



PO Box 564  
 Flourtown, PA 19031  
 215-233-4600  
 www.springfieldhistory.org

# The Challenge

**PRESERVATION • RESEARCH • EDUCATION**

## Things That Aren't There Anymore – And Why

A Presentation by  
**Thomas H. Keels**

Author of *Forgotten Philadelphia: Lost Architecture of the Quaker City*

**NOVEMBER 2007**

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In 1900, the Pennsylvania Railroad's Broad Street Station (on Market Street west of City Hall) was the pride of Philadelphia, an immense structure that symbolized not just the corporate supremacy of "the Railroad," but also the city's status as an industrial and transportation powerhouse. By 1950, the station was a public embarrassment, an obsolete Victorian pile that represented Philadelphia's industrial and economic decline. Its demolition in 1952 for a modern office complex called Penn Center was hailed as Philadelphia's entry into the 20th century – only 52 years late!



*Broad Street Station*

In "Things That Aren't There Any More – And Why," author and historian Thomas H. Keels takes a tour of a vanished Philadelphia, drawing on material from his recent book, *Forgotten Philadelphia: Lost Architecture of the Quaker City*. Going beyond nostalgia, Keels will examine the political, economic, and social changes in Philadelphia society that transformed landmarks into landfill, often in only a few years. Among the lost structures Keels will examine are the Slate Roof House, where William Penn lived during his visits to Philadelphia; the Bank of Pennsylvania, the first complete example of the Greek



*The Gimbels Building*

Revival style in America; the Jayne Building, considered by some historians to be America's first skyscraper; and the 1976 Liberty Bell Pavilion, hailed by some as a marvel of Modernism and derided by others as an overgrown Fotomat booth. Keels will discuss the symbolic value that these buildings held in the minds of Philadelphians, and why this symbolic value diminished, leading to their destruction.

Thomas H. Keels is the author of *Chestnut Hill* and *Philadelphia Graveyards and Cemeteries*, and has written numerous articles for the *Chestnut Hill Local*, *Springfield Sun*, and other local newspapers. A member of the Springfield Township Historical Society, he has spoken to the Society in the past on the history of the Andorra Natural Area in Fairmount Park, and on Laurel Hill and the Victorian Way of Death.

This promises to be an exciting and educational program on an interesting topic of Philadelphia history. The public is invited to attend, and there is no charge for admission. Reservations are not required. Light refreshments will be served.

**Thursday, November 29th, 2007  
 7:30 p.m.**

**First Presbyterian Church**  
 Bethlehem Pike & East Mill Road  
 in Flourtown, PA

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

## President's Corner

The Springfield Township Historical Society has made a concerted effort over the past several years to increase its visibility and presence with its membership and in the community through activities such as speaker presentations, a website on the Internet, bus trips, published books, and articles in the local newspapers. Our goal is to bring forth our tenets of Research, Preservation, and Education through these activities and others, as we deliver historical services to both our membership and the Springfield Township community.

When the Historical Society was formed by a small, but passionate group of people in 1985, their Board of Directors numbered twelve, which essentially made up the original membership. From these humble beginnings the society grew in number by providing an ever-increasing array of services and activities to their members. Our membership grew to a high of about two hundred a couple of years ago. Since that time this number has decreased to around one hundred and sixty. One of our major goals heading into 2008 will be to increase our membership, so that more people can take advantage of our services and activities, and to increase the number of people who can help staff these events.

While our successful public relations efforts are important, the best recruiter of new members is the people who are most passionate about Springfield's history, and that's you, our general members! Have you enjoyed attending one of our speaker programs, been aboard one of our historical bus trips, read our Springfield Township or Whitemarsh Hall books, visited

our web site, volunteered at our archives/headquarters, or participated in any one of our other activities? Tell others! You are our best proponent and messenger to educate others about what the Historical Society stands for, the diversity of valuable services we deliver, and how much fun we have with our activities!

Springfield Township has a number of volunteer organizations, each with their own mission to provide targeted activities and services to the community. The Historical Society is one of these service organizations, and our goals today are the same as they were at our founding twenty-one years ago: to conduct *Research*, *Preserve* information and artifacts, and *Educate* people about the township's history for generations to come. This is essential in providing an intimate knowledge of those people, places, and events that helped influence and shape the evolution of the area originally known as Penn's Manor of Springfield, into the Springfield Township we call home today.

The continued growth of the Historical Society is essential to enable us to continue providing these important services now and in the future. We need your help to increase our membership beginning in 2008! Spread the word about the Historical Society to your family and friends, encouraging them to participate in our activities, to visit us at our website ([www.springfieldhistory.org](http://www.springfieldhistory.org)), and then to become a member to help us continue serving Springfield Township for current and future generations to come!

Keeping the past in the present,

Ed Zwicker



### September Program

STHS vice president **Charles Zwicker** (left) welcomed guest speaker **Ed Grusheski** to the program in September. Grusheski, general manager of the public affairs department of the Philadelphia Water Department and former director of the PWD's Fairmount Water Works Interpretative Center, described the history of the Water Works, from its inception to its renovation and current use as an exhibition on public water usage in the Philadelphia area, and as a restaurant.

## Hillcrest Hotel

This fall, redevelopment plans for the property located at 9425 Stenton Avenue were unveiled which called for the demolition of the old hotel generally known by township residents as the "Hillcrest Hotel." Neighbors requested that STHS prepare a history of the property so that they could be more informed about its history and significance. We thought this history might also be of interest to our readers.

According to information in the STHS archives, the Stenton Avenue building was constructed in 1916 as a hotel. Just five years prior, ownership of the property had transferred with a clause in the agreement that prohibited the construction of a drinking establishment on the site for the ensuing 75 years. During World War I, the hotel was used as a hospital. Following the close of the war, it became known as Otto's Grotto and was a reputed speakeasy during the Prohibition era. The building was renamed "Hillcrest Hotel" in 1933, a name that continued in use for several decades. During the 1930's, the hotel housed the Philadelphia Eagles professional football team during the preseason; the practice fields being located on West Oak Lane and transportation being provided by the local Chestnut Hill Grocers van. The building was renamed "Whitemarsh Valley House" in 1962. In more recent years, the building has housed numerous commercial establishments, private offices and apartments.

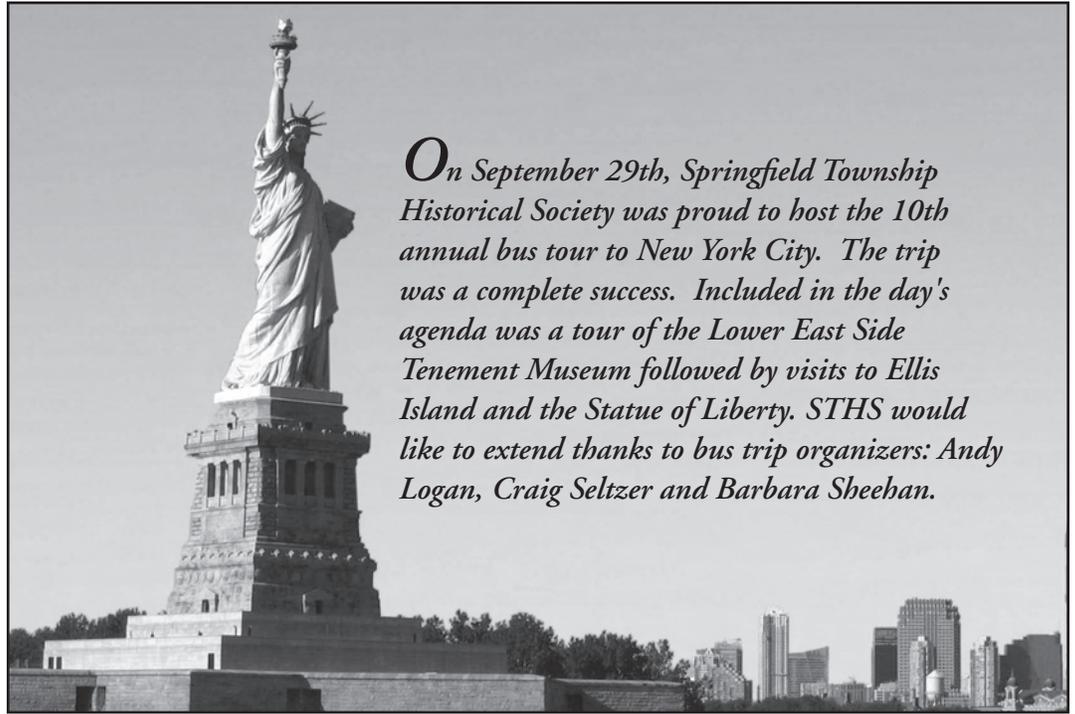


*This photo, from STHS Archives shows that the building has been altered with the removal of porches.*



## Notice of Elections

At the November program, we will ask our members to vote on the slate of officers and directors with terms beginning January 1, 2008 (copy enclosed). STHS would like to thank the nominating committee, which was comprised of STHS board members: **Phoebe Rosenberry, Craig Seltzer, Ed Zwicker** and STHS general members: **Joan Dessureau and Sue Dufasne**. We appreciate the time and efforts of all those involved.



*On September 29th, Springfield Township Historical Society was proud to host the 10th annual bus tour to New York City. The trip was a complete success. Included in the day's agenda was a tour of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum followed by visits to Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. STHS would like to extend thanks to bus trip organizers: Andy Logan, Craig Seltzer and Barbara Sheehan.*

## ARCHIVES UPDATE

In recent months, local resident and STHS board member, **Joe Timoney**, sat for a three hour oral history about his life and the history of Wyndmoor. He shared stories of the rose industry before World War II, of the old Springfield High School, and of the almost rural nature of Wyndmoor in the 20's and 30's. Joe also donated Penn Salt records and his 1943 Springfield High School yearbook.

Other recent acquisitions have included records about the USDA property in Wyndmoor, created on the occasion of its status as a National Chemical Historic Landmark this year and a 1933 book "Penn's Woods, 1682-1932." Finally, we also have a charming souvenir from White City, dating from the turn of the previous century. One side is a postcard-like picture of the park while the other is a photograph of a family of park-goers, dressed in their Sunday best.

*Anyone interested in donating photographs, written materials or artifacts to the archives is encouraged to call STHS at 215-233-4600*



**Join the  
STHS**

Mr./Mrs./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

*I would like to become a member in the following category:*

Individual/Couple \_\_\_\_\_ \$20     Student \_\_\_\_\_ \$5     Contributing\* \_\_\_\_\_ \$40     Organization\* \_\_\_\_\_ \$65

*\*These membership levels receive a 6" square commemorative trivet with a drawing of Springfield Mill (at the Morris Arboretum) by local artist Sally Yates. Exclusively ours.*

Please make your check payable to **STHS** and mail this form with check to **STHS, PO Box 564, Flourtown, PA 19031**

# for the Scrapbook

## Community Day

The Historical Society's table at September's Community Day attracted many passersby, who enjoyed looking at the old pictures on display and sharing their memories. Board members **Barb Coleman** and **Christine Smith** talked with visitors and gave out information about the society. Among those also helping at the table were board members **Dolores Jordan** and **Katie Worrall**.



## Friends Award

The Friends of Historic Bethlehem Pike presented its first Acorn Award to the owners of the building at 801 Bethlehem Pike, Erdenheim. Friends president **Don Mitchell** and board member **Ellen Manning** (far right) presented the award to **Kimberly Thomas**, an employee of Chelsea Land Title Insurance Company at the Community Day celebration in September. The purpose of the Award is to draw public attention to those properties along Bethlehem Pike that have either preserved or made improvements to preserve the historic fabric of Bethlehem Pike consistent with the Friends goals and purposes.



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*Reserve  
the Date:*



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