

The Concord School Bell

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



Fall/Winter 2009
Vol. 1, no. 2



A Day and a Site to Remember



The Battle of Germantown took place on October 4, 1777, 232 years ago. The Upper Burying Ground was 84 years old, and the Concord School House, then only one story, was nearly new, having been completed in 1775. It's difficult to imagine the noise, smoke, and confusion of that morning, especially when contemplating the now-tranquil setting of the burying ground, with the leaves just hinting at fall.

This year, up the road, our neighbor and partner Cliveden marked the day with two battle reenactments. At the Upper Burying Ground, we commemorated the occasion with a ceremony to honor those fallen in the battle and all of the Revolutionary War soldiers buried here.

Leading the ceremony was the 11th Pennsylvania Regiment, and also on hand were members of the Sons of the American Revolution. One of those fallen, 1st Lieutenant Thomas Lucas, was a member of the 11th Pennsylvania.

At our September 13 "Second Sunday" public opening, I met a group of German university-age students, most just arrived in the United States, on a walking tour of Germantown. Our site clearly was a surprise to them—far from the beaten track of Independence Hall. We gave them a tiny view of America's past that most don't always notice. I like to think that if we do that, we're fulfilling our mission.

--John Pollack

The Concord School
House and Upper
Burying Ground of
Germantown

6309 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia PA 19144

2009-10 Officers

John Pollack
President

David Young
Vice President

Michael Schweisheimer
Treasurer

Jennifer Kanthor
Secretary

Contact Information

215-746-5825
jpollack@upenn.edu



A Brisk October at 6309 Germantown Avenue

October, 2009 is a busy month. On Saturday, October 3, the school house and burial ground opens from 11AM to 5PM to mark the annual Battle of Germantown celebration, with a special ceremony at 2PM to honor the over 50 Revolutionary War soldiers who lie in the grounds.

On Friday, October 9, beginning at 7:30PM, the Upper Burying Ground, in collaboration with Cliveden, hosts **Ghost Hunting 101**, a program organized by the Free Spirit Paranormal Investigators—who will study our site and, we hope, report on their findings! Reservations are required (fee charged).

For further details about this event and to RSVP, please contact Richard Fink, Education Director at Cliveden, at 215-848-1777 x223 or by emailing rfink@cliveden.org.

On Sunday, October 11, the site opens from 2-4PM for our final Second Sunday of the year.

On Saturday, October 17, the Upper Burying Ground will be one of the sites hosting a Germantown "Cemetery Stroll," organized by Historic Germantown. For more information and advance registration for the self-guided stroll (fee charged), call Anne Burnett, Program Director, at 215-844-1683.

Editor's note: this event was canceled due to inclement weather.

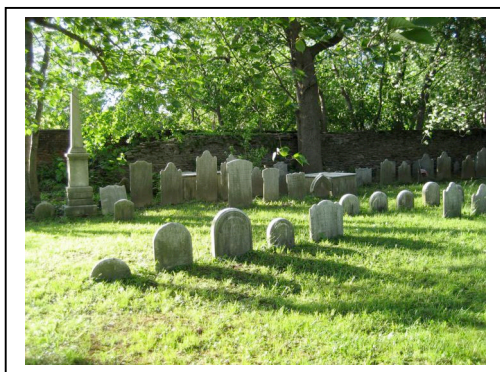


The Founding of the Upper Burying Ground

A new book now available in print sheds some important light on the very first years of our site and of our sister site, the Lower Burying Ground (or Hood Cemetery). *Acta Germanopolis: Records of the Corporation of Germantown, Pennsylvania, 1691-1707*, edited by J. M. Duffin (Philadelphia: The Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, 2008), is a remarkable scholarly accomplishment, providing transcriptions, translations, and extensive explanatory notes and commentary on the earliest Germantown legal and court records, hitherto only available in scattered print and manuscript sources.

In the "Raths Buch" [General Court Book] for November 27, 1693, we read that the representatives of the Corporation of

Germantown signed a deed of exchange with Paul Wulff according to which Wulff gained one acre of land in front of his "town lot" in exchange for ceding two half-acres of land, "both squares, for the Corporation burial place" (247). The "Grund- und Lager-Buch" [Ground and Lot Book] records the deed on November 28, 1693 (although the text refers to an earlier agreement which had been made on March 3, 1692 in the General Court at Germantown). The recorded deed specifies the locations and dimensions: "a half acre on the east side of this town situated on the Phi[il]adelphia road and the other half on the west side of this town on the Plymouth Road in such manner . . . that each half acre in the form of a square can be laid out and surveyed as burial places" (464). This legal contract founding the Lower and Upper Burying Grounds makes it clear that the two burial sites were integral parts of the planning of Germantown from a very early date. Although 1692 is the most frequently-cited date of foundation for the Upper Burying Ground, based on the evidence presented in *Acta Germanopolis*, it would seem prudent to assign 1693 as the legal date of foundation.



Schoolhouse Conservation: The Report is In



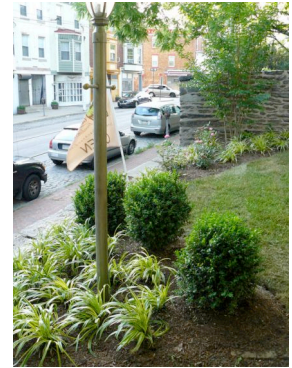
The Concord School House has received a preservation consultation report prepared by Kim Andrews and Anne Brancati of the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA), Philadelphia. This report represents a first professional assessment of the school interior and will serve as the basis for additional grant-writing in support of efforts to begin serious conservation work on the schoolroom. Among the major recommendations of the report:

- Install environmental systems to monitor and maintain stable temperature and humidity.
- Install heat and smoke detectors
- Consider removal of some objects (for example, prints and maps) which are particularly sensitive to light.
- Develop an emergency plan.
- Develop an overall collections-management plan.



New Flag flies!

Thanks to helpful volunteers, a new 13-star flag was raised in the Upper Burying Ground on May 10, 2009, in time for our first "Second Sunday" public opening.



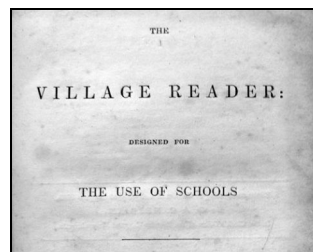
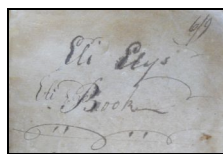
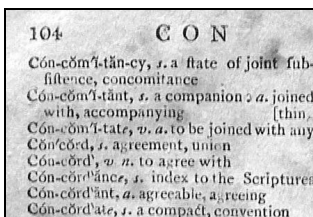
Gifts to the School: Books for Teaching

The Philadelphia Rare Books and Manuscripts Company has generously donated to Concord five early school books, including dictionaries, readers, and a Latin-English edition of Cicero. These books have been well used over time but retain their early bindings and numerous traces of former owners.

The gift initiates a new teaching collection at the schoolhouse: these books will be available for visitors to (carefully!) leaf through and experience for themselves the books just like those schoolchildren at Concord might have had in their hands.

Concord's green garden

Thanks to the generous hard work and donations of the Wissahickon Garden Club, the front yard of Concord was transformed early this summer. New soil, new sod, and new flowers and bushes brightened up our front yard all summer. Future projects may include additional work in the yard behind the school. Thank you, gardeners!



Festive July 4 at Concord School House/Upper Burying Ground

On a pleasant Saturday, a crowd of over sixty attended the annual Fourth of July celebration. David Young and John Pollack officiated, and volunteers sounded the schoolhouse bell one time to mark each year since the Declaration of Independence (this year 233). Visitors then moved to the Johnson House to hear a perspective on freedom of Oney Judge (played by Kathy Simpson), one of George Washington's slaves at the "Germantown White House" (the newly-restored Deshler-Morris House), who escaped to New Hampshire in 1796 and refused to return despite Washington's pleas.

Waiting for the web?

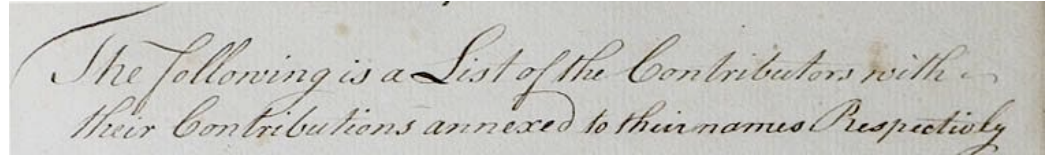
Concord's website is in development. The address will be :

<http://www.concordschoolhouse.org>

During the fall of 2009 we will be constructing this site: so come check us out on the web—soon!

For more on Concord and its partner sites in Historic Germantown, plus a full calendar of events, see:

<http://www.freedombackyard.com>



Concord School House minute book, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Become a Subscriber!

Since the eighteenth century, the Upper Burying Ground and the Concord School House have relied upon the support of the community for their survival.

We welcome donations and support. Our site is a non-profit organization, and your donations are tax-deductible.



Battle Day 2009

Want to volunteer?

We welcome volunteers to help at our site.

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

Proud member of:



The Concord School House
and Upper Burying Ground of
Germantown
6309 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia PA 19144

