The King of Prussia Gazette

Preserving Upper Merion's Past to Enliven its Future

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Summer 2014

MOVING AHEAD

by Michael Morrison

It is always exciting to see membership renewals come in, but it's even more exciting to welcome new members to our Society. It just seems to reaffirm that what we are doing is worthwhile. About a year and a half ago, I received a copy of the "Articles of Incorporation" of the Society, from 1955. On it were the signatures of the founders, and to my delight there was my grandmother's signature, along with four others. This served to reinforce in me that what we are doing is meaningful to the community, and each and every new membership confirms that.

On June 14, 2014, the Society will host its Annual Picnic and program entitled, "Digging into Upper Merion's Archives", where we will feature a presentation of some of the donations to the Society, as well as a display of artifacts and manuscripts. The program begins at noon, followed by the picnic at 1 PM. We will also feature tours of Christ Old Swedes Church, and its lovely stained glass windows. This will be a fundraising event, and we are asking for donations of \$10 (members)/\$15 (non-members), with children under 12 accompanied by an adult FREE. This is a great way to support your Society, and have some fun just "talking history".

I was recently called to visit a family who was downsizing, and learned that their children had been there to "help" a week or so earlier. Their "help" involved filling a dumpster with items from the attic. Upon hearing that, I suggested that I get a look at what was left. To my amazement there were many things of value, including some items that a local historical society would treasure. Not only was I able to sell some of the remaining items to local antiques dealers and collectors, but a sizeable donation of ephemera was made to their local historical society. Sadly, this story is told again and again, so I urge everyone to let us assist you in determining whether or not you possess items of historical significance. You will be helping the Society, and you will be helping to preserve our rich local history for future generations.

In each issue it is my pleasure to recognize someone who has proven they have an interest in preserving our rich local history, and Carole Kenney is such a person. Thank you, Carole, for not only renewing your membership in our Society, but for your steadfast and ongoing support of our efforts. You inspire me on so many levels, and we now have a township supervisor on board.

I am pleased to announce that pursuant to our By-Laws, we have contacted several individuals who have agreed to sit on our Board. Our first meeting should take place in June, and we look forward to a spirited exchange of ideas from our new members.

Finally, we have extended an "Emeritus Membership" to our good friend and fellow historian, Ed Dybicz, for his hard work and dedication to our local history initiative.

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Look for details about the upcoming Montgomery History Fair scheduled for Saturday, September 20, 2014 at Heckler Plains in Harleysville! The King of Prussia Historical Society will have exhibits and will sponsor presentations and re-enactors!

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The Town Crier—

updates from the Society

MEMBER EMERITUS

The Society is pleased to include Ed Dybicz as a member, emeritus, for his many contributions to the Society and for his untiring efforts to preserve the history of Upper Merion.



OUR 2014 CHARTER MEMBERS

We acknowledge our Charter Members for 2014 and thank them for their support: Emma Carson, Dave and Marianne Furman, Michael Morrison, Frank Luther, James Pickens.

INTERESTED IN WRITING?

The Society welcomes articles prepared by its members. Contact Frank Luther if you might be interested in writing and sharing an article for our publication.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Check the back page for the listing of our September 2014 through December meetings with dates, times, locations, and program information.

INFO ABOUT UPPER MERION

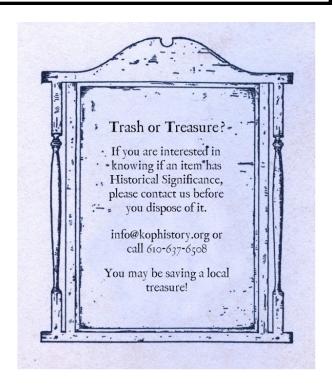
Is there a question you have about some aspect of the township's history? You can submit your question to us at info@kophistory.org and we will provide an answer in a future issue.

YOUNG HISTORIANS PROGRAM

Sharon Schwarze, a professor at Cabrini College, has been working with her students on preparing oral histories of the Mount Pleasant area of Upper Merion. One history student researched the oral histories and created a presentation on Mount Pleasant for the Society's October meeting, "Young Historians". Professor Schwarze will introduce the project and briefly describe what she and the students have done as a class working with the Mt. Pleasant residents.

COMMUNITY FAIR

Don't forget that Upper Merion's Community Fair is scheduled for Saturday, September 6. Stop by the Society's tent and enter the contest for a 2015 membership for yourself or as a gift for a family member or a friend.



WE GLADLY ACEPT DONATIONS

Our holdings continue to grow, thanks to the generosity of individuals in the community and beyond who have a connection to Upper Merion. Consider a donation to the Society to help enlarge our Special Collection of books, manuscripts, photographs and maps. Donating your historic materials will help ensure its preservation for the next generation.







MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the King of Prussia Historical Society is to preserve and interpret the history of Upper Merion Township as relevant to its various neighborhoods of Gulph Mills, Gypsy Hills, Croton Woods, King of Prussia, Valley Forge, Abrams, Belmont, Town Center, Swedesburg/King Manor, Henderson, and Swedeland, as well as the areas of Rebel Hill, Port Kennedy, and Hughes Park. The Society's goal is to stimulate public interest and to support the township's heritage through educational programs and public events focusing on preserving the past and shaping the future.



Henderson Road facing south at Route 202: 2014 (Google Map)

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Henderson Road is one of the oldest thoroughfares in Upper Merion Township, and, today, it is one of the most traveled roads in the community. Did you ever wonder how the road got its name? Stretching from Gulph Road in the south to Abrams in the north, Henderson Road traces its name to one of the earliest families in the township---the Hendersons.

What a history this roadway could tell! From the earliest days, it served as a conveyance for the farm produce taken from the fields and the limestone, the King of

Prussia blue marble, or the white pigment taken from the quarries. These items would have travelled into Philadelphia or to the Schuylkill River to be transported beyond Upper Merion. In this issue of the GAZETTE, you will learn about this very interesting early family for whom Henderson Road is named.



(Image courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.)

Route 202 is shown going north from the lower left to the upper right. Henderson Road is shown going north to south from the left to the right. The intersection was once called Malloy's Corner for the family that lived on Route 202 South, a short distance from the intersection.







THE HENDERSON FAMILY

An early map of land owners in Upper Merion, dated December 24, 1728, showed that Alexander Henderson held one hundred acres of land in the township. On a later map, dated April 5, 1735, he is again shown having one hundred acres. However, on a March 17, 1742 map, he is shown to have owned only fifty-two acres of land.

The Hendersons were natives of England and settled in Upper Merion. The family became one of the great industrialist families of Montgomery County. They were very prosperous with the operation of several quarries. Although it is known that the family occupied land in Upper Merion as early as 1728, the marble quarries were not in operation until the latter part of the eighteenth century---1784. These quarries produced a very fine blue marble which was called King of Prussia blue marble. Quantities of the marble were used in construction sites not only throughout the area but in faraway sites as well. Girard College in Philadelphia and the Montgomery County Courthouse in Norristown are two local sites that were built using King of Prussia blue marble.

These quarries had been in operation for more than one hundred years, ceasing to operate in 1889. There is no evidence today that the Henderson quarries ever existed. They became land fill sites and gave way to development in the township. However, the Henderson home, the barn at the Village Mart, and the quarry workers' homes on Shoemaker Road still stand.

The 1790 census records of Montgomery County list the following Hendersons in Upper Merion Township. John Henderson is shown to have a household includ-ing one male over sixteen and two females. Alexan-der Henderson is shown to be in a household with four males over sixteen, two females, and two males under sixteen. Samuel Henderson, head of house-hold, is shown with four males over sixteen, three females, and two males under sixteen.

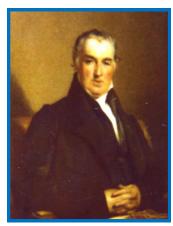
Mention is also made of the Henderson family in the early tax records of Upper Merion Township. William Terrence paid the tax on the Jane Henderson estate in 1774. In 1779, William Terrence paid the tax on William Long's estate. In 1782, Terrence is listed as a farmer with one hundred and thirty acres.

Alexander Henderson listed as a farmer from 1782 until 1798, paid taxes on two hundred and twenty-five acres, three or four horses, and occasionally three to six cows. After his death, Catherine is listed in the tax records showing that she had one horse and one cow.

In 1789, Samuel Henderson had one hundred acres, two horses and two cows. A year later, he was taxed on three horses, three cows, and a servant. By 1795, he was listed as a blacksmith, but he did not have any servants. By 1804, Samuel had one hundred and thirty-six acres, three horses, eight cows, and was a representative in Congress. By 1807, he was again listed as a farmer.

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Other Hendersons listed in the tax records were Davis Henderson who owned eighty-nine acres, seven horses, and four cows. John Henderson was taxed in 1769 for fifty acres, two horses, two cows, and a servant. He was taxed on fifty acres until 1779; by 1781, he held three hundred and seventy-three acres, but by 1783 he was taxed on only one hundred acres.



(Photo courtesy of Sarah Lobb)

Samuel Henderson, born on November 27, 1764, was the son of John and Ann Henderson. Samuel attended school in England but immigrated to the United States in 1782 when he was eighteen years old. He settled in Montgomery County where he owned and operated the Henderson Marble Quarries in Upper Merion. Being very active in politics for many years, Samuel was supported as a candi-

date for the legislature by opponents of Jonathon Roberts, also a resident of Up-per Merion. Henderson ran for Congress against Roberts on a platform favoring "an honorable and permanent peace". Roberts, however, was elected. Henderson was elected as a Federalist to the Thirteenth Congress to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Jonathan Roberts and served during the 1814-1815 session. Samuel died on his estate in Upper Merion on November 17, 1841. Interment was in the family burial ground located on Henderson Road in Upper Merion.

Alexander Henderson, brother of Samuel, was born in March 1760. Being the name sake of his grandfather, Alexander Henderson of Upper Merion, he was favored in his grandfather's will. After the death of his grandmother Jane, he was to receive his grandfather's plantation on which he resided. Upon Alexander's death, the estate was to be passed on to all of his male heirs.

In 1782, Alexander Henderson was taxed on eight hundred acres. In the 1790 Federal Census, he is listed as an inhabitant of Upper Merion with a household of four males over sixteen, three females, and two males under sixteen in his house. Later Alexander is shown to have owned two hundred and twenty-five acres and by 1792, he had eight hundred and seventyone acres. However, a year later, he is listed once again with two hundred and twenty-five acres.

In the same census, the John Henderson is undoubtedly the father of Alexander and Samuel. John had one male and two females listed in his household.

Church records at Christ Church Old Swedes Church show that members of the Henderson family were congregants there as early as 1841, the year of the marriage of Samuel H. Traquair and Rebecca S. Tyson on September 9 of that year. In the nineteenth century, three marriages, fifteen burials, and six baptisms are shown in the church records.









Henderson Family Burial Ground (Photo courtesy of Michael Morrison)

THE HENDERSON FAMILY BURIAL PLOT

One of the earliest burial grounds in Upper Merion that is still in existence is the Henderson Family Burial Plot located on South Henderson Road near Gulph Road. In an account of the burials in the cemetery done by Joseph D'Orazio in December 1978, he listed sixty-five burials based on the existent tombstones and records. The earliest burial listed is that of Ann Henderson, daughter of John and Ann Hen-derson who died on August 14, 1763, aged eleven months. Her sister, Sarah, died on April 23, 1777, aged seven years, seven months.

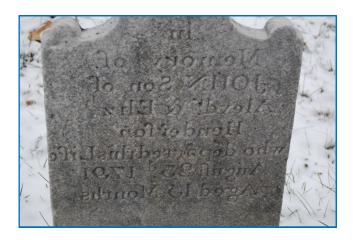
Other early burials included John Henderson, son of Alexander and Elizabeth Henderson, who died on August 23, 1791 at age fifteen months. William Torbert, aged sixtythree, died on April 18, 1774.

The infant mortality rate in the 1700's and 1800's is quite evident from the burials recorded at the family burial plot.

Records from Christ Church Old Swedes indicate that fifteen members of the Henderson Family were buried in the church graveyard during the 1800's. The earliest burial at Old Swedes was that of William Henderson, son of James Henderson, who died on May 29, 1847.

THE HENDERSON FAMILY BURIAL PLOT, cont.

Since the late 1800's the family burial ground has been maintained through funding from the Henderson Family Trust Fund; however, these funds in this trust are nearly depleted. Individuals and groups interested in contributing to the maintenance and upkeep of this rich historic treasure in Upper Merion can forward contributions to the King of Prussia Historical Society at 612 General Scott Road in King of Prussia, PA 19406.



Tombstone of John Henderson, aged fifteen months, who died August 23, 1791. (Photo, courtesy of Michael Morrison)



Tombstone of Samuel Henderson, who died July 4, 1865. (Photo, courtesy of Michael Morrison)







HISTORIC HENDERSON ESTATE

Over the years, many historic treasures in Upper Merion have been levelled in the name of progress. However, the township is fortunate that some of the original Henderson Family structures still exist as can be seen here. Our thanks to Michael Morrison for this wonderful collection of photos.



Early photo of the Henderson home on Shoemaker



Road, now the offices of Pasquale Properties.

The Henderson barn on Shoemaker Road, now the Village Mart Shopping Center. See the photo below. This section shows the back portion of the barn which housed the Robert E. Lee Hardware Store for many years. The neighboring shop to the right of the hard-



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HISTORIC HENDERSON ESTATE, cont.

By 1728 the Henderson Family had already made their home in Upper Merion, which was then a part of Philadelphia County. The family built simple structures until they acquired more substantial means; at that point, they began building elaborate eighteenth and nineteenth century mansions. Four of these mansions were built along with a number of out buildings which included springhouses and row homes used to house quarry workers; all of these structures comprised the Henderson Estate which was located off of what is presently Gulph Road, Shoemaker Road, and south Henderson Road.

From the late eighteenth century this area was a busy industrial center. Today, that area houses apartment complexes and commercial warehouses.



The Henderson Mansion on Shoemaker Road, pictured above, has a date stone of 1792. A later addition on the right side of the structure has a date stone showing 1806 and the initials "H. S. & M." for Henderson, Samuel and Mary. In the 1850's, a Chinese Gothic porch was added. The interior of the house shows details of the Victorian period. After the last of the Henderson family occupied the house, the Shoemaker family lived there.



Across Shoemaker Road is the barn which has two date stones. One is 1799 and the other is on an addition built in 1802. This barn is today's Village Mart.

One other Henderson home that is still standing today is the office building for the Gulph Mills Village Apartment complex. It has also been restored. This home was built about 1812, probably by one of Samuel and Mary's sons. The original barn on this property has also been restored and houses the maintenance department for the



apartment complex.

Another Henderson structure that remains is a spring house, also located on the Gulph Mills Village Apart-



ments campus.

Pictured below is one of the Henderson Quarry work-ers'



A commitment

to Preservation

A HENDERSON QUARRY CURIOSITY

(An excerpt from **THE REGISTER OF PENNSYLVANIA**, Vol. V., Hazard, Samuel, ed., Philadelphia: William F. Geddes, 1830. January to June 1830.)

A solid block of white marble, of thirty cubic feet, was lately taken out of Henderson's quarry, at the depth of seventy feet, four or five miles from Norristown, on the western side of the river Schuylkill. It was sent to Norris -town to be cut by the saw into slabs. One of these slabs presents to the eye a remarkable curiosity: On one of its sides are two characters, somewhat resembling the English word "in", regularly cut into the marble. This singular appearance must either have been a freak of nature, or the work of man executed ages ago, and the marble must have been growing over it ever since, for it was found by the sawyer in the very interior of the block. The curious slab is now in possession of Col. Peter A. Browne, of this city, who will, we are sure, take pleasure in show-ing it to any gentleman who may he inquisitive on geo-logical subjects.

Perm. Inquirer.

To the Editor of The Pennsylvania Inquirr.

Sir—Observing that you have noticed, in your paper of Thursday last, the curious marble slab which I have in my possession, I will furnish you with some further particulars in relation to it. The block was taken out of Henderson's quarry, Upper Merion township, Montgomery county, Pennsylvania, between 60 and 70 feet below the surface of the earth; it measured upwards of 30 cubic feet; it was purchased by Mr. Alexander Ramsey of Nor-ristown, to whose liberality I am indebted for the slab, and was by him sent to Mr. Savage's marble saw mill to he cut. A slab two inches in thickness was taken off and displayed to view, nearly in the centre, an indentation 1 inch long by 5-8ths of an inch wide, handsomely arched above and rectangular below. In this cavity was a black powder, which being removed, two characters were ob-served—These are raised, and are at equal distances from the top, bottom and sides of the indentation from each other. That the letters have not been put there since the block was cut, is proved by several gentlemen of Norristown of the highest respectability, who saw it soon after the sawing; and moreover, it is apparent to any person accustomed to examine mineral substances, that no tool whatever has been used; the surface of the indentation, as well as that of the letters, has a vitrified or semi-crystallized appearance. Mr. Strickland and Mr. Peale, both of whom have examined the slab carefully with a magnifying glass, agree with me in this particular. The marble belongs to the primitive limestone formation, which in this district is the last of the primitive series, commencing at Philadelphia, and pursuing the following order: gneiss, micaslate, hornblende, talcose slate, primitive clay slate, a narrow strip of granite, and then the rock in question. Unfortunately the black powder was not preserved. It is not the least remarkable circumstance attending this curiosity that had the saw passed the sixteenth part of an inch on one side, it would have injured the letters, or on the other they would not have appeared. No fissure or fracture was to be seen in the block.

Various conjectures have been made as to the characters; one gentleman insists that they are Hebrew, and stand for "Jehovah;" another says that they are the Roman "in" and correspond to "Jesus of Nazareth."— Both these persons of course believe that they have at some ancient period-of time been put there by the hand of man; but by whom, or how they could after-wards have become buried in the solid rock, especially as it is primitive, they cannot explain. Others, among which number I confess myself, believe it to be a kuue naluns, all agree that it is a great curiosity, and well deserving examination.

I am yours, respectfully, P. A. BROWNE.









Photo by Tristan Baldwin, courtesy of his son Peter.

BICENTENNIAL 1976: VALLEY FORGE

As the 200th anniversary of the American Revolution neared, events of all kinds were arranged to commemorate the occasion. Train Pilgrimage was one of these events. Wagons from each state would travel along the historic trails of the country, (The Bozeman Trail, Santa Fe Trail, Oregon Trail, Appalachian Trail, etc.) then gather for a celebration on July 4th 1976 in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. In commemoration of the Nation's 200th birthday, the Wagon train started on June 9, 1975 at the U.S. Canadian Peace Arch, Blaine, Washington, beginning a 3,000 mile trek to retrace the pioneer wagon trains that settled the West. Wagons from every state joined the train enroute for a final encampment at Valley Forge on July 4th.

The King of Prussia Historical Society

Preserving Upper Merion's Past to Enlighten its Future

Meeting Schedule for September-December 2014.

No meetings are scheduled for July and August.

Saturday, September 13: Business Meeting

Speaker: Graham Dellinger: Beer Making in Colonial Times Location: Christ Church Old Swedes Hall at 2:00 PM

Saturday, October 11: Business Meeting

Program: Young Historians

Location: Christ Church Old Swedes Hall at 2:00 PM

Saturday, November 8: Business Meeting

Speaker: Greg Pritchard: Keystone Markers

Location: Christ Church Old Swedes Hall at 2:00 PM

Saturday, December 13: No meeting

Saint Lucia Feast: Holiday Celebration for Society Members

Location: Christ Church Old Swedes at 7:00 PM followed by reception in Church Hall.



King of Prussia Historical Society 612 General Scott Road King of Prussia, PA 19406

Attn.: Frank Luther