

The Concord School Bell



Newsletter of The Concord School House and Upper Burying Ground of Germantown

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Welcome! from the President

When I first walked into the Concord School House in 2005, I was stunned. Right on busy Germantown Avenue sits an oasis of history and calm: a schoolhouse little altered since the nineteenth century and a burying ground dating back to the founding of the community itself. How could this remarkable place be in plain sight, yet so hidden?

Issue number 1 of *The Concord School Bell* is our announcement to friends, neighbors, and visitors: come join us as we learn about this place, help to rebuild and conserve it, and begin to define its place in the cultural and historical life of Germantown. Over the past several years, a revitalized board of directors has worked to clean the burial ground, lay a

new roof on the schoolhouse, and begin the important work of conserving the school's interior. We still have many projects to tackle: from work on the grounds, to signage, to planning for the use of this site by school groups and local residents. Come learn with us as we look to the future!

We would also like to announce a pilot project: **the Concord School House and Upper Burying Ground will be open from May through October, the second Sunday of each month, from 2 to 4PM. First opening date will be Sunday, May 10—Mother's Day! Come join us on Second Sunday afternoons!**

--John Pollack

The Concord School
House and Upper
Burying Ground of
Germantown

6309 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia PA 19144

2008-09 Officers

John Pollack
President

David Young
Vice President

Michael Schweisheimer
Treasurer

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In memoriam: Steven J. Kameika, 1959-2008

One of the greatest friends the Concord School House and Upper Burying Ground has ever had, Steve Kameika, passed away on December 13, 2008, after a tragic illness. Steve was a wonderful neighbor, a strong voice in the community, and one of the leaders who helped revitalize our site. He served as Treasurer of the Board, helping put us on a solid financial footing for the future. He also invested hours of his own time fixing up the school, cleaning up the Burying Ground, painting shutters, and trimming trees.

On January 10, 2009, a memorial celebration for Steve was held at the Germantown Mennonite Church on Washington Lane. At the end of the service, the Concord School Bell was

rung, a powerful reminder to us all of Steve's presence in this community and his love for the little schoolhouse and burying ground.



Steve with daughters Effy and Fudia

It is the determined wish of all friends of Concord School to honor Steve by continuing the work he invested so much in. We will be honoring him in the future with a memorial on the grounds.



“...a Number of the Inhabitants Met on the Twenty fourth day of March 1775 in order to Promote the Building & Erecting a Convenient School house and Establishing an English School in that part of the Town....”

In Case You're Wondering ...

Who are we?

The **Upper Burying Ground**, established in 1692 and used into the twentieth century, is one of the two oldest cemeteries in Germantown; laid to rest in it are blacks, whites, and Native Americans; Germans, English, and Irish; Catholics and Protestants; adults and children; and over fifty Revolutionary War soldiers. The **Concord School House** sits on a corner of the Burying Ground, and was constructed and opened in 1775 as an English-language school. Sponsored and supervised by the community through the nineteenth century, it remains today one of the only intact schoolhouses of its kind in the country.

Who runs the site?

The site is managed by a Board of Directors, elected annually in a public ceremony held on Whit Monday (the day after Pentecost and seven weeks and one day after Easter Sunday): in 2009, Whit Monday is June 1. The Concord Board was re-organized in 2005 to

ensure that this site would be preserved and its stories made accessible to a wider public. Since 2005, the Board has raised the site's profile through public programming and a successful preservation campaign.

What is our mission?

Our mission is to preserve the historical integrity of the Concord School House and Upper Burying Ground and to interpret this site for a broad and diverse audience.

We seek to promote educational programming, public events, scholarly investigations, and collaborative partnerships with institutions and community groups in order to demonstrate and document the site's importance in local, regional, and national histories.

If you would like to join us in this endeavor, please contact John Pollack: jpollack@upenn.edu, or 215-746-5825.

Look Up! The Schoolhouse has a new roof



During the second half of 2008, scaffolding enfolded the little schoolhouse on Germantown Avenue. And for a very good cause: thanks to a Philadelphia Capital Grant of \$31,000, supplemented with \$4,000 from Concord's own funds, the schoolhouse has a brand new, historically accurate shingle roof. Work on the roof was done by Olde World Historic Restorations. All this was accomplished thanks to the hard work of many, most notably David Young, who prepared the grant, and the late Steve Kameika, who figured out all of the finances, got the necessary permits, and supervised the work as it proceeded.

As is so often the case, one project led to another. While working on the roof, we discovered that the chimney was also in urgent need of repair and elected to do this work at the same time. Andrew R. Palewski (Andrew R. Palewski Historic Preservation) repointed, re-bricked, and generally restored it.

Conservation: Looking Inside

Plans to survey the schoolhouse interior are underway. The Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) has completed a survey of the space and contents. Their initial recommendations include adding ultraviolet filters to windows, which the Board will be installing in April.

The CCAHA report will serve as the basis for future fundraising and grant proposals as we seek to save and restore this remarkable nineteenth-century school interior. We hope in the coming months years to prepare signage explaining the history of the school and burying ground as well as key artifacts.



Philadelphia Cultural Fund Grant

The Cultural Fund, for the third straight year, has awarded an operating grant to the School House and Upper Burying Ground. This year the amount awarded was just over \$3,000. The Cultural Fund's reviewers were impressed by the Board's organization and by our ability to do effective programming with an all-volunteer crew.

A New Landscape for an Old Schoolhouse!

Historic Germantown Preserved—and Us

Under the able leadership first of Stephen Hague and now of David Young, the coalition of Germantown sites known as Historic Germantown Preserved (HGP) has undergone a renaissance, capped in April 2009 by the announcement of a \$200,000 grant from the Pew Charitable Foundation. HGP has been working to produce publicity to advertise its fourteen individual sites, develop targeted advertising and

marketing campaigns, and plan collective programming. Concord is delighted to be a part of HGP and looks forward to seeing its own visibility rise along with that of the Consortium.

For more information about Historic Germantown Preserved and its fourteen sites, visit:

<http://www.freedomsbackyard.com>
or call 215-844-1683

The Wissahickon Garden Club has generously raised funds to redo the landscaping outside the schoolhouse.

This spring new bushes and plants will be planted and new sod laid. Soon to follow will be a brand new sign announcing our presence on Germantown Avenue.

*Coming soon...
On the web!*

Concord has reserved space on the world wide web for its own site, which will be at:

<http://www.concordschoolhouse.org>

During the spring and summer of 2009 we will be constructing this site: so come check us out on the web—if you don't see what you're looking for, check back in a few weeks!

Events for 2009: Please Join Us!

Sunday openings: In 2009, we will open the second Sunday of each month (May-October), from 2:00-4:00PM. Dates are:

May 10
June 14
July 12
August 9
September 13
October 11

Come visit—tell your friends!

Monday, June 1, 2009, 6:00PM

-Whit Monday Annual Board election and public open house
Refreshments and bell-ringing

Saturday, June 20

-Juneteenth Celebration
Schoolhouse and Burying Ground open for visits from 11:00AM to 3:00PM

Saturday, July 4, 2009

-July 4 Celebration
Tours of the Schoolhouse and Burying Ground from Noon to 3:00PM
Bell-ringing ceremony at 2:00PM

Saturday, October 3, 2009

-Revolutionary Germantown Festival
Schoolhouse and Burying Ground open for visits from 11:00AM to 3:00PM

Get Involved!

We welcome volunteers and support of all kinds.

If you would like to participate, want to learn more, or wish to make a contribution, please write to John Pollack, President: jpollack@upenn.edu, or call 215-746-5825.

Proud member of:



**HISTORIC
GERMANTOWN**
Freedom's Backyard

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