

The King of Prussia Gazette

Preserving Upper Merion's Past to Enliven its Future

Volume V, Number Four

Winter 2016

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A Time to Give Thanks and for Holiday Wishes

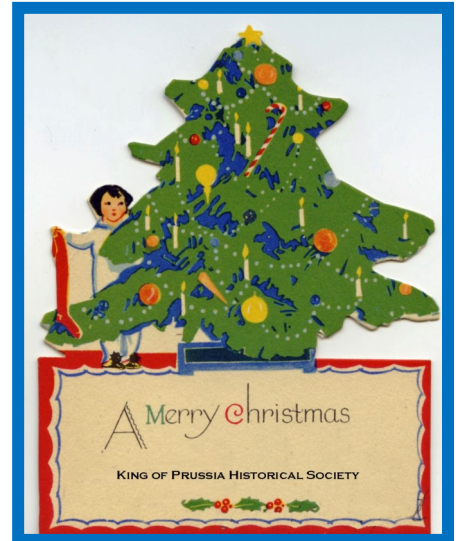
There are many things to be thankful this year. As 2016 draws to a close, I would like to remember some of the highlights of this year of growth. First, I would like to thank our board of directors, who are a cohesive group with ideas and solutions. It is a treat to be in their presence. I would like to thank our executive committee for giving their time and talent, and for making the job of president so much easier.

With the help of our summer intern Dan Neagoe, we were finally able to finish our long-awaited publication **UPPER MERION'S HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS**, which will be distributed to the school district and Mother Theresa Regional Catholic School as a guide for students of our local history, along with our newly revised book, **UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP: THE FIRST 300 YEARS**. Slowly and surely, we are growing in the hearts and minds of our great community, and we are happy to give back with our writings.

We recently began work on a new and exciting project with the working title "Upper Merion's Register of Historic Places", with a map and information that will be posted on our website. Here, homeowners can go online and register their property, and give some brief details about the history. This is long overdue, and I am thankful that it is well underway.

Several weeks this year we reached over 5,500 people with our Facebook posts. Facebook is a powerful tool that promises to only increase our visibility, and we look forward to more growth in 2017. Our Friday E-History fact has grown in popularity, and continues to be our most popular post. Thanks to all who support it.

I have only two wishes for this holiday season, and one is to welcome back past members to the society who have let their memberships lapse. Fortunately, we have added some new members and that helps compensate, but wouldn't it be wonderful if we could become totally sustaining and actually implement some of the programs that we can now only dream of implementing due to lack of funding. Remember, as we seek grants and donations, we are totally dependent on the generosity of our membership for support. My second wish is to have a climate controlled place for our growing archive and special collections facility, which is now packed away, and cannot be easily accessed. These items are part of our local history and intended to be shared with the community. I cannot believe that there is literally no room at the inn.



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The Town Crier—

updates from the Society

**OUR 2016 CHARTER MEMBERS**

We acknowledge our Charter Members for 2016 and thank them for their support: Emma Carson, Dave and Marianne Furman, John and Shirley Funkhouser, Michael Morrison, Frank Luther, Dave Montalvo.

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 and we will provide an answer in a future issue.

Check out the King of Prussia Historical Society website at www.kophistory.org. And find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kophisory.

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership campaign for 2017 is underway! 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	

The Society accepts PayPal for dues and donations.

OUR MAILING ADDRESS

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

THESE OLD HOUSES

The King of Prussia Historical Society's monthly program on March 11, 2017 will be "Upper Merion's Historic Homes". The presentation will include a review of the Society's 1956 report, THE KING OF PRUSSIA STORY which was a study of historical homes in the township at that time. Learn what the Society had proposed and what has happened in the meantime. The presentation will also in-

clude information about historic and unique homes that still exist in Upper Merion.

Followers on Facebook who go to the YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT WE'RE FROM KING OF PRUSSIA and the Society's page have seen photos posted by Russell Rupert, Society member and Board Member, of houses located throughout the area. With Russell's permission, the Society will use many of his photos to discuss "these old houses".

Support King of Prussia Historical Society.

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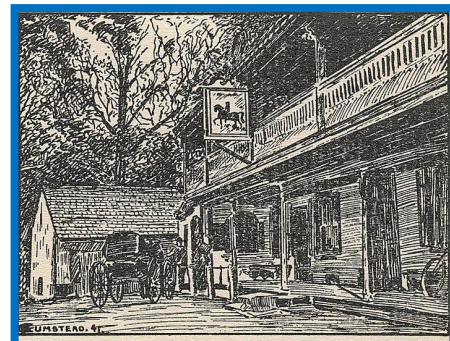
* When you select the "King of Prussia Historical Society" as your charity of choice, Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible Amazon Smile purchases to us.

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SEASON'S GREETINGS!

The King of Prussia Historical Society Board wishes you and yours joy and special moments during this holiday season: ; George Brusstar, Dave Montalvo, Vytas Masalaitis, Russell Ruppert, and Scott Sibley, Frank Luther, Chairperson, Michael Morrison, President, Marianne Hooper, Secretary, and Shirley Funkhouser, Treasurer.



A commitment to Preservation

SCHOOLS OF UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP, part 2*by Ann W. Pechin, 1958*

(This document was presented to the King of Prussia Historical Society by Doris L. Freeman from her Ann W. Pechin collection. The document has been retyped in Microsoft Word and has been digitized by the Society. Ann W. Pechin, daughter of John Wagner Pechin and Mary Emily Pechin, was born on January 31, 1877 in Radnor. She grew up in a plain stuccoed house, a severe colonial built in the early 1700's, located near what is now the Valley Forge Interchange of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.)

HENRY SCHOOL

The Henry School, which stood between Port Kennedy and Valley Forge just west of the Washington Memorial Chapel and on the same side of the road, was abandoned about 1869 when the Camp and Evergreen Schools were built. As a young man, Samuel K. Zook, of Port Kennedy, taught at the Henry School. In the Civil War he commanded a brigade in the Union Army and was killed in the Battle of Gettysburg.

This, and the Holstein or Center School, built in 1814, seem to have tied the early schools to those built after the passing of the Common School Law of 1834. They were one-room buildings of stone, and later both were used as dwellings. Although these early schools were called free schools, they were far from free. By this time the wealthier still paid their children's tuition, and the poorer children were paid for by the Township. This arrangement was not popular, as many people were too proud to accept charity.

The Holstein School was located about a quarter of a mile west of Bridgeport on DeKalb Pike (Rt. 202). In 1834, Mr. Ramsay, who was a surveyor, was the teacher. He taught reading, writing, arithmetic, mensuration and surveying---no geography, algebra, or grammar. At this time the curriculum, as well as the teachers, was improving. The pupils gravitated from one school to another according to the reputation of the teacher and the subjects taught. The first teacher of the Holstein School was Mrs. James Hooven, a married woman, whose son was one of her pupils.

The passing of the law in 1834 establishing free public schools brought an impetus to the education of children. The law had been much discussed. It was thought by many that if they had no children in school they should pay nothing for the maintenance of schools for their neighbors' children. The next year the Senate repealed the act, but it was saved by the stirring speech of Thaddeus Stevens in the House. Governor Wolfe had always supported the act, though his action kept him from being re-elected.

In 1854 E. L. Ecker was appointed County Superintendent, which meant closer supervision and greater efficiency of the schools. They now became pervaded by a common life and had both system and method. During the Civil War many of the older and more experienced men left the profession and women, against whom there was wide-spread objection, took their places. According to H. W. Kriebel, in his "History of Montgomery County", Upper Merion had eight schools with an 11-month term; 8 male teachers, each receiving \$22. per month. In 1860 there were 10 schools with a 10-month term; 6 male teachers and 4 female teachers. By 1884 there were 12 schools, with 12 female teachers, each receiving \$40. per month. No longer were the children obliged to use the text books of their forebearers, which they might find in their homes, but books of uniformity were furnished by the School Board and paid for by the parents. About 1885 the pupils were supplied with free text books in Upper Merion.

EVERGREEN SCHOOL

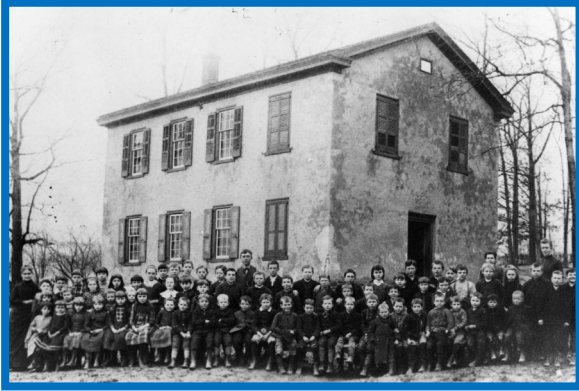
The older Evergreen School was a two-story, two-room building standing one-quarter of a mile east of Port Kennedy, close to the then Port Kennedy Road, now known as Valley Forge Road. It bore the date 1869. It was abandoned about 1927. In 1912 a one-story, four-room brick building was built in the woods behind the former building. The use of this brick building was discontinued in 1930, along with six other buildings in the township. However, the school population so increased in 1931 that the building was remodeled and inside water and toilet facilities and electric lights were installed. This building was again closed later and the children were transported, but it was reopened in 1956 and used for kindergarten classes.

CAMP SCHOOL

A later Camp School was built across from the Letitia Penn School on the Southeast corner of Baptist and Gulph Roads (Rt.23) in 1869. It was a one-story stone structure when built, but later, because of increased attendance, a second story was added. As the Park was extended, the population in the neighborhood decreased and the use of the building was discontinued in 1911.

BIRD-IN-HAND SCHOOL

The Bird-In-Hand School takes its name from the Bird-In-Hand Tavern of pre-revolutionary days, near which it stood on Holstein Road just off the Gulph Road (Rt.23). It was a two-room structure built in 1870, but was discontinued for school purposes at the time of the general consolidation in 1930 and used as a dwelling.



The Bird-in-Hand School was located in Gulph Mills.

The MERION SCHOOL

The Merion School, a one-room stone building, was located but a short distance from Abrams Station on Henderson Road. It bears the date 1872. It was closed in 1930 due to consolidation.

The outline of the Upper Merion Schools which I have given appears to have been the background of our present public school system. There were other schools that were maintained in the Township at times which need mention if we are to record all the educational efforts made in Upper Merion.

STURGIS SCHOOL

Around the year 1825 Mary Brook Hughes, widow of Benjamin Hughes, then a girl of 15, left the Gulph School and attended a school kept for girls only. The school was taught by Mrs. Sturgis in a little room over a spring house at Gulph Mills. The building was still standing in a dilapidated condition about 1897.

MUD COLLEGE

Mud College was built of logs, chinked and daubed with mud. It was opened about 1829. It stood on the corner where Church Road met the Gulph Road (Rt. 23), but was afterwards moved to the Jonathon Roberts farm (now the cemetery called Valley Forge Gardens and used as a smith shop. It was intended primarily for the Hughes, Henderson and Roberts' families, but others were admitted.

NUGENT COLLEGE or COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Mr. Nugent, a successful Philadelphia merchant, bought a 78-acre farm in Gulph Mills. He had sent his older children to boarding schools, but decided upon the novel plan for building a school at home. About 1830 he erected a two-story building of stone, with attic and basement, so as to accommodate boarding and day pupils. It had the curriculum of the ordinary grammar school of the time, including music and languages. The discipline was lax and it lasted but a year or two. The building was later used as a dwelling and finally abandoned.

THE TYSON SCHOOL

The Tyson School was held in a room in the Tyson home at Alderbrook about 1870. Alderbrook is at the intersection of King of Prussia and Croton Roads. It was a finishing school for the children of the neighborhood after they left the Roberts School. Mrs. Tyson was the daughter of Jonathan Roberts.

THE BARRETT SCHOOL

Miss Annie Barrett, who was an unusual teacher, opened a school in her own home September 1892. She never had more than 8 pupils in several grades. She stressed speaking and the best use of the English language, as well as mathematics. The school closed in 1902.

BALLIGOMINGO SCHOOL & BRIDGEPORT SCHOOLS

December 14, 1849 the School Board of Upper Merion purchased a two-story building with one-fourth acre of ground on the Balligomingo Road for \$240. Only one teacher taught here and the property became a part of West Conshohocken when it was incorporated October 1874. The Upper Merion School Board erected two schools in Bridgeport before it became a borough. The first was built on Second Street in 1842; the other at Sixyh and DeKalb in 1846. Both of these buildings have been destroyed.

GULPH SELECT SCHOOL

This school, an evening school meeting in the Gulph School building, claims the date 1867. The students sat every evening excepting Friday and Saturday. The subjects studied were phrenology, physiology, philosophy, grammar, practical and analytic geometry, physical geography, orthography, Latin and German.

INDIAN SCHOOL or LINCOLN INSTITUTE

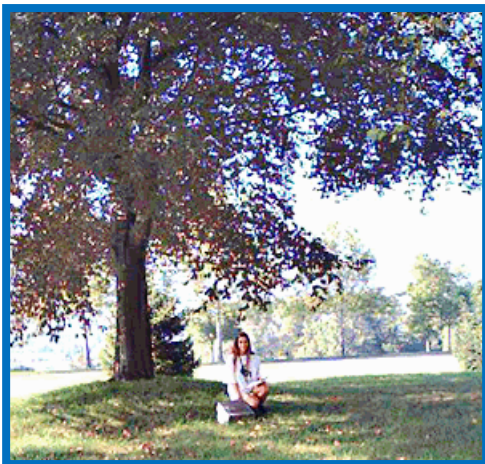
At the close of the Civil War various schools were opened for the Education and maintenance of soldiers' orphans. Two such schools were maintained in Philadelphia and directed by Mrs. Balange Coxe until sometime in the '80's. These buildings were then filled by Indian boys and girls representing 13 tribes. The children yearned for the outdoors, so in 1886 the officers

bought 10 acres of ground south of King of Prussia on the Radnor Road bordering Chester County. The Indian girls came here for the summer. Many of them, as well as the boys, were taken into the homes of the farmers and paid for their work. The boys were brought out from Philadelphia and never lived at Ponemah (the name for the new school). In 1899 the institution was discontinued by the directors.

ROYER GREAVES SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

The Royer-Greaves School was founded In 1921 by Mrs. Jessie Royer-Greaves in Upper Merion. It was located in King of Prussia along the Swedesford Road (DeKalb Pike}. Mrs. Greeves taught deficient, blind children who had been dismissed from other schools as uneducable, or who had never been in school. There were usually 18 to 20 pupils in the school, supported by private donations, the Lions Club, etc. Later it had a number of out-of-state pupils, especially from the northeast, where help was received from the Department of Public Instruction. This was true of Pennsylvania children after 1943. The school was moved to Paoli in 1941, when it numbered 32 pupils. It has been incorporated and is still growing and thriving, being the only school of this kind in this country.

(The conclusion of Miss Pechin's will appear in the Spring 2017 issue of THE KING OF PRUSSIA GAZETTE.)



KING OF PRUSSIA MOON TREE

The Moon Tree in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania is planted at the Lockheed Martin Space Systems facility on Goddard Blvd. Located by the cafeteria; the sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) was planted on July 30, 1976 as part of the Bicentennial celebration at what was then the Valley Forge Space Technology Center of the General Electric Space Division. Nearby is a tulip poplar grown from a seed taken from a tree planted by George Washington at Mount Vernon. The tree is located at 40 degrees 05.452 minutes N; 75 degrees 23.921 min W.



When Apollo 14 launched on January 31, 1971, for America's third trip to the moon, it not only carried three men on a mission, it also carried hundreds of seeds that would produce "Moon Trees" here on earth. Lockheed Martin is proud to possess one of these unique trees at its King of Prussia, Pa., facility.

The genesis of Lockheed Martin's Moon Tree (a *platanus occidentalis*, also known as an American sycamore) dates back to August 9, 1969, when NASA announced the crew for Apollo 14. Soon after, the U.S. Forest Service joined with NASA on a project to study the effects of prolonged weightlessness on seed germination and seeding growth. The partnership was a natural one for Apollo 14's Command Module Pilot Stuart Roosa, who was a former Forest Service smoke jumper.

The Forest Service selected 400 - 500 seeds of five different trees: Douglas fir, loblolly pine, redwood, sweet gum and sycamore. The seeds were classified and sorted, and control seeds were kept on earth for comparison. Roosa packed the seeds in small containers and stored them in his personal kit aboard Apollo 14.



On February 9, 1971, Apollo 14 returned safely to earth. However, the seed canisters burst during the decontamination process. Fortunately, the seeds withstood the spill. The resulting 420 - 450 seedlings—referred to as "Moon Trees"—were planted throughout the U.S.

On July 30, 1976, Lockheed Martin's Moon Tree was planted at the King of Prussia location, a heritage General Electric Space Division for the U.S. space program, recognizing the design, assembly and operational contributions for Apollo's ground equipment necessary for flight vehicle safety testing.

More than thirty-five years after taking root on earth, this Moon Tree pays tribute to Stuart Roosa and America's brave astronauts. It symbolizes Lockheed Martin's significant role in NASA's shuttle missions from the start, as well as mankind's insatiable curiosity and desire to explore the unknown.



(This information was provided courtesy of John Daukas, Dr. Gerald Liebling, and Dr. Calvin Fowler and can be found on the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center website.)

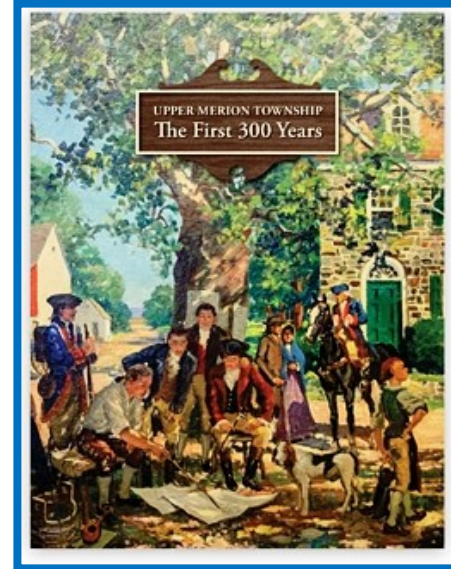


THE BACKSTORY

In August of this year, the Society exposed what happened during the UM Tricentennial. For those who did not see the Facebook posting, here is an abbreviated version.

Based on the actions of the Tricentennial Committee, the Society expected to receive the leftover funds from the UM Tricentennial. These funds would be used to jump-start the Society as it reestablished itself and to help us keep our local history alive for the benefit of future generations. In return, the Society agreed to write a new book entitled, **UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP: THE FIRST 300 YEARS**, which the township would sell to raise funds for the Tricentennial.

The Society never received any leftover funds as the township would not honor the agreement. We still maintain that the township should act in good faith, not only because the Society honored its part of the bargain and produced the



history books, but because of the loyal residents and businesses who donated in good faith to the Tricentennial believing the Society would receive any remaining funds.

That Facebook posting received a lot of attention. The majority of responses indicated that UM residents recognized that the Society had a point. We share some of the comments in this issue.

"I've read every word you've shared. It's exhausting. THANK YOU to the KOPHS for your perseverance. For "soldiering on" because what you offer is genuinely what our community today and tomorrow needs. What we value today is what our community has tomorrow!"

"Very disappointing news. The residents of this township whether longtime residents or recently located here are missing out on valuable history about this wonderful township rich in history. The township should embrace the King of Prussia Historical Society and help promote the organization more. It needs to grow its membership and have a place where residents can visit and learn more about this great township. The few remaining Historical buildings that the township has control over they have unfortunately allowed them to deteriorate. Monies have been spent elsewhere. Priorities obviously shifted in another direction away from our rich history.....very sad.....only 3 short years ago we celebrated our townships 300 year celebration and these same supervisors were there partying and celebrating."

"Nice to see the township taking such good care of its history and the few old buildings leftsad nothing will stop the board from selling and building every place they can."

"They don't want us to remember the history of this great town!! It puts a "cramp in their style" with the KOPBID who wishes all of us residents will just go away!!"

"It is very sad that we will be losing our historical facts section in the e-newsletter, as well as historically valued structures in this township. Once they are gone, they're gone. Would be nice to see cultural uses occupy the historical buildings. Win-win."

"I found this Henrik Ibsen quote today in the Wall Street Journal. "A community is like a ship. Everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm" Our officials need to listen to residents and to honor commitments in directing our Township's course in history."



THESE OLD HOUSES: THE POWELL HOUSE



On Wednesday, August 24, 2016 at 10:00 AM Society President Michael Morrison had an opportunity to photograph the Powell House on Allendale Road, which soon went up for sale.

It was a tenant house for Billy Walker's Farm and then he sold it to the Powell family in 1944. They moved in during that summer according to the writing inside the cellar wall. So it has been the Powell residence since then. The police station was next door at one time where a law office is now located.

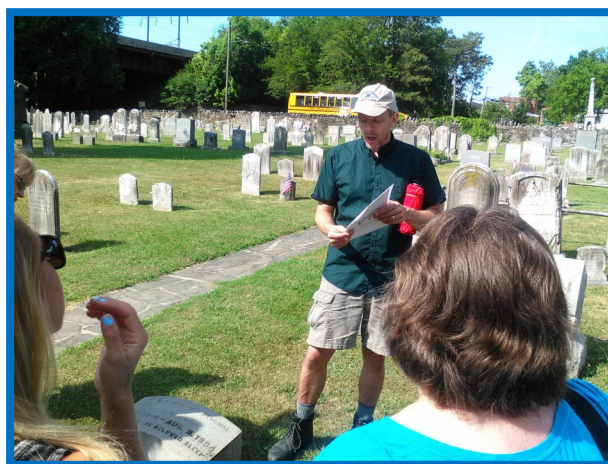
While we have lost yet another treasured property to "progress", another is likely to follow. The house on 158 Allendale Road went on the market. With the value of the land in that district, not much hope is held out for the home itself. The oldest section of the home was the north side (gable end), built in 1750. An addition was added to the south side in 1917, adding a dining room and kitchen. A porch was added in 1956, covering over the old pump and well.

Nancy Powell Daly was kind enough to donate many items of interest to the society and has allowed us to make a photo documentation of the property. We will be posting some of the many treasures that we have acquired on our website.

TEACHER INSERVICE

This past summer, Dave Montalvo, Upper Merion Area High School teacher and King of Prussia Historical Society Board Member, conducted workshops for District teachers. The focus was on local history and even included a bus tour of the District. Responses from the teachers indicate that they were very pleased with the workshop and trip and hoped that similar trips could be arranged so their spouses could learn more about our local history.

David Montalvo also spent part of his summer creating a Teacher Resources link on our website. He noted that these are some resources that can be used in the classroom; however, anyone interested in local Upper Merion history will find the resources valuable.



...at Christ Church (Old Swedes) Churchyard.



...at Roberts School.

(Photos courtesy of Matt Mitchell, Upper Merion Area High School teacher and KOPHS member.)



TEACHER WORKSHOP

During the past summer, Upper Merion Area School District teachers participated in workshops to learn more about Upper Merion's rich local history. See details on page 7. The participants also were given a bus tour and visited some of Upper Merion's historic sites. Workshop participants learned more about the King of Prussia Inn and other sites.

...at the King of Prussia Inn (at left)

2017 Program Calendar

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

January 14 ~ 2:00 pm

Annual Business Meeting
Recent Changes in Upper Merion: Then and Now

February 11 ~ 2:00 pm

Abdullah R. Muhammed
Africans in New Sweden: The Untold Story

March 11 ~ 2:00 pm

Upper Merion's Historic Homes

April 8 ~ 2:00 pm

Upper Merion's Ethnic Heritage

May 13 ~ 2:00 pm

From the Archives: 2016 Donor Donations

June 10 ~ 2:00 pm

Annual Field Trip/Picnic