with a city lot in Philadelphia for a bonus.

Penn drew up a Frame of Government establishing the laws for the province. It was a model of his beliefs about the purpose of government.

...the great end of all government...[is] to support power in reverence with the people, and to secure the people from the abuse of power; that they may be free by their just obedience, and the magistrates honourable for their just administration; for liberty without obedience is confusion, and obedience without liberty is slavery. To carry this evenness is partly owing to the constitution, and partly to the magistracy; where either of these fail, government will be subject to convulsions; but where both are wanting, it must be totally subverted; then where both meet, the government is like to endure. Which I humbly pray and hope God will please to make the lot of this of Pennsylvania. Amen. (From the Preface to Penn's Frame of Government.)

*Penn had named his province "Sylvania" but at the insistence of the King, the name was changed to "Pennsylvania," or "Penn's Woods." Although the King's purpose was to honor the name of his father, Admiral Sir William Penn, William feared "it would be looked on as a vanity to me."

Penn's wife, the former Gulielma Maria Springett, did not accompany him to America. They were married in 1672 and she was much admired for her beauty, charm and gentle manners. They had seven children, but only three survived. When he left her and sailed with 100 companions aboard the "Welcome" in August, 1682, he wrote an affectionate farewell:

Remember thou wast the love of my youth and much the joy of my life—the most beloved as well as the most worthy of all my earthly comforts; and the reason of that love was more thy inward than thy outward excellencies, which yet were many. God knows and thou knowest I can say it was a match of His making; and God's image in us both was the first thing, and the most amiable and engaging ornament in our eyes. Now I am to leave thee and that without knowing whether I shall ever see thee more in this world. Take my counsel into thy bosom, and let it dwell with thee in my stead while thou livest.... [Regarding the children.] Be sure to observe their genius and do not cross it; let them not dwell too long on one thing, but make an agreeable change before they become weary. Let all their diversions have some little bodily labour in them....

Most of the passengers on the "Welcome" were Quakers, the major part of them from Sussex, where Penn lived. The voyage was long and difficult; an epidemic of smallpox took the lives of nearly a third of the company. Penn comforted the passengers and one of them wrote affectionately of his advice and assistance. Six weeks after sailing, on the 27th of October, the ship was anchored in the Delaware.

Penn had planned carefully for his reception and was joyfully received by the inhabitants as he sailed up the Delaware to Upland (Chester). Swedes and Finns had settled along the Delaware many years before his coming. To prepare these settlers and the

Indians for his arrival, Penn had sent a Deputy Governor, William Markham, in advance.

He began at once the construction of an estate on the Delaware near Bristol, which he called Pennsbury. Probably the first “urban planner” in America, Penn laid out Philadelphia with straight streets intersected at right angles with other straight streets, broad enough to protect against the kind of devastating fire that had destroyed London in 1666. He urged those who would build homes in the outlying areas of his “greene, countrie towne” to set their houses in the middle of the lot, with space around them for orchards and gardens. He was able to attract thousands of colonists from Holland and Ireland as well as from England. In two years time, there were 357 houses in Philadelphia. In 1685, the population was about 9,000. Germans from Crefeld, who were mostly linen weavers of the Mennonite sect, founded Germantown in 1683 with Francis Daniel Pastorius, a well-educated minister whom Penn had met on his European tour. Radnor and Haverford were founded by Welsh Quakers. The Free Society of Traders, a corporation of English Quakers, opened a general store in Philadelphia, conducted whale fishing in the Delaware Bay. Glass works, tanneries, pottery and brick kilns were established. English civilization was transplanted to America and was available to non-English people as well.⁶

A remarkable man, this William Penn, driven by a zeal and blessed with a wisdom beyond his years, his accomplishments in two short years were so numerous that they cannot be recorded in in this brief history. At the end of the two years, Penn returned to England because of reports of persecution of Quakers there. He worked on their behalf and was able to secure the release from prison of many of them. He spent another two year period in Pennsylvania from 1699 to 1701, during which time he gave the province a more liberal charter.

In all, William Penn spent less than four years in the colonies. Yet his influence on their development in his day and his legacy to the future United States were

as important a contribution as that made by any settler or other English promoter of the 17th Century. He shared prominently in establishing three colonies—New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. He saw that humble folk got a chance to start their lives anew under favorable conditions, he practiced and preached religious freedom; he was a great humanitarian in an inhumane age; and he wrought so well that his ideals have in the long course of time become primary ingredients in the tradition of democracy in America. When we think of William Penn, we ought to visualize him both as the lord of now-restored Pennsbury, landing at the foot of his garden from the barge in which his servants rowed him up the Delaware from his “greene countrie Towne,” and also as the responsible aristocratic champion of ordinary people, as exemplified by the statue atop Philadelphia’s City Hall. Penn’s hand rests on an open book wherein we read: “Lo, I go to prepare a place for thee.”⁷



*Statue of
William Penn
atop City Hall,
Philadelphia*

Penn's Manors

In selling off the land in the province, Penn planned to keep 10,000 acres out of every 100,000 acres for his own family. He established six manors: McCalls, Gilberts, Mount Joy, Williamstadt (the Welsh Barony), Springfield and Moreland. Only Moreland was not kept for his family.

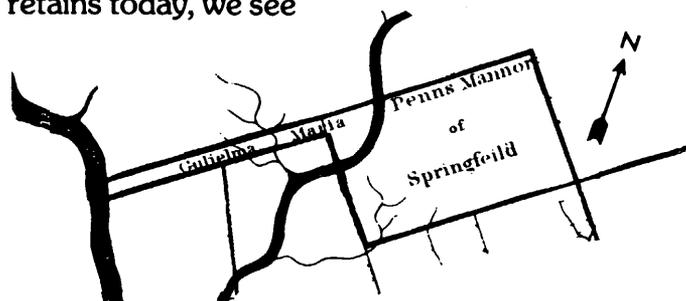
There is little record of actual visits Penn may have made to this area and it is even hard to know who was the first white man to explore it. It may have been a surveyor under Thomas Fairman, inasmuch as Springfield first appears on Thomas Holmes' map of "Pennsilvaina" which is dated 1681. The map is remarkable in its detail, though it is crude compared to contemporary map making. There is one bit of evidence, however, that must be noted. In 1683, Penn's surveyor submitted a bill which read:

<i>To a survey of the Manor of Springfield, with Hands &c</i>	£ 15-0-0
<i>To a journey with the Proprietor to look out some land to be called Springutsbury above the designed for Germantown afterward make Springfield</i>	£ 0-6-0
<i>To a journey with the Proprietor and his friends to Unbolekemensin * 3 of my horses</i>	£ 0-12-0

We know that William Penn had visited Chestnut Hill earlier and apparently this time came to look over the land he had set

*Whitemarsh

aside in his wife's name. There on Holmes' map, with the peculiar shape it retains today, we see



Most of the plots laid out by the surveyor were neat squares, as one might expect the Quaker Penn to direct. For this reason, there has been much conjecture as to why the long strip of land is attached to Springfield. This “panhandle” provided Springfield with a water front, but because it is located above the Falls of the Schuylkill it would be of doubtful use as a landing to accommodate river traffic between Philadelphia and Springfield. It is ideally situated as the site of a ferry across the Schuylkill to provide access between the east and west bank of the river. It takes in about ninety perches (over 1100') along Wissahickon Creek, which would have been enough creekside to accommodate a substantial merchant mill.⁸ Other stories attribute the existence of the panhandle to Mrs. Penn's desire for direct access to the river without leaving her own land, possibly for the transporting of cattle.

Mrs. Penn never actually saw the manor which bears her name. She died in 1694, shortly after her husband returned from his first visit to America.

One can readily see why William Penn chose this land to set aside for his beloved wife.* He did not like city life, much preferring to live in the peaceful countryside. As he rode out from Philadelphia, probably from Chestnut Hill, one can imagine his first sight of this place—a quiet, fertile valley—a sanctuary from the great city he envisioned Philadelphia would one day be.

*There is no record of why the name “Springfield” was chosen, but since he recorded it in his wife's name, one must wonder if there could have been a relationship to her maiden name, Springett.

Settlement of Springfield

The Penn family held most of the land in Springfield until after the Revolution, and thus the names of its earliest settlers have escaped the historians. In 1690, 160 acres were surveyed to Thomas Fitzwater, but it is not known if he actually lived here. The road from Philadelphia through the township to the lime-kilns at "Wide Marsh" was opened in 1703, originally called the "Kings Highway," now Bethlehem Pike. And it is felt that there could not have been much settlement before that date.

One of the earliest settlers is known to have been Herman Groethouse (Hermanus Groethausen). He had obtained from one of Penn's agents in Germany, a patent for 5,000 acres in Pennsylvania. Meeting him in London, Penn persuaded Groethouse to exchange it for a patent of 500 acres in the settled part of the province—acreage not already granted to someone else. When Groethouse



Home of Herman Groethouse built in 1742 still standing at 901 E. Abington Ave.

arrived in Philadelphia, he found the nearest land was in Springfield Manor and he settled here. His possession was disputed and after a long fight, he went to London and persuaded the second Mrs. Penn (Hannah Callowhill) to authorize the court in Pennsylvania to grant him a deed for 500 acres.

The house Herman Groethouse built in 1742, is still standing at 901 Abington Avenue in Wyndmoor, and is living testimony to this immigrant's industry and the subsequent owners' loving care.

The original kitchen is dominated by a huge, walk-in fireplace,



Top photo Home of Christopher Ottinger, built in 1743 stands at Bethlehem Pike and Chesney Lane.

Bottom photo is pre-Revolutionary home of John Ottinger located at Swade and Paper Mill Roads.

nearly 12 feet in width. The lintel is a massive beam approximately two feet deep. The windows were set at a slight angle to allow the occupant a view without being seen from the outside. The size of the house is surprising, since most of the early homes had only one room on the first floor. Groethouse built three large rooms and a circular stair led from the kitchen to the bedrooms on the second floor.

Christopher Ottinger was another early settler in Springfield. His original holding of 85 acres was purchased from Groethouse in 1706; in 1721, he purchased 35 acres from William Harmer, 10 acres from William and Mary Nice; in 1737, a patent for 148 acres was granted to him in Springfield Manor for £185 on which he was to pay an annual quit rent of half a penny for each acre beginning on June 20, 1737. He later purchased 50 acres from Herman Groethouse and 88 acres from Joseph Delaplain, so that by 1745 his holdings had increased to over 400 acres. He built a solid two-story house on the east side of Bethlehem Pike. A date stone on the house, which stands today in excellent condition, bears the inscription "COMO 1743" meaning Christopher and Maria Ottinger.

For Draught of Springfield Manor in the County of Philadelphia
referred on the 22nd day of Feb^r 1732 by Nicholas Scull & found to contain 400
by which time has been given by the said Scull (See p. 6)

1689	Thomas Fitzwater in two Tracts	{ 150 acres 160
1690	Thomas Duckels two quantities	{ 100 100
	Nicholas Scull's D ^o	{ 100 N ^o 1 supposed left out of map in part of the 1771 100
1692	Edward Farmer	100
1713	were sold and confirmed to him	200
1702	John Henry Sprugel	100
1714	William Harmer in two Tracts	{ 255 127
	Leonard Sleepers	100
1715	Herman Groethausen at 1 st p ^{ce}	500
1702	Nicholas Kicks at 40 th p ^{ce} Ann	100
		2792
<p><i>Thus the Sum of the several Quantities held by the D^o before or their Representatives; by the Reference afores^d is computed to amount to</i> 2368</p> <p><i>and the several Quantities yet remaining unsold (which are distinguished by the Red Lines) 1642</i></p>		

Section of Survey Report of 1732.

Ottinger's purchase in 1744 for 71 acres was from the Honorable John Penn, Thomas Penn and Richard Penn, Esqs., Proprietors of said Province (Pa) by patent of Apr. 2, 1744, and entered on record in the Philadelphia Patent Book. Christopher sired three sons and four daughters and at the time of his death was listed as a "farmer and innkeeper." Most of his children settled near the original Ottinger home, and his will left the land to his three sons William, John, and Christopher, Jr.

In 1734, there were sixteen landholders on record in Springfield Township:

Herman Groethausen	260 acres
George Donat	80 acres
John Groethausen	100 acres
John Harmer	100 acres
Allen Forster	100 acres
Thomas Hicks	100 acres
Christopher Ottinger	85 acres
William Nice	75 acres
Job Howel	75 acres
Thomas Silance	75 acres
Samuel Adams	50 acres
Adam Read	50 acres
Henry Snyder	50 acres
George Gantz	40 acres
Hugh Boyd	30 acres
Michael Cline	12 acres

1600 acres still remained in the hands of the Penn family, owned by Thomas Penn, son of the founder by his second marriage. The Penns were absentee landlords and took no active part in the development of the township. Their retention of nearly half the land meant that the growth of community life was very slow. What early development took place in Springfield was determined by the Commissioners of Property and by private interests who, often as not, circumvented or ignored the Proprietor's rights and directives. There was no meeting house or church and no magistrate to serve the needs of the community. Meanwhile the surrounding communities

—Upper Dublin, Whitemarsh, Germantown, Roxborough, Bristol and Cheltenham were going concerns with nearly all the land within their bounds granted and much of it developed with homes, plantations, inns, mills, quarries, limekilns and other places of business.

In short, as late as 1730 there was no real “community” in the Manor of Springfield. It was only with renewed interest in Pennsylvania by the Proprietary in the persons of John, Thomas, and Richard Penn (sons and heirs of William Penn) that the development of Springfield was fully realized and a recognizable community emerged within the bounds of the Manor of Springfield. Unlike their father, the young Proprietors were frequently in Pennsylvania and participated directly in the affairs of the province by personally holding the office of Governor.

During the 1730’s and 1740’s, the Penns attempted to straighten out the often muddled and confusing records of the provincial land office, drastically curtailing the authority of the Commissioners of Property. It was in this climate of reorganization in land affairs that most of the remaining land in Springfield was granted to private individuals.⁹ *

At the end of this period, the term “Manor of Springfield” was replaced by the term “Springfield Township,” the earliest use of the term being found in deed records in 1744. However, it was not until after the Revolution that the term “Manor of Springfield” dropped out of deed language altogether.

These early Springfield residents were farmers and nearly all of their needs were supplied by their own efforts. They kept cows, had a horse or two, raised chickens, pigs, sheep. They farmed the land with the instruments of the day. Many of the plows had wooden mould-boards to turn the soil; wheat was cut with a sickle, gathered and thrashed by hand; hay was harvested with a scythe. Flax and wool grown at home were spun into thread for weaving cloth and were sometimes dyed with nut or copperas. They made cider, quilted coverlets, butchered their own meats, using the fats with lye to make soap. Candles were made by the family. Root crops were stored in the cellar or buried in the garden to keep for the winter. Beans

*For a detailed account of early land ownership, see “Historic Base Maps of Land Development” by Barbara Liggett and Betty Cosans.

and corn were dried, as were other vegetables, and some fruits.

These farmers and their wives worked hard, often from before sunrise until late at night. They churned their own butter, made their own cheeses, smoked or salt-cured the meat to preserve it. Families were close-knit—they had to be for they were dependent upon each other. Every able-bodied member of the family had chores to do, the girls usually working in the house with the mother, the boys joining their father in the fields.

The excess of farm products was exchanged in the city for those few things that were not grown on the farm, such as tea, coffee, spices, and other household goods that had to be imported from Europe. Springfield farms were prosperous as measured in those days, and provided the families with the necessities of life.

Families who wanted their children to have an education could employ a traveling schoolmaster. He taught the three R's, "readin', 'ritin' and 'rithmetic," and his fee, often produce, was based on the number of pupils in the household.

Even at this early date, before establishing a house of worship or a visible government, schools were a major concern to the residents. The first school of record was on Pauls Mill Road (Bell's Mill) west of the Wissahickon. An old newspaper clipping describes the area as "a wild and primitive region now known as Upper Roxborough" in 1745. Children from Germantown, Roxborough, Whitemarsh, and Springfield attended, with each family paying its share of the cost. Harmony School was opened about 1770 on Bethlehem Pike at Chestnut Hill near where the Reading station now stands. This school was attended by children from Chestnut Hill, Springfield and Cheltenham. Christopher Ottinger of Cheltenham and William Ottinger of Springfield were listed among the members of the Board of Trustees.

These early settlers of the township had little impact on the general nature of the area. They mostly lived alone, there was no community life, and hence little need for government. They did pay taxes, which were assessed and collected by Philadelphians, inasmuch as the township was then part of Philadelphia County.

Development of Community Life

For many years before the arrival of William Penn, the Munsee or Minsi Indians (part of the Wolf Tribe of the Lenapes) had followed a trail northward from the Delaware which passed through this area. It was natural, then, that the settlers enlarged the existing trail as they moved out from the city and began to settle in Springfield. This trail was known as “the King’s Highway,” sometimes as “the Bethlehem Road.” Nicholas Scull, at one time Surveyor General of Pennsylvania, petitioned the Provincial Council in 1698 requesting a road from “the lime-kilns at ‘Wide Marsh’ to Philadelphia.” Apparently no action was taken until 1703 when a second petition was filed.

Germantown Pike was opened in 1687 and Ridge Pike in 1706. With Bethlehem Pike, these three roads were among the major arteries out of Philadelphia and remain so today. Other roads opened in the township during this period were Church Road in 1734; Pennsylvania Avenue in 1737; Bell’s Mill Road in 1738; Paper Mill Road in 1748; and Willow Grove Avenue in 1770.

Location of roads often tells an interesting story. Church Road was established to accommodate the pastor of St. Thomas’ Church in Whitemarsh. He traveled on horseback between his congregation at Oxford in Cheltenham and St. Thomas. Bell’s Mill and Paper Mill Roads led to mills on the Wissahickon (called “cat-fish stream” by the Indians) and its tributaries and on Sandy Run.

One of the needs of the early settlers was for mills to grind their grain, since they could not do this for themselves. The first mill in the area was built about 1710 by Edward Farmar on Farmar’s Lane in Whitemarsh. He later built a second one, probably about 1713, on the Wissahickon along West Mill Road. This mill, later owned by Silas and John Cleaver operated continuously until it burned in 1907. German settlers from as far away as Salford and Franconia Townships brought grain to Farmar to be ground. Records would seem to indicate that Skippack Pike was established to allow farmers to

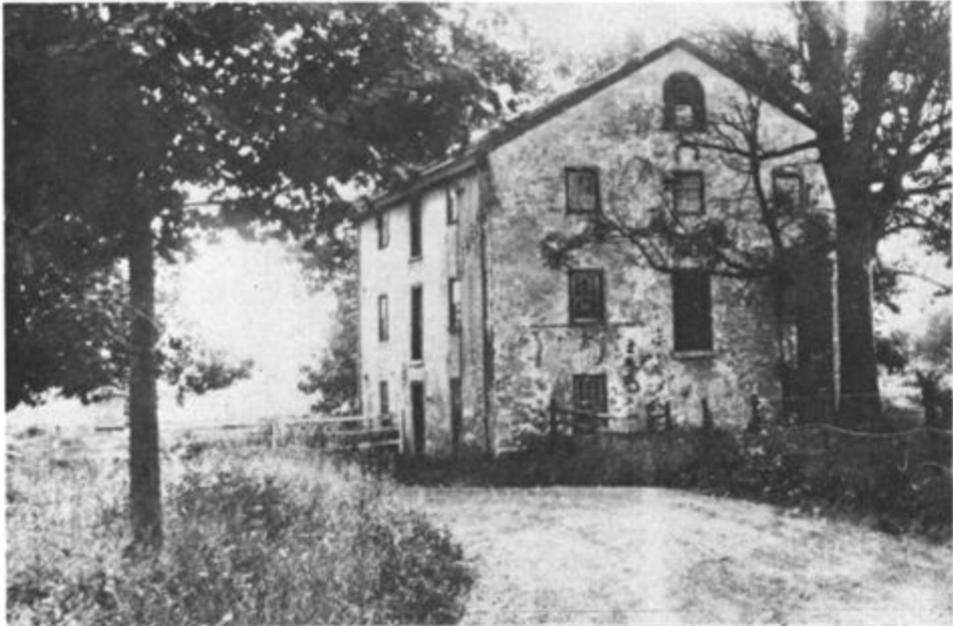


Photo of Springfield Mill on Arboretum property, adjacent to Wissahickon, taken about 1916, present building built 1854.

bring their grain to these mills. William Streeper erected a grist mill on Northwestern Avenue about 1761 which was later known as Piper's Mill. The existing building, which is in excellent condition, was erected in 1854 and is located on the Morris Arboretum property in the panhandle. Sheetz' mill on Sandy Run was built in the early 1700's. It was started as a paper mill and later sold to the Fell family who made it a grist mill.

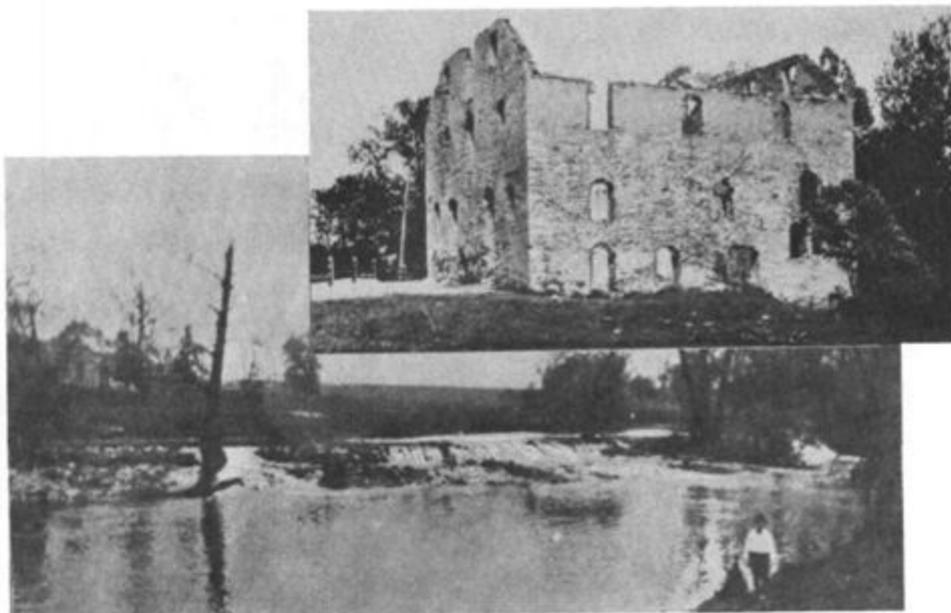
The Reverend Michael Schlatter had a paper mill which was located on Paper Mill Run upstream a hundred yards or so from where it passes under Paper Mill Road. This mill was built about 1760 and a few remnants are still visible. Schlatter sold the mill to John Scheetz in 1765 who continued to operate it.

A steam saw and grist mill was operated by the Heydrick (later Yeakle) family of Erdenheim in the early 1800's on the site of the present Rittenhouse Lumber Yard. The mill lasted until 1897 when the mill was razed to make way for the trolley terminal. Henry Dewees lived in the township and operated a paper mill in Harper's Meadow.

In "Historical Sketch of Flourtown," W. R. Yeakle, Sr., of Fort Washington, refers to a paper he read before the Irving Literary Society of Flourtown in 1904. In it he describes the mills of the Flourtown area:

...this village was the great wheat market of the eastern counties of the state around and north of Philadelphia. The numerous mills that at one time were in operation along the Wissahickon Creek...obtained a great supply of wheat from grinding into flour at Flourtown.

...Thomas Bitting of Ambler...told me he well remembered the farmers coming with four-horse loads of wheat in great numbers to Flourtown, stopping at his father's hotel, from the counties of Lehigh, Berks, Northampton, Bucks and upper portions of Montgomery County, to meet the millers who would negotiate with them for the purchase of grain. Most of these transactions



Top photo: Remains of Cleaver Mill taken about 1900.

Bottom photo: Dam at Cleaver's Mill, located on Wissahickon near Stenton Ave.

were carried on in Pennsylvania Dutch (or German). The large teams would take their loads of grain to the different mills to be ground into flour.

In their text accompanying "Historic Base Maps of Land Development,"¹⁰ Barbara Liggett and Betty Cosans discuss the strategic location of Springfield in relation to Philadelphia. They believe the farmers of the township helped to feed the city, perhaps to supply the tables of the "pushers of ideas," the Continental Congress, and to provide the paper on which their ideas were printed.

Traffic moving in and out of Philadelphia, and to the mills of Flourtown soon required inns to accommodate their passengers. The tax lists for the period just prior to the Revolution reflect the changing occupations. In 1769, of the following six persons listed by occupations, 4 were tavernkeepers:



1510 Bethlehem Pike originally a store and the Post Office.



1538-40 Bethlehem Pike formerly J. M Heydrick—Harness maker.
Now Cisco's on right and barbershop on left. Photo circa 1920.

Henry Sheetz, papermaker
 Conrad Leaser, smith
 John Kinnier, tavernkeeper
 Bernard Brisberg, tavernkeeper
 Jacob Righter, tavernkeeper
 Henry Junkin, tavernkeeper

However, Liggett and Cosans (Page 38) note that the deed records indicate a number of Springfield residents were called by various crafts as a form of address at some time or another. These included:

Jacob Sarver, cooper
 Philip Peterman, sadler
 Jacob Fisher, cordwainer
 David Mock, blacksmith
 Jacob Neff, tanner
 Andrew Heyberger, mason
 Jacob Karger, leather-breeches maker
 Christopher Lentz, mason
 Balsor Heydrick, carpenter, joiner
 Michael Slatter, minister (clerk)
 William Leaverling, weaver



*Top photo: Presently Marple Clemens & Bell, originally J. Ottinger built about 1736.
Middle photo: Presently High TV—right half built in 1750, left half built in 1760.
Bottom photo: 926 Bethlehem Pike (Tyson House) probably built in early 1740's.
Now occupied by Burke & Lawton.*

By 1779, other occupations shown on the tax list were miller, shoemaker, tobacconist and wheelwright. Thus many basic goods and services seem to have been available in the township. It was possible to have a building erected, a cart fixed, a horse shod; one could buy a bolt of cloth, shoes, pipe tobacco, or a new pair of leather breeches. Bean, in his *History of Montgomery County*¹¹ notes that these craftsmen often came to the home of the farmers to ply their trade:

The village tailor and shoemaker...was expected to “whip the cat”—that is, bring his tools and board with the family while making up the home material into shoes and clothing for the family. These rude mechanics were expected also to do their work in the kitchen with the family, and work until bed-time by light of the aforesaid “dips” [candles] for there were no ten-hour regulations in those days, as most indoor tradesmen worked till nine at night, and field hands from “sun to sun.”¹²

Houses and other buildings, which still exist in the township, that are believed to have been built before the Revolution include:

Heydrick House at Bethlehem Pike and Gordon Road
Wheel Pump Inn at Bethlehem Pike and Gordon Road
Yeakel House on Montgomery Avenue
Yeakel Houses on Church Road at Paper Mill and at Brent
Rex House on Church near the Expressway
Yeakel House on Mill Road
Ottinger House at Chesney Lane
Ottinger House at Paper Mill and Swade
Tyson House at Bethlehem Pike below Haws Lane
Groethouse House on Abington Avenue
House now occupied by High TV on Bethlehem Pike
Morris House at Cheltenham and Willow Grove
Black Horse Inn
Block and Cleaver (formerly Central Inn)

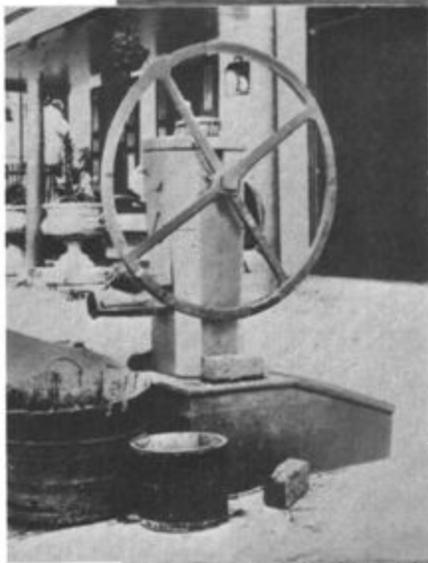


Central Hotel now Block & Cleaver. Photo taken about 1890.

As indicated by the tax lists, a number of taverns had sprung up in Flouertown. Historians seem to agree on at least four: Central Hotel (1765), sometimes known as the "Farmer's and Citizen's Hotel," sometimes called "The Wagon and Horses" (now called Block and Cleaver); "Slifer's Hotel" (now occupied by a food market and a tailor shop) which once bore the sign of "The Eagle" (1760); the Black Horse Hotel, sometimes known as "Samson and the Lion" (date unclear); and the "Wheelpump Hotel," so named because of the wheel pump in use at the front of the hotel during the Revolution and for a time thereafter. Other inns are variously located by writers at different periods. Christopher Ottinger is listed as an innkeeper, and reference to a stagecoach stop at Ottinger's is referred to in some records. It is unclear whether this inn was located in his home ("COMO" house still standing at Chesney Lane) or at another location. Yeakle mentions a hotel kept by Garrett Simmons on the west side of "the turnpike" above Haas Lane.



*Black Horse Inn—note coal wagons.
This inn still stands and operates at
1432 Bethlehem Pike.*



*Left: Wheelpump for which
the hotel was named.*

*Wheelpump Hotel
built about 1735 and still operating
on Bethlehem Pike in Erdenheim.*



Some of the innkeepers operated other businesses in connection with the hotel. For example, Slifer is known to have had a feed and grain store next to his hotel (now Whitemarsh Valley TV); Abraham Heydrick operated a store in connecton with the Wheelpump Hotel. It was for the Heydrick family that the section of the township now known as Erdenheim was at times called "Heydricksdale." The Heydricks lived in the house still standing opposite the Wheelpump.



Heydrick Homestead—opposite Wheelpump Hotel—Built in 1767

Many stories are told about life in Flourtown during these times. Lippincott¹³ refers to witchcraft:

Flourtown was for some time in its early career, the peculiar headquarters of witchcraft and witch-credulity, says Watson in his *Annals*. Almost everybody there credited the evil influence, and they used frequently to summon an old character named George Shronk, a "conjurer," who lived at the Falls of the Schuylkill to coneract and point out these spells. He would fling his arms about and proclaim that, here and there, in given directions, are many, many witches. The whole place was in serious trouble and confusion for several years; one and another accusing and charging the other with witchcraft.



Stages like this made runs throughout the entire area.

There was considerable community life by the time of the Revolution. The taverns were accommodating stagecoach travelers in and out of Philadelphia. Running between the cities of Bethlehem and Philadelphia, the stage made its first trip in September, 1763, starting from the Sun Tavern in Bethlehem and terminating at the King of Prussia Inn on Race Street. This was a distance of 52 miles, and included a stop at Ottinger's in Flourtown. The horses were changed every ten miles and they sped along at about 10 miles per hour.

Describing a stage stop at an inn, Faris in *Old Roads Out of Philadelphia*¹⁴ says:

Here two long rows of market folk were seen,
Ranged front to front, the table placed between,
Where trays of meat and bone and crusts of bread
And hunks of bacon all around were spread;
Or pints of beer from lip to lip went round
And scarce a bone the hungry house-dog found.
Torrents of Dutch from every quarter came,
Pigs, calves and sauerkraut the important theme,
While we, our future plans revolving deep,
Discharged our bill and straight retired to sleep.

He described the carriage as a kind of open wagon, hung with double curtains of leather and wool, which could be raised or lowered

at the pleasure of the rider. It was not well suspended, but this was found to be acceptable since the roads were sand and gravel. The carriages had four benches, and could carry twelve persons. The light baggage was stowed under the benches and the trunks on the back. Unlike this writer, others have described deep ruts in the roads, requiring sometimes that a cedar log be placed under the wheels to allow the stage to pass.

Community life centered around these taverns which were the natural gathering places since there was still no church or government building in the township. News could reach Springfield from Philadelphia in half a day, and news from the outlying areas was heard in the taverns of Flouertown before it was known in the city.

It is evident from the tax lists that a sizeable number of the families who settled here were German. They, like other groups of people who came to these shores, brought with them many of the customs practiced in their native land. Christmas occasioned a revival of some of these customs. For example, on Christmas Eve German children would set plates on the tables or windows, having been told that if they were good, the "*Christkindlein*" would bring them a gift, or if they had been naughty or disobedient, then the "*Belznickel*" would come to correct them. Candy, toys, or Christmas cakes were the usual presents. The *Belznickel* carried a rod, and children who promised to give up certain habits he would not punish, but instead give them presents; but if they had not kept their promise by the next Christmas would receive the punishment.

At Easter the children prepared nests in the house or barn in anticipation of the coming of the *haas* or rabbit. Next morning they would find colored eggs supposedly left by the *Oster haas*. These eggs were dyed with onion husks or logwood, or carved with a penknife in beautiful designs. The raw egg was extracted from the shell by puncturing with a pin, blowing out the contents, then sealing the hole with wax. Sometimes the eggs were wrapped in printed calico and hard boiled, in order to transfer the design to the shell.

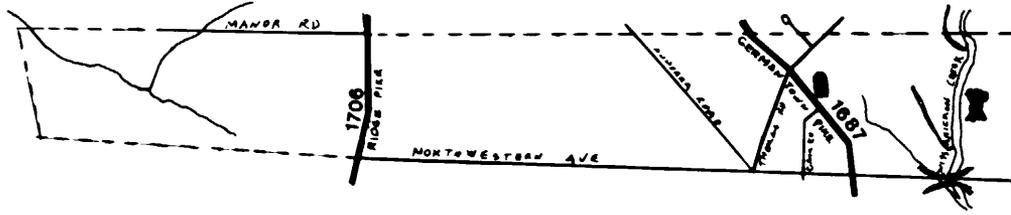


Ruins of Yeakel Lime Kilns built and used about 1776

One of the very early industries in Springfield was that of lime burning. A large part of the township rests atop a limestone layer, which is easily accessible and of good quality. The limestone was broken into manageable sizes after it was quarried, then placed in huge kilns or ovens. There, in order to remove the moisture, it was burned to a fine white powder, much like that covering Corson's quarries, for making mortar and to sweeten the soil. The kilns were usually built in banks of three, one to fill, one to burn and one to be emptied of the finished product. It is reported that we had three such kilns in Springfield Township, one on the Springfield side of Pennsylvania Avenue, south of Oreland Mill Road, another near the intersection of Oreland Mill Road and Walnut and still another on the south side of Valley Green Road, near the Sandy Run Country Club.

There were many Yeakles in the area. They traced their origins to Christopher Yeakle who settled near Germantown about 1734. He was a cooper by trade and raised a large family. Aubrey Williams described the Yeakle burying ground where many of the family and other Schwenkfelders from the surrounding areas were buried:

The Yeakle burying ground, about a quarter mile east of Stenton Avenue, just off the Bethlehem



Roads — in use prior to 1777.



Roads — probably in use prior to 1777 (undocumented).



Mile Markers — still standing.



Toll Houses — once located here.



Cemetery — Schwenkfelder (Yeakle) dates from 1753.



Mills ON THE WISSAHICKON — Piper's (Streeper's) Mill — "Springfield Mill." Present building dated 1854 but an earlier building (mill) existed in 1761. This was a saw and grist mill built by William Streeper II.

ON SANDY RUN — Sheetz Grist Mill in 1877. It is entirely possible that there was a mill on this site much prior to 1877.

ON PAPER MILL RUN — Schlatter's Mill. This mill was built in 1760 by Michael Schlatter, Minister, and was sold to John Sheetz in 1765. Finally the entire tract of land owned by Schlatter was sold to Thomas Combe in 1776.



Penn Oak Tree



Iron Ore Works



Edge Hill Iron Works



Limekilns — Lime burning & quarrying one of earliest industries.



Covered Bridge — Burned in summer of 1888—replaced by steel super structure.



Stone Quarries — for home & road building.



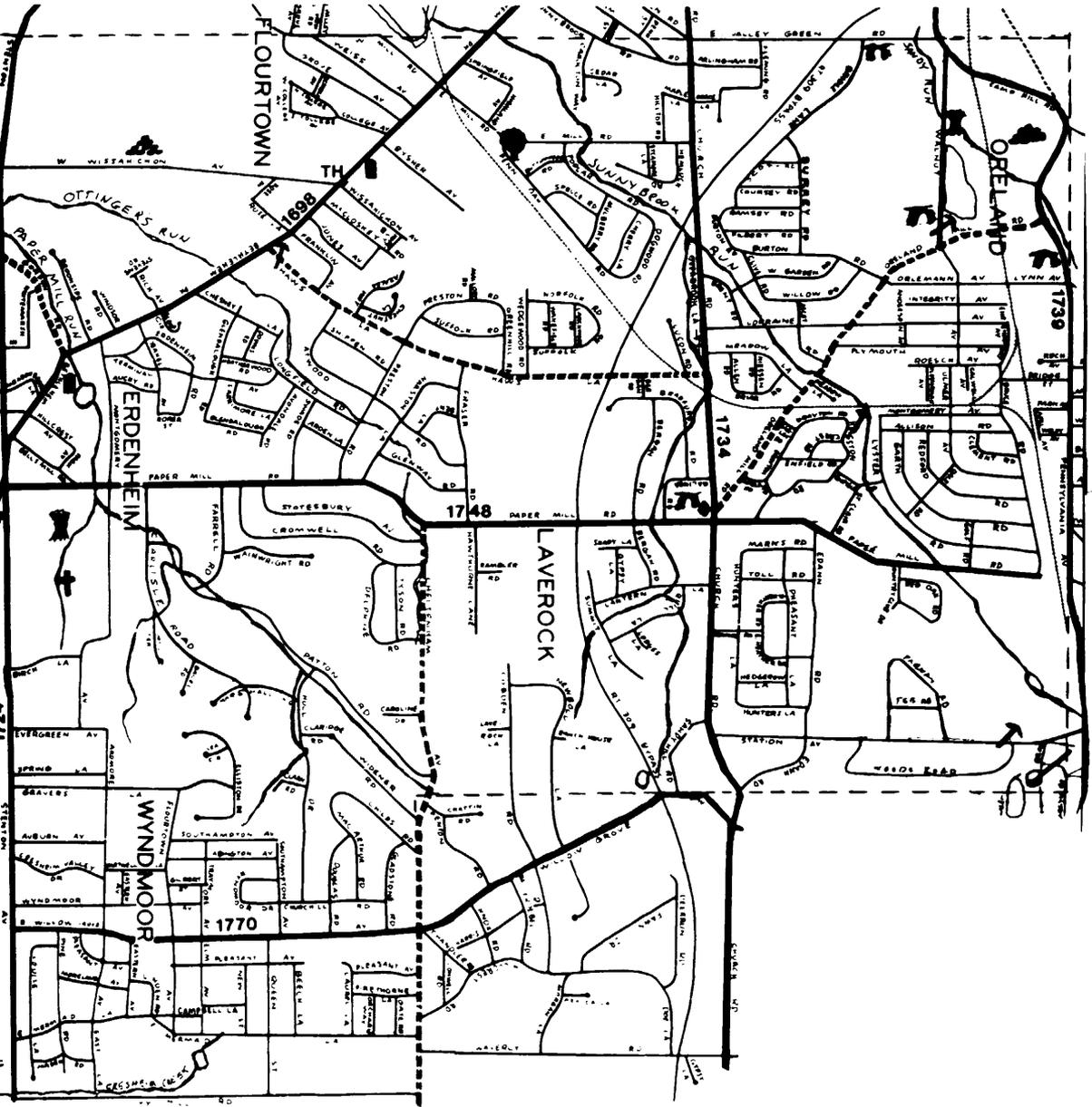
Tile Works



Streams WISSAHICKON CREEK — "Catfish Stream"—passing through the pan-handle for a brief distance.

SANDY RUN — flowing through the northernmost corner of the township to join the Wissahickon in Whitemarsh.

This map locates historic points of interest in relation to Springfield as it is today



- SUNNY BROOK RUN — flowing across Oreland and upper part of Flourtown to join the Wissahickon near the Railroad in Whitmarsh.
- OTTINGER'S RUN — rising in the lower portion of Wyndmoor and joining Paper Mill Run near Stenton Avenue, then to Wissahickon.
- PAPER MILL RUN — rising in Cheltenham Township (see Ottinger's Run).
- CRESHEIM CREEK — rising in lower Wyndmoor and flowing westward toward the city.



Yeakel Burial Grounds in Township date back before 1753.

Pike, is little known today. [Between Montgomery Avenue and Stenton.] Purchased in 1802 by Christopher Yeakle and his two sons, Abraham and Christopher and his son-in-law Abraham Heydrick, it consisted of about one-eighth of an acre and at one time was enclosed by a stone wall.

Originally it belonged to the Mack family of Germantown and was used as a cemetery prior to 1753. In addition to members of that family, we find such names as Yeakle, Heydrick, Scheetz, Dowers, Oberholtzer, Krieble, and Shuman on tombstones there. Although never verified, it is said that several soldiers who died from wounds received at Germantown and from the attack made on the Americans under General William Irvine nearby, were also interred here.¹⁵

The cemetery is still in existence in very good condition.

Liggett and Cosans estimate that the population of Springfield in 1774 was approximately 300. Only the heads of household were listed on the tax rolls, so the number of adult women and the number of children have been estimated.¹⁶

The Revolution

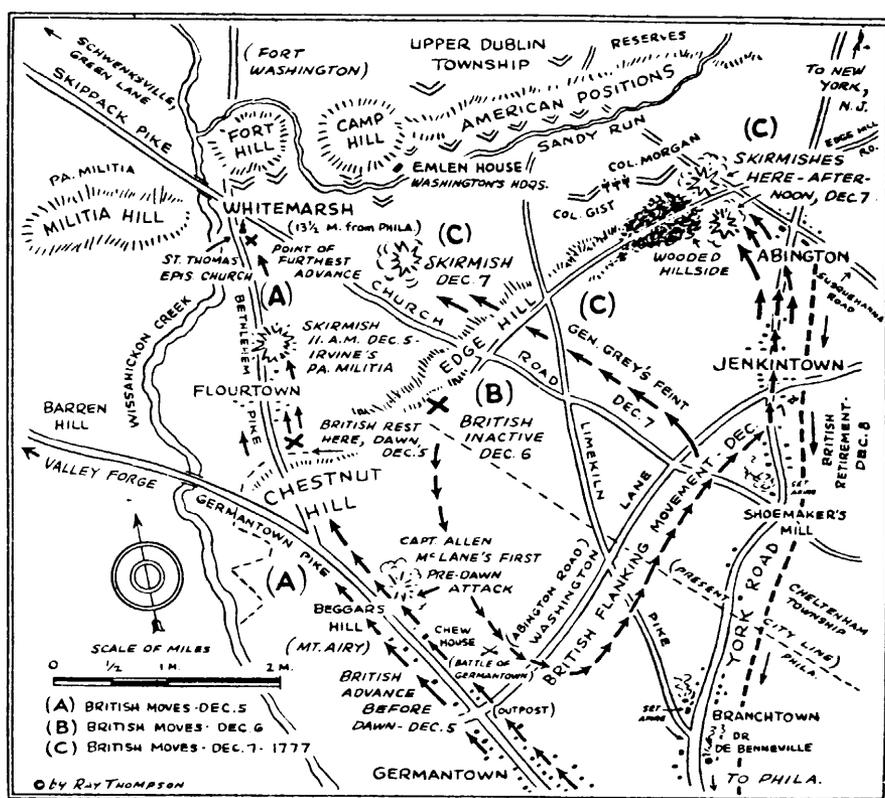
In April of 1775, shortly after the famed encounter at Lexington and Concord between the British and American forces, the word reached Flourtown and a meeting was called of “all persons who have any regard for their country, their liberty, and their property....” As a result of this and subsequent meetings, a “Home Guard” was formed.

The compulsory enlistment of all men between the ages of 18 and 53 able to bear arms, was required by the Militia Act passed in 1777. William Hicks was elected captain of the Springfield Company. The company was divided into eight classes; each class was required to serve two months. Although Springfield was still very sparsely settled, the Springfield Company eventually was composed of 80 men, more than any other township was able to muster.

Not much of the Revolution was apparent to the residents of the township until the British occupied Philadelphia on September 26, 1777 although Tory soldiers were said to frequent the Wheelpump Inn in Heydricksville (Erdenheim) during some of the war years.

The American army was quartered at Pennypacker’s Mill on the Perkiomen Creek near Schwenksville. On October 3, 1777, a planned attack on the British in Germantown was put into motion. Washington’s troops moved south passing through Springfield Township along both Bethlehem Pike and Church Road. The battle, begun in the early morning mist and haze, was a total disaster and the Americans fled to St. Thomas Church in Whitemarsh where they regrouped and marched back to Schwenksville.

By degrees the army moved south again to establish an encampment at Whitemarsh with Washington making his headquarters at “Dawesfield” in Whitpain Township from October 21 to November 2 and then at “Mr. Emlen’s” on Pennsylvania Avenue from November 2 until December 11, 1777.



British troop movements December 4-8, 1777. Map Courtesy of Author/
Historian Ray Thompson.

For General Howe the proximity of Washington's troops to the city was disturbing and plans were made to attack the Americans. Quakeress Lydia Darragh, whose house was used by the British, overheard the battle plans. On the pretext of securing flour for the family's needs, she managed to slip out of the city. Leaving her sack at the mill in Frankford, she continued on to Whitemarsh, her true destination, to inform General Washington of the coming attack. She encountered an American captain whom she knew, relayed her message and walked wearily home again after retrieving her 25-pound bag of flour.

On the night of December 4 Howe's troops moved north toward Chestnut Hill and encountered American scouting parties as far south as Beggarstown, now known as Mt. Airy. From his headquarters at Chestnut Hill, Howe had a clear view of the American

positions on Camp Hill, Militia Hill, Fort Hill and Edge Hill. On the 6th, British troops continued north on Bethlehem Pike and engaged in battle with 600 Pennsylvania Militia under General Irvine at the point where Paper Mill Road joins the Pike.

General Irvine was captured after being wounded and the British continued on to Church Hill (site of St. Thomas Episcopal Church). At the church they stopped, lobbed a few shells at Fort Hill which fell short of the mark, then retreated to Chestnut Hill. It was evident to Howe that the Americans held a formidable position and he deployed his troops toward Edge Hill where, on December 7, they encountered Morgan's Riflemen for whom they were no match. On the morning of the 8th, Howe gathered his forces together and returned to the city.

Winter was upon the Continental Army and the decision was to establish winter quarters in Valley Forge. On December 11, a weary and ill-equipped army moved out of Whitemarsh and headed slowly for the Valley Forge encampment which they reached on December 19. It was to be a bleak and heartbreaking winter for the Americans while Howe rested warm and cozy in Philadelphia.

The war did not totally wind down in the township. There were brief encounters with foraging parties from both armies.

About the middle of April, 1778, fifty British Dragoons came out



Washington reviews his troops on the way to Valley Forge.

as far as Flouertown where they were confronted by some Jersey Militia and in the battle that followed 18 American prisoners were taken.

In May, 1778, the young and restless Lafayette was given permission to attempt an attack on the British. He got as far as Barren Hill where he was nearly surrounded and captured, but managed to avoid the trap by skillful maneuvering.

The British appeared in Springfield one more time in the middle of June, 1778, when a light infantry group came foraging for supplies for the troops in the city.

MacFarlane reported an interesting incident involving British soldiers in Springfield:

About one-half mile back Paper Mill Road [at Swade Road] was the house of John Ottinger, whose daughter, Elizabeth, married John Huston, an officer under Washington at Whitemarsh, while riding to visit his lady-love at her father's home, was pursued by British horsemen. Alert as to possible capture, on his arrival, he quickly dismounted, put his horse in an unused building, and hid his saddle and himself under the hay in the barn. He barely escaped discovery when the searching party arrived and hurriedly walked over him. The late George Martin Ottinger, an artist of Salt Lake City and great grandson of John Ottinger, idealized and preserved the tradition in his painting —“The Hasty Farewell.”¹⁷

By the end of June the British without explanation quitted the city and the American troops left Valley Forge and marched back to the Jerseys.

In Springfield the immediate presence of the war had passed although the Revolution would not end until the Battle of Yorktown in 1781.

It is unclear when the name was actually changed from Manor of Springfield (a tract of land privately owned, commonly known as “tenths”) to the Township of Springfield (an independent political

subdivision within the limits of a county). The minutes of the County Commissioners in Philadelphia start in 1718, and by 1720 assessors and collectors had been appointed for Springfield. Aubrey Williams conjectures that it could not have been much before this time that the township was formed, but there is no definite evidence one way or the other. The court, upon the formation of a township, appointed one constable, two overseers of the poor, assessors, and tax collector. Justices of the Peace, by an act passed in 1771, were ordered to meet once yearly and appoint Overseers of the Poor for the various townships. A Justice often served several townships. In 1767, Henry Scheetz was Constable in Springfield, and Henry Dewees was Assessor. Jacob Neff was Collector in 1776.

Springfield Township was a political subdivision of Philadelphia County. Prior to 1777, general elections were held at the State House in Philadelphia. An act passed June 14, 1777, divided Philadelphia County into three elective districts. The second elective district, which included Springfield, voted at the public house kept by Jacob Coleman in Germantown.

Montgomery County was established by an act of the General Assembly which was approved September 10, 1784. An act passed September 13, 1785, divided the county into three elective districts, and Springfield was included in the second voting district. Residents voted at George Eckhart's Tavern in Whitemarsh until March 31, 1797, when the voting place was changed to the house of Philip Riffert also in Whitemarsh.



Toll gate at Stenton Avenue and Bethlehem Pike.



1208 Bethlehem Pike—originally tenant house on Yeakle farm.



1100 Bethlehem Pike circa 1746 in 1877 owned by Charles Jacoby.



1452 Bethlehem Pike—J. Callahan



1448 Bethlehem Pike (Marigold Cottage).



*Bisbing House—
Bethlehem Pike and Mill Road.*

After the War

The population of the township remained fairly stable during the Revolution, but soon afterwards began to grow steadily. In 1790, the number had grown to 446. The stagecoach traffic steadily increased, reaching a peak in 1820 when there were nine daily arrivals from the City of Philadelphia, plus two tri-weekly lines for Bethlehem. Since each coach could seat 12 persons, it is possible that as many as 240 travelers arrived in Flourtown daily. This traffic no doubt occasioned the increase in the number of trades that were practiced in the village. Several wheelwrights, cedar coopers, a tanner, even a clock maker were listed. Assessment lists reveal the largest landowners: William Nice, 200 acres (3 horses, 2 cows, 1 servant); William Hicks, 100 acres (2 horses, 4 cows); Christopher Rex, 100 acres (4 horses, 4 cows); Christian Donet, 110 acres (6 horses, 2 cows); Andrew Redhoffer, Jr., 160 acres (4 horses, 3 cows); John Ottinger, 100 acres (3 horses, 5 cows); Henry Bisbing, 200 acres (4 horses, 5 cows); Michael Slatter (Minkster!) 130 acres (2 horses, 5 cows); Henry Dewees, 120 acres (1 servant, 4 horses, 5 cows). Largest landowner of them all was Christopher Ottinger, Jr. with 286 acres (1 servant, 4 horses, 4 cows). Aubrey Williams had some interesting information about other members of the Ottinger family:

Others of the family settled in different parts of the country, and George Martin Ottinger of Salt Lake City, Utah, became an artist of some note. Douglas Ottinger, another descendant, entered the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service and is credited with devising a method of saving people on ships wrecked along the coast. His device, which he called a "Life Car," was used in the following manner: A light cord was fired from a gun to the vessel in distress, a heavy cable was then pulled across the water, and over this cable traveled a basket or "car" large enough to carry several people.

Douglas rose to the rank of Captain, and in 1849 was ordered to establish eight life saving stations along the Atlantic Coast from Sandy Hook to Little Egg Harbor, New Jersey. This is reputed to be the origin of the Government Life Saving Service.

There is very little record of Springfield in the early 1800's. More houses were being erected in Flourtown, and several farmhouses were established in other areas. Most of these homes followed an earlier pattern in construction. Usually the house was one room deep and two rooms wide with a center hall between them. The stairway in the center hall gave access to the second and occasionally a third floor. Dwellings were usually built in two steps. The initial first floor room served as kitchen and living quarters, and as the center of all the family's activities. The second floor contained one or two bedrooms, and the third floor or attic served as additional sleeping space and was also used for storage. The open rafters provided space for hanging sausages and cheeses or herbs. Barrels of apples and sacks of flour were stored in the cellar along with other supplies. Usually there was a dirt floor in the cellar and it was cool year round. Some families who had no cellar



Springfield Hotel built by Charles Bittins in 1811. Photo taken about 1890.

built cold cellars into a rise of ground, where a fairly constant temperature could be maintained. Other outbuildings around the farm house might include a barn or shed for a horse or cow, a toilet (“privy”), a smoke house for curing meat, a spring house where the well was located, for there was no running water in the house. Some would have had a chicken house.

In 1802, an act passed by the General Assembly eliminated the Overseers of the Poor and replaced them with Supervisors of Public Roads who were to be elected annually.

Evidence of the growing traffic along Bethlehem Pike may be gleaned from the increase in the number of hotels. One of them still operating today is the Springfield Hotel, established in 1811.

Churches in many areas assumed the task of educating the children. Often the pastor of the church would serve as schoolmaster, instructing in the basic subjects. The Bible and hymnals were often the only books available. Children from Springfield often attended schools in nearby communities. These included the Harmony School in Chestnut Hill, and the Union School in Whitemarsh, which was established by the Morris family and is still standing on Bethlehem Pike in Fort Washington. Even today, more than a century after the Union School closed, Springfield schools periodically receive a small annual payment from a trust fund set up when the school was established.

The state legislature in 1834, after a year or more of debate, established a General System of Education by Common Schools. While they were strong supporters of education, the German communities in particular opposed these schools. They believed that the divorce of education from religion would mean that half the value of education would be lost. To them the church was the guardian of the public as well as the private morals. To remove the church’s hand from the education of youth, they felt, would offer training which failed to provide special emphasis on human dignity and decency. Many of them also believed that the state would gain too much power over the lives and minds of men if the schools were turned over to the state.

The Germans were not alone in this fear, other church groups also looked with question on state controlled education. They *resented and feared "big government" with too much power.*

Springfield did not accept the Common Schools until 1842 and then they were open only four months during the year. These were one-room affairs, with a single teacher serving all grades. Earliest schools were located at "Five Points" (the point of land now bounded by Oreland Mill, Paper Mill and Church Roads) and on Ridge Road in the panhandle.

A military company was organized in Springfield in 1832. It was known as the Union Grey Artillerists. Aubrey Williams described their activities and the participation of George Lower of Flourtown:

They became so proficient in drill they could go through the manual by the tap of a drum. During the great riots in Philadelphia in the summer of 1844, this company was called into service by the Governor, and its 34 men and two 6-pound brass cannon marched to the city to help restore order.

George Lower, a young man of Flourtown, was one of the persons responsible for this company. He helped form the unit when only 19 years old, and was elected a Lieutenant in it. A life-long resident of Flourtown...born on his father's 20-acre farm on the west side of Bethlehem Pike. When the Mexican War broke out in 1846, he and his brother, Henry, enlisted in Company H, 1st Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers. He took part in nearly all the major engagements of the war.¹⁸

Henry was killed on the first day of battle and was brought home by George and buried at St. Thomas Church, Whitemarsh. When the war ended in 1848, George Lower came home to Flourtown and that fall he was elected Recorder of Deeds. Later he served 32 years as Justice of the Peace. His farm is now part of Carson Valley School and his house at 1419 Bethlehem Pike, which is believed to have been built in the 1730's, is known as "Orchard Cottage."



Old Orchard Cottage as it appears today.

Communications were improving, as more and more newspapers began to appear in Norristown and Philadelphia and in 1846 the first telegraph appeared in Montgomery County. The township was growing and changing. By the act of March 7, 1846, Springfield was first formed into a separate elective district and elections were ordered to be held at "the public house of Samuel Rader, known as the Black Horse Hotel in Flourtown." Names of Supervisors for the period included those of Jacob Bisbing, Charles Weikel, Jacob Schlecter, William Frances, Christopher Keyser, Charles Heist, William Unruh, Charles Kerper, Seth Gilbert. The same year the Odd Fellows Lodge was established in Flourtown and probably met at one of the inns.

By 1850, there were 114 houses occupied by 124 families, 65 of them on farms. Population figures indicate that there were many large families. Often, however, a family consisted of three, sometimes four generations. Other family members—aunts, uncles—often lived with them, and some households included hired hands who assisted with the farming. Records indicate few female heads of households. Widows, it was said, did not stay single long after the death of a husband.

Bean describes a fashionable wedding that took place in the area, and was attended by "one hundred couples" on horseback:

According to the custom, these gay young people would all assemble at the home of the bride, and

escort the contracting parties to the parsonage, where the ceremony would take place and from thence a characteristic ride, either to selected relatives of the married parties or to the home of the bride and from thence daily on a visiting tour among the families of the married pair, often lasting for many days.¹⁹

Quilting bees, barn raisings, neighbor helping neighbor became occasions for social gatherings among the farmers.

The residents of Springfield from its beginnings have been conservative in politics, slow to move from the status quo, and loyal to the party of their choice, usually the Republican Party or its predecessors. An election tally from a county election in 1856 listed 15 offices for the voters' choice of candidates. One hundred seventy-four persons voted in Springfield, and for 14 of the offices, the Republican received 120 votes to the Democrat's 54. The other winner received only one less vote, with the tally showing 119-55.

Most families took only one newspaper. Its politics, of course, was the same as the head of the household. Once when a resident of Trappe lost his reason it was discovered he had been regularly reading both Norristown's opposing newspapers. "It's no wonder he went daft" said the neighbors.*

The Yeakle family owned a great deal of property in the township by mid-century. An 1848 map of Montgomery County shows them holding property on Montgomery Avenue, at Church and Paper Mill Roads, at Haws Lane and Church Road, and further west on Church opposite the present Brent Road, as well as on Grace Lane and Mill Road (earlier owned by Ottinger and Harmer) in Flourtown. All of these properties still contain the original houses, though most of them have had additions. Two substantial houses were built on Mill Road near Church by the Lower family.

* From History of Montgomery County, Norristown, Commissioners of Montco, 1951, Page 182.

The Railroads Arrive

History books abound with stories about the tremendous impact made by the arrival of railroads in the country. Springfield Township was no exception. The 50 percent jump in population figures from 743 in 1850 to 1067 in 1860 attests, at least, to the growth that occurred.

The first to pass through the township was the North Pennsylvania Railroad. Chartered on October 2, 1852, by 1856 it was running trains as far as Gwynedd. A tragic train wreck occurred on July 17, 1856 in Whitemarsh Township near Felwick Station. The wreck took the lives of 59 persons and injured 86 others. The accident did not retard the growth of the railroad; the next year the line was opened to Bethlehem and in May, 1879, was leased to the Reading system for 999 years. The trains made two stops in Springfield, one at Oreland and the other at Felwick, although the latter was by flag only.

The name "Oreland" derived from the presence of large deposits of iron ore in the area. Extensive open pit mining was carried on



Flourtown station of railroad on Bethlehem Pike.

between 1830 and 1870. There was also in the area quantities of clay suitable for lining blast furnaces. The name was formally established when the North Pennsylvania Railroad established a station in 1855 and named it Oreland.

The Plymouth Railroad was chartered between Conshohocken and Oreland in 1836, but because of financial difficulties, it was not completed through to Oreland until 1868. It, too, was later leased to the Reading Company.

A station was opened in Flourtown on Bethlehem Pike and it was an important stopping point. Within a short time of the railroad's arrival a coal yard was established near the station by George Seckler. This yard was later operated by Edward McCloskey and still later by the Comly family. Passenger service continued on the line until 1930 and freight until 1950.

The Reading Railroad had been extended to Chestnut Hill in 1854, enabling prominent and wealthy people of Philadelphia to move with ease between the city and outlying areas. Many of them bought land and established lovely country estates, chiefly in Wyndmoor.



The first church in Springfield—the Presbyterian Church at Mill Road and Bethlehem Pike.

Some of the estates were occupied only during the summer, but because of convenient rail transportation, nearly all of them developed into year-round homes, often with a stock farm attached.

Not until 1857 did Springfield have its first church. Twelve members from Whitemarsh formed the first congregation and the early meetings were held in the schoolhouse in Flourtown. The church was the only house of worship in the township until early in the 20th century. William J. Buck, writing in 1884, described it:

The Presbyterian Church is situated on the east side of the turnpike and near the railroad in Flourtown. It is a two-story stone edifice, 50 by 36 feet in dimensions, built in 1857 and the only house of worship in the township. The church and graveyard comprise about 3 acres of ground. On the tombstones are found the names of Sliver [Slifer?], Lower, Thatcher, Gilbert, Lukens, Dungan, Yeakle, Sorber, Bitting, Bunting, Cressman, Katz, Garner, Murphy, Kline, Soladay, Robeson, Freed, Thornton, Graeff, Gordon, Liedig [Lessig?], Layer, Van Winkle, Dewees, Miller, Willis, Watson, Shaffer, White, and McNeill.

A search of the records of the Montgomery County units who served in the Civil War reveals many names matching those of families known to have lived in Flourtown, but since there are no addresses shown with the names, it is difficult to determine if they were from the township. No doubt, many of the young men did serve. In 1863, the Reading Railway established a station at Willow Grove Avenue which they called Willow Grove. The station was created for the Mower United States General Hospital which had 3,600 beds and was located in Philadelphia on Stenton Avenue between the present Abington and Springfield Avenues. More than 17,000 wounded soldiers were cared for at the hospital.

It was about this same time that farm implements were manufactured by descendants of Balthasar Heydrick—George, and later Harrison Heydrick—on Montgomery Avenue. Harrison

was reputed to be responsible for invention of the first successful lawnmower and many other tools. The saw mill operated there and as mentioned earlier, was the largest industrial plant in the township at that time. This area was known as Yeakel's meadow and the pond, known now as Hillcrest, was then called "Yeakel's Pond."

There were numerous stone and marble quarries in the area by the time of the Civil War, and extensive mining of iron ore, especially in the Oreland area. Until recent years, remains of some of the pits could still be seen on the north side of Haws Lane in Flourtown. Oreland is still pitted with depressions which were once flourishing ore mines. Until the railroad arrived in Flourtown, most of this ore was carried by wagon to the foundries at Spring Mill and Bridgeport for processing.

The Edge Hill Iron Company was organized in 1868 and a two-stack blast furnace was erected on the Springfield-Abington Township line where the present North Hills railroad station is located. This station, originally known as Edge Hill, on the North Pennsylvania Railroad, provided easy transportation to Philadelphia and other points for the shipment of pig iron made by the plant.

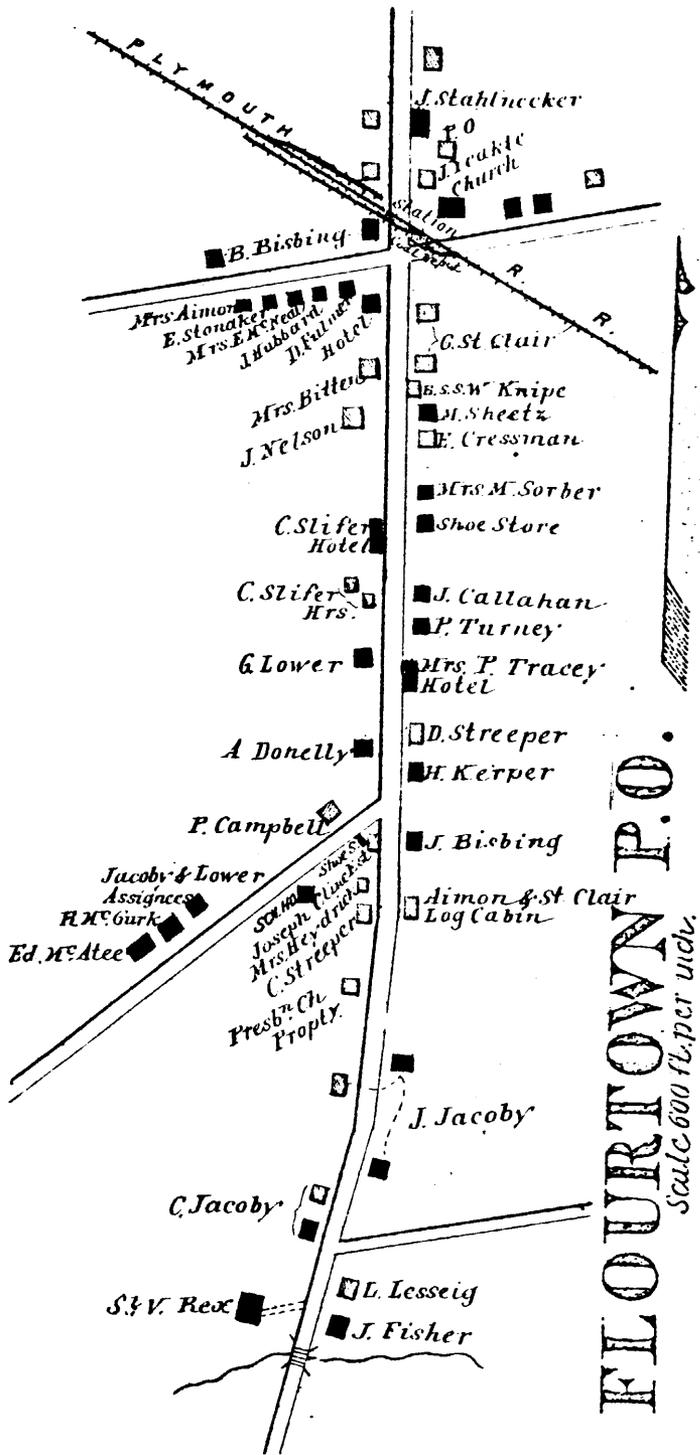
The company was in full operation by 1872, but then ran into financial difficulties and came to a standstill until 1883 when it came under new ownership. After making several engineering changes, the furnace was blown in again in July, 1883. At the peak of operations, the plant employed 205 men. The company also owned 122 acres of ground in Springfield, where North Hills Country Club is now located. A decline in the quality of the ore and a falling market forced the closing of the plant in 1897. As late as World War I, however, iron ore was being mined in the Enfield section of Oreland and at Haws Lane and Bethlehem Pike.

A quarry along Walnut Avenue in Oreland, now filled with water, was long in use and supplied an immense quantity of stone. When the great snowstorm of 1958 struck the area and knocked out electrical power for several days, the quarry was put out of business. The pumps could not operate without power and water rapidly filled the excavation. It was later taken over by the U. S. Navy as an underwater experimental station and is still being used for that purpose.

One of Philadelphia's distinguished lawyers, Henry J. Williams, Esq., the son of General J. Williams, the first superintendent of West Point, retired to Chestnut Hill and built a large mansion on Stenton Avenue. Known for his philanthropic nature, he established a large public library called the Christian Hall Library, which was free to all classes in the community. In addition, in 1872, he built a large and very beautiful home for orphaned children, known as the Bethesda Home, on Stenton Avenue between Willow Grove Avenue and Mermaid Lane. At one time nearly 150 children, who were well cared for and provided with an education, called Bethesda their home. Apparently the children who lived there in later years were sent to Springfield schools, since minutes of the school directors near the turn of the century record deliberations about whether or not the children will be admitted and details of tuition to be paid. The home was closed in 1954 and the property was later developed with single homes.

Thirty-two years after they were organized in Flourtown, the Odd Fellows were able, in 1878, to erect a permanent hall at Bethlehem Pike above Wissahickon Avenue. Substantially built of native stone, it contained a room for lectures and concerts, the first such cultural center in the township. The building is still standing and presently houses an antique shop.

The growing population was reflected in the number of school children. By 1883 the schools were open 10 months of the year, with an average attendance of 103 pupils. A year's budget for the operation of schools was an unbelievable \$1,013. Three of the early schools are still standing, though none is used as a public school today. The first of these was Flourtown School on Wissahickon Avenue, built in 1879, then Wyndmoor on Willow Grove Avenue, in 1893, and finally, Oreland School on Plymouth Avenue, built in 1897. The other two early schools, Ridge Road and Five Points are no longer standing, the latter having been sold by the school directors in 1899 for \$1,000. In that year, the secretary, William Harmer Harper, reported that \$6,498.36 was collected in real estate taxes. The directors often met at the Wheel Pump Hotel to consider teachers' salaries and other matters. The Board hired 8 teachers in 1900 at an average salary of \$50 per month.



Still exists at this location.
 Gave way to progress.

Flourtown P.O. map locating properties along Bethlehem Pike.

The panhandle section of the township which extended to the Schuylkill River consisted primarily of farms, with the exception of two or three stone quarries which were operated during the middle 1880's. The difficulties of getting children to schools in the township presented something of a problem. With this in mind, three commissioners were appointed by the Courts to look into the possibility of changing the boundary between Springfield and Whitemarsh Townships.

On November 11, 1876, the Court modified and confirmed this report as follows:

That instead of the Ridge Turnpike Road being the northeastern boundary, the dividing line shall be the line dividing the land of J. Kratz and William L. Rittenhouse, on the southwesterly side of said Ridge Turnpike Road, so that the township of Whitemarsh shall comprise that part of Springfield lying between the River Schuylkill, and line of Philadelphia City and County and the said line, between lands of J. Kratz and William L. Rittenhouse.

Whitemarsh Township gained about 160 acres of additional land. Why the court decided to modify the original report has never been explained. Springfield was left with a shortened "panhandle," which still presents some problems of policing and transporting of school children.

Students were graded in as many as 15 subjects, including spelling, reading, writing, mental and written arithmetic, geography, grammar, U. S. history, physiology-hygiene, literature, the U. S. Constitution, physical geography, etymology, algebra, drawing and geometry. Graduation from eighth grade at age 14 or 15 was usually the end of formal education for most students. Teachers were also required to pass periodic examinations.

New businesses in the township during this period included a tile and pottery works in the Yeakle house at Paper Mill and Church Roads. Products produced by this concern were used in the construction of the famous Bok Tower in Florida and in the building of the

Delaware River Bridge, now the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, between Philadelphia and Camden. The works, in operation for a little over 30 years, closed around 1930.

News events as the new century dawned included: the first telephone appeared in the County; the 133' long covered bridge over the Wissahickon on Northwestern Avenue was replaced in 1900 with an open span; the Episcopal Diocese of Philadelphia established the first hospital in the state to provide fresh air treatment of tuberculosis on a 15-acre tract of land on Stenton Avenue between Evergreen Avenue and Birch Lane; residents along Willow Grove Avenue formed the Wyndmoor Sidewalk Association and collected funds for installing sidewalks in front of their homes and businesses.

There were many large farms operated by wealthy "gentlemen farmers" in Springfield about 1900. Mitchell Harrison had the "Chestnut Hill Kennels and Stock Farm" devoted to the development of blooded horses and thoroughbred hounds. It was located on the south side of Paper Mill Road, starting at a point where the building now known as the "gatehouse" stands, and extended eastward to Cheltenham Avenue and along the west side of Cheltenham Avenue nearly to Willow Grove Avenue.

Edward T. Stotesbury purchased 40 acres of ground at East Lane and Mermaid Lane in Wyndmoor, and established his well-known "Winoga Stock Farm" dedicated to the raising of fine horses. His "Gentlemen Roadsters" became world famous. Stotesbury's farm was later sold to the U. S. Government and the Eastern Regional Research Laboratories of the Department of Agriculture were erected there in 1939. In 1975 part of the government grounds were granted to the township for Mermaid Park.

Stevenson Crothers, for many years president of the board of commissioners, had the "Roslyn Heights Stock Farm" at Montgomery Avenue and Paper Mill Road. The Newbold farm in Laverock, known as "Farleigh," was famous for its fine cattle. John Dulles Allen had the "Enfield Stock Farm and Kennels."

About 1897, Philadelphia Rapid Transit Co. (P.R.T.) built an amusement park on the plot of ground formerly known as "Yeakle's

Meadow," now the site of Hillcrest Junior High School. The park opened in 1898 and the P.R.T. extended its Route 23 trolley route to Erdenheim. Announcements in the Philadelphia newspapers advertised the longest open air trolley ride in America for a nickel.

Officially the Chestnut Hill Amusement Park, it was more familiarly known as "White City" because all of the buildings were painted white. It contained a grand casino, merry-go-round, boat ride, miniature railway and scenic railroad in addition to other amusements such as shooting galleries and roller skating rinks. In August, 1907, the scenic railway was hit by lightning and razed, but was rebuilt the following year. By the summer of 1911, rumor had it that the Pennsylvania Railroad would extend its tracks to the park, but nothing came of it, and the park closed down that Fall.



Imposing main entrance to "White City" Amusement Park

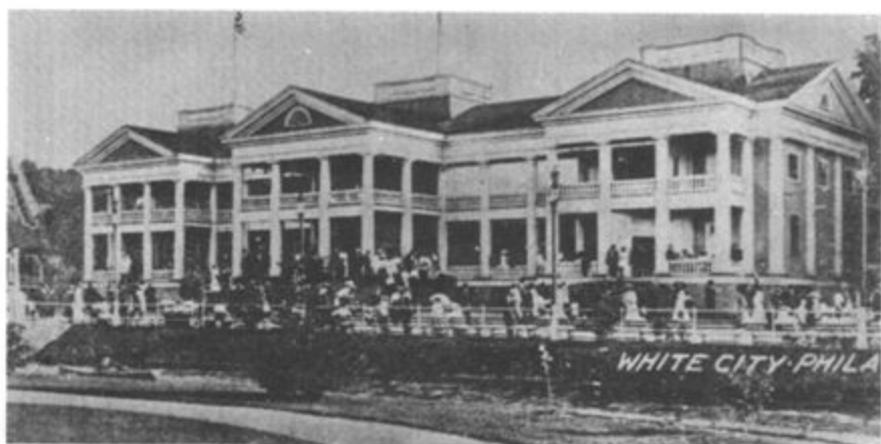
A story about the trolleys appeared in the December 11, 1969, issue of the *Chestnut Hill Local*, written by Otis W. Balis. He reports a conversation with Carl Andrew Gaeser, then 80 years old and a long time resident of Flourtown. Gaeser, who had a nightmare experience on a ride, vividly remembered the four-wheeled open trolley that in the summer ran down Germantown Avenue to Hillcrest where it took a right and went over to White City Park.



Heading for the Picnic Grounds at White City.



Overall view shows lake, Pavillion and scenic rides in background.



The Grand Casino at White City.

He was 19 years old and he decided to spend the evening in the park. He boarded the trolley at the top of the hill with the rest of a large crowd bound for an evening's entertainment at the park. Just as the trolley came over the crest of the hill [about where the Chestnut Hill Presbyterian Church now stands], the motorman began to apply the hand brakes with the big brass crank which tightened a stout chain under the car. Suddenly [he] heard a loud crack accompanied by the clanking of a loose chain and he realized that the braking system had gone. As the trolley picked up speed he edged his way to the outer end of the long seat. Ahead of him stood a stout lady trying to work up her nerve to jump. He made up her mind for her by giving her a push, and followed immediately, landing directly on top of her.

Five persons lost their lives in the resulting crash, and 63 were injured. The swaying, careening car sideswiped two others coming up the hill and wound up broadside against a third car that was turning into Germantown Avenue from Hillcrest.

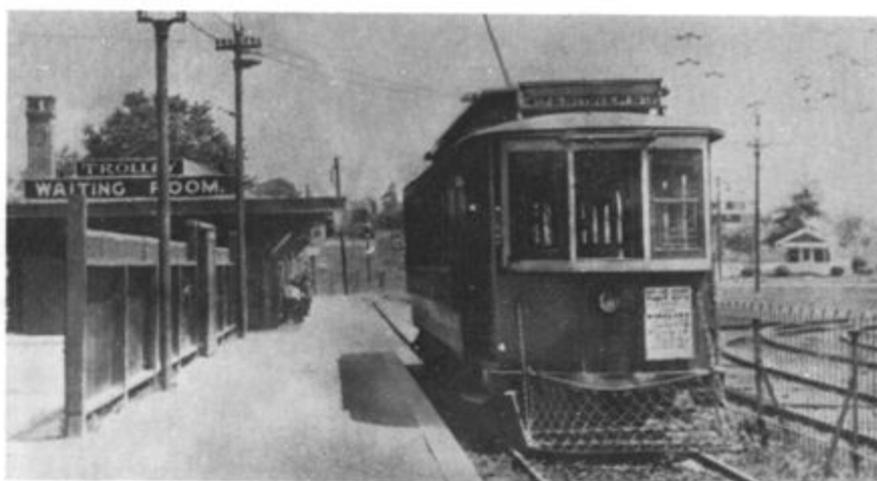
Across the street at the Wheel Pump Hotel, the owners were apparently trying to compete with the amusement park. In February, 1904, the *Conshohocken Recorder* ran a story about the goings-on:

[The Wheel Pump] has been licensed since colonial days except for a few months three years ago when an attempt was made to run a park in connection with the hotel. Judge Swartz decided that beer and music must not mix in this county and cancelled the license until the following spring.

In 1900 the Inland Traction Company began building a trolley line down Bethlehem Pike through Flourtown and Erdenheim, and on November 21, 1902, the first car ran down to Erdenheim. This company later became the Lehigh Valley Transit Company, or more familiarly, the L.V.T., and its well-known red trolley cars were a familiar sight as they traveled up and down the Pike.

The line, which ran from Allentown to Erdenheim, was inconvenienced by the refusal of the railroad to permit their cars to pass over the tracks at the Flourtown crossing. The trolleys from Allentown came down as far as the railroad where the passengers had to get off and walk across the railroad and board another car on the other side in order to continue the trip to Erdenheim. In 1903, however, the L.V.T. "stole the crossing." This was done by having a crossing built after the last train for the day had passed, and then running a trolley over it. This somehow constituted legal permission on the railroad's part, and thus a through line was established between Allentown and Erdenheim.

Neither the P.R.T. nor the L.V.T. had a station or terminal building at Erdenheim until 1907. The Philadelphia cars stopped at the entrance to the park on Bethlehem Pike near the 10½ milestone marker, and the Allentown cars stopped nearby. In the summer of that year a trolley station was built on a portion of the park ground and became known as the Union Trolley Terminal. The building used as a waiting room is still standing behind the present Rittenhouse Lumber Yard and portions of the tracks are still in place. This building also served as a post office after 1910 and continued in operation until 1926.



Union Trolley Terminal, Bethlehem Pike. Erdenheim

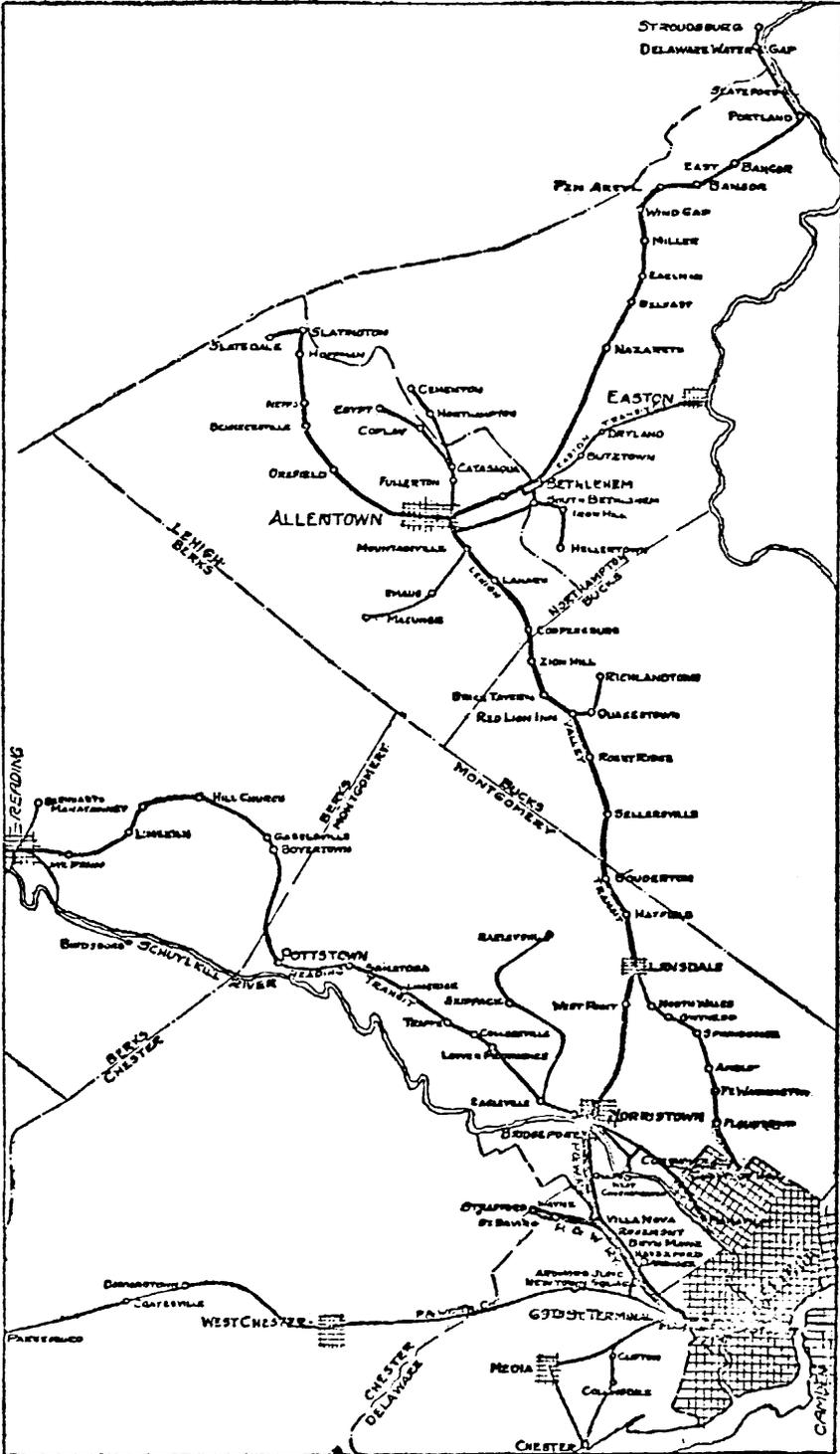


Bethlehem bound Trolley north of Valley Green Road.

With the closing of the park and the increasing use of automobiles, the trolley companies were hard pressed to operate their lines profitably. Finally, on July 13, 1926, the last L.V.T. cars departed the terminal and the company abandoned its trackage to Erdenheim. The P.R.T. ran for a few months longer and then it, too, ceased operations.

Springfield, adjacent to Philadelphia and now served by good public transportation, began to fill up rapidly. As the population grew, the people began to ask for government services which the system then in effect could not give them. There were no police or fire services, paved streets or sidewalks, no street lighting and no regulation of nuisances. The same was true of other suburban districts.

Alexander J. Cassett, an officer of the Pennsylvania Railroad and also supervisor of Lower Merion Township, began sounding out other township supervisors regarding the possibility of increasing local government services. He proposed that the law be changed to allow two types of townships. Second Class Townships, those with sparse population, would be allowed to continue with the older, simpler form of government. For the other townships, those with 300 or more people per square mile, First Class status would be



The Trolley System showing connecting lines from Philadelphia through 5 counties to Stroudsburg, Slatington, Reading, Parksburg and Chester and all points in between.

permitted. These townships would be governed by an elected board of commissioners with the power to provide a wider range of services for residential areas.

After the First Class Township Law was finally passed in 1899, Springfield took advantage of it and in 1901 elected five commissioners who took office on March 10, 1901. They were: Patrick Sheehan, President, Harry Fallows, Vice President, Morris A. Weiss, John A. Campbell, and Abraham Unruh. The commissioners appointed a solicitor to look after the legal affairs of the township, a road supervisor whose job it was to keep all roads in good repair, and a township clerk to take charge of township records. The road supervisor was the only full time employee.

The board further organized itself into committees of three members each, whose functions were to supervise certain phases of township activities. The Lighting Committee handled the street lighting, the Road Committee cooperated with the Road Supervisor, and the Police and Fire Committee handled matters relating to public safety.

During the first few years of its existence, the Board organized each year, electing one of its members to the various committees. Until 1916, the commissioners were elected every two years. The original wards were designated: Springfield East (all of Wyndmoor), Springfield West (all of Flouertown and Erdenheim), and Springfield Third (Oreland).

On July 3, 1903, the township organized its first police force with the appointment of two patrolmen. First known as "The Night Watch and Police Force," they were on duty seven days a week, starting at 4. p.m., and remaining on duty until about midnight. Until 1908, the police were on duty only between the months of May and September, but in 1908 at least one man was on duty throughout the year.

Until the original Township Building at 402 Bethlehem Pike in Erdenheim was built, the meetings of the Commissioners were usually held in one of the taverns, or at the residence of one of the commissioners. From 1901 until 1904 their usual meeting place was "the public

house of Edward McCloskey, Flourtown,” otherwise known as “The Black Horse Hotel.” Later they were held at the “public house of Edmund P. Rotzell,” known today as the Springfield Hotel.

In 1907, the Commissioners purchased a plot of ground on the east side of Bethlehem Pike between Bells Mill Road (Thorp’s Lane then), and Hillcrest Avenue, and erected the first municipal building at a total cost of \$12,000. The first meeting was held in the building March 4, 1908.

By 1900, Wyndmoor was the most highly developed district in the township. The extension of the railroads to Chestnut Hill, the strategic location in relation to Philadelphia, and the excellent vista afforded by the higher ground, made it fair game for real estate development.

Wyndmoor contained some of the largest estates and some of the finest farms in this portion of the county and many of them were sold to entrepreneurs who put up single family homes.

The growth in population led to the establishment of the second church in the township. Christ Lutheran Church of Chestnut Hill opened a mission church on Willow Grove Avenue which became Grace Lutheran Church. The present building was erected in 1903. The congregation will mark the 75th anniversary of its establishment this fall.

There is confusion about the origin of the name Wyndmoor. As mentioned earlier, the Reading Railroad named their station Willow Grove, but prior to that time the area had been known as Spring Village and even earlier as Bungtown. The railroad later changed the name to “Tedyuscung,” the Indian whose statue was erected on a hill overlooking the Wissahickon, and finally called it “Windmoor.” Lippincott suggests,

...that the donor of the land [for the station], Samuel Y. Heebner, or his sister Julia, who had moved out there, thought the name “Tedyuscung” too much of a mouthful. Mr. Heebner was given the privilege of naming it and always said it was actuated by the bleakness of the place. It was a romantic age. This ex-

planation seems plausible to me and if it is so a verse from Robert Louis Stevenson (“To S.R. Crocket” in the volume called “My Wife”) I think might furnish an explanation.

“Blows the wind today, and the sun and rain are flying,
Blows the wind on the moors today and now,
Where about the graves of the martyrs the Whamps
(European curlew) are crying,
My heart remembers how!”²⁰

By September, 1907, many of the people of Wyndmoor were suggesting that the place might benefit by becoming a borough, and a movement was started to separate from the township, and incorporate as the Borough of Wyndmoor. In 1909 a petition was submitted to the county court requesting borough status. At that time the assessed valuation of Wyndmoor was \$1,900,000 and persons owning property valued at over \$1,500,000 signed the petition for the creation of a borough. The commissioners took official action on the petition on June 5, 1909. By a vote of three to two, they sent a lengthy resolution to the court opposing the petition. The court refused to grant the application on the ground that since Springfield was a First Class Township, Wyndmoor could derive no additional benefits from becoming a borough.

The Wyndmoor fire company was organized in 1907, and was the first in the township. The original firehouse was located on Mermaid Lane at Queen Street, and consisted of a hand-drawn hose cart. Officially the Wyndmoor Hose Company No. 1, they moved to Queen Street, south of Willow Grove Avenue after 1916, and into their present location on Willow Grove in 1967. Although Oreland did not grow rapidly until just prior to World War II, the Oreland Volunteer Fire Company was started in 1909, and their present building at Roesch and Ehrenpfort Roads was erected in 1912.

As early as 1906, the Township records show that the citizens of Flourtown had asked the commissioners about fire protection for the community. Finally, in 1910, a group of citizens formed the Flourtown Volunteer Fire Company, and obtained a charter. From

a humble beginning of one hand-drawn hose cart, kept in a barn, the company now operates from a modern building on Bethlehem Pike, which was completed in 1967. For many years the company operated a fair or carnival, usually held in August, on their grounds at the rear of the firehouse. It was the largest volunteer fireman's fair in the state, and it has been estimated that as many as 10,000 people attended on a single night. The fair was discontinued in 1950.

Robert N. Carson, a prominent and wealthy railroad magnate, owned a large tract of land in adjoining areas of Whitemarsh and Springfield Townships. Aristides Welsh purchased a farm of 150 acres on the Wissahickon in 1861. He increased this to 250 acres with purchases of adjoining lands for the purpose of breeding blooded horses. In May, 1882, the farm was sold to Norman W. Kitson for \$125,000, and he increased its size by additional purchases. It was this land that Carson purchased prior to 1900.

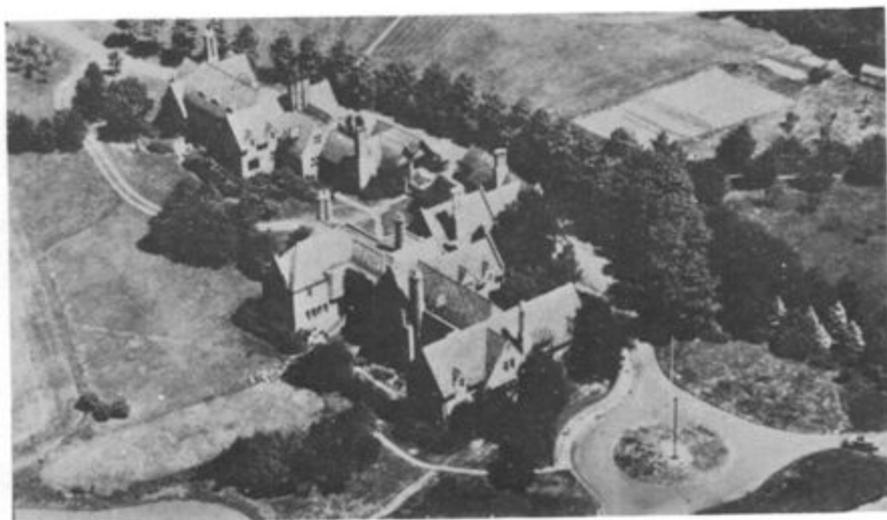
Carson's will, drawn almost parallel to that of Stephen Girard, established Carson College for Orphan Girls on about 100 acres of the property, and required that the residents be "poor, white, orphan girls." Elsa Ueland, Carson's first director, recalls that when she came to Flourtown during World War I, Bethlehem Pike was still unpaved. The school was erected with stone construction and tiled roofs at an enormous cost. Charming tiles with nursery-rhyme figures imported from Italy adorn many of the buildings.

Carson specified that the girls reside in "cottages" in order that the atmosphere be as home-like as possible. This was unlike other orphanages of the era where all children were housed in large dormitory-like buildings. The cottages were scattered over the property and were originally to have been connected by a large tunnel, so that the girls could get to the central building during inclement weather without going outside. These tunnels were also to connect the central heating system to the various buildings. The cost of building the tunnel became so prohibitive that only one section was built. It was abandoned midway from Mother Goose (the school building) to Lower Beech Cottage. In more recent times the tunnel has been suggested as a possible bomb shelter.

Like the Bethesda Home and Girard College, the children not only lived at Carson, but in the early years also attended school there. The girls were taught practical skills, including cooking, sewing, crafts, as well as academic subjects. They were taught to swim in the Wissahickon.

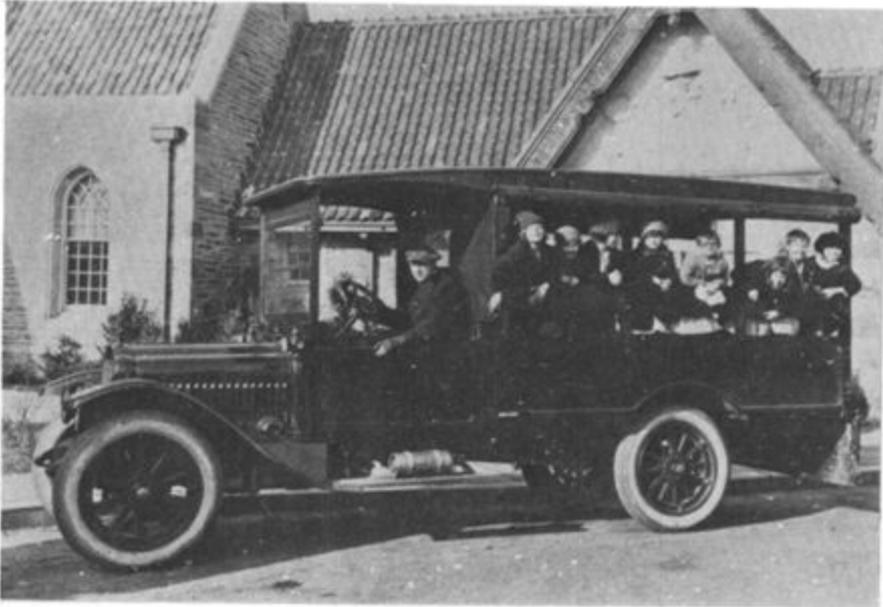
At one time, Carson operated a working farm which provided food for the kitchens of the school. The girls learned gardening as one of their skills by working on the farm. A herd of cows provided milk and other dairy products.

Today the school is known as Carson Valley School, and is operated as an "intentional community." While the residents are still mostly female, some boys are accepted as guests in order not to split the families further than necessary. The trustees quietly desegregated the school a few years ago and the children attend public schools.



Looking down on what is now Carson Valley School in Flourtown.

The balance of the Carson property was sold to George D. Widener between 1909 and 1916, and his family has continued the breeding and training of fine race horses. His farm is known as "Erdenheim," and it was from the estate that the village of Erdenheim got its name.



An early bus transports children from Carson Valley School

Henry B. Auchy was responsible for much of the development of the present Erdenheim. Clinton Rorer had originally laid out Yeakle Avenue, Gordon Lane and Montgomery Avenue in 1892. About 1908, Auchy relaid these streets, but not on the original lines of Rorer. His residence "Erden," originally the home of Daniel Yeakle, was across the street from the park on Montgomery Avenue. Commercial development was slow in coming to Erdenheim. An atlas for the year 1916 shows the trolley terminal, postoffice, a blacksmith shop and the Wheel Pump Hotel as the only businesses.

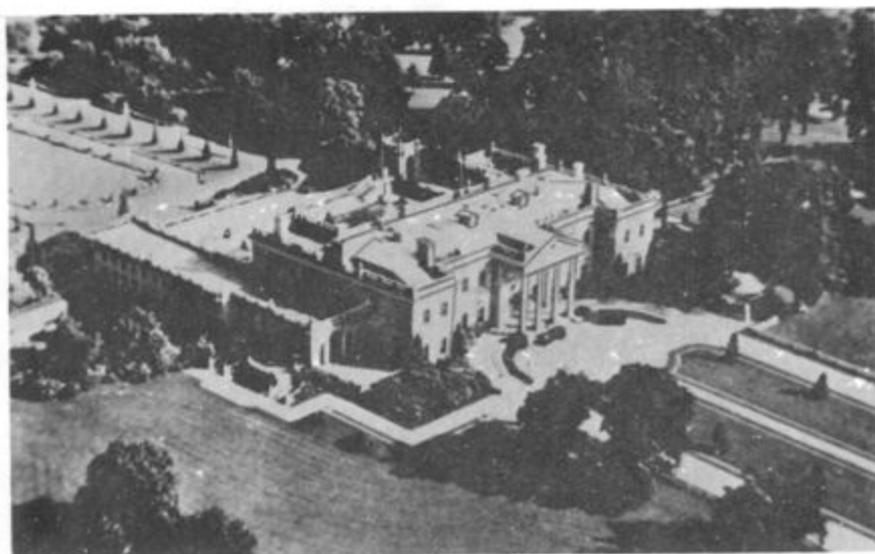
Property owners in Springfield just prior to World War I included the following names: Mitchell Harrison, Robert Fell, Clark Dillenbeck, Edward Ernest, Charles N. Welsh, Edward L. Welsh, Francis I. Gowen, Arthur H. Lea, Mrs. J. Lowber Welsh, A. Warren Kelsey, Walter H. Jarden, J. Morris Bisbing, Harriet D. Newbold, Grace Leslie Simms, George W. Shriver, J. Welsh Young, John H. Dulles Allen, Henry F. Harris, J. Milton Brooke, Joseph W. Hunter, Sarah D. Van Rensselaer, George Heist, Stevenson Crothers, George C. Thomas, John Faber Miller, Charles Slifer, Clarence Kates,

George Campbell, Samuel Crothers, J. Nelson Yocum, Henry B. Auchy, and A. J. Nace.

In 1916, Edward T. Stotesbury purchased the Fell estate and erected the costliest house in Montgomery County. The magnificent 145-room mansion known as "Whitemarsh Hall," cost \$3,000,000 to build and required five years to complete. During World War II, the many underground rooms of "Whitemarsh Hall" were used to store valuable paintings from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

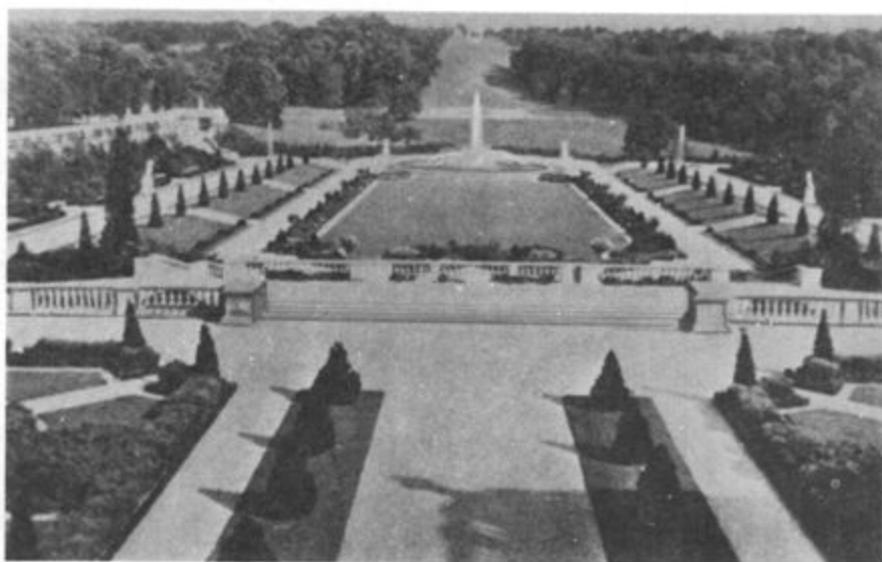
Details of the mansion stagger the reader. Modeled after the architecture of Georgian homes in England, the main entrance which faces Paper Mill Road is held up by six massive 50-foot Corinthian columns. It was built of Indiana limestone and Italian marble and has been called the "Versailles of America." The ballroom was 64 feet long, with an indoor water fountain and an organ with three-story pipes. The foyer, which features a sweeping, marble staircase leading to the second floor, was as big as an average house and the walls of the staircase were lined with mirrored glass.

The mansion was furnished with only the best—French furniture, gold chandeliers and Oriental rugs. The parquet floors were polished



Aerial view of fabulous "Whitemarsh Hall" in Wyndmoor.

by the 35 servants until they could reflect the colors of the priceless Gainesboroughs, Romneys and Reynoldses that Stotesbury bought and hung for his bride. There was a miniature movie theater, private water supply, and an ice making plant. A small army of gardeners was required to tend the formal gardens. A magnificent expanse of marble steps stretched the length of the back wall of the mansion and led to the enchanting formal gardens, impressive fountains and statuary.



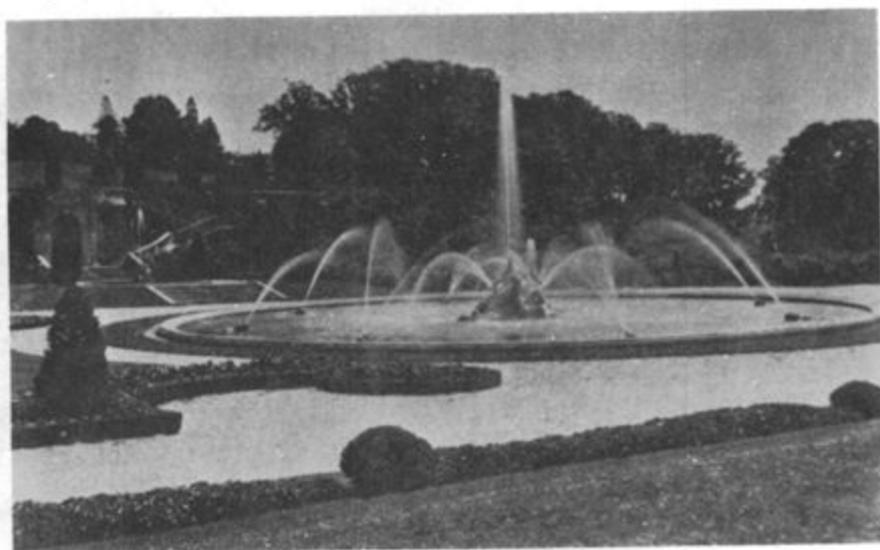
The elaborate formal gardens extending from the rear of the mansion. Willow Grove Avenue is in the distance.

Edward Stotesbury's story was the traditional rags-to-riches fairy tale. At sixteen he went to work for Drexel & Company, the bankers, as a clerk earning \$16.60 a month. He was always punctual, never absent, and kept meticulous records of every penny he spent. Anthony J. Drexel was impressed with this young man, and when Drexel went into partnership with J. P. Morgan, he rewarded Stotesbury with a lucrative post. Within a few years, Stotesbury had become an expert in commercial paper and rose in the company. By 1900 he was a world-famous financier who collaborated with J. P. Morgan in the formation of U.S. Steel.

Edward Stotesbury built the mansion for his second wife, the former Lucretia Cromwell, the widow of Oliver Eaton Cromwell of New York and Washington. He had been a widower who lived very simply in Germantown before meeting her at the age of 62. She was known as "The Queen," by many of the staff, and entertained as lavishly as one. She frequently went to New York to have her fashionable wardrobe designed. She wore fabulous jewels when she entertained, and was good copy for the society columnists. Friends reported that Edward worried about his wife's extravagance and that of her children, particularly Louise, the wife of General Douglas McArthur.

Edward Stotesbury died in 1938 at 89 and his funeral was the last extravaganza at the mansion. The ballroom, where the casket lay upon a blanket of thousands of magnolias, was lit only by candles. A guard at the gate counted more than 100 truckloads of flowers. After his death, Mrs. Stotesbury closed the house and moved to their \$450,000 "cottage" in Palm Beach where she died in 1947.

Writing in the *Chestnut Hill Local*, Marie Reinhart Jones, reflects the thinking of many who have visited Whitemarsh Hall in recent years:



Close up of one of the fountains in the formal garden setting.

It seems impossible that a man who worried about the future of the U.S. economy so much that he called a meeting of bankers from all over the country at Whitemarsh Hall during the depression of the 1930's would not have considered the use to which his home could be put after he and his wife died. Or perhaps he was not enough interested in the \$3 million home to think of it as something to preserve.

Shortly after the Second World War the Pennsylvania Salt Mfg. Co. (now known as the Pennwalt Corporation) purchased the entire estate and used the mansion as a research center. The major portion of the ground was sold to Matthew H. McCloskey who developed it as "Whitemarsh Village" and built more than 500 homes on the hills and in the valley surrounding Whitemarsh Hall.

In 1964 Pennwalt moved its laboratories and the mansion and the 47½ remaining acres were sold to Sidney T. Dvorak, Wyndmoor, who held the land until 1969 when he sold it at auction to Kevy K. Kaiserman and George W. Neff for \$700,000.

Kaiserman and Neff waited for almost two years before presenting a plan for 570 condominium units on the tract which was zoned for single family homes. They requested a curative amendment in order to construct the development, but after a lengthy series of hearings the commissioners denied the request. The Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas and Commonwealth Court on appeal upheld the commissioners and the Supreme Court refused to hear arguments on a further appeal.

Meanwhile, "Whitemarsh Hall," the house that was built to last forever, decays. The dreams of all who hoped for a cultural center, an art museum, are gone. It has become a paradise for vandals who have left the rooms filled with debris, windows broken, mirrors smashed, statues headless and sprawling on the neglected lawns. Nature, too, has played a part in the decay. Weeds grow everywhere, ivy once neatly trimmed has invaded the roof and drains. Numerous fires have destroyed parts of the building. Wild cats,

dogs, mice, rats and other animals roam the six-storied building (three above and three below the ground).

Another of the beautiful homes built in Springfield Township during the hey-day of the “gentlemen farmers” was the Rotan estate on Graver’s Lane. Samuel B. Rotan, then district attorney of Philadelphia, and his wife spent a great deal of time in England. Enamored of English architecture, they brought back pieces of English homes—windows, flooring, doorways, etc., and found an architect, Robert McGoodwin, who incorporated these pieces into the house he built for them. Smaller cottages were dismantled in England and brought here for reassembly along the drive. Mrs. Rotan was particularly fond of Sutton Place on the river Wey near Guildford, England, and wanted her home to be as much like Sutton Place as possible.

The estate, now held by the University of Pennsylvania, was owned for many years by the Wharton Sinkler family.

The gateway and the linen-fold paneling in the stairway may be the oldest carved wood in the United States. It came from Parkam Old Hall and is estimated to be between four and five hundred years old. The flagstone in the foyer was originally laid down in about 1124 in a priory in Warwick. The glass in the foyer windows is 15th century Swiss. Every room in the house contains leaded glass complete with Latin inscriptions, flowers and birds. The large living room belonged to Lord Essex in Cassiobury Hall and it has a Tudor Rose inserted in the glass, indicating that Elizabeth I had visited there. The library, built of Cedars of Lebanon, came from a home in the Battersea section of London which was a meeting place for intellectuals. Alexander Pope is said to have written his “Essay on Man” there.

Many other lovely homes were built along Montgomery Avenue in Wyndmoor. One of these, near the top of the hill, is a handsome place which combines French, English and Italian architecture. Completely surrounded by a masonry wall, the grounds are beautifully landscaped and include a swimming pool and bath house, a pebbled walkway shaded by a double row of linden trees, and a formal

garden which includes fountains and a summerhouse nestled in the corner overlooking the woods.

The house was designed by Miller, Meigs & Howe, Architects, for a prominent Philadelphia attorney about the time Whitemarsh Hall was completed. The house is entered through a glass enclosed stair, and the tiled floor, beamed ceiling and fireplace of the foyer remind the visitor of the entrance halls of country estates in France.

This house has long been referred to as the "Poe" house and rumor had it that the house was built by the descendants of Edgar Allen Poe. Actually, Poe had no descendants, but a relative of his, probably a grand-nephew, was an occupant of the house at one time.

Other building was going on in Wyndmoor during the 1920s. The industrial development along Mermaid Lane brought an increase in population. New houses rose in the area between Willow Grove Avenue and Mermaid Lane as well as in the section just north of Willow Grove. Seven Dolors parish was established in 1916, and the school was opened to the children of the area.

The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts established their first troops in the Township during these years, and soon after the 19th Amendment was ratified, the League of Women Voters of Springfield was formed. A group of Protestants met at the Wheelpump Inn in Erdenheim in 1929 and formed the Community Church of Erdenheim, now St. Marks United Methodist Church. Hillcrest School was built on the White City grounds and served as Springfield's first high school. The school tax imposed was 14 mills, and teachers were paid a maximum of \$2275 per year.

The Great Depression affected the expansion of the township and during the early 1930's there is little evidence of new growth. The township continued to grow at a very slow rate until the second World War economy created a building boom.

The first major housing developments to occur in the township were begun just prior to World War II. These included Chesney Downs, Whitemarsh Downs (N.E. side of Church Road) and the area around Station Avenue.

The following figures show the very rapid expansion that took place in the township at the close of the war:

Date	Population	No. of Homes	Assessed Valuation
1790	446	1238	\$ NA
1840	695	1843	NA
1880	1535	3222	1,522,605
1931	5571	1238	7,000,000
1941	6635	1843	8,391,995
1950	11,384	3222	12,755,936
1955	16,954	4620	18,160,470
1960	20,652	5646	33,298,950
1970	22,934	6212	39,000,000
1975	23,313	6335	41,398,000

The coming of so many new residents to the township occasioned tremendous growth in roads, in schools, in municipal services, and in new houses of worship.



Mermaid Park, the latest addition to Springfield's Park System.



Three fire companies work together to protect your property.



They're always available in case of emergency.



Trash collection, snow removal, glass collection, street cleaning services we take for granted.

The records of growth parallel the establishment of religious congregations: in Oreland, St. Philip-in-the-Fields Episcopal organized in the Oreland firehouse and later built on Oreland Mill Road; Oreland Presbyterian and St. Paul's Reformed Episcopal on Church Road (the latter was formerly in center city Philadelphia and met for a time in Glenside before building the present structure) and Holy Martyrs Roman Catholic Church on Allison Road; in Flourtown, St. Genevieve's opened the school and soon afterwards the church.

The development of Paper Mill Glen attracted the first sizeable Jewish population to the township, and soon afterward about 130 families organized to form a congregation. In 1956, they began to hold meetings in the house now occupied by the school administration. The school board, however, needed the land to meet the requirements for building the new junior high school, and therefore the congregation sold them the house, but continued to rent it. Temple Beth Tikvah, a member of the United Synagogues of America, is a conservative congregation, and their present structure on Paper Mill Road was erected in 1958. Only the foundations and skeleton construction were done by contractor. The balance of the building was finished by the members of the congregation and opened for the high holidays in September, 1958. Ground was broken for an addition this year.

Finally, in Wyndmoor, the First Church of the Brethren was erected on Cheltenham Avenue. Other churches which have come to the township in more recent years include the Germantown Gospel, the Flourtown Gospel Tabernacle, the German Church of God, Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christ Bible Presbyterian. In all, Springfield now has sixteen houses of worship—three Roman Catholic, one Jewish, and the balance various Protestant denominations.

The school population reflected the rapid growth of the township, and many new schools were needed to accommodate the children: Enfield Elementary was built in 1948 at a cost of \$312,774; Wyndmoor Elementary in 1950 for \$344,134; the Senior High School in 1954, \$2,371,587; Erdenheim Elementary in 1955, \$588,326; and Enfield Junior High School in 1958, \$2,005,374. The last of the schools to

be built was Penn Manor Elementary in 1965, costing \$851,438. Springfield School District has had only four superintendents—A. L. Gehman, who first served as supervising principal and then superintendent when Springfield became a third class district; David Johnston, Thomas Payzant, and Robert D. Christiana.

New schools require increased assessments, and during these years, the millage rate skyrocketed. In 1927-28 the budget for schools was \$87,120; currently it totals \$6,666,205, reflecting the expanding cost of education and the nation-wide inflation rate.* The excellence of Springfield schools brought many of its new residents to the township, and contributed to the increased value of property.

Like other school districts Springfield has seen a trend to declining enrollments the last few years. In the spring of this year, school directors approved a reorganization plan which called for the closing of Wyndmoor Elementary School in June. The long range plan also calls for the closing of Hillcrest Junior High School with in five years.

Under the reorganization plan, all sixth and seventh grade students will attend Hillcrest and all eighth and ninth grades will go to Enfield Junior High School. Future projections call for Enfield to become a middle school housing sixth, seventh and eighth graders while ninth graders move to the high school.

Wyndmoor was rented to Alternative High School—East for a period of two years. Beginning in September, the alternative school, which is supported by neighboring school districts, will open at Wyndmoor. Ironically, Springfield pulled out of the alternative school plan and in the future no new students from the district will be entering unless their parents opt to pay tuition for them.

Another important addition to the educational offerings in the township was the move of La Salle College High School from Philadelphia to Springfield. Under the jurisdiction of the Christian Brothers, the school purchased a large tract of land from Clarence M. Brown and erected the present buildings on Cheltenham Avenue in Wyndmoor.

The history of the libraries in Springfield Township began with some of the Women's Clubs who opened small local libraries. For

*Between 1899 and 1976, the millage increased from 3 mills to 126 mills.

a time the community was served by the Montgomery County Bookmobile. But for many years a group called Friends of the Library had dreamed of a township library that would serve all the people, and in 1966 the dream came true.

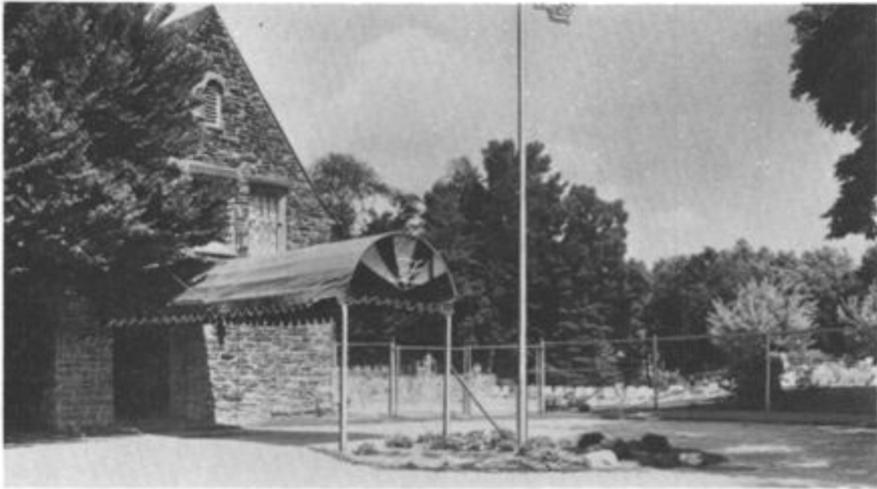
The Friends secured the backing of the township commissioners and the school board and launched a campaign to raise funds which would make matching state and federal funds available. The community got solidly behind this effort and in 1966 the Free Library of Springfield Township was opened on Paper Mill Road across the street from the township building.

Ground for the facility was given by the township which continues to support the library with tax dollars. The Library Board, which supervises the activities of the library, is appointive and always includes a member of the school board and the board of commissioners. Volunteer workers aid the professional staff.

The Friends of the Library has remained an active organization, and continues to raise funds in support of the library. For the past two years, part of the money raised in its annual drive has been sequestered in a building fund which will be used if the library is expanded. The organization has been supportive in many ways and provides funds for books, special projects, equipment and programs when it is able to do so.



A well stocked library goes hand in hand with good schools and good citizens.



Entrance to Flourtown Country Club.

The Flourtown Country Club, formerly known as the Sunnybrook Golf Course and Country Club, located east of Bethlehem Pike and north of Haws Lane, was acquired by the Township in 1957 for future park and recreation use. When it was acquired, there existed a clubhouse and fifty-one remaining acres of land containing seven golf holes of the Sunnybrook Golf Course. The balance of the 100-plus acres had already been developed with residential homes.

The Country Club property was leased at an annual rental sufficient to amortize bonded indebtedness created for the purchase. In 1967, the Township bought out the lease and ran the overall operation for five years. In 1973, the operation of the Country Club was again leased by the Township. Two additional acres of land, adjacent to the existing 51 acre site, were acquired for parking lot purposes.



Holing out on the ninth.

As the township grew, the need for services increased. In 1950, the Commissioners voted to expand the voting districts to six, which meant an increase in the number of commissioners. In 1955, township government moved to the new municipal building on Paper Mill Road. The ground for the new building was donated to the township for that purpose by Clarence M. Brown.

Redistricting was again required after the 1970 Census and the Commissioners opted for seven voting districts which increased the number of commissioners to the present seven. The council-manager form of government was adopted by ordinance and became effective on January 1, 1970. James R. Fulginiti, the township secretary, was appointed township manager coincident with the change.

Today's government is required to provide a great many services. The first officials of the township were charged only with looking after the indigent; later they were supervisors of roads. Today, they must provide trash removal, maintain the streets, remove snow, provide police protection, health services, regulate zoning and building, maintain recreation and library services. Modern government is big business, and requires a substantial budget—\$2.3 million in 1976,



Police protection utilizes the latest in computerized equipment.

or 31 mills which amounts to \$31 for each \$1,000 of real estate valuation. The police budget alone is more than the total cost of government only a few years ago, a total in 1976 of \$563,000 to support a staff of 33 uniformed policemen. The growth of the police department from two part-time persons fifty years ago to this large force today is evidence of the growing concern of the township for the safety of the life and property for its residents.

The limits of space have not allowed for adequate mention of civic activities in Springfield, yet many organizations are active in the life of the community. Some of these are the Oreland Lions, the Rotary Club of Springfield, Woman's Clubs in Oreland, Wyndmoor, Erdenheim and Flourtown; Little Leagues in each community, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, senior citizens' groups, neighborhood civic associations and many others.

Political parties, both Republican and Democratic, have active organizations. The party preference of the majority of the residents is still heavily Republican, and the only Democrat ever elected to the Board of Commissioners was Leonard B. Mower, who took office in 1954.

Springfield in 1976 looks much like other suburban communities. Development housing covers much of its acreage, commuters clog the transportation routes morning and evening and its open space is almost entirely gone. However, Springfield managed to escape the fate of many suburban localities where land developers sent bulldozers in to level trees before building began. Many old trees still survive in the township and in the spring particularly, the old shade and the new and the verdant rolling hills inspire pride in township residents and make it easy for them to forget they are part of the crowded metropolis.

A few large tracts of open space remain—the four country clubs, Stotesbury, which is owned by developers, and Carson Valley School. Mermaid Park in Wyndmoor was granted to the township on condition that it be kept as open space in perpetuity and the U. S. Agriculture Department installation adjoining it has a large amount of open lawns surrounding the building. Part of Morris Arboretum is also located in Springfield Township.

The most historic township area, Flourtown, has suffered in the process of growth and many historic buildings have been razed in the name of progress. Yet, in spite of a parochial attitude in its four communities, the residents of today evidence values reminiscent of the earliest settlers.

What are those values? One can only guess, based on the issues which cause concern to be voiced in public meetings:

Sixteen houses of worship: the importance of religious liberty

Zoning laws: the protection of property rights

Large, well-equipped fire and police departments: the safety of life and property

Superb educational system: the importance of education

The public official in Springfield who will draw the largest crowds of protestors needs only to mention high rise apartments or public housing, downzoning of property or annexation by the City of Philadelphia. The people give their consent to be governed, so long as the "thou shalt nots" are observed. Like those earliest of residents, they want their rulers to "move by the breath of their people."

During the celebration of the 250th anniversary of William Penn's arrival in America in 1932 a researcher found a white oak tree on East Mill Road in Flourtown, which he certified had been growing before Penn came to Springfield Township. At that time its circumference was given as fifteen feet.

In the middle 1950's plans were made to cut the tree down because of its poor health and because it was located in the bend of the road and posed a traffic problem on a street where the adjoining land was scheduled for development. A group of interested citizens petitioned the commissioners and as a result the tree was allowed to remain and the sidewalk adjoining the new housing development was constructed around the tree.

The Committee for the Preservation of the William Penn Oak solicited funds from residents in the neighborhood in order to nurse

the tree back to health. The magnificent tree continued to deteriorate, however, and was finally felled in December, 1975. The rings of growth substantiated the estimate of its age—approximately 339 years old.

The Bicentennial Committee, in order to raise funds to preserve a cross section of the historic tree for the township, arranged to have it cut into pieces and scheduled a sale and auction. The result was astonishing—within two hours every available scrap of the tree had been sold and scores of disconsolate customers who arrived too late were leaving disappointed.

Perhaps the most significant part of the sale was that the vast majority of purchasers lived in Springfield Township. And that may provide the final clue as to what makes this township unique.

The William Penn Oak was important as a symbol of the past and of the continuity of a community which emphasized the “quality of life.” As long as a tree was more important than a straight stretch of road, the values of the township were being represented. And love for that tree and for all the other trees in the township, and for green vistas that rest the eyes and for the values of the past may well be the qualities that make Springfield Township a unique and wonderful dwelling place for those who settle here and recognize its spirit.

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12. *Ibid.*
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Rotary Club of Springfield Township

Flourtown, PA 19031

Membership

Robert R. Abbott
Herbert J. Alburger
Henry Bass
Edward A. Baumgart
George Boone, 3rd
Richard E. Buck
Ellwood Byers
Gerald J. Clifford
John M. Collyer
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for the Springfield Township Bicentennial Commission by
Barbara Liggett and Betty Cosans, 1975.
- Old Roads Out of Philadelphia*—John T. Faris, 1917, Lippincott,
Philadelphia.
- The Wissahickon Mills*—Douglas MacFarlen, M.D., 1949-50,
unpublished, in possession of The Free Library of Philadelphia.
- Sketches*—Vols. I-VII, The Montgomery County Historical Society.
- Stotesbury*—Collection compiled by Aubrey H. Williams.
- Chestnut Hill, Springfield, Whitemarsh, Cheltenham*—Horace
Mather, Lippincott, 1948, Lippincott, Philadelphia.
- History of Early Chestnut Hill*—John J. MacFarlane, 1914,
Philadelphia.
- Washington at Whitemarsh*—Ray Thompson, The Bicentennial
Press, Fort Washington, Pa.
- North-Penn Atlas*—A. H. Mueller, 1916.
- A God Within*—Rene Dubos, 1972, Scribners, New York.
- The Oxford History of the American People*—Samuel Eliot Morrison,
1965, Oxford University Press, New York.
- The American Story*—Earl Schenk Miers (ed.), 1956, Channel
Press, Great Neck, New York.

Note: Most of these books are to be found at the Springfield Township Library
and the Historical Society of Fort Washington.

The Township of Springfield

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
Township Bldg., 1510 Paper Mill Rd., Wyndmoor, Pa. 19118

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**Friends of
Historic
Bethlehem
Pike**



112 West College Avenue, Flourtown, PA 19031

January 25, 2007

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Ms. Kathleen Lunn, President
Board of Commissioners of Springfield Township
Springfield Township Building
Springfield Township Building
1510 Paper Mill Road
Wyndmoor, PA 19038

RE: Penn's Manor of Springfield

Dear Ms. Lunn:

As you are aware, the Friends of Historic Bethlehem Pike have been focusing our efforts this year on historic preservation issues. One of the more important aspects of this is public education. To this end, we have taken the opportunity to digitize Penn's Manor of Springfield written by Velma Thorne Carter for the Township's Bicentennial Committee in 1976. We ask that this digital version of the text be posted on the Township website for the public to access.

This book is a wonderful, accessible history of the people our township. It also contains much interesting and important information on the early mills, mines and commercial development of Springfield Township.

The Friends have undertaken this project as a public service to inform Township residents about our great history. We firmly believe that support for historic preservation increases with awareness. The wide dissemination of Penn's Manor of Springfield through the Township website will further this goal and so we respectfully request that the book be prominently placed on the Township website

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Ryan,
President,
Friends of Historic Bethlehem Pike