

# The Wall Paper

Fall 2015

Volume XIII Number 21

## GARDEN WINS AWARD

The Old York Road Garden Club was recently awarded First Place for Historic Preservation by the Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania for their Colonial Herb Garden at the Wall House. Pictured below during one mid-summer work session are (l. to r.) Mary Findlay, Linda Lonsinger, Ronny Kosempel, and Mary Louise Ryan, all of the Garden Club. With them is Jack Washington, (right) Chairman of the Historical Commission. The Commission is very appreciative of the fine work done by the Club to preserve this historic garden.



THE RICHARD WALL HOUSE  
HISTORICAL MUSEUM

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OPEN  
FOURTH SUNDAY  
OF EACH MONTH

1 - 4 PM

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GROUPS BY APPOINTMENT  
215-887-1000 ext. 227

The Garden Club will celebrate its contributions with a holiday season open house at the Wall House. See the "Events" section later in the newsletter.

## CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

The Richard Wall House Museum, a Township treasure, could not function as a civic and educational resource without support from a few very dedicated individuals. Thank you for all you do to make this the special place that it is, and thank you everyone who stewards the building, its legacy, and its collections. For those who are docents that guide tours, commission members or high school students, your contributions in passing on Cheltenham's unique history to future generations is greatly appreciated.

There is, however, a great need to continue the operation of the museum. Thirty-five years ago, when the Commission took over "the building," its destiny was to become a repository for Township-related treasures, an educational entity, to help citizens understand the roots and growth of Cheltenham Township and its place in the greater scheme of things as the area developed.

Over time, the Commission, which shares the responsibility for the operation of the museum, has sponsored antique shows, market days, holiday happenings, and outreach programs. With the  
*(Continued on page 2)*

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## Cheltenham Personalities

[One in a series of spotlights on  
celebrated historical residents of  
Cheltenham Township.]

Phillies fans, disappointed with their team's lackluster performance this season, who are also history buffs, may find some solace in recalling the 1915 Philadelphia Phillies. One hundred years ago, the Phillies finished a sparkling season as National League champions. It was their first pennant since their founding in 1883. Players such as Gavy Cravath (115 RBIs), Possum Whitted, and powerful first baseman Fred Luderus (batting .315) led the team to a World Series appearance.

The man behind the Phillies was their founder, Cheltenham resident Col. John Ignatius Rogers. Rogers was a respected Philadelphia jurist, having received his law degree from Penn and was admitted to the bar in 1865. The military title was by virtue of his membership in the famed First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry. His rank was awarded when he was appointed Judge Advocate General of the Philadelphia National Guard.

Rogers and his partner for a time, Al Reach, purchased a struggling

### Cheltenham Township Historical Commission

Chairperson: Jack Washington  
Vice-Chair: Thomas Wieckowski  
Financial Secretary: Timothy Esposito

Newsletter Editor: Thomas Wieckowski  
Program Chair: Louise Cohen  
Preservation Chair: Jim McCann



Massachusetts baseball team and moved them to Philadelphia. Known first as the Quakers – what else. They soon were renamed the Phillies as they joined the new National League of professional baseball teams.

Rogers was taken with the new exclusive country community of Wyncote and constructed a magnificent estate on 16 acres of prime ground in Wyncote obtained from the extensive land holdings of Wharton Barker in the center of historic Olde Wyncote. Standing on the hillside overlooking today's Robinson Park on Greenwood Avenue, *Dunluce* contained thirty rooms, five new-fangled bathrooms, and a conservatory. The basement contained a bowling alley and a hallmark windmill and water tank that insured a continuous supply of fresh water to the household.

Rogers died prematurely of a heart attack on a business trip in 1910. The estate was then purchased in 1918 by Max Sladkin who manufactured the Black Beauty bicycle and Ace motorcycle. Sladkin renamed the estate the *King Fox Ranch* as he raised foxes on the grounds. Many old-time

residents still remember the pungent atmosphere surrounding the immediate neighborhood as a result of that enterprise. Sladkin died in 1939 and the estate was demolished and subdivided after the war.

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[Chairman's Chatter Continued]

downturn in volunteers joining the Commission, many of the former fund-raising events have been discontinued. An infusion of new appointees who will devote time and energy to the Commission is sorely needed.

The scheduled opening of the Museum on the fourth Sunday of the month was accomplished throughout the summer. In addition, several special tours were given. One such tour entertained a college student and her husband who were engaged in a research project. Another special tour saw cyberschool students with parents making an extended mid-week afternoon visit.

The value of such tours is incalculable and can only continue with your support.

*Jack Washington, Chairman*

## Inside the Richard Wall House Museum

### The Langsdorf Doll House

[One of a series of articles highlighting the holdings of the museum]



One of the favorite exhibitions among visitors to the Wall House Museum is the fascinating and intricate Langsdorf doll house. Standing four feet tall and almost three feet wide, the house contains three stories and an attic.

The doll house was built by a carpenter sometime between 1915 and 1920 for Blanche Langsdorf. Blanche was the daughter of cigar magnate Jacob Loeb Langsdorf. It stayed at Blanche's house at 7827 Old York Road in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, just north of Ashbourne Road on the east side, until Blanche grew older. That was the home of Louise and Jacob Langsdorf and their children, Benjamin Feller and Blanche.

When Blanche outgrew the doll house, it was relegated to their barn

where it remained until the present owner, Cynthia Langsdorf Wilkinson (Blanche's niece) inherited it at age five in 1940. At that time, it was moved to her parents' house on Old Huntingdon Pike in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. That is when it was electrified by her father Benjamin, a research electrical engineer. Eventually the doll house came back to Elkins Park when, in 1995, Cynthia brought it to her present home. There she repaired and refurbished it. In November 1997, the doll house was moved to its present home, The Richard Wall House, thanks to Cynthia's donation.

Among the features of the house are a full attic, veranda, balcony, wall sconces, a working toy train, fish bowls, a cradle in the sitting room, Priscilla curtains, petit point screens, rugs, water closet, baby grand pianos, harp, a miniature dowry chest, and quilts. The child's room is even equipped with a dollhouse, a replica of the actual Langsdorf dollhouse.



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Visit the Richard Wall House Museum to see this treasure and many other interesting objects of local history and lore.  
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## EVENTS

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**The Cheltenham Township Harvest Festival** will be held on **Saturday, October 17**, from 12 noon to 7:30 pm. It is held at the historic Curtis Arboretum, Church Road and Greenwood Avenue in Wyncote. This traditional family event boasts entertainment, food, and attractions for all. The Commission will have a table at the event.



**The Battle of Edge Hill**  
– For four cold and very tense days in December 1777, two great armies faced one another ready to do battle in what would potentially be the largest engagement of the American Revolution. Learn about the battle at a free lecture, **Wednesday, November 11, 2015, at 7:30pm**, at the Parish House of the Church of Our Saviour, Homestead Avenue Jenkintown. Sponsored by the Old York Road Historical Society. Admission is free.



**Old York Road Garden Club Open House at the Wall House** – The Garden Club is preparing the Wall House for a festive holiday season with special decorations and exhibits. The Open House will be **Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015**, from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Visit on that day to enjoy a special tour of the historic Wall House Museum with music and refreshments.

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## Anniversary

## A BIT OF HISTORY

*Twenty - five years ago*

*By Mary Washington*

The 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, is the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Founder Eugenia Washington proclaimed "We want a society founded on service." With numerous projects that are done by the chapters throughout the United States, a local chapter will be donating a service project to the Richard Wall House Museum to honor their founder.

The William Penn Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution will be doing two projects in Cheltenham Township. One group of members will be at the Wall House during October doing much needed household chores to maintain the order of the building. The second group will be placing American flags at the DAR marker at Church Road and Washington Lane. The marker commemorates the presence of Continental troops at the location during the revolution and the location of Camp William Penn on the opposite hillside during the Civil War.

The Historical Commission is very appreciative of the efforts of the Chapter.

*Mary Washington*

### Cheltenham Burns Festive for Village Tri-Centennial

"Cheltenham Village Tri-Centennial celebration has been 300 years in the making. Planning for the celebration took only slightly less long it seems. Plans for the week-long celebration, September 8 - 15, start with a parade on Saturday. The dedication of the Ashbourne Road Bridge is also scheduled at 10:00 am.

Neither jet lag nor the five-hour time difference dampened the enthusiasm of four visitors from Cheltenham, England.

Here to help celebrate Cheltenham Villages' Tri-Centennial are the Mayoress, Anna Billingham; town clerk and chief executive, Brian Wynn; and two councillors, Daphne Pennell and Alistair Cameron. Also William Billingham who is the mayor."

*Times Chronicle - September 12, 1990*

## BE A FRIEND OF THE WALL HOUSE

Help to preserve the rich history of Cheltenham Township

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Benefactor, \$100.00 \_\_\_\_ Sponsor, \$50.00 \_\_\_\_ Patron, \$20.00 \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

Post Office \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to Cheltenham Township Historical Commission.

Mail to: FRIENDS OF THE WALL HOUSE  
c/o Cheltenham Township  
8230 Old York Road  
Elkins Park, PA 19027