

Victorian News

Newsletter of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Victorian Society In America

Winter / Spring 2008

Upcoming Events

February 17, 2008

Bed and Breakfast lecture at the Unitarian Church in center city Philadelphia

March 15, 2008

Tour of Memorial Hall and lunch at the Centennial Cafe in Fairmount Park

April 13, 2008

Lecture/book signing by Tom Keels at the Maxwell Mansion

May 18, 2008

Lecture on Victorian Wedding Gowns

June 29, 2008

RITTENHOUSE SQUARE book premiere at The Church of the Holy Trinity.

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February Event

Sunday, February 17th

Dane Wells, who with his wife Joan, ran the award-winning Queen Victoria Inn in Cape May, New Jersey. He will discuss what he has learned over his 23 years of running a successful Victorian Bed & Breakfast Inn.

This event will be held in center city Philadelphia at The Unitarian Church, which was designed by Frank Furness. The church is on the National Register of Historic Places and features stained glass windows by Tiffany and La Farge.

Event Contact: David Ewaniuk @ 215-538-1122

March Event

Saturday, March 15th

We will be taking a tour of Memorial Hall during its final stages of construction prior to its grand opening as the new home of the **Please Touch Museum**.

Following our tour we will visit **The Centennial Café** located in the historic Ohio House, one of the last remaining buildings from the 1876 US Centennial Exhibition, for a tour and a sit-down lunch.

Event Contact: David Ewaniuk @ 215-538-1122

April Event

Sunday, April 13th

Tom Keels, a chapter member and author of a number of books, will conduct a slide lecture and book signing on his new book **Forgotten Philadelphia: Lost Architecture of the Quaker City**.

This event will be held at the Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion located on Tulpehocken Street in Germantown. The Maxwell Mansion is a gorgeous Victorian-era house. It was built by Ebenezer Maxwell, a cloth merchant, in 1859.



During our visit will we be able to enjoy the newly redecorated parlor and dining room. We will conclude our event with an assortment of finger sandwiches and pastries.

Event Contact: Bob Skaler @ 215-635-0356

MAY event

Sunday, May 18, 2008

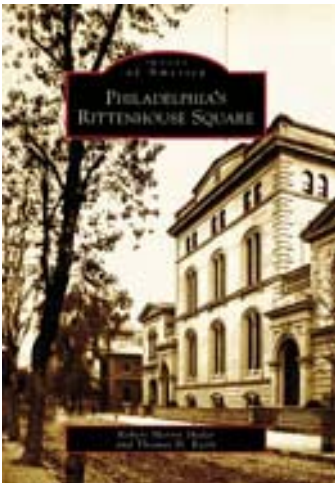
Ann Snyder will present a discussion on Victorian Wedding Gowns and wedding customs. Our event will be held at Grace Epiphany Church located on Gowen Avenue, Germantown. For those who remember Ms. Snyder, her talks are filled with authentic Victorian props and antidotes which all will find most enjoyable and educational. Refreshments and a social gathering will follow the presentation.

Event Contact: Mimi Grimes @ 215-782-3703



JUNE event

Sunday, June 29, 2008



A new book has been co-authored by Robert Skaler and Tom Keels, entitled: **PHILADELPHIA'S RITTENHOUSE SQUARE**. During the Gilded Age, Rittenhouse Square was home to Philadelphia's high society, with more millionaires per square foot than any other American neighborhood except New York's Fifth Avenue. The authors will present the book with a slide lecture at the beautiful The Church of the Holy Trinity on the Rittenhouse Square.

Founded in 1857, The Church of the Holy Trinity was designed and built by Scottish Architect, John Notman in the "Norman style with non-ornate straight lines, semi-circular arches, simple trusses, flat ceiling and a shallow chancel.

Refreshments will follow the lecture where the authors will be available for signing their new book which will be available for purchase.

Event contact: David Ewaniuk..... @ (215) 538-1122 e-mail:
dewaniuk@comcast.net

A Message from *The woodlands*

THE WOODLANDS, a historic property in West Philadelphia which includes the 18th-century mansion of William Hamilton and the Woodlands Cemetery Company of Philadelphia, would like to expand its mailing list to include anyone from the Victorian Society who would like to receive a newsletter and notices of public events. To be added to this list, please send your contact information, including name, mailing address and e-mail to: The Woodlands, 4000 Woodland Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19104 or e-mail to info@woodlandspbila.org.

The website, www.woodlandspbila.org is currently under construction and is scheduled for completion later this Spring and will include a complete listing of upcoming programs and event. Woodlands Cemetery was founded in 1840 and is the second oldest rural cemetery in Philadelphia. It consists of many wonderful monuments and mausoleums and a marvelous arboretum of over 750 trees. For tours of the ground and the mansion please contact the undersigned.

Jean K. Wolf, Executive Director

The Woodlands, 4000 Woodland Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19104-4560

Tel: 215-386-2181

Fax: 215-386-2431

jwolfwoodlands@verizon.net

President's Message

Dear Fellow Victorians,

I would like to extend my wishes to our membership for a Happy New Year. As usual, our Board is hard at work carrying out the final planning of our Winter / Spring schedule of events. We believe we have a diverse slate of events to appeal to the varied interests of our membership. As part of our efforts we have tried to combine interesting topics with interesting architectural venues for a complete Victorian experience.

I thought it may be of interest to our chapter membership to share a few details of some of our very talented chapter board members. Many of our Board members are involved with other organizations and outlets for pursuing their interests in Victoriana and our regional history.

Lew Keen, our Vice President and Membership Chair, has been deeply involved with other organizations and endeavors. Mr. Keen is the president of the Fort Washington Historical Society which keeps him quite busy with overseeing that organization's activities including the maintenance and caretaking of the society's headquarters. In addition, Lew and his wife Trudy, have a fine Victorian home, which like all old homes requires a good deal of effort to maintain in its pristine condition. The Keens have recently been involved with sharing and educating the general public in the values and preservation of Victorian culture with the readership of *Victorian Homes* magazine. For those not currently subscribing to this fine publication, the Keens have been featured in a monthly series of articles entitled, *Diary of a Restoration* which began earlier this year. In each installation the Keens have shared their trials and triumphs in the restoration of their 1876 Queen Ann style home. Each month covers a different room of the home complete with photos, details of the restoration and their thoughts related to the planning, research and execution of the room's restoration.

Bob Skaler, our Preservation Officer, is a forensic architect who has been very active in collecting old post cards, photos and historical maps of Victorian Philadelphia for most of his adult life. Many have had the opportunity to see one of Bob's slide lectures. To date he has published a total of three books through the Arcadia Press. Bob, along with Tom Keels (another member of our chapter) have just completed a joint book writing venture and have submitted their final manuscript to Arcadia for publishing. The new book entitled, *Rittenhouse Square*, will be available at bookshops later this summer. I suspect we could coax Bob and Tom, to offer a slide lecture of this recent accomplishment at a future event. Please be sure to offer Bob and Tom your congratulations for the completion of this latest book next time you see them.

Finally, I must complete this newsletter message with some truly heartbreaking news concerning one of our long standing board members. Last month, on January 21st, **Katie Giomi** lost an extended battle with illness and passed into eternal life. We have missed our fellow board member for a number of months now and are truly saddened by her loss. As one of our fellow board members noted "Sadly, the bright spirit we knew as Katie is no longer with us". Katie was not only active with our organization but many other organizations such as the Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion, the Del-Val Fern Society and the Philadelphia Flower Show. Many of you will remember Katie as the event chair for our annual June bus tours. The board and I extend our deepest sympathies to her daughter, Claudia and the rest of the extended Giomi family. A memorial fund has been started in Katie's name and later this spring the Board will determine a fitting and appropriate use for the fund receipts.



Best Regards,

David Ewaniuk
President of the Philadelphia Chapter of VSA

Preservation news

North Board Street Preservation Battle

If you have been following the North Broad Street preservation battle in the articles by Inga Saffron, Inquirer Architectural Critic, you have read about all kinds of legal shenanigans to tear down two historically designated buildings used as the headquarters for Philadelphia Life Insurance Co., for the construction of the Convention Center.

As of January 10, 2008, the demolition of the buildings has been halted. However, the most interesting thing in the fiasco is that demolition of the 1962 addition by world famous architect Romaldo Giurgola was started on Christmas Eve 2007 with gusto smashing the front façade of this historic building. How do they get a demolition crew to work on Christmas? I remember when a historic Robert Mills town house in Society Hill had holes battered in its bearing walls on Yom Kippur in the early morning, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, making the house an imminent danger to public safety, and down it went before they could get a judge out of bed to stop the work. So if you wish to negate a preservation pledge in Philadelphia, wait until Easter, Yom Kipper, Labor Day, or Christmas to have your demolition crew start their devious work and chances are the opposition won't be able to get a judge in time to stop some major damage to the structure and down the building will go.



Let's hope Mayor Nutter will put an end to this all too prevalent eminent domain abuse and disregard for preservationist rights.

Bob Skaler

Preservation Officer Philadelphia Chapter VSA

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Opinions presented are the author's and are not necessarily

agreed to by the Board of Directors of the Philadelphia Chapter of VSA

Postscript: As most of you know The Preservation Alliance decided not to appeal Commonwealth Court Judge Keith B. Quigley' ruling to allow state officials to proceed with the demolition of the buildings as part of the Convention Center expansion. On, Friday, January 25, 2008 many came out in the freezing weather in hope of persuading Gov. Rendell to issue a reprieve. Others just wanted a last look at the pair, once home to Philadelphia Life Insurance Co.

Victorian of the Year Award

Many organizations promote their work and bring attention to their mission by presenting awards. Think about the number of award presentations the news reports each year in addition to prime time television shows. At its December meeting, the board approved the creation of an award to honor an individual who advances Victorian related items or issues. The award presentation will become part of the annual meeting currently held in October of each year. If you have input as to the criteria for the award or would like to make a nomination for the award, please contact any member of the board. Discussion on the structure of the award will continue this winter and the first presentation will take place in October 2008.

The Victorian Society in America

42nd Annual Meeting

Napa, California – May 7-11, 2008

*This is a popular event
so sign up early.*



As you should be aware, the VSA's Annual Meeting this year will be set in the beautiful Napa and Sonoma Valleys of California, from May 7 through 11, 2008. There will be tours of wineries, of course, but also of some of the local historical sites, private homes, and museums. In short, there will be much more to see and do than simply tasting wine! And there will be access to some locations that few tours get to see. The lovely mountain scenery alone will be worth the trip.

There are still a few openings left, but they're going fast, and the deadline for registering with the host hotel is coming up on February 15. For availability and details please contact **Kenneth Olin, Business Manager** at:

THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA

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Chapter membership news

We are pleased to welcome the following new members for 2007. Thank you for joining the Philadelphia Chapter this past year and may the society sufficiently please you to renew your membership when it expires.

David Barquist.....Philadelphia
Frances Bond-White.....Philadelphia
Glenn Carter,.....Warminster
Jacqueline DeGross,Drexel University
Linda and John GistFort Washington
Betty HuberRichlandtown
Liz and Andrew JarvisPhiladelphia

Jennifer and John Ochman..... West Pittston
Alfred Prime Malvern
Robert Quinn..... Devon
Marion Rosenbaum Jenkintown
Carol and Chuck Schramek..... Erdenheim
Jeanne Solensky..... Wilmington
Chuck Stiefrater Litz

All members are invited to contact me with any membership issues either by email (tk1876@earthlink.net) or phone, 215-540-8065 (please no calls after 9pm)

Lew Keen

Membership Chairman