



PO Box 564
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www.springfieldhistory.org

The Challenge

PRESERVATION • RESEARCH • EDUCATION

HAWKSWELL

Presented by STHS Archive Volunteer, Mr. Ed Zwicker III

Thursday, March 5th, 2015 – 7:30 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church

Bethlehem Pike & East Mill Road in Flourtown, PA

MARCH 2015

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Hawkswell, also known locally as Copernicus House, was built in 1905 as a wedding gift for Mae Drexel Fell and Howard Houston Henry, from Mae's parents, Sarah Drexel Fell and Alexander Van Rensselaer. This house has been witness to many uses; from a family home, to a school for children with special needs, to an organization dedicated to promoting cultural activities in science and the arts throughout the world.



After Captain Howard Henry died in England at the end of World War One, Mae later married Gouverneur Cadwalader and they commissioned the noted Philadelphia architectural firm of Mellor, Meigs and Howe to enlarge the house for their growing family. Two generations of the Cadwalader family grew up here until it was sold in 1948 to Helen Matthews, a Baltimore, Maryland psychologist, who established a school for children with reading disabilities.

When Miss Matthews retired in 1965, she sold it to Mr. Gerald Schatz, who eventually moved the school across Camp Hill Road and renamed it Wordsworth Academy. In 1972 it was sold again to

Edward Piszek, owner of Mrs. Paul's Kitchens, who used it as the headquarters of the Copernicus Society of America, which he founded that same year.

After the death of Edward and Olga Piszek, the society relocated to Ambler, Pennsylvania and the house stood vacant until the Piszek family eventually sold it to Sal Paone Builders in 2013.

Please join us on March 5th as Mr. Ed Zwicker presents the story of Hawkswell with photos and stories from its construction to its demise just this year. The public is invited to attend, and there is no charge for admission. Reservations are not required. Light refreshments will be served.

For more information call 215-233-4600

PLEASE NOTE:

Attendees to the March 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.

President's Corner

Historical Societies are the record-keepers of our society. We are the repositories of our community's collective memory, we mark time, and we keep track of anniversaries. This year, it's our turn to celebrate an anniversary. Throughout 2015, and particularly at our History in Motion event, we will be celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the founding of the Springfield Township Historical Society.

The 1980 demolition of Whitemarsh Hall, the magnificent estate of Edward Stotesbury, was a significant event in the formation of our Historical Society. The loss of that historic building provided the impetus for members of the Springfield community to come together on April 25th, 1985 for the first meeting of the new Society.

The first STHS Board of Directors included James P. Geoghegan (President), Marie Kitto (Vice-President), Shirley Hanson (Vice-President), Robert R. Cutler (Recording Secretary), Dorothy Cutler (Corresponding Secretary), George Parrish (Treasurer), John Ames Ballard, Roy D. Hanshaw, Harry A. Harris, John W. Jackson, Jane S. Johnson, and Virginia Wilmsen. The new Society received a very generous

grant from The Barra Foundation, whose President Robert L. McNeil, Jr., was a resident of Wyndmoor and Chairman of McNeil Laboratories.

The Society's first program was held in June of 1985, when Marie Kitto presented a "Thumbnail Sketch of Springfield Township." At the second program, held in the fall of 1985, Kitto's topic was Whitemarsh Hall. Kitto's research was extensive and has, in fact, formed the nucleus of the Society's collection.

We are indebted to the founders of our Historical Society for their efforts. I hope we can continue to build on their achievements. Let us remember that the loss of a historic building brought a group of like-minded members of the community together, in part, to prevent the loss of other historic structures in our community. For the last several years, Springfield Township has been considering the adoption of a Historic Preservation Ordinance as part of the Comprehensive Plan. I encourage you to contact the Commissioners and request that the Preservation Ordinance be adopted in the near future.

T. Scott Kreilick – *President, Springfield Township Historical Society*

History in Motion

The Katie Eagleson Band prepares to entertain guests at the Springfield Township Historical Society's November fundraiser, "History in Motion."

Many thanks to our volunteers and sponsors for making this event a great success.



BECOME A FRIEND OF STHS

The officers and directors of Springfield Township Historical Society invite you to become a member of our society as a FRIEND. As a Friend, you will help to support our mission of "Research, Preservation and Education," and you will receive:

- Four issues of our newsletter, "The Challenge."
- Discounts on programs and activities (bus trips, tours, etc.).
- Discounts on gift items such as books, maps, prints and tiles.

To sign up as a Friend, please visit our website: www.springfieldhistory.org or complete the form below and send it to: **Springfield Township Historical Society, PO Box 564, Flourtown, PA 19031**

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NEWSLETTER OPTIONS:

- Emailed electronic newsletter *ONLY* Mailed printed newsletter *ONLY*
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FRIEND CATEGORY:

\$100+ William Penn \$50 Penn's Manor of Springfield \$15 Penn Oak
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The Archives are
OPEN
to the Public

TUESDAYS 7pm – 9pm

WEDNESDAYS 1pm – 5pm

SATURDAYS 9am – 12noon

For more information,
call **215-233-4600**

Like Us on Facebook

The Historical Society has recently joined Facebook; find us at **Springfield Township Historical Society.**

SPOTLIGHT ON

Springfield's Historic Businesses:

Frank Duff Electric Service, Inc.

Family Business with Staying Power

This is the fifth in a series of articles highlighting firms in Springfield Township that have been in business 50 or more years.

Sixty-seven years ago, Philadelphia native P. Francis Duff decided it was time to leave his electrical maintenance job at Budd Company and realize the dream of starting his own electrical contracting business. At that time, Frank's formula for success was simple: "Do quality work, go the extra mile for customers and they'll not only come back to you, but refer others your way."

Fast-forward to 2015, and family members still adhere to that philosophy. "Frank always believed in giving the customer a quality job at a reasonable price," says Frank's grandson Matt, who is one of three family members who make up the five-person staff at Frank Duff Electric Service, Inc., located where it was founded in 1948 – 813 East Abington Avenue in Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania.

For all of that time, the firm has been owned and operated by members of the Duff family. Started by P. Francis Duff, the business was passed on to second, third and fourth generation family members Frank E. Duff (Francis' son), Matt (grandson) and Chuck, Jr. (great-grandson). All have been involved in electrical contracting while growing up and though the choice to do other work was out there, all chose to follow in the family footsteps. "I started out working with my grandfather while in high school," recalls Matt. "I worked mostly in the office, doing bookkeeping, writing estimates and keeping track of invoices." Recognizing that in order to survive, you need to run your family business professionally, he later took accounting courses in college to further his training and still takes courses to maintain contracting licensing requirements and to keep up with the rising level of innovation and business

sophistication in the industry.

"Twenty years ago, you did wiring for lighting, power and phones, but you didn't do network wiring, lighting controls or home entertainment systems," he explains. "Technology has changed dramatically, the codes are constantly changing and you need to keep pace with it all." To do that, the Electrical Association of Philadelphia, a trade association of electrical contractors based in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, has been a part and parcel of the family's business lives. Matt says they take advantage of the services the association has to offer and he believes in the value of such groups; particularly as small business owners typically do not have the scope and scale to continually run educational, training, safety and marketing programs. He also mentions that manufacturers offer training workshops on new products, which also helps the staff to stay on top of an evolving industry.

Besides technology changes, there are also structural changes going on in the electrical contracting industry as there are in other industries that are affecting the business itself with family-owned firms expanding on a large scale or being purchased by large corporations. While Frank Duff Electric Service recognizes the trend, they prefer to stay a community-based, entrepreneurial business that stays true to P. Frank Duff's principles, which have proven themselves over time. "You can't please everyone all the time," Matt said. "But you can get it right the first time and go the extra mile to make sure customers come back."

And they do. The firm does little advertising, relying largely on repeat business and on word-of-mouth referrals. "We advertise in church

bulletins, but almost all of our new business comes from referrals," Matt said. "Over the past few weeks, we've gotten maybe two or three referrals a day."

Though electrical contracting jobs often require long hours, the Duff family finds time to volunteer in the Springfield Township community. Frank is a member of the Springfield Township Rotary Club and continues to volunteer there, participating in the winter citrus sale and annual carnival fundraisers, as well as supporting many

of the group's other events: the Special Olympics field day, St. Patrick's Day Dance, and much more. The Rotary Club made major improvements to the Flourtown War Memorial and Frank Duff Electric Service designed, installed and maintains the state-of-the-art LED lighting at the site.

"The community is very special," concludes Matt. "People are friendly and it's like living in a small town. Why live anywhere else?"

Written by Dorothy C. Nickelson

FROM THE *Archives*



This photo taken on January 30, 1966 along Bethlehem Pike during the "Blizzard of 1966." We would welcome recollections of this blizzard or other storm events from our readers. Please call the STHS at 215-233-4600 to share your stories.

VOLUNTEERS



Springfield Township Historical Society volunteers past and present were recognized by historical society president T. Scott Kreilick (back row, far left) at the December 4 program. They include (back row) Ed Zwicker, IV; Ed Zwicker, III, and Dulie Gray. In the front row are Barb Coleman and Judy Smith. Not in the photo are Ray Smith, Christine Smith, George Silvanney, Heather Killinger, Judge Kate McGill and Frank Vitalli.

Archives UPDATE

We have finished digitizing and cataloging the Bethesda Collection and also were given permission to keep the originals in the Archives. The documents from the Deming Collection have been cataloged and we are in the process of scanning and cataloging the pictures, films and negatives from this important Whitemarsh Hall collection. The Archives has received the following donations: 2nd grade 1937 class photograph of Flourtown Elementary School and a 1930's photograph of the Springfield Township High School Faculty taken outside the original High School Building on Hillcrest Ave. We have a new volunteer, Zack Klebanoff, a senior at Springfield High School who is helping with the STHS digitization project by scanning the STHS Archives Photograph Collection into Past Perfect 5 so that we can make them available to be searched online on our web site.

We received a donation of two flat files and one bookcase.

The Archives hours have changed. The Archives will now be opened on Wednesdays from 1PM -5PM instead of 11AM- 1PM.

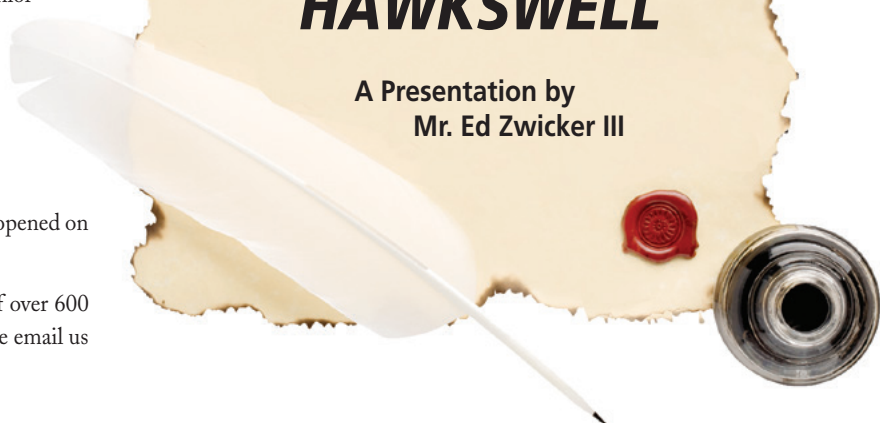
We really appreciate our volunteers who have given a total of over 600 hours of service in 2014. If you are interested in volunteering please email us at archives@springfieldhistory.org.

*Reserve
the Date*

Thurs., March 5, 2015 – 7:30 p.m.

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Mr. Ed Zwicker III



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