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The Challenge

PRESERVATION • RESEARCH • EDUCATION

THE WANAMAKERS, Prominent Family of the Gilded Age

Presented by Mr. Thomas Wieckowski

Thursday, December 4th, 2014 – 7:30 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church

Bethlehem Pike & East Mill Road in Flourtown, PA

DECEMBER 2014

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The development of the Cheltenham Hills and then Wyncote, during the Gilded Age brought some of Philadelphia's most prominent citizens to that verdant countryside. One of the most illustrious was the merchant, John Wanamaker. Wanamaker's exploits spanned what easily could be called three careers, not including his "side interest" of acting as a developer of several communities neighboring his magnificent estate, Lindenhurst. Several of his children, also residents of Wyncote, achieved their own fame and fortune. Their exploits touched on aviation, golf, and the development of Florida as a winter resort among others.

The Springfield Township Historical Society welcomes back Mr. Thomas Wieckowski. Tom is Vice-President of the Old York Road Historical Society and a member of the Cheltenham Township Historical Commission. He received his B.S. at Villanova University and Ph.D. in Higher Education from The Catholic University of America, Washington D.C. He recently retired from Drexel University after twenty-seven years where he was Associate Dean of the College of Business among other positions. He currently devotes his time to his lifelong hobby, historical research and writing, and is the author of *Making Marathon*, published in 2009 and, *A Spectacle for Men and Angels*, a narrative documentary of Camp William Penn, published in 2013.

Last year Tom piqued our interest in the Wanamaker family with his wonderful presentation of *Making Marathon, the history of early Wyncote*.



Wanamakers Depot (Old York Road Historical Society)

Please join us on December 4th to explore the exciting lives of this prominent local family. The public is invited to attend, and there is no charge for admission. Reservations are not required. Light refreshments will be served.



Lindenhurst postcard (Old York Road Historical Society)

For more information call 215-233-4600

PLEASE NOTE:

Attendees to the December program are encouraged to bring a canned food item to donate to the First Presbyterian Church's neighborhood food pantry. Please help us to support this important cause.

History of Wyndmoor's Bethesda Home

This article was prepared by STHS Archives volunteer, Ray Smith, who has been researching the history of Bethesda Home.

The orphanage, that was a large part of Wyndmoor life in the late 1800s through the 1940s, came here through the extraordinary efforts of two people, Anna Clement and Henry Williams, and countless others who were inspired by them.

Anna W. Clement (1819–1909) was raised as a Quaker and, as a dressmaker, went on to create a “large, fashionable and lucrative business.” In the 1850s, she converted to the Methodist Episcopal church and found a calling to help the less fortunate.

Henry J. Williams (1791–1876) was the son of General Jonathan Williams (1751–1815) who was a grand nephew of Benjamin Franklin and his assistant in Europe during the Revolution. General Williams became chief of Engineers of the Army Corps of Engineers and the first Superintendent at West Point in 1801. He made his home in Philadelphia and was buried there. Henry married Julia Rush (1792–1860) in 1820. Miss Rush was a daughter of Dr. Benjamin Rush.

Henry Williams was a practicing attorney, in Philadelphia. During the early years of his practice, he lived and worked down by the waterfront. As Philadelphia grew, he and Julia moved out to 712 Walnut Street, not far from where Anna Clement lived.

After her conversion, Anna Clement was appointed to take charge of a class with a missionary church, in South Philadelphia, where she came in contact with “much destitution and distress.” Being an astute businesswoman, she saw that there was a problem in giving money directly to the poor, as many would just turn around and buy intoxicating liquors rather than take care of their children.

In October 1859, Miss Clement decided to open up a refuge in the upper floors of a store run by an acquaintance. Events came quickly. With the help of other ladies, she took in the poor and children with no other place to go. Much of the operation was financed from her earnings and personal savings.

The war presented an insurmountable problem for her dressmaking business. Much of her sales were to the South and the Western states and her business couldn't survive without access to these markets. From here on the home had to be supported from the gifts of others. She declared a deep faith in divine providence and would not ask others for money, convinced that support would come freely from benefactors who witnessed her mission.

Quickly outgrowing the capacity of the Philadelphia home, she found



a “large and commodious” house in Chestnut Hill that she could rent for \$600 a year. Even though it was much more than she could afford, she made the move, confident that others would come to her aid. A Philadelphia directory, for 1863, gave Anna Clement's address as “Bethesda Home, Wissahickon Ave., Chestnut Hill.”

Henry J. Williams became the primary benefactor and advisor for the home. His wife, Julia, like Anna Clement, was a believer in divine providence. Later, in 1872, Mr. Williams funded the building of a large stone home at the corner of Willow Grove Avenue and what was later to be called Stenton Avenue. This was an accessible location, just inside Springfield Township, a short walk from the Wyndmoor station and along “improved roads.”

While the institution was never well funded, Miss Clement was able

to make it grow and support those in need. Over and over again, entries in her journal lamented on periods when the cupboard was bare, only to have someone appear at the door with a small gift. Started as a refuge for the poor, both elderly and children, it slowly moved to being a “Christian Children's Home.”

Many of the “boarders” were children in single parent homes. This entry is from May 1888:

- *Three children admitted to-day through the interest of Mr. M., sad circumstances which separates mother and children, in this case the father died a Christian man, committing his little ones to our Father's care.*
- *Several quarts of milk from Mr. H. A little girl taken by the mother, per order of the Home Mission.*
- *22d. Two little girls needing home and care, brought by their mother who lives at service.*
- *An interesting child brought to us, through the interest of Rev. R. J. C., no father, mother a respectable woman working in a laundry. A bundle of clothing sent us by Mrs. P., which her little adopted daughter had outgrown.*

In most cases, the children had relatives or patrons who contributed what they could for support. Ledgers tracked the individual child, showing what was collected on his or her behalf.

Upon his death in 1876, Mr. Williams left an endowment for the home, overseen by trustees. In it he directed that Miss Clement have absolute control of the home as long as she was willing to remain. While the endowment was very large, by the 1880s the income from it only covered about a fifth of the expenditures.

At the turn of the century, the home had grown to consist of five substantial buildings and numerous outbuildings in an 8-acre compound. By 1910, after Anna Clement's death, it came under the control of a board, backed up by a “Visiting Women's Committee” of the social elite of the area. The home was surrounded by the estates of people who are familiar to

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Continued on next page

us all. The Stotesbury "Winoga Stock Farm" and Randall Morgan Estates were adjacent. The "Contributors" lists, through the years, contained the "who's who" of Chestnut Hill and Springfield

Township. It is interesting to note, when Anna Clement recorded the gifts in the annual reports, that a gift of a few eggs was as much prized by her as a gift of hundreds of dollars.

Youth Service, Inc., the successor of Bethesda Home and other child-wel-

fare organizations, loaned STHS numerous Annual reports, ledgers, minutes and legal documents. Our archives are in the process of digitizing these documents to preserve them for future generations. This project was made possible by the generous support of our

Friends during this past year. Please stop by the archives and view these fascinating documents in our digital catalog.

You can read about Youth Service Inc. at ysiphilly.org. They are a United Way organization and would welcome your support.

Springfield's Historic Businesses: **CISCO'S BAR AND GRILL**

SPOTLIGHT ON

Fourth in a series of articles highlighting historic businesses in Springfield Township.

If you ask a Springfield Township resident who their favorite moose is, chances are the one in the 1500 block of Bethlehem Pike in Flourtown will win out over Bullwinkle every time.

Cisco's Bar and Grill, located at 1538 Bethlehem Pike in Flourtown, Pennsylvania, has been home to the moose for over a generation and a mainstay of the community for more than half a century. For all of that time, the firm has been owned and operated by members of the Cisco family. Started by James A. and Anne Cisco in 1949, the business was run by their daughter, Joanne, from 1983 to 2009. While Joanne owns and resides in the Bethlehem Pike residence, her daughter, Sandra Olszewski Durkin, is the current owner of the business.

Cisco's continues to stand out as an independently-operated business, which is no small feat in an era of big restaurant franchises and supermarkets with cafés. The original owner, James Cisco, learned much about the industry from another relative who started out on his own. "When my Dad was a young man in the 1930s, he helped out his brother Tony, who was the proprietor of a bar and grille in Norristown," explains Joanne. James also learned the importance of putting a new twist on a popular favorite. While most people in the surrounding area were calling them "hoagies," people in Norristown chose to call the sandwiches "Zeps." That term stuck as did having cooked salami with peppercorns and other variations added to the sandwich.

James' time in the restaurant business came to a halt in the early 1940s with the Second World War. "Everything changed when World War II started," explains Joanne. "Dad went to work at the Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company and later enlisted in the Coast Guard, seeing action in the North Atlantic."

When the war was over, James Cisco opened a luncheonette located in the "pan handle" of Springfield Township on Ridge Pike. The restaurant was open for breakfast and lunch and offered hot and cold sandwiches along with homemade soups and salads. From the very beginning, James' wife Anne was a partner in the business, who not only prepared and cooked the food, but also helped to oversee day-to-day operations.

Determined to move from renting restaurant space to owning it, James and Anne purchased the property on Bethlehem Pike from William Gerstlauer on June 29, 1956. [The land on which Cisco's now stands has quite a bit of history itself, being part of William Penn's original land grant of Springfield Township, which he deeded to his first wife, Gulielma Maria Springett Penn in 1681. In 1741, Penn's descendants, John, Thomas and Richard Penn sold two tracts of land in Springfield – 75 acres on the west side of the "Great Road" (Bethlehem Pike) and 110 acres on the east side – to Renoir Tyson. The huge property was divided and sold to numerous residents, changing hands several times over the two centuries. During the first quarter of the 20th Century, the two-story dwelling was home to John Heydrick, a saddler and harness-maker, who also had his shop there.]

Soon after James obtained a liquor license, Cisco's Luncheonette became Cisco's Bar and Grille. James and Anne lived above the bar and grille, raising two daughters, Joanne Cisco Olszewski and Dianne Cisco Yeater and a son, James, Jr. "The business has always been a part of our lives," recalls Joanne. "We lived here and got used to a lot of activity – people coming in to dine (many on a menu favorite – cheesesteak hoagies, vendors coming in and out and, of course, all the action around the firehouse where Dad was a volunteer fireman." Joanne mentions that she even got used to the sound

of the siren going off from the Flourtown Fire station located only yards away from the establishment.

"The siren goes off for fires and helicopters since a fire truck has to be present when they land in the field behind the fire house," she says. "The other night, the siren went off at 3:03 a.m., at 3:10 a.m. a fire truck went out, at 3:20 a.m., the helicopter

landed and medics in the ambulance put the patient on board the helicopter and at 3:30 a.m., it took off."

What's most memorable about growing up in Flourtown are the strong relationships the family has established and continue to make with others in the community." Families have been coming to Cisco's for years; many coming back as regulars after being away for decades," she says. "Some bring their children and grandchildren back who remember Dad and regale us with family stories, saying, 'My husband proposed to me in that booth' or 'I stood right there and had a birch beer when I was 9 years old.'" And some especially remember Dad's conservation and environmental efforts."

James Cisco loved the outdoors and helped save Erdenheim's Hillcrest Pond, sponsoring cleanups and trout stocking at his own expense. "Dad said he wanted the neighborhood to have a clean place where kids could go to fish," Joanne relates. James involved all family members in the ongoing project. In 1964, his conservation and environmental efforts were cited by Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall and Lady Bird Johnson. In 1994, he was recognized for dedicated service by the Springfield Township Parks and Recreation Board.

Though there's still a small town feel to the community, the business environment has undergone change. What's changed most are the large supermarkets and shopping centers that have sprung up over the last few decades. "While I was growing up, all the businesses were owned by entrepreneurs who lived and worked here," Joanne recalls. "Many of them were women-owned businesses." According to Joanne, there's still quite a few independently-owned businesses, particularly at the Flourtown Farmer's Market, but many have gone away – the large corporations that have come have changed the fabric of the community. "The business has been affected by this as well as by drought conditions when tomatoes and onions become very expensive, but Cisco's has managed to weather the storm. We've never had to lay anyone off because of it."

And the Cisco family continues the tradition started by James and Anne of giving back to the Springfield Township community. "Most people know us well and we continue to support the community by contributing gift certificates to local schools, taking ads in community pamphlets and, of course, continuing to raise funds for the upkeep of Hillcrest Pond," Joanne concludes. As of this writing, (October 20, 2014), Joanne received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the MONTCO Democratic Committee. Her husband, Bernie and her three daughters, Sandy, Laura and Christine were on hand to celebrate the occasion.

"Flourtown has been good to Cisco's and to me," Joanne concludes. "Indeed, it has been good to our entire family."

Written by Dorothy C. Nickelson



The moose that adorns the dining room wall at Cisco's Bar and Grille is as popular as the cheese steak hoagie with members of the Flourtown community.



Archives UPDATE



Whitemarsh Hall

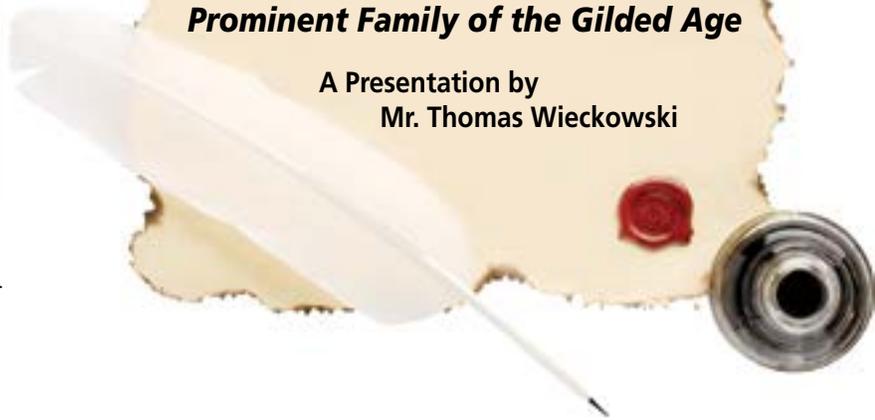
The Archives received a large collection from historian John Deming containing letters, documents, photographs, audio tapes of staff interviews, and garden videos of Whitemarsh Hall, all of which are in the process of being cataloged and digitized. The photo above (from the collection), is a picture of a guest bedroom occupied by the King and Queen of Sweden.

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