

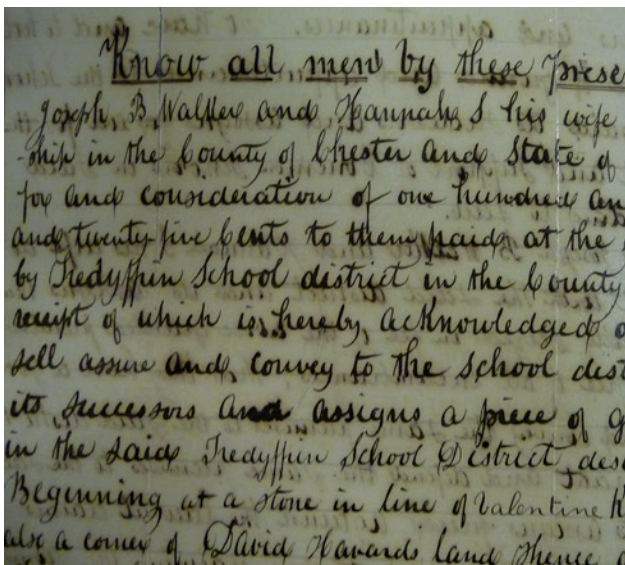
2015 Gifts to the TEHS Archives and Special Collections

Cheryl Leibold

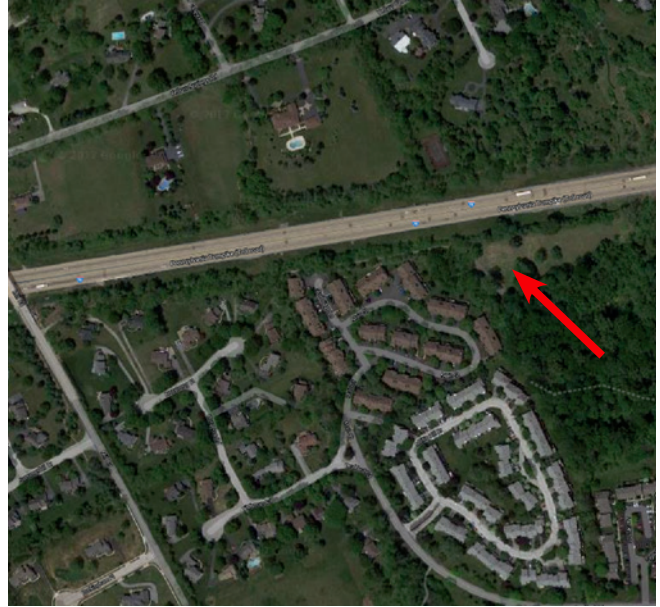
2015 saw several interesting donations come into the TEHS Archives and Special Collections. Many thanks to the donors of these objects.

The Walker School House is the subject of a small collection of printed matter, photographs, and other items, donated by Mr. and Mrs. J. Mark Montgomery of Wayne. They purchased the former school house in the mid-1990s (by then much enlarged from its original tiny size) and lived there until 2015. Their contribution is a small but valuable trove of information on a subject that is in fact very poorly documented, either in photographs, or documents. Previously, the TEHS archives did not have so much as a file folder on the Walker School House.

In 1863, the Tredyffrin School District decided that two new schools were needed in the northern section of the township, since the Diamond Rock School, a local, privately-supported school, was soon to be closed. The Salem School was built about a mile to its west, and the Walker School about a mile to the east. The Society received the original deed by which the township purchased about half an acre of land from Joseph B. Walker and his wife for \$101.25. The Walker School was built on the land in that year. (Sadly the deed was laminated many years ago, something that can never be undone.)



A portion of the 1863 deed (author photograph)



Former location of the Walker School. *Courtesy of Google Maps*

Where was the Walker School? The school building was located in the northern part of the township, in the northwest corner of what is now the Chesterbrook development, and very close to the Pennsylvania Turnpike. At the end of Bradford Road there is a group of townhomes called Main Street Village, and the school would be right behind them to the east. This Google Earth map image was provided by Mike Bertram to identify the location. The red arrow marks the spot where the school once stood, now an open space. Its recent demolition was connected to projected turnpike upgrades in this section. To date, we have no photograph showing the entire school building from its period of use as a school, from 1863 to 1923.

But we do have a picture of Walker School students, taken on the front steps, possibly in the 1910 era, and also included in the Montgomery's gift. This, and one or two other very similar shots from other sources which the Society has had for some years in its image collection, show only the porch of the building, but are in fact the earliest photographs of the Walker School known to date, and the only ones taken during its use as a school. About 25 students, presumably the entire student body of that time, and several adults, are posed on the front porch. The photograph is unmarked, but



Students in front of the Walker School c. 1910 (TEHS Image Archive # WSH4)

could be one by Lucy Sampson, who took many similar photographs.

The school closed in 1923, when an April storm tore off the school's roof. The bell tower and the bell were carried to the next field. Fortunately, it was Easter vacation and the students were not there. By that time the old school, which had only one story, had outlived its usefulness. The building still had no water supply, suffered from insufficient light, and a very isolated location. In reality, it probably could not offer the children the advantages of a more modern school in which students were separated into grade levels. Thus the school was closed in 1923 after sixty years in operation, and the students delegated to North Berwyn Elementary. The building stood empty until 1926, when Robert C. Ligget acquired about 240 acres which included the empty school building. He converted the structure into a farm employee residence, and it was put to this purpose until 1952. Thus Mr.

Ligget was presumably responsible for the strange exterior wall treatment seen in this 1949 photograph, as well as the addition of a second story, and probably indoor plumbing.

In October 1952 the former school and two and a half acres of land were sold to Harry L. Oneil for \$17,500. He and his wife, and their daughter Marghrita (Peggy), lived there. Harry died in 1966, his wife in 1970. Peggy



Former Walker School House building, 1949 (TEHS Image Archive # WSH15)

continued to live on the property for some 40 years. The deed transferring the property to her in 1971 is also in the Montgomery's gift to the Society. They bought the house from her in the mid-1990s. In fact, she is the source of many of the items in the gift as she passed them on to the Montgomerys. She was also the hostess for a reunion of former students in 1981. The building appears only in the background of the reunion shots but it is clear that additional alterations were completed during the Oneil ownership, mostly at the back and side.



1981 reunion, outside the old building
(TEHS Image Archive # WSH7)

There are seven photographs taken at the 1981 reunion, mostly focusing on the people. At the reunion, the former students recorded their memories, which are featured in an article on the school published in the July 1981 issue of the *Quarterly*.¹ One of these recollections is that the two Kirkner brothers lived closest to the school, and they were paid \$15 each year to carry a milk can of water from their spring to the school every day, providing the only water the school had each school day.

Fortunately, the building was photographed relatively recently, as part of a survey done for the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission. The survey company researched



Final appearance of the building before demolition, 2008. Note the later additions. Photo by Joseph Schuchman, Courtesy of STV Inc. (TEHS Image Archive # WSH17)



The former site of the school building, now an empty lot, 2015.
Courtesy of the author.

and photographed 31 properties which would be impacted by the widening of the turnpike between mileposts 320 and 330. As a result, we have six nice shots of the school building's last days, taken in 2008.²

From Ann Plambeck, the Society received a group of eleven 8" x 10" black and white photos by photographer Millard D. Freeman, showing scenes along Lancaster Avenue in Berwyn. Several depict the taking-up of the cobblestone pavement along Lancaster Avenue leading to its replacement with concrete paving, in 1930. In the background of the image shown here, above where a group of men are standing, there is a sign that says "DRUGS," hanging on the front of the brick building, which housed Connor's Pharmacy for 43 years, and was occupied at this date by Dr. A. E. Day's Drug Store.³ This view of Lancaster Avenue looks west across the intersection with Main Avenue and along the building presently housing the restaurant "30 Main."



Removing old cobblestones along Lancaster Ave in Berwyn, 1930.
Photo by Millard D. Freeman. (TEHS Image Archive # LAB35)



Lancaster Avenue in Berwyn, looking east, 1930.

Photo by Millard D. Freeman. (TEHS Image Archive # LAB41)

Another shot of the road is taken from a spot a bit further east, looking to the east, and is interesting for two reasons: the cobblestones had been covered with some kind of thin layer of paving material, and it is also quite apparent just how narrow Lancaster Avenue was even into the 1930s. Several Fritz Lumber buildings, the old Ice Plant storage tower, and the Bronze building can be seen in the distance.



Oliver and Mary Bair. *Courtesy of Herb Fry.*

Herb Fry found a small collection of material related to Oliver H. Bair (1854-1923) and his daughter Mary Bair (1887-1970), in his home files, and passed it on to us. Both photographs are digital print-outs of medium quality, but are nice additions to our archive, along with some biographical items. These photographs are not dated but look like they would have been taken in the late 1920s or early 1930s. Herb received these prints from a collateral descendant of Oliver Bair, who did the scans nearly twenty years ago.

Oliver Bair was a Chester County native, born in Sadsburyville, west of Coatesville. He became one of Philadelphia's most successful undertakers, operating the largest and fanciest funeral home in the city. He began in the undertaking business in 1878 and had several establishments, each larger than the last, culminating in 1902 with the opening of his seven-story facility at 1818 Chestnut Street in Philadelphia.

The Oliver Bair funeral home was very large, and when the building sold in 1982, it became a satellite building for the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. It was sold again in 1988, becoming the home of Boyd's Menswear. This beautiful, classically-inspired building would have been an elegant funeral home indeed.



Interior of Boyd's clothing store. © EveryMerchant.com

In 1905, a few years after he opened his new building in Philadelphia, Oliver Bair purchased Hillcrest, a 15-acre property in Berwyn in Easttown Township for \$50,000. The house, built early in the 1880s, sits at the north end of Cassatt Ave., as you face Upper Gulph Road, with the Berwyn train station behind you. Bair Road still exists and was the western edge of this property. Once a much



Hillcrest, 2016. *Courtesy of the author*

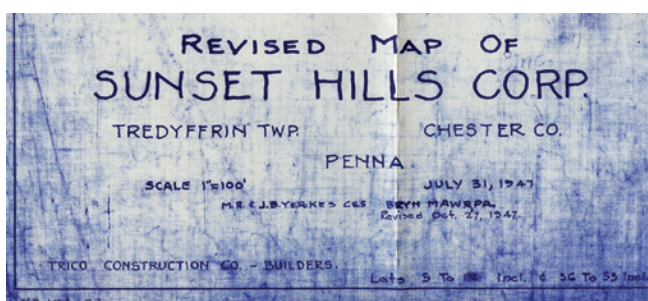


View from Hillcrest toward Berwyn, photo by Lucy Sampson c. 1908
Herb and Barbara Fry Collection (TEHS Image Archive # CAA4)

larger estate with open land surrounding it, Hillcrest was used by Oliver Bair as a summer estate until his death in 1923 at age 69. Oliver Bair's unmarried daughter Mary Bair was active in his funeral home business for

several decades and apparently moved to Hillcrest full-time after her father's death. She died at Hillcrest in 1970, age 83.

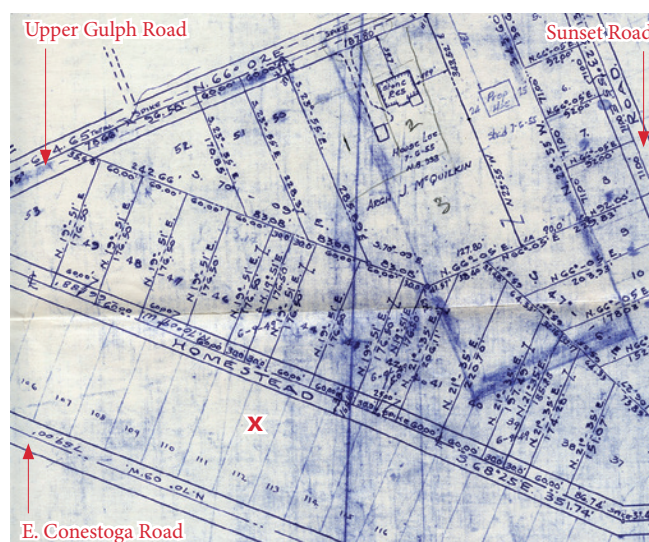
Hillcrest is well known to area historians for two reasons: first, it's distinctive, highly unusual dome, removed many years ago, could be seen for miles. And secondly the reason the dome could be seen from afar was that Hillcrest, sitting as it does on a rise, once boasted panoramic open views to the north towards the Great Valley, and as seen here to the south toward Berwyn. In the photograph above, which is by Lucy Sampson, open space (the Fritz farm) can be seen to the south of Hillcrest all the way to Lancaster Avenue in the distance.



Title portion of drawing "Revised Map of Sunset Hills Corp., July 31, 1947, M.R. and J.B. Yerkes, CES, Trico Construction Co. - Builders"

A large collection of Surveyors' Drawings of Tredyffrin and Easttown properties was the gift of the Radnor Historical Society. These are accurate surveyors' drawings of building lots, for both individual, single-family properties, and also for larger tracts of the type that we would call a subdivision, including Daylesford Lakes and Daylesford Hills. There are about 40 folders with one to four drawings in each. Almost all were done in the late 1940s, and almost all come from the same surveyor's firm, the Yerkes Company, a firm with a long history on the Main Line.

Most of these drawings are quite large. This section covers an area called Sunset Hills Corporation, a term the developers used, but which is no longer in use today. The name comes from Sunset Road which is one of several streets in this development. The area of the completed portion of the drawing is bounded by Sunset Road, Upper Gulph Road, and East Conestoga Road. Some of the road names that did not get into the



Intersection of Upper Gulph Road (bearing left) and Conestoga Road. Homestead Road is just beyond the house, on the left.
2016 photo courtesy of the author

scan have been added by the author, and the "x" marks the approximate location of the house (#90, shown following) which has been photographed for this article.



Homestead Road house #308 with optional stone façade (UPPER), and the simpler #90 (MIDDLE), in 2016. *Photos courtesy of the author*
(LOWER) #90 during construction in 1947,
Photo courtesy of Greg Russell, (TEHS Image Archive # HOU157)

Most of our readers will have driven by this tract many times. It is just east of St. Mark's Lutheran Church and northwest of the Strafford train station. One entrance road to the tract is East Conestoga Road, seen here on the extreme right, at this very familiar intersection where eastbound Upper Gulph Road bears to the left before it reaches Old Eagle School Road. Homestead Road, which is just beyond this intersection, is another entrance road, and it features a long block of small homes. There are other larger homes in this tract, but the small ones on Homestead were built first.

The houses on Homestead are small bungalow or Cape Cod cottage style residences, some brick and some stone-fronted, with lots 176 feet deep by 60 feet wide according to this plan. In the post-war building and baby boom, small homes like this went up by the thousands. Almost all of those in the Sunset Development have had additions put onto the back for more space. 308 Homestead Road exemplifies the option buyers had for a stone façade. 90 Homestead Road was the simpler style, and in a noteworthy coincidence, 2015 also saw the donation of five photos of this specific house, number 90 (originally numbered 112), by Mr. Greg Russell, son of the homeowner. The home was photographed by his parents as it went up in 1947. In the image reproduced here, showing the second story underway, the lots are surrounded by open space which would soon be filled with the larger homes on Sunset and Wentworth Roads. (Note: All five “in-progress” views of #90 may be found in the TEHS Image Archive.)



Sister Lilian Jackson's Birthday Party, Berwyn 1947
(TEHS Image Archive # PEO47)

Among the other 2015 gifts is this photograph of a group of African-Americans celebrating at an unknown location. It is inscribed “Sister Lilian Jackson's Birthday Party, Berwyn, Pa., Feb. 5, 1947.” It was purchased on eBay by Michael Morrison, who then donated it. We have no other details about the photograph, but it is a wonderful addition to the collection and hopefully more information will turn up someday.



Wooden Perfecto cigar box from the Paoli News Agency,
Donated by Dick Kurtz

Society member Dick Kurtz donated an embossed cigar box from the Paoli News Agency, a memento of a business that has been a fixture in Paoli for many decades. The box is embossed on both the outer and inner sides of the lid, and presumably once held cigars bought by Doug Miller, whose name appears on the lid. It was common practice to leave your box of cigars at the store where it would be kept in optimal conditions, and then you picked up a few at a time.

The Paoli News Agency is located in the building on Lancaster Avenue just east of the train station parking lot. Constructed in 1929, it was often referred to as the Gable Building until renovations lopped off the gable. It housed the Paoli Post Office from 1929 to 1955, as well as the John E. Giantonio Real Estate Agency. The TEHS Image Archive contains a photograph of it in 1956, taken after the post office moved out and the space was carved into several smaller parts. The Giantonio Real Estate agency still occupied one part, and the center retail space with the dark awning, along the Lancaster Ave. façade, became the home of the Paoli News Agency.



Gable building with Giantonio Real Estate sign, 1956.
(TEHS Image Archive # PA26)



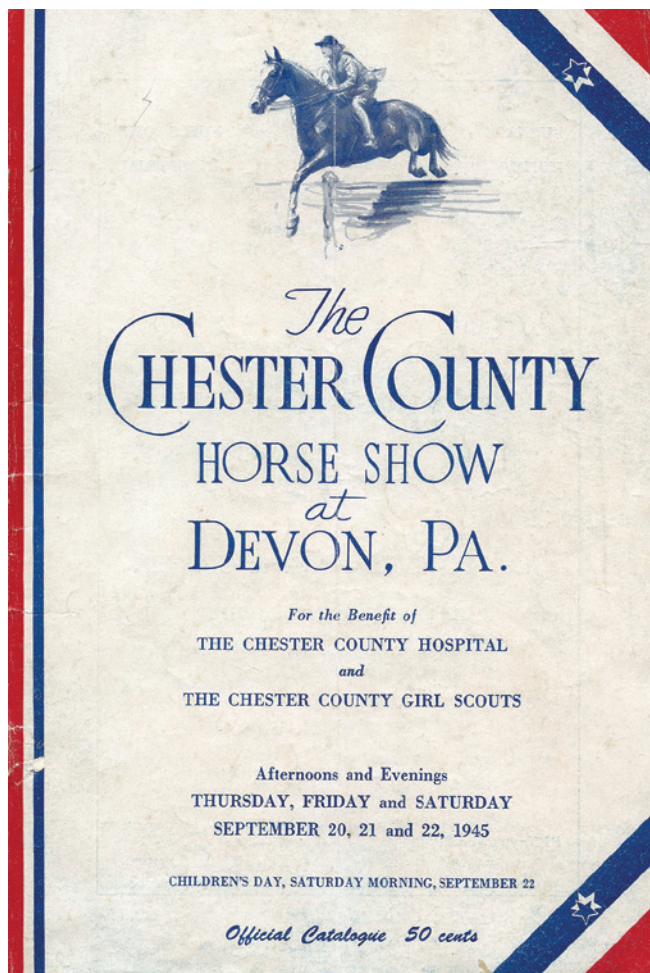
The News Agency building, looking northwest, c.2015.
Photo courtesy of the author

In more recent times, perhaps the 1970s, the redesign of the roof removed the gable and added a heavy mansard-shaped wood-shake roof, making the building look somewhat squatty and rather sad. This building also housed Starbucks from 2008 until 2015, but its future is uncertain. It may be demolished as part of Phase Three (the “Intermodal Transportation Center and Parking Garage”) of the Paoli train station renovations. In an architect’s concept for this location, a large parking garage will occupy the site, but space for retail is planned for the front and sides. Phase Three of the project is not yet funded, and is some years away, but one hopes the Paoli News Agency will find a new home there. Paoli just would not be the same without it.



Architect’s conceptual renderings of a possible design for the proposed new parking and retail structure at Paoli Station (UPPER) looking northeast and (LOWER) looking northwest.

Courtesy of Tredyffrin Township



Printed program "The Chester County Horse Show at Devon, PA. / For the Benefit of The Chester County Hospital and The Chester County Girl Scouts," September 20, 21, and 22, 1945. Gift of Charles P. Stone.

Another donation in 2015 was the program for an equestrian event held at the Devon Horse Show grounds in 1945. The program cover tells us that it was the "The Chester County Horse Show at Devon, PA. / For the Benefit of The Chester County Hospital and The Chester County Girl Scouts," September 20, 21, and 22, 1945. Notably, the Devon Horse Show itself was not held during the World War II years 1943-45. Thus we see that events have been held on the Devon grounds that were not directly related to the Devon Horse Show itself, and illustrates that the property has a long history of multiple charitable uses.

List of Other Gifts Received by TEHS in 2015

Manuscripts and Photographs:

- History of the House and Land of Alfred M. Campbell, manuscript, author: unknown, a deed and family history of Green Bank Farm. Gift of Mike Bertram.
- Postcard sent from Murphy Motor Company, Paoli, Pa. to a customer. c. 1950s. Gift of Historical Society of the Phoenixville area. (filed with Transportation - Automobile)
- DVD of Ceremonies Commemorating the 97th Volunteer Infantry Regiment, West Chester, Pa., October 5, 2014. Gift of State Senator Andrew Dinniman. (Donor letter stored with Wars – Civil War, Miscellaneous. DVD is with the other discs.)
- Photograph of General Howe's Quarters (also known as Gen. Scott's Quarters), by Harry K. Penrose of Philadelphia, ca. 1910. Gift of the Lower Merion Historical Society.
- Two images of the Potter Farm lent for digitizing by Anna Sicalides.
- Five photographs depicting 90 Homestead Road, in Tredyffrin Township, in 1947, lent for digitizing by Gregory Russell. (TEHS Image Archive, # HOU154–58)
- Photograph of a crowd of people at an event, (donated as a photograph of the Devon Horse Show. Several people knowledgeable about the horse show agreed that it is not Devon.) Gift of Susan Camp Tryforos. (see Book 27)
- File of miscellaneous items on The Devereux Foundation, Gift of the Easttown Library and Information Center:
 - 20-page booklet "Reaching the Mind, Touching the Spirit: The Helena T. Devereux Biography"
 - 95-page article, probably assembled by Frank Patterson, Devereux Foundation Communications Dept., 1993
 - approximately 40 pages of research notes prepared for the *Quarterly* article on Devereux by J.B. Post vol. 41 no. 4 Fall 2004)
- Printed booklet: "History for the Strafford School Centennial, 1872-1972," by Anne Cook and Jane Breinholt. Various short articles on Strafford history. Gift of the Tredyffrin Public Library

Books (Gifts of the Tredyffrin Public Library):

- *Awake Throughout the Land*, edited by Kenneth D. Wells, 1968, a collection of fifty letters reproduced as facsimiles, solicited by the author on the subject of “freedom,” Authors are businessmen, elected officials, military and political figures, indexed at the back, unpaginated.
- *Chester County, A Photographic Journey*, published by Jared Co./Miller Publishing Inc., 1997 with photographs by Mike Biggs and text by Catherine Quillman.
- *A Chester County Christmas*, text and photographs by Red Hamer, 2008
- *Palate Pleasing Cuisine: Recipes from the Congregation of Paoli Presbyterian Church*. 2006

Artifacts

A collection of small items from Erik Eichinger. These items were dug up on the property at 527 Daventry in Berwyn, in about 1980, by the homeowners Lonnie and Patricia Eichinger. Donated by their son Erik Eichinger, the collection includes five small pottery fragments; a glass bottle w. remains of a cork, 4 ½ x 1 ½”; metal fragment with a ring attached about eight inches long. Mr. Eichinger’s recalled her mother’s story about the items: “While living in Berwyn, she volunteered at Valley Forge Park, taking the items with her to see if any information could be gained. She learned that there had been a battle fought in Paoli, and an encampment had been in Berwyn. In looking at the items, the Park Service felt that the large iron item was actually part of a cannon—the cart portion—with the ring serving as the handle by which the cannon could be dragged or spiked into position. At that time, there was a similar item in the museum at VFNHP. The bottle seemed to be of the same era. They said it was common to just bury trash such as this and move on.”

List of Selected Digital Photographs Added to the TEHS Image Archive in 2015

- December 2015: 164 photographs from Archives Book 5; miscellaneous photographs, including a group of Easttown School #2 (Ogden School) images.
- November 2015: Photographs donated by Dave Mosbruger (Schools); Greg Russell (house on Homestead Road); Anna Sicalides (Potter Farm); James Sundman (Paoli Local); Penny Washington (see the related articles in the *History Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 2, October 2015); Lancaster Avenue, Berwyn (1930 photos and 2015 retakes).
- September 2015: 91 photographs from Archives Book 4.
- June 2015: Digital copies of six historic photographs of Valley Forge village and its inhabitants were donated by Lee Kirts (note that 3 of the photographs are from 1878); 25 photos of the Continental Can Company and its employees; 62 photos of Newhall on Crestline Road; and 42 photos from George Moran.
- May 2015: 47 photographs of springhouses and other secondary buildings by Meg Fruchter; 50 photographs from the Paoli Post Office Scrapbook.
- April 2015: 80 photographs of mansions built in the local area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; 107 additional photographs of the Devon Horse Show.
- February 2015: Another 133 images of the Devon Horse Show and Country Fair have been added. 7 of the images, donated by Greg Prichard, are of the 1899 show. The remainder cover the Show and Country Fair over the many years of their existence. These images were input by Heidi Sproat and Mike Bertram.

Footnotes

- 1 Molly A. TenBroeck and Elizabeth K. Weaver, “The Walker School: Sixty Years of Neighborly Learning.” *Tredyffrin Easttown History Club Quarterly*, Vol. 19 No. 3, (July 1981), pp. 69-76.
- 2 Images from *Determination of Eligibility Report, Total Reconstruction, MP 230.03 to MP 326.0, STV Inc., Project No. 40-13059 for the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission*, September 2012. The turnpike survey report is fascinating for the hundreds of photographs included in it.
- 3 Herb Fry, “Berwyn’s 75th Anniversary.” *Tredyffrin Easttown History Club Quarterly*, Vol. 34 No. 3, (July 1996), p.120.