



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

The Challenge

PRESERVATION • RESEARCH • EDUCATION

THE HISTORY OF ERDENHEIM FARM

A Presentation by

Mr. David Contosta & Ms. Kimberly Sheppard

Thursday, November 14th, 2013 – 7:30 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church

Bethlehem Pike & East Mill Road in Flourtown, PA

NOVEMBER 2013

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As one of the few remaining large farm tracts in Southeastern Pennsylvania and the only one that still remains adjacent to the city of Philadelphia, Erdenheim Farm represents a unique and extraordinary example of our area's disappearing agricultural past. The 450 acre farm located along Stenton Ave. and situated in Springfield and Whitmarsh Townships, offers residents and travelers inspiring vistas and glimpses into the life of a working farm.

The farmland offers some of the best soil for growing grain in this part of the state, a fact that no doubt attracted German immigrant farmer Johann Georg Hocker, the first recorded owner of Erdenheim Farm. It was Hocker who gave the farm its name Erdenheim, which means "earthly home" in German. Subsequent owners turned their attention from farming to livestock. In 1860's a new owner, Aristedes Welch, established a horse breeding enterprise on the farm raising racehorses that competed at Ascot and the Kentucky Derby. The Wideners and Dixons continued Erdenheim Farms historic legacy with horse breeding.

The Springfield Township Historical Society is proud to host a special presentation of the history of Erdenheim Farm featuring two guest speakers.

Historian and author Dr. David Contosta will present: A Tale of Erdenheim. Dr. Contosta will trace the evolution of the incomparable Erdenheim Farm from its origins as a modest colonial tract in the Whitmarsh Valley to the unlikely rescue of a large country estate and its preservation as a model



Photos from the STHS Archives

of environmental sensibility. Starring in this story are the lush rolling fields, the iconic Wissahickon Creek, picturesque dwellings and barns, prize winning livestock, a brace of colorful owners, and a dedicated group of community activists.

Kimberly G. Sheppard is the Executive Director of the Whitmarsh Foundation. The Whitmarsh Foundation is a non-profit organization created to help preserve Erdenheim Farm. Ms. Sheppard will present the story of what the organization has done to move forward working with Whitmarsh Township, Montgomery County, the state of Pennsylvania and others to collectively raise the funds to save what is arguably Southeastern Pennsylvania's most important open space to preserve.

Please join us on November 14th to discover more about this historic landmark. 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 November 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.

Notice of Elections, November 14, 2013

Elections will be held at our Annual Meeting on November 14, 2013. The Slate, prepared by the Nominating Committee, follows. Additional nominations may be made by any Friend of the Springfield Township Historical Society, in writing signed by 10 additional Friends, and filed with the Nominating Committee at least 15 days prior to the Annual Meeting (by October 30, 2013). No nominations will be accepted from the floor. Address nominating petitions to the Nominating Committee, Springfield Township Historical Society, PO Box 564, Flourtown PA 19031.

SLATE

Directors also Serving as Officers – 4 year Terms

President.....T. Scott Kreilick
Vice President.....Coxey Toogood

DIRECTORS Terms take effect on January 1, 2014

Board Members for Re-Election

Barbara Coleman.....2014-2017
Cynthia Hamilton.....2014-2017
Jack Yeakel.....2014-2017

Board Member Candidates

Albert M. Comly, Jr.2014-2017
Dr. Mickey Harris.....2014-2017

Board Members Serving 4-Year Terms (elected December 1, 2011)

Scott Armington2012-2015
Alex Bartlett.....2012-2015
Dorothy J. Cutler.....2012-2015
Sue Duckwitz2012-2015
Kathy Haight.....2012-2015
Amanda Helwig.....2012-2015
Dolores Jordan Cannon.....2012-2015
Katie Worrall.....2012-2015

Historic Cemetery Hidden in Plain Sight

Did you know there is a 260 year old historic cemetery on a wild plot of land bordering Chestnut Hill and Wyndmoor? The burial ground, known as the Yeakel Cemetery, is located behind a rehabilitation center on Stenton Ave. and is owned by the Schwenkfelder Church in Montgomery County. Surrounded by private property, the cemetery has eluded public eye for nearly a century.

A team of professional historic preservation conservators and student volunteers, have begun a survey and condition assessment of the monuments this week, according to a Preservation Plan outlined by the Yeakel Cemetery Preservation Committee.

The cemetery began as a family burial ground by the Mack family prior to 1752. In 1802 it was purchased by Christopher Yeakel and his sons. Christopher was a Schwenkfelder, a Protestant sect of exiles from Germany. Like other religious groups, they took up William Penn's offer of religious freedom in Pennsylvania and made the voyage here in 1733, settling in Chestnut Hill and Montgomery County.

Research shows that 53 known burials took place in the cemetery, but there are 86 existing head and footstones. The earliest inscription is Maria Yeakel, who died in 1752, and the latest is Matilda Heydrick, who died in 1902.

Did you know a Revolutionary War skirmish took place in this area in December, 1777 with Chestnut Hill houses and barns burned and looted by the British for food, livestock and other supplies? Tradition states that soldiers killed in this turbulent time are buried in the Yeakel Cemetery.

The cemetery is surrounded by a stone wall built in 1881. Two wrought iron gates complete the enclosure. A polished granite monument placed by the Schwenkfelder Church to commemorate the 200th anniversary of

Continued on next page

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.
- Recognition of your contribution in our year-end issue of "The Challenge."

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*

Check here if you do NOT want your name included for recognition in the newsletter.

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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
\$75 Maria Springett Penn \$25 Friend of Penn \$_____ Other amount

The Archives are

OPEN

to the Public

Tuesdays

7pm – 9pm

Wednesdays

11am – 1pm

Saturdays

9am – 12noon

For more information, call

215-233-4600

Join Us for Yeakel Cemetery Clean-Up Day
Saturday, October 19th
Noon – 4pm

BRING GLOVES AND A RAKE

Park at rear of Chestnut Hill Lodge,
 8833 Stenton Avenue, and follow path to cemetery

the Schwenkfelder migrations is located in the center of the cemetery. The monument, unveiled in 1931, is inscribed with the names of the original immigrants buried in the Yeakel cemetery as well as the Hood Cemetery, in Germantown, and the Pilgrim Cemetery, a potter's field, the location of which is unknown.

The idea for the project came after Jack Yeakel, a Flourtown resident who is a descendant of people buried in the cemetery, visited the site the same day as Chestnut Hill Historical Society Curator/Archivist Liz Jarvis and Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center President, Jerry Heebner, were meeting there to discuss plans for a program. The program, co-sponsored by the Chestnut Hill and Springfield Township historical societies, took place in October, 2012. Jim Taylor, a descendant and Springfield Township resident, also joined the committee.

The Springfield Township Historical Society has set up a committee to work with the Preservation Committee. The Chestnut Hill Historical Society is partnering with the committee to raise awareness of the project.

Four trees, identified as being hazardous will be removed by John B. Ward and Co. Tree Experts. The next phase will involve stabilizing and repairing the most vulnerable monuments. Addressing soil erosion issues by re-grading to direct storm water away from the cemetery walls is also planned to keep the cemetery wall from being undermined, followed by repairing the stone wall, enclosing the cemetery. T. Scott Kreilick of Krielick Conservation, LLC, an Oreland firm, is heading the conservation work.

According to the Yeakel Cemetery Committee's Preservation Plan the project is organized into five phases. The Committee is seeking to raise \$72,000 to cover the project's costs. Using its non-profit status, The Schwenkfelder Church will be managing the funds for this project. The church has already spent \$10,000 repairing the access road and clearing the site and Bowman Properties, Ltd., a Chestnut Hill development company, has made a lead gift of \$8500. Yeakel descendants have already contributed over \$1,000.

You can help! Please donate to this important cause. To be a part of preserving this historic site, visit the Yeakel Cemetery Preservation Committee's website www.yeakelcemetery.com.

Join STHS for **HISTORY IN MOTION**

STHS and Chaddsford Winery will present "History in Motion" Film Night at the Ambler Theater, located at 108 E. Butler Ave. in Ambler, on Thursday evening, November 21. Festivities will begin at 7 p.m. with a one-hour complimentary wine reception by our signature sponsor Chaddsford Winery with light appetizers and a silent auction of items donated by local businesses and residents.

The reception will be followed at 8 p.m. by a screening of *The Crossing*, starring Jeff Daniels as General George Washington. Adapted by Howard Fast from his fact-based novel, the movie co-starring Roger Rees and produced for the Arts & Entertainment cable television network tells of the surprise attack by Washington and his troops on the British Army on Christmas Day in 1776.

Proceeds will benefit the cataloging and scanning of the archives collections, to ensure their survival and access for future generations. Located at the Black Horse Inn, 1432 Bethlehem Pike in Flourtown, STHS has a



Ambler Theater – courtesy of www.AmblerTheater.org.

collection that includes photographs of Springfield Township sites, a selection of Colonial era tax records, research on the history of various residences and institutions, and atlases and maps from the late 19th through the 20th century and more. The collection also contains a number of deeds and documents relating to Springfield Township properties, as well as an extensive holding of information, photographs and artifacts from the Stotesbury estate, Whitemarsh Hall.

Major Sponsors of History In Motion, in addition to Chaddsford Winery, include Dan Helwig Inc.

Realtors, the Coyle Group, Rex & Sons Inc., Janney Montgomery Scott and Enterprise Newspapers.

Planners of the fundraiser welcome sponsorships and are actively seeking silent auction donations and local restaurant owners to give samples of their culinary creations at the event. For more information about sponsorship and donation of auction items, please call STHS board member Amanda Helwig at 215-233-5000, x124.

Tickets to the event are \$25 per person and may be purchased online at <https://HistoryinMotion.eventbrite.com> or by sending a check payable to the Springfield Township Historical Society to the STHS at P.O. Box 564, Flourtown, PA 19031. Information and a ticket order form are available on the historical society website, www.springfieldhistory.org.

FROM THE
Archives

Parade through Wyndmoor, c. 1920.



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



The archives is in need of a computer that is recent enough to run our cataloguing software. Anyone with a computer to donate is encouraged to call 215-233-4600 or email STHS at archives@springfieldhistory.org.



Reserve the Date

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Address Service Requested

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