

# The King of Prussia Gazette

*Preserving Upper Merion's Past to Enliven its Future*

Volume IV, Number Three

Fall 2015

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*(by Michael Morrison)*

A Round of "Thank You"!

It's nice to be recognized, especially when our efforts are being rewarded at a time when we sometimes think that nobody is watching. That is why I must extend a big heartfelt "Thank You" to the Upper Merion Township Board of Community Assistance, for their recent grant of \$4000. This grant will be used to repair and replace the Keystone Markers in the township and to further student education as it pertains to our rich local history.

There were at one time two original Keystone Markers, each occupying a spot on U.S. 202, one on the northbound side and one on the southbound side. Somewhere during one of the many widening projects performed on the roadway, one of the markers disappeared, and one was relocated to South Gulph Road. Our plans are to repair/replace the two markers on U.S. 202, and add an additional marker to the existing location on South Gulph Road. In an agreement made in 2012, the King of Prussia Historical Society ("KoPHS") and Upper Merion Township agreed that the markers will be fully funded by the society, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Keystone Marker Trust, and the township will be responsible for installing and maintaining them.

The student education project will include a tri-fold educational pamphlet and a teacher educational guide for all sixth-grade students in Upper Merion schools. Sixth-grade is the year that students are tasked to learn about Pennsylvania History, making it a natural tie-in.

Again, let me extend my thanks to my dear friend and vice president of KOPHS, Vytas Masalaitis, for his insight and well-worded submission of the BOCA application. Thank you, sir, for taking on such an important project, and handling it flawlessly.

Now, back in 2012 the KOPHS received a number of very large artifacts from the original general store, and the Port Kennedy Post Office, both demolished in the 1980's. Mr. Ron Wagenmann, Upper Merion Township's manager at the time, extended the use of the barn at the recently acquired DiGiambattista property, for the safe storage of our one-of-a-kind treasures. I did not want to wear out our welcome, so earlier this year I got in touch with another dear friend, George Louderback. You may remember it was George's father who originally had Ted Kunda's "George Washington Mural" installed on the side of his warehouse in time for the U.S. Bicentennial. I appealed to George, who is now with Wayne Moving and Storage in West Chester, PA, to see if he might have some storage space available to store our items while a suitable permanent location could be found. George did not hesitate, and last month the items were relocated. Thank you, Upper Merion Township; thank you, George Louderback; and thank you, Wayne Moving and Storage. We appreciate your kind gesture, and above all your commitment to preserving local history.



*(Photo courtesy of Michael Morrison.)*

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## *The Town Crier*—

updates from the Society...

### OUR 2015 CHARTER MEMBERS

We acknowledge our Charter Members for 2015 and thank them for their support: Emma Carson, Dave and Marianne Furman, John and Shirley Funkhouser, Michael Morrison, Frank Luther.



The Society is also pleased to honor Ed Dybicz (1923-2015) as an honorary member for his many contributions to the Society and for his untiring efforts to preserve the history of Upper Merion.

### 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 upcoming meeting dates and our special programs.

### 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](mailto:info@kophistory.org) and we will provide an answer in a future issue.

Check out the King of Prussia Historical Society website at [www.kophistory.org](http://www.kophistory.org). And find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/kophisory](http://www.facebook.com/kophisory)

### MEMBERSHIP

Our membership campaign for 2015 continues! New memberships and renewals will be accepted at this time. Looking for a unique gift? Why not present a family member or friend with an annual membership for the King of Prussia Historical Society! We supply a gift card for you to present to the recipient.

Student/Senior (65+): \$35.00	Individual: \$40.00
Family Household \$50.00	Patron: \$125.00
Charter: \$250.00	

### OUR MAILING ADDRESS

Please note that our new mailing address is King of Prussia Historical Society, PO Box 60716, King of Prussia, PA 19406-0716.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Society would like to thank George Louderback of Wayne Storage for helping us to find temporary storage for some of the larger artifacts in our collection.

We also appreciate the help of Rob and Marlene Lowder of Box Pack N Ship, located at 150 Allendale Road in Courtside Square. They are handling the sale of the Society's book published for the Township's Tri-centennial---UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP: THE FIRST 300 YEARS.

### BACK TO SCHOOL

Miss Elizabeth Hawkeworth will be taking "roll" at 2:00 PM at our September 12 meeting. Experience a 19<sup>th</sup> century classroom just as it might have been at the Old Roberts School. Don't be tardy! Karin Stocking takes us back to school as teacher Miss Elizabeth Hawkeworth.

### GRAVE TALES (THE ORIGINAL!)

Join the W. S. Hancock Society at Christ Church (Old Swedes) on October 24 as we once again traverse this unparalleled graveyard than spans the centuries. If you are a follower of Grave Tales, you are sure to be wowed by the stories, the headstone iconography and symbolism that this small but mighty churchyard offers. You will also visit the church to hear the unique story of the little spot that the very early Swedish settlers called New Sweden. Our daytime tour begins at 12 noon leaving from the church hall and our evening tours will begin at 6:00 pm and then every half hour until 8:30 pm. While you wait for your tour to begin, drink in a presentation on unique headstones and burial places to whet your appetite. Please dress warmly, wear comfortable and sturdy walking shoes and bring a flashlight or lantern. We are NOT a haunted attraction. Our aim is to educate while allowing your imagination to ignite your senses. Admission is \$6.00 for adults and \$4.00 for students/seniors.

### 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.

*A commitment to Preservation*



*(Photo courtesy of Michael Morrison.)*

### **ROBERTS SCHOOL**

*(This article is reprinted from the brochure prepared by the King of Prussia Historical Society for the Roberts School Re-creation Program in 1958.)*

The Roberts School stood on Croton Road a short distance west of King of Prussia Road. It was built in 1848 by Jonathan Roberts and given to the Township by him. When in 1917 it was no longer used as a school, the property reverted to the Roberts' heirs.

It was built as a place of education for the children of the families who worked in the Croton Mill on the northeast side of the dam breast at Martins' Dam. Croton Mill was owned and operated by the Martin family. Before the Roberts School was built, the children from this locality walked to Union School east of King of Prussia. The early tutors at the School were employed by the Roberts family.

The School originally was built of stone plastered in a deep tan. It contained one room with the entrance and a hallway on the north side facing the road. During the late nineties the number of children attending the School had grown to 72. An assistant was brought in and she taught in the north end of the room or in the vestibule. Soon a frame room, making a second story, was added. At first the desks and benches must have been handmade entirely of wood, as iron frame school seats and desks were not built until 1859. At this time a desk and seat formed one unit and provided seating room for two pupils. These desks either had a closed shelf above where the seat in front folded up, or a plain board shelf parallel to the top of the desk about 8 inches from the top. After the use of pens became common, ink wells of glass were set in the center of the desks at the top, and many a mischievous boy dipped the curls or long pigtailed of the girl sitting on the bench in front of him in the ink well. The iron and wood desks were screwed to the floor and placed in four rows running the length of the room, with aisles between them. They faced the teacher's desk, which stood on a platform located at the south end of the room, above which was a blackboard.

The early blackboards were made of heavy cardboard painted black. The writing on them was done with white chalk. In the early days all the children's work was done on slates, as paper was too expensive to be used for this purpose. The slates were both single and double, varying in size. The oldest slates had a plain wooden frame. Later they were made more attractive by wrapping the frames with red flannel, laced into place with a heavy black string. Each child had a sponge to wash his slate and a piece of soft material to wipe it dry.

The school room was heated at first by a round stove which stood midway between the door and the teacher's desk in the middle aisle. On either side of it was a long piece of bright zinc, 3 x 5 feet, to protect the children from the heat when they were obliged to sit near the stove. Later a hot air heater was put in the cellar, the heat coming into the room through a large circular opening in the middle of the floor. Neither mode of heating was a great success and the children were often sent home, when the cold north wind blew its hardest, because the temperature of the room was so low. The teacher built the fire and carried the whole responsibility for the heating and cleaning of the building. The teachers were really also the janitors of the schools for many years. If the teacher did not wish to do the work herself, she paid someone for doing it. Before a well was drilled on the left side of the building, the water for all purposes was carried by boys (who would rather tote a pail than memorize a poem), from the creek or a spring further up-stream back of the school building. It was brought, a bucketful at a time, in a pine bucket with brass hoops. If a child did not supply his own drinking utensil, he used the common tin cup or dipper that reposed on the bench with the bucket at the rear of the room or in the vestibule.

A post and rail fence marked the limits of the school ground in the beginning. A gravel walk ran to the door from the road and all the children delighted in using the style of three steps up and three steps down as access to the path. At noon and at recess the children would take a rail from the fence beside the woods and enjoy seesawing back of the school building. Later a substantial board fence was built, with the boards running up and down.

The children were dismissed and summoned to their places by a small bell, the property of the teacher. The ringing of the bell at noon and recess was done by a child who needed to be especially rewarded for good behavior or a kindly deed to his school mates. He usually stood beside the open door to do his ringing. During the late nineties, an iron pole was erected near the

northeast corner of the building, and two United States flags were given to the school by Mr. Howard B. French, who lived at "Alderbrook." Mr. William C. Wilson, of King of Prussia, made the presentation address. The large flag was flown on clear days and the smaller one was kept for less promising weather.

The curriculum of Roberts School followed the pattern of other schools in the Township. At first books of all types were brought to school by the pupils, then uniform books were furnished by the School Board and paid for by the children's parents, and finally the books were furnished free to the pupils.

Roberts School during most of its life welcomed the children at 8:30 in the morning and sent them home at 4 P.M. All of the children walked to school, many of them finding a shorter route through the fields and woods than that afforded by the circuitous course of the road. The hour from twelve to one was spent in eating lunch and relaxation. Then there was a fifteen minute recess both morning and afternoon. The older children helped the small ones in their play, so all went well on the school ground.

The older children sat at the higher desks in the back of the room. Each row of desks was graduated and the beginners occupied the small desks near the teacher. A program of classes was placed in a conspicuous place in the room so the pupil knew just when he would be required to recite on a certain subject. As the day moved on, the teacher would name the class whose turn it was to recite. The pupils in the grade named would rise and march to a position in the front of the room, stand erect and place his toes touching the edge of the platform.

Position in the class was gained by competitive examination or some other means of grading. If number one should fail to answer a question when asked and number two should give the correct answer, number two would pass above number one in the line. By this means any child who would study hard enough might work his way to the head of the class. This created healthy competition.

On Friday afternoons, when the children had been particularly well behaved during the week, the teacher would read the children an interesting story. There would be spelling bees or geography quizzes when one grade would compete with another. These might cause much excitement as the winner was not always the child from the higher grade. Little equipment was furnished for the class room by the school board and often the teacher supplied the pictures, the maps and various devices used in teaching.

In the late 1850's public examinations were given in June and July, after which they had closing exercises. This continued into the 1870's, when these ceremonies were called commencements. After the exercises, vacation began and extended to the latter part of August. The first commencement in which pupils from all the schools in Upper Merion might participate, and similar to the commencements of the present day, was held in the Stewart Fund Hall, King of Prussia, June 1887. The valedictorian of the class was Sallie MacAfee, and the salutatorian was Hannah Martin. Both of these young people had received their education at the Roberts School.



*(Photo courtesy of Michael Morrison.)*

The first teacher of the Roberts School must have been a man, since women had not yet entered the profession. His name cannot be found, but he did seem to have been one who thought the children's minds could be made keener and their work neater by the use of the rod, according to a story that still exists concerning him.

At that time the children carried their lunches in tin kettles and placed the kettles on the wide window sills which afforded ample space for such use. Joseph Cole was one of the larger boys. After he had solved a problem and given the correct answer to the master, the master would reply---"All right, do some more". This day Joe must not have taken time to eat much breakfast, so he took his dinner kettle from the window sill, removed a piece of apple pie from it, enjoyed the pie and said to the master, "This brings the answer". Whereupon the master replied---"All right, do some more ." Later Joseph Cole lived in the frame house that sits along the Pennsylvania Turnpike opposite the entrance to the present Valley Forge Golf Club. He produced milk on his farm which he served day after day for years to the people of Port Kennedy before the land on which the village stood became a part of Valley Park.

Port Kennedy was the seat of the Patterson Blast Furnace, and much lime was produced in this region so it contained many homes. Joseph Cole would go from house to house with his large, heavy tin buckets of milk. He would serve the milk from the pail with a dipper and pour it into the housewife's pitcher, bowl or other container.

Miss Annie Barrett, who lived on DeKalb Pike in King of Prussia, seems to have taught at the Roberts School about 1854, when female teachers were receiving only \$25 per month. Miss Barrett became Supervising Principal in Bridgeport afterward, but could not be made Superintendent because she was a woman. She also played the organ and led the music at the Union Sunday School, which was held for many years every Sunday afternoon in the Stewart Fund Hall. William Phillips of William Penn Farm (between the present Keebler and Valley Forge Roads), was the superintendent of this Sunday School and it was attended by old and young of the community regardless of the denominations to which they adhered.

Between Miss Barrett's apprenticeship at Roberts School and 1877 Sallie Roberts, Amanda Fleck, Emma Pierce, Maggie Speakman and Sidney Emma Marshall served the school. December 13, 1877 Miss Marshall became Mrs. Hughes, marrying the son of William Hughes, the School Director who had the Roberts School under his special care. Mr. William Hughes owned and operated the saw mill which stood at the breast of the present Colonial Village Swimming Pool. At this time in the history of the Township it was the custom for the Director on the School Board who lived nearest a school to assume responsibility for that school. He had a strong voice in regard to who would teach in the school, saw that she had a boarding place in the community, looked after the improvements to the building, and saw that books were supplied to the school.

Miss Ella Gallagher, who was considered very strict by the children, taught at Roberts School before she became instructor in mathematics in the Norristown High School. Miss Mary K. Anderson began teaching here in 1890 and left to become Mrs. Joseph Rapp. She was followed by Miss Mae Kratz, of Norristown. In September 1895 Ann W. Pechin came to Roberts School as a beginner. Miss Martha Pugh came as her assistant, took charge of the primary grades, and moved with the children to Union School when Roberts School was closed. Early in the twentieth century Mrs. Hughes returned to Roberts Grammar School and found she was teaching children and grandchildren of former pupils there. Miss Lentz, Miss Hannah Phipps, Miss Lizzie Blackwood (an alumna of the School), Miss Tyson, Miss Pennypacker, and Miss Mary McLean (who later became Supervising Principal in Upper Merion), all were teachers of the grammar grades in the upper room of Roberts School.



#### **ANN W. PECHIN, TEACHER**

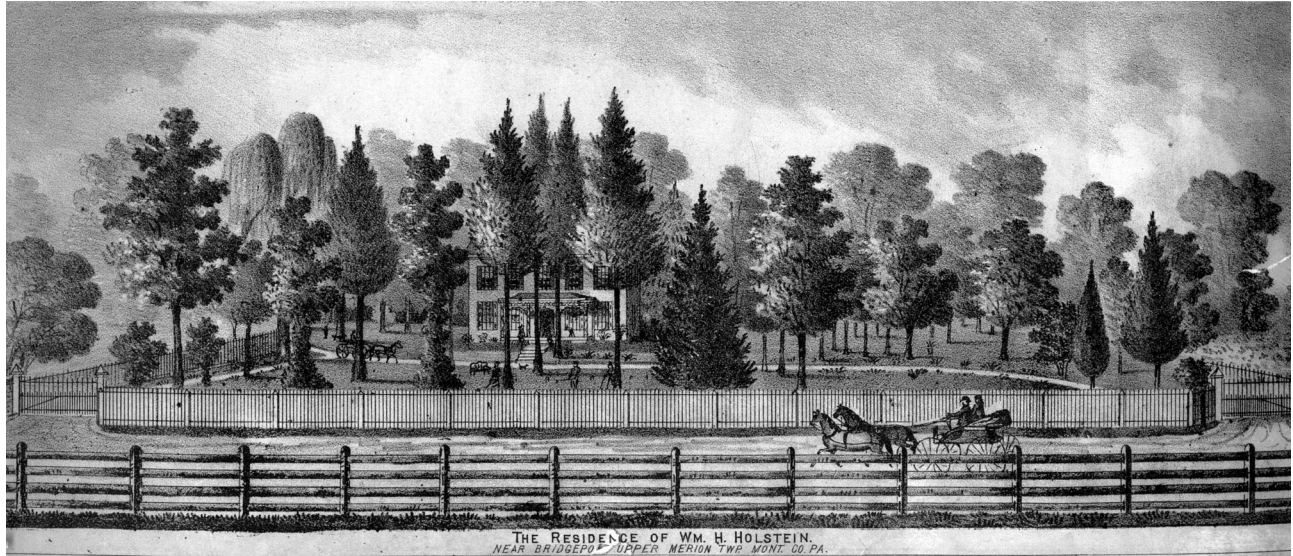
*(This article was written by Miss Pechin for the brochure for the ROBERTS SCHOOL RE-CREATION in 1958 and gives us a glimpse of education in Upper Merion Township in 1895.)*

I began my teaching at Roberts School September 1895 and my answers to the question relate to that time. Then the schools of Upper Merion were carefully graded and the children graduated after completing ten grades. They were admitted to the high schools of the surrounding area so as to receive a high school diploma. A commencement was held and a diploma granted by Upper Merion on the completion of the ten grades. The course prescribed covered reading, writing, arithmetic, algebra, mental arithmetic, plain geometry, spelling, U. S. history, etymology, physiology, geography, physical geography and English literature.

The appearance of Roberts School was similar to the Abrams School now standing on Henderson Road about one half mile from the Schuylkill River not far from the Abrams Station on the P & R Railroad. The building is now used as a dwelling. In Mr. Lloyd A. Moll's article on The Upper Merion Schools in the Montgomery County Historical Society there is a picture of the original Gulph School building which is very similar in appearances to the Roberts School when it was a one room building.

During the fall of 1895 the attendance numbered about thirty boys and girls, but in a few years the number attending was seventy-two and a second floor room was built and used by the higher grades. The benches used were of the type where the seat is attached to the desk behind the seat.

*(Editor's Note: The Abrams School referred to by Miss Pechin still stands and is owned by the Hope Community Church.)*

**PICTURE THIS!**

This residence in Upper Merion was home of the Holstein Family and still stands today! Would you be able to locate the Holstein Family home? See page 7.

*(Photo courtesy of Michael Morrison.)*



*St. Martin's Church, Canterbury, England.*

**THE LITTLE CHURCH AT THE CROSSROADS**

*(The information in this article was excerpted from remarks at the Homecoming Celebration Worship Service at Gulph United Church of Christ given by the Reverend Judith A Meier, OCC on November 16, 2014 and shared with the Society by Emma Levering, KOPHS member.)*

...Historian Theodore W. Bean tells us that Gulph Mills used to be a tiny village consisting of an inn, the sign of the Bird-in-Hand, some fifty houses, a store, a post office, some woolen mills, a school house, and a church conducted by what he called the Christian Baptists or Plummerites.

Another historian tells us that the Rev. Elias Smith of Lyme, Connecticut, ordained a Baptist, embraced the doctrine of the Rev. Dr. Abner Jones of Vermont (One of the three strands contributing to the Christian Church) and brought the Christian Church to Philadelphia. Elder Frederick Plum-

mer continued his missionary work eventually came to Gulph Mills, where he began preaching in the Gulph School House in 1830. The congregation became so large that the little school house couldn't contain them, so they moved outdoors, and services were held under a large oak tree in the schoolyard.

In May of 1833 Elder Plummer, assisted by Elder D. F. Milliard, held a series of meetings in the school house and out under the oak tree, and on June 16<sup>th</sup> the following people were baptized in the Schuylkill River: Isaac DeHaven, Andrew Supplee, John Henderson Supplee, George Supplee, Jacob Rodenbaugh (who later became pastor of the church), John Sutton (who became a traveling preacher), William S. Wagner, Elizabeth Matson, Sr., Jane Zell, Eliza Supplee, Mary Ann Supplee, Susanna Smith, and Jane Matson. William Noblit was baptized on June 23<sup>rd</sup>.

There was another large baptism at the Schuylkill River, which included George Richter, George W. DeHaven, Samuel Custer, Catherine Wagner, Catherine Richter (Supplee), Elizabeth Wagner (Hawk), Susan J. Wagner (Rodenbaugh), Susannah Matson (Noblit), Sarah DeHaven, Terissa Dull, and Harriet Clair. That afternoon, July 21, 1833, at 3:00, there was a meeting in the school yard---under the oak tree ---and Gulph Church was organized with twenty-five members. A special meeting was held at Andrew Supplee's home on November 15, and the officers were appointed. I think it's remarkable that, along with a president, secretary, treasurer, and three deacons, three deaconesses were selected: Elizabeth

Supplee, Susan J. Wagner, and Mary Ann Supplee. That was in 1833!

Baptisms were held regularly the rest of that year, but there is one more group of new Christians I must mention, those who were baptized in the waters of the Schuylkill on Christmas Day 1833: Edward Parker, Jesse Dicky, Mary Parker, Elmirs Richter, (Broades), John Horn, Elizabeth Matson, Jr., and Ann Jones.

A piece of ground was purchased next to the school house property, and the new stone church house was dedicated in 1835.

I believe you can still see the date stone over some outside steps. The inscription reads: First Christian Meeting House in Upper Marrian A. D. 1835.

The same year that the burying ground was purchased there was a lecture on Abolition held in the church. Members were strictly disciplined and could be disowned if their behavior didn't measure up to the Christian way of life. This, of course, was the era of revivals and prolonged meetings, preaching services held in the evening over days or even weeks, claiming new believers in Christ and reclaiming backsliders.

The congregation that outgrew the school house and met outside under an oak tree and then built a little stone church which was itself later outgrown finally decided to erect a fine new church modeled after St. Martin's church in Canterbury, England (pictured at the beginning of this article). It was truly a project of the neighborhood, with the members raising thousands of dollars and mill owners and other wealthy neighbors contributing money, workers, and such additions as the bell which still rings in the tower. One of my great joys was to personally ring the bell on holidays and days of prayer. The new church was dedicated in March 1895, free of debt. The Christian Education building, originally known as Butler Hall, was built in 1932.

Gulph Church has evolved from being the first Christian Church in Montgomery County (and in the present Pennsylvania Southeast Conference) and then becoming part of the merged Congregational Christian Churches and finally becoming part of the merger of the Congregational Christian Churches with the Evangelical and Reformed Church, the United Church of Christ.

Gulph Christian has had its share of challenges, conflicts, and scandals. One was in 1913 when the pastor objected to the choir master's efforts to have the choir chant the Apostles' Creed at the Easter morning service. The account of what was called "the clash" provided readers of

the CONSHOHOCKEN RECORDER weeks of entertainment. Those who left Gulph Church over the "church rupture" (another term from the RECORDER) became part of the core of the new Episcopal Church at the Gulph.

*Gulph United Church of Christ is located at 100 W. Matsonford Road.*



*(Photo courtesy of Michael Morrison.)*

**PICTURE THIS ANSWER!**

The white apartment house on the right of Henderson Rd, between Monroe Rd and Saulin Blvd., was the home of Anna Morris Holstein and her husband, William The Holsteins were a prominent local family. In 1862, Anna volunteered as a nurse in the Civil War, and served as a nurse at the battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg, and was matron-in-chief of the United States General Hospital until it closed. William Holstein joined Anna in caring for wounded soldiers after his period of enlistment was up.

Other women like Anna Morris Holstein went out to the lines and actually nursed wounded soldiers, offering proper food and simple comforts to reduce the sufferings. Anna organized efforts to gather large quantities of medical supplies, and even obtained contributions from Philadelphia. Anna also helped out in hospitals at Fortress Monroe.



**GRAVE TALES—OCTOBER 24**

**See page 2 for details.**

## 2015 Program Calendar

Subject to change; check the society's website or Facebook page for the most up to date information:  
[www.kophistory.org](http://www.kophistory.org) ~ [www.facebook.com/kophistory](http://www.facebook.com/kophistory) or contact [info@kophistory.org](mailto:info@kophistory.org)

**September 12 ~ 2:00 pm** Karin Stocking: *Back to School with Miss Elizabeth Hawkesworth*

**October 10 ~ 2:00 pm** Young Historians: An Aerial Retrospective of Upper Merion

**November 14 ~ 2:00 pm** Alan Wood Steel

**Sunday, December 13 ~ 7:00 pm** *Saint Lucia Festival* (Holiday Celebration for Society Members)

Unless noted otherwise, meetings are held on Saturday at **Christ Church (Old Swedes) Hall**,  
740 River Road, Swedesburg PA 19405 GPS coordinates [40.103498, -75.327288](#)



PO BOX 60716  
KING OF PRUSSIA PA 19406-0716

*A Commitment to Preservation!*