

The King of Prussia Gazette

Preserving Upper Merion's Past to Enliven its Future

Volume VI, Number One

Spring 2017

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Michael Morrison

When local government realizes that their history is important and not only supports it, but provides a place for storage, preservation and viewing, then they deserve a great deal of credit. I would like to congratulate the borough of Bridgeport, PA for helping to protect and preserve their rich history. In a time when growth and development seem to take an eraser to our past at an alarming rate, it's nice to see someone care enough to preserve it. Thanks should also go out to those individuals who have made donations to the cause. Without your support, I suspect the project would move ahead much more slowly.

It all makes me wonder why we don't have a similar love of historic preservation here in the community that is Upper Merion? Is it because we are a township comprised of several distinct neighborhoods without a main street, USA? Is it because we are more or less a transient community, and folks don't stay long enough to really put down roots, or are we just too busy to care? Regardless, that's why there is a historical society.

A historical society must remember that fundamentally, it is a trustee of the culture. As such, it faces the challenge of preserving not only what has value now, but also what will have significance in the future. To maintain a collection is important, but to stop there only leaves the task half done, and it takes community support to succeed.

Through education, the society must encourage old timers and new comers alike to embrace their history, or forever be doomed to repeat it and never even know why. When a historical society does this, it embraces a sense of security and plants roots of continuity in the community and carries on the heritage of their trust. We must never forget that we are only the temporary trustees of the past and its culture. Please know that your King of Prussia Historical Society understands this

special responsibility and does not take it lightly, but the very survival of such a responsibility depends entirely upon our partnership with the community. We all have a story to tell, and it's a story worth hearing over and over again.

According to the township's website there is now a 2040 Comprehensive Plan that mentions the society in conjunction with the Moore-Irwin House. According to the website, "A comprehensive plan is two things. It is a document that will provide an officially adopted framework for managing continued growth, while preserving existing assets." It is our sincere hope that we make the list for the latter.

IN THIS ISSUE

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.....	1
THE TOWN CRIER.....	2
REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES.....	2
BRIDGEPORT HALL OF FAME.....	2
SCHOOLS OF UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP.....	3
A VISIT TO THE VILLAGE.....	4
QUARRY SALE: PORT KENNEDY 1852.....	6
THE DEMISE OF REBEL HILL.....	7

The Town Crier - -

updates from the Society

**OUR 2016 CHARTER MEMBERS**

We acknowledge our Charter Members for 2017 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.

We are especially looking for members who might want to share memories of Upper Merion's recent past and recent history. Photos are also welcome to help us look at Upper Merion's past and to appreciate it..

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.

A commitment to Preservation

**REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

The King of Prussia Historical Society has just started putting together a Register of Historic Places in Upper Merion Township that will be available online. The idea is that we cannot recognize and save the valued buildings of our heritage if we don't have some kind of registry in place along with supporting information and documentation.

We would love to include places in Swedeland (and all the neighborhoods!) of historical significance - and who better to help us identify them than the residents. Please email suggestions including whatever you might know about the history of the building to info@kophistory.org.

Visit the website and/or come to one of our free presentations related to our local history. <http://www.kophistory.org/>. We are wholly dependent on membership, donations and volunteers to continue our mission of preserving UM history. Please consider joining, volunteering or donating.

**BRIDGEPORT HALL OF FAME MUSEUM**

This information was recently posted on Facebook by Randy Bennett: For those who have been enjoying the yearbook photographs posted on the site by Bill Lawless, I want to let you know that they are from yearbooks housed at the Bridgeport Hall of Fame Museum in Borough Hall. The Hall of Fame Museum was created by Nicholas J. Rotondo, Sr. in 1982 and features many memories of our community. We are currently renovating the Hall of Fame in an effort to enhance the preservation and presentation of our history. I would like to thank the following for their generosity in helping us as we work toward meeting our goals: The Community Fund, Jim Wilkinson, William Del Collo, Mark Lattanze, and Torry Kelly.

We always gratefully accept donations, memorabilia, documents, photographs, maps, and written history.

SCHOOLS OF UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP, part 3

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 under what is now the Valley Forge Interchange of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.)

**PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS****TRINITY CHURCH NURSERY SCHOOL**

This is a non-denominational school founded by Mrs. Wm. Porter for four-year olds. It accommodates 36 children and has a long waiting list. There are 3 teachers and 1 volunteer mother serving for a month at a time. It is held in the Sunday School room of the Trinity Church, located at Gulph Mills near the P & W Station on Gulph Road.

SACRED HEART PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

This was founded in 1927 by the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart. At first there were but six grades, but the number of grades was increased to 8 in 1945. At this time (November 1957) 303 children are enrolled, with 7 Bernadine Sisters and 1 lay person teaching. The School is located in Swedesburg at the corner of Fourth and Stewart Streets.

MOTHER OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

This was founded October 1956 by Rev. James M. McGrory. There are 7 grades with 347 children attending. The teaching is done by 5 sisters of the Sacred Heart and 1 lay person. The School owns two buses that make five trips each day transporting all pupils but those living in Lafayette Hills. It is located on Allendale Road near Lafayette Hills.

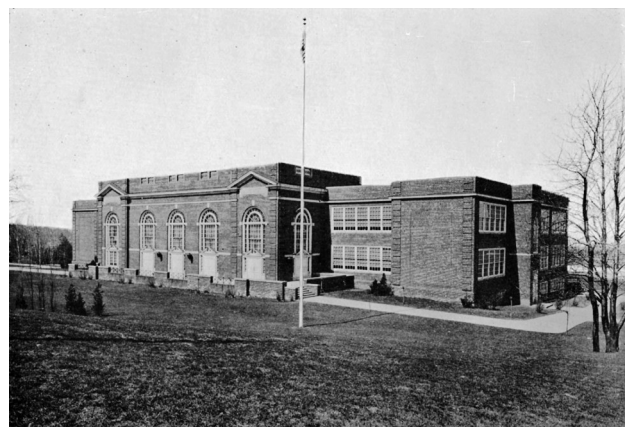


(Mother of Divine Providence School, now Mother Theresa Regional Catholic School.)

Upper Merion was always proud of her schools. For many years there were none better in the county. The women who taught were efficient, conscientious teachers, concerned with every phase of the welfare of their children. Many of them were born in the Township and understood what was necessary for the full development of the pupils in the locality.

About 1885 a ten-year course was adopted for the Township Schools. This meant that in the one-room school house the teacher handled 10 grades in various subjects in a day. There was little discussion or explanation, but the children loved their teachers and willingly studied until they could recite the printed page by rote. At the completion of the course, the pupils passed an examination given by the County Superintendent. These pupils had learned to read as a class from a chart at one corner of the room, or from a book by the word method at the teacher's knee. The first group which graduated in 1887 numbered 10 and represented several of the schools of the Township. After graduating from the Upper Merion Schools, those who wished to study further went to neighboring high schools or to the Normal Schools. Wherever they went, they paid for their own instruction and transportation.

After the law was passed insuring to every child in the State a high school education, the number of grades in the township was cut to 8, since after graduation the children could attend a 4-year high school in another locality. Most of the children either went to Norristown or Wayne to high school. Their tuition was paid by the Township, but they furnished their own transportation. This set-up continued until the building of the Gulph Road School and the formation of the Upper Merion High School.



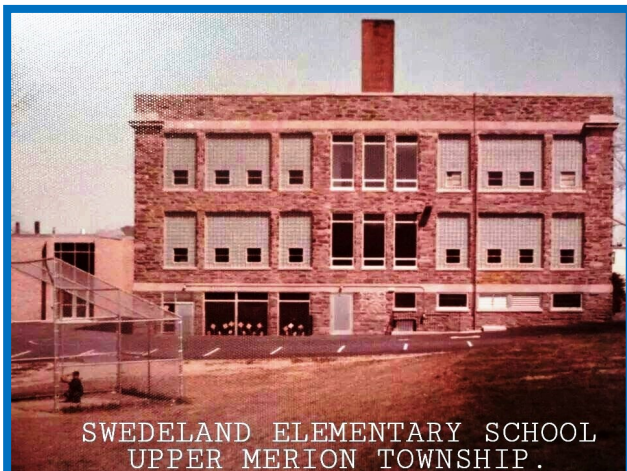
In the Norristown Times Herald of August 30, 1929 appeared an article in regard to the Upper Merion Schools.

The plan to improve school conditions in the Township was first started more than five years ago. The first step toward their improvement was the report of Thomas A. Bock, Director of the Bureau of Field Service of the Department of Public Instruction at Harrisburg, showing the inadequacy of the present educational facilities of the District. August 15, 1924 Mr. Bock submitted another report with proposed plans for reorganization. Nothing resulted from the recommendation and in 1926 Dr. Lee T. Driver, Director of Consolidated Projects, Harrisburg, again studied the situation and submitted a plan for reorganization.

"The Board worked on the project and carefully studied both reports, and after some time realized the necessity of a consolidated high school. The Directors submitted a loan to the electors for \$175,000 to build an addition to the Swedeland building, with the high school in mind. The loan was overwhelmingly defeated because residents of the Upper District of the Township felt no provision had been made for them. One year later another loan for \$200,000 was submitted. Election notices stipulated the money would be expended for a school at a central site to house certain elementary pupils and the high school pupils of the entire district.

The residents were much exercised over the meaning of the "Central site". Two sites chosen by the Board were dropped after the State Board refused to approve them for school sites. Finally the School Board purchased a track of 18 acres for \$20,000. at the corner of Gulph and Henderson Roads, on which the building was erected. The school building is of colonial architecture---red brick with white trim."

This spacious building, with its many rooms, contrasted strongly with the small rooms in the old buildings to which the children were accustomed. The building with its many modern conveniences was dedicated as the Gulph Road Building September 1930, because it was located on the old road laid out by William Penn. It was to house from 750 to 800 pupils ranging from grades 1 to 12 inclusive. All the grade pupils of King Manor, Rebel Hill and Gulph Mills attended here. Children from the Evergreen and Union Schools of grades 5 and 6, and the Junior-Senior High grades also were transported to this building.



SWEDELAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP.

Swedeland Elementary School that was located on Flint Hill Road. (Photo courtesy of Brian Horrocks.)



A VISIT TO THE VILLAGE

by Frank Luther

The Village, as it is referred to today by some residents, was founded as "Matsunk" by Swedish settlers in 1710. The name was changed to Swedeland sometime in the late 19th century.

Situated along the Schuylkill River and the Matsunk Creek, the Swedish village was composed of about nineteen homes. After the conquering of the Swedish colony by the Dutch, followed by English control, in 1664, a third-generation settler with the New Sweden Colony named Peter Yocum the Third (1678-1753) established Swedeland. William Penn offered the Swedish and Finnish colonists land from his grant in this Upper Merion area. The land in the vicinity of Swedeland/Matsunk was known for its fertile soil, limestone and iron ore quarries.

In 1840, Robert Potts retired from his business and moved to a one-hundred-acre farm in Swedeland, where he lived until his death. His farm was called Potts' Landing. In politics, he was an active Whig and was a candidate for congress at one time. By the mid-19th century Abraham Supplee operated a factory producing Kentucky Jean, employing some 25 hands. The extensive works of the Swede Iron Company were also here, consisting of two large furnaces and a rail road leading from the iron ore mines to the Schuylkill River.

However, major changes occurred in the early years of the twentieth century. The Alan Wood Steel Company built a massive steel Plant and Coking Facility in Swedeland in 1919 this brought forth a need for additional housing for the huge unskilled workforce made up of new waves of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. By 1918, the company was thriving and decided to construct a "company town" in Swedeland to house their many workers. Streets were laid out on the former Potts Farm and several hundred houses were built. Swedeland became a sizable town with utilities, property for its public school and playground, and other necessary facilities furnished at the expense of the company. In 1918, a new chapel was built to replace the 1869 chapel at Flint Hill Road and B Street for the Swedeland Union Sunday School which was used until the 1960's.

At the turn of the century the wave of Eastern European immigrants consisting of Poles, Slovaks, Ukrainians, and Rusyns appeared in Upper Merion. Many of these immigrants came to work in the steel mill at Swedeland. Efforts were made by them to establish their own churches

to conduct services in their native tongues and to preserve their customs and heritage. A great number of Slovaks settled in Swedeland and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia agreed to create a parish for them, naming the Rev. Joseph C. Tomko as pastor. Alan Wood, Jr. had made an agreement with the pastor to build a Catholic Church for the Slovak workers on ground on Flint Hill Road that Wood would donate. When the pastor insisted that a Catholic school be part of the parish, Alan Wood withdrew his offer, since he was an ardent proponent of public education. The Slovak parish was established in Bridgeport in 1923.

Alan Wood Steel operated into the early 1980's when it was forced to close because of foreign competition underselling its products.



(A view of Swedeland from 1916 shows some of the 168 houses for workmen, owned by Alan Wood Steel. The houses in the upper view were given to the foremen, while those in the bottom view housed the workers. Photo courtesy of Ed Dybicz Collection.)

The Swedeland Volunteer Fire Company was formed in 1920 with the help of Alan Wood and continues to protect the citizens of Upper Merion and nearby communities. Swedeland has continued its industrial heritage and is surrounded by pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline, chemical manufacturer Lonza, the Renaissance Business Park, and The Philadelphia Newspapers Incorporated Complex.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, a day President Roosevelt declared "a date which will live in infamy." The next day, the United States declared war on Japan and on December 11 Germany declared war on the United States. The country was now involved in total war.

In the attack on Pearl Harbor, more than 2,400 were killed and 1,100 were wounded. At the time of the Japanese attack, two Upper Merion soldiers, Pfc. Emil A. Sabol and Pfc. Stanley W. Bengen, both of Swedeland, were serving with the Signal Company, Aircraft Warning Unit at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. Sabol was one of five brothers and sisters who would serve in the armed forces of the United States during World War II. It took more than a month before the Sabol family was notified that Emil had survived the attack.

Emil was off duty that fateful day and was in bed when awakened by the bombing and strafing. Together with the other soldiers in the barracks, he immediately responded and sprang into action to defend the base as the Japanese planes swooped in over the barracks with ma-

ing at the planes with their rifles.

On January 3, 2017, Brian Haney posted on Facebook some registrations for World War II. These included some old Swedeland family names: Bednar, Andreyko, Pignoli, Toth, and Blasband.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER 701 1. NAME (Print) Michael (NONE) Toth ORDER NUMBER

U. 201 (First) (Middle) (Last)

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) Upper 34 Summit St. Merion Swedeland Montg Pa (Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

(THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL)

3. MAILING ADDRESS Same (Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same)

4. TELEPHONE 5. AGE IN YEARS 51 6. PLACE OF BIRTH (Town or county) (State or country)

DATE OF BIRTH Oct 25 1891 Austria-Hungary (Mo) (Day) (Yr) (State or country)

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Anna Toth 34 Summit St. Swedeland Pa (Exchange) (Number) (Mo) (Day) (Yr) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS Upper Merion + Plymouth R.R. Conshohocken, Pa. (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Swedeland Montg Pa. (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42) (over) 16-21630-2 Michael Toth (Registrant's signature)

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER 503 1. NAME (Print) CHARLES NONE BLASBAND ORDER NUMBER

U. 503 (First) (Middle) (Last)

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) Summit St. SWEDELAND UPPER MERION MONTG. PA. (Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

(THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL)

3. MAILING ADDRESS SAME (Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same)

4. TELEPHONE 5. AGE IN YEARS 62 6. PLACE OF BIRTH (Town or county) (State or country)

DATE OF BIRTH NOVEMBER 24 1879 AUSTRIA (Mo) (Day) (Yr) (State or country)

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS ROSE BLASBAND-Summit St. SWEDELAND-PA. (Exchange) (Number) (Mo) (Day) (Yr) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS SELF (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS SWEDELAND MONTG. PA. (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42) (over) 16-21630-2 Charles Blasband (Registrant's signature)

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER 1162 1. NAME (Print) MICHAEL (NONE) ANDREYKO ORDER NUMBER

U. 1162 (First) (Middle) (Last)

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 102 Summit St. SWEDELAND UPPER MERION MONTG. PA. (Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

(THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL)

3. MAILING ADDRESS SAME (Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same)

4. TELEPHONE 5. AGE IN YEARS 49 6. PLACE OF BIRTH (Town or county) (State or country)

DATE OF BIRTH FEB 24 1892 C.Z.S. SLOVAKIA (Mo) (Day) (Yr) (State or country)

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS ANNA ANDREYKO-102 Summit St. - SWEDELAND PA (Exchange) (Number) (Mo) (Day) (Yr) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS ALAN WOOD STEEL CO. - CONSHOHOCKEN PA. (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS SWEDELAND MONTG. PA. (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42) (over) 16-21630-2 Michael Andreyko (Registrant's signature)

Royce Keehn, a Village native, administers the Swedeland, PA Facebook page where a number of individuals recently posted comments about Swedeland. Donna Barainyak-Staurovsky wrote that her grandmother Josie taught her a cheer when she was a little girl and till this day when people ask her where I was raised she first says, "Swedeland the better part of King of Prussia. Then I sing the cheer, "Stand them on their head, stand them on their feet, Swedeland, Swedeland can't be beat." She praised all those who walked our streets, played at the park, drank at the firehouse, opened their

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER U. 1680 1. NAME (Print) ROCCO (NONE) PIGNOLI ORDER NUMBER

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 100 SUMMIT ST. UPPER MERION SWEDELAND MONTG. PA. (Town, township, village or city) (County) (State)

3. MAILING ADDRESS SAME

4. TELEPHONE 5. AGE IN YEARS 62 6. PLACE OF BIRTH ITALY (Town or county) (Date) (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.) (State or country)

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS MARY CHRISTINA PIGNOLI 100 SUMMIT ST. SWEDELAND, PA.

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS ALAN WOOD STEEL CONSHOHOCKEN PA.

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS SWEDELAND MONTG. PA. (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. S. FORTH I (Revised 4-1-42) (over) 16-21629-3 Vito Pignoli (Licentiate's signature)

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER U. 1110 1. NAME (Print) STEVE (NONE) BEDNAR ORDER NUMBER

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 20 SUMMIT ST. SWEDELAND MONTG. PA. (Town, township, village or city) (County) (State)

3. MAILING ADDRESS SAME

4. TELEPHONE 5. AGE IN YEARS 52 6. PLACE OF BIRTH CZECHOSLOVAKIA (Town or county) (Date) (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.) (State or country)

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS FRANK BEDNAR - SUMMIT ST. - SWEDELAND PA.

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS ALAN WOOD STEEL CO. CONSHOHOCKEN PA.

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS SWEDELAND MONTG. PA. (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. S. FORTH I (Revised 4-1-42) (over) 16-21629-3 Stephen Bednar (Licentiate's signature)

Long-time township residents will recognize some other Swedeland individuals who deserve recognition, but not limited to include Al Humay and Joe Dudas, who went on to become members of the Upper Merion Township Police Department; then, there were Ogie Martella and Fran Murphy who taught and coached in the Upper Merion (Area) School District. Of more recent memory was Gene Lonchar, in his ubiquitous hat, who often appeared at Township Board of Supervisors meetings to remind them of Swedeland's presence and its residents' wishes.



(A 1940 photo of the Swedeland Post Office, located at 625 "B" Street, in the home of Francis R. Murphy. It was a gathering place for residents, and Murphy was postmaster for 25 years. Until the post office was closed on December 30, 1972, Swedeland's zip code was 19479. It was later incorporated into the King of Prussia zip code of 19406. Photo courtesy of Fran Murphy.)



QUARRY SALE: PORT KENNEDY 1852

(Courtesy of the Tredyffrin-Easttown Historical Society History Quarterly Digital Archives.)

The area between the Valley Forge Historical National Park Welcome Center and the Schuylkill River was once the thriving industrial village of Port Kennedy where the main business was quarrying limestone and shipping lime. Here is the notice of sale of the limestone land and quarries of David Zook published in the Norristown Register and Montgomery Democrat on Tuesday, November 30, 1852.

"At Port Kennedy, in Upper Merion Township, the subscriber desirous of relinquishing the Lime business, offers at Private Sale, his Limekilns, quarries and about 13¾ acres of limestone land at Port Kennedy. There are two quarries now open, one of them about 60 feet deep and the other about 40 feet deep, and both may be sunk many feet deeper and drained. The whole height may be increased to over 100 feet, thus furnishing the largest amount of good limestone there is to be found in the County of Montgomery.

There are five kilns all in good order, a stone office, two stone dwellings, a frame dwelling and a large frame stable.

doors and were just truly good neighbors.

Harry Nuskey wrote that he calls Swedeland the Land of the Midnight Sun, recalling when the slag at Alan Wood was dumped and it lit up Swedeland.

Shirley Cross Weaver has lived in Swedeland since 1972. Back then you could walk the street at night and feel safe. Also, they had the ice skating at the park, ice hockey for the boys. The nice picnics, where everyone came. A very close community. Evelyn had her horses. Milty's store, post office. It was great then, let's try to make it great again.

Carl Pierce commented, "SWEDELAND—Matsunk, a field, Alan Wood, Keystone Coke, acid pit, all the woods—that is gone!

Angelina Donatello is proud to live in Swedeland. She was born in the schoolhouse at Flint and Summit streets and lived there until she was ten when the family moved to a street next to the firehouse. She remembers always looking out the window when the whistle went off and watched the guys running to the firehouse. Angelina is 74 and still living here and will stay. I love Swedeland!



The whole to be sold together or divided into two lots, the largest of 10½ acres with the largest and deepest Quarry, office and five kilns thereon, and the lot with the residue of improvements contains 3¼ acres.

There is a right of road down to the River in connection with the Kilns and Quarries, a large basin and wharves on the Schuylkill River.

The Subscriber has expended a large sum of money in making good roads into his Quarries, in building bridges over the roads about his kilns, and he now offers all for sale, confident that upon examination, this will be found the best in Kennedy's Hollow, for an immediate and profitable business, and where the quantity of limestone far exceeds any other single property on the River Schuylkill. For terms apply on the premises to David Zook, August 24, 1852."



THE DEMISE OF REBEL HILL

by John J. Hagan and reprinted with his permission

(About John Hagan: I grew up on DeHaven Street on Rebel Hill in Upper Merion Township. I attended the former Swedeland Elementary School, Upper Merion Junior High (when it was located on Henderson Road), and graduated from Upper Merion Senior High School. Our class of 1965 was the first class to attend all four years (1961-1965) in the current high school building. I taught one year at Upper Merion Junior High School before moving to New Jersey, where I taught history for 37 years at Eastern Regional High School in Voorhees, NJ, retiring in 2007. I have one daughter, three sons and four granddaughters. Many of my ancestors lived in Upper Merion and Lower Merion Townships and I enjoy researching family history and writing articles about local history.)

Many people, justifiably, believe that progress is a positive thing. Computers, cell phones and ATM cards have made life easier for almost everyone. Few would want to return to a time without those recent conveniences. A major source of progress in the post-World War II era was the building of highways that made travel and transportation faster and easier. Two important highways that appeared in Montgomery County during this time period were the Pennsylvania Turnpike, which reached its terminus at Valley Forge, and the Schuylkill Expressway, which connected the Valley Forge exit of the Turnpike with Center City Philadelphia. These highways were beneficial for the residents of Montgomery County in many ways, but there were drawbacks. To reverse a popular saying, within every silver lining is a dark cloud. The construction of the Schuylkill Expressway had particularly dire consequences for one community in Upper Merion Township. Rebel Hill Village was one of the oldest settlements in the township, but the expressway doomed the neighborhood in two ways. First, it ripped through the hill, dividing the community in two. Second, it helped to shift the population center from the lower parts of the township to the King of Prussia area. This is the story of the historic Rebel Hill and its ultimate demise in the early 1950s.

Geographically, Rebel Hill is an elongated prominence in Montgomery County that rises up from the west bank of the Schuylkill River in West Conshohocken and extends southwestward about one-and-a-half miles to the east bank of Gulph Creek in Upper Merion Township. The hill is about

half a mile wide for its entire length. Matsonsford Road (1) traverses the hill's entire eastern base and Balligomingo Road does the same to the West. Most people believe that Rebel Hill acquired its name due to the patriotism of its residents during the Revolutionary War when the Continental Army spent almost a week camped there before moving on to Valley Forge. The famous Hanging Rock, under which George Washington's army marched on their way to their winter encampment, protrudes from the southwestern slope overlooking Gulph Creek. Historically, Rebel Hill Village was located on the eastern slope of the hill from the West Conshohocken border to Old Gulph Road. Because almost no one resided on the western slope, the citizens of Rebel Hill often referred to Balligomingo Road as "the back road." On December 8, 1952, the Schuylkill Expressway was completed between Valley Forge and West Conshohocken (2), effectively cleaving Rebel Hill Village and creating two neighborhoods where there once was only one.

Prior to the construction of the expressway, Rebel Hill Village was the kind of neighborhood where no one locked their doors at night and where every adult was the surrogate parent of every child. Dogs ran free, kids rode bikes in the street and grandfathers liked to wile away their days sitting in a rocking chair in the shade of an old apple tree. Kids spent their summer days swimming in Balmoral Lake, camping at Griffie's Rocks or fishing in Gulph Creek. Favorite winter activities included sledding on Hillside Avenue and ice-skating on Balmoral Lake. Any time of the year was fine for hiking through the woods along the crest of the hill to the West Conshohocken Water Company's reservoir at the corner of Zielinski's Field. Although Rebel Hill Village was still intact in 1950, it was the eve of the neighborhood's destruction.

NOTES

- 1 This road is simply called Ford Street in West Conshohocken. It becomes Matsonsford Road when it emerges from West Conshohocken and becomes the border between Upper and Lower Merion Townships.
- 2 West Side Official Cuts Ribbon Opening Expressway Spur. Conshohocken Recorder. January 8, 1952.

(This entry is only one section of Mr. Hagan's essay. Future issues of THE KING OF PRUSSIA GAZETTE will feature other sections.)



(A photo from Rebel Hill circa 1940. Courtesy of the Spragg Family.)

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

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

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 education-



PO BOX 60716
KING OF PRUSSIA PA 19406-0716