

GERMANTOWN *CRIER*



Ruins of Hill's Cotton Mill, 1900.

This appears on the 1848/49 map as "Patterson's; Tenant, Hill" (see site marked as 13, p. 62). George Patterson and his heirs (among whom was his daughter Eliza, who married Rubens Peale the painter) held this property from 1808 to 1853, when it was sold to Joseph Hill, the tenant. In 1879 its cotton machinery was sold at auction — the Society has the auctioneer's annotated catalogue — and the property eventually came into the hands of Henry H. Houston, who ran it for some time as a paper mill.

GERMANTOWN'S OLD-TIME NEIGHBORHOODS, VILLAGES, AND ONE-MAN TOWNS: A GAZETTEER

As the German village slowly grew into a town and then into a suburb and eventually submerged its identity, at least in part, in the City of Philadelphia, a number of smaller communities came into being within its boundaries, flourished for a time, more or less, and ultimately disappeared. Some of these, especially those with colorful names like Dogtown, Smearsburg, and Beggarstown, still arouse curiosity. Others, like McNabtown, Little Britain, and New Jerusalem, survive chiefly in old-timers' vivid reminiscences of fifty to seventyfive years ago.

BEGGARSTOWN (also Dogtown and Franklinville). On both sides of Germantown Avenue, between Upsal and Carpenter on the west and Gorgas on the east. One writer attributes the name to a corruption of Van Bebberstown, after a neighboring family, whereas Hocker theorizes that it came from Bethelhausen ("house of God"), claiming to have found that term in old manuscripts. It is also said to have originated from the poverty of the inhabitants of Upper Germantown. (One story has it that an early inhabitant went round the town collecting money to buy a cow, though actually he built himself a house with the gifts.) Also adduced to support the povertytheory is the extraordinary argument that "Germantown" was mispronounced by Germans as "Yarmentown" — "armen" meaning "poor" in German. About 1836, a correspondent (to the *Telegraph* ?) proposed Franklinville instead, as it appears on the 1849 map, which has "Frankland" Street, not "Franklin," for what is now Hortter. George W. Carpenter, whose writ ran large in those parts, did not care for the term "Beggarstown," says Jellett; however, even his influence could not eradicate it.

In 1927, the *Independent Gazette* published a list of "oldtime residents of Dogtown," by occupation — "Butcher of hogs," "Cigarmaker," "Carpet designer," "Ventriloquist" submitted by Milton B. Tyler of Crowson Street, who was, incidentally, the superintendent of the Hood Cemetery, which was of course in Smearsburg. {See GHS Clipping file, under *Neighborhoods*.}

The Old Dogtown Band (see *Beehive* 29(3): 14, July, 19), played its one tune, "The Old Grey Mare," up and down Germantown Avenue in the 1860's, its musicians (courtesy title) collecting liquid refreshments as they went. For a time the town went dry, but the band played on, and liquid refreshments were provided as usual, albeit in teacups. Most of the inhabitants, said Tyler, were proud dog-owners, especially the Franklin Fire Company on Main at Franklin, which had a "beautifully spotted coach dog." Hence the name Dog Town.

BLUE BELL HILL. Near Johnson Street and Wissahickon Avenue, fronting about 450 feet on Wissahickon Avenue and running west about two city squares; named for "the profusion of blue bells which grew in this field." Clarence Jacoby in 1927 recalled schoolboy pranks played on neighbors — shutting the race-gate leading to the Rittenhouse Mill which was then making cotton batting, and defending Isaac Rittenhouse's apple orchard against depredators from Little Britain or Devilstown nearby.

The earliest record of sale for any lot on Blue Bell Hill, according to Jacoby, was 1867. He identified early householders as Hutelmyers, Foster, Jacoby, Aucott, Henshaw, Evans, Gentner, Rhoades, Green, Bussger, and Mollenkopf.



Rittenhousetown, looking north to Blue Bell Hill



Fisher's "Old Mills."

BRICK YARDS. Along Reading, above Wister Station. Owned by Samuel Collom.

CEDAR PARK. Limekiln Pike, north of Washington Lane. Also called Helltown and Pleasantville.

DEVILSTOWN. Less than a dozen houses, says Jacoby, north of Blue Bell Hill along Wissahickon Avenue (then Township Line) near Carpenter Lane. Populated by mechanics employed in the mills along the Wissahickon, which, of course, were removed by degrees by Fairmount Park Commissioners during the '70's. The area is now all or partly covered by Carpenter's Woods.

DOGTOWN, see under Beggarstown.

FENIAN HILL, see under Irishtown.

FISHER'S HOLLOW. Fisher's Lane is now called Logan Street, crossing Germantown Avenue at 4900, and becoming Lindley before it crosses Broad Street at 5100. One of the grid of new streets set out after World War I, Fisher Avenue, (originating in Wakefield Park, and crossing Broad at 5300) preserves the name of Thomas Fisher and his family. Their Wakefield Mills, in Fisher's Hollow proper, employed English knitters, some of whom prospered and started their own mills. Locally famous as a beauty spot, Fisher's Station and Fisher's Hollow were often sketched, by Joseph Pennell and Herbert W. Pullinger, for example, and photographed, by Edward Hall Sanborn and others.

Many legends and reminiscences of this area and its noteworthy inhabitants — Elisha Kent Kane, Owen J. Roberts, Septimus Winner who wrote "Listen to the Mocking Bird" were recalled by George M. Chatburn in *The Beehive*, vol. 13A, no.6, September, 1928.

SHELLTOWN, see under Cedar Park.

IRISHTOWN. Around East Wister Street, south of Chelten, just above Chew. According to Giles S. Stafford, poet and humourist, the sons of the "poor but industrious Irish families" who settled here in mid-19th century,

indulged in a good bit of fighting among themselves, and the term "Irishtown" was first applied in some exasperation by Germantown police, often summoned to march more than two miles to the scene of these disturbances. With increasing wealth, Stafford reported, the residents of Irishtown moderated their disagreements, and adopted a gentler lifestyle, preferring the name "Somerville." Newspaper accounts describe balls and other gala occasions at the social clubs of Somerville. "Fenian Hill" is not explained, except by a preposterous account of a ghostly cat, with yellow eyes, who somehow transmitted its name to the area.

However, in a newspaper article dated 1916, John W. Boyer, on whose family farm "Irishtown proper" originated, gives another description of the place and its inhabitants. "Sprague Street was the first street opened and ran from Stenton Avenue to a fence...near where Woodlawn Avenue now runs. Somers Street (now Devon) was opened later and was for many years a pudding-bag street [whatever that may be - Ed.]. These two streets were connected near the center by a narrow street (now Locust Avenue) which formed the high-ways into the letter H. Below Stenton Avenue, opposite Sprague Street, was another settlement known as Somersville, but these people were beneath the notice of genuine Irishtowners. There were about 38 houses in Irishtown, occupied by Shea, Toner, McGee, O'Donnell, McMahan, O'Neil, McGinnis, McGuire, Finnegan, Brennan, Nolen, Botts, Brooks, Quinn, Bates, Smith, Chappelle, Delaney, Snee, Argus and other families, a fine crowd of 'Old Sod' people from whom have sprung some of Philadelphia's best-looking and most progressive citizens."

LITTLE BRITAIN. Wayne Avenue and Price Street. Described by William C. Wright in 1927, with a long list of post-Civil War families (see GHS Clippings under "Neighborhoods").

McNABBTOWN. Near Walnut Lane and Chew St., occupying "about an acre and a half" just east of Washington Lane Station; built by David McNabb, in the 1860's, "using material obtained upon the dismantling of the military hospital at Chestnut Hill." One account ("The



Pelham, an aerial view at Pelham Road and Hortter Street

Man on the Corner" column, *Independent Gazette* III-3-1927) mentions 29 houses; a Public Ledger story, probably in 1916 ("Streets" scrapbook, pp.57-58) lists 50 houses: brick, whitewashed frame with red doors and windows, others "long divorced from association with paint." Land transferred 1916 to City Parks Association and since made part of Awbury Arboretum.

MANHEIM. One of Germantown's early cross-streets, running west from what is now 5100, Manheim Street was opened about 1740 by the Shippens (a series of deeds relating to these old properties has recently been cataloged at the Society) and has been called at various times Shippen's Lane, Betton's Lane, Pickus's Lane and Cox's Lane. After 1792, Henry Fraley laid out a tract of small building lots, calling it Manheim Village; these were "quite unexpectedly purchased by people of means from Philadelphia, and instead of a populous village, the lots were consolidated into a few large country seats," (Thomas G. Parris, *Beehive*, VI(3):2, June, 1924). Eventually the Germantown Cricket Club (often called the Manheim Cricket Club), occupied the ground.

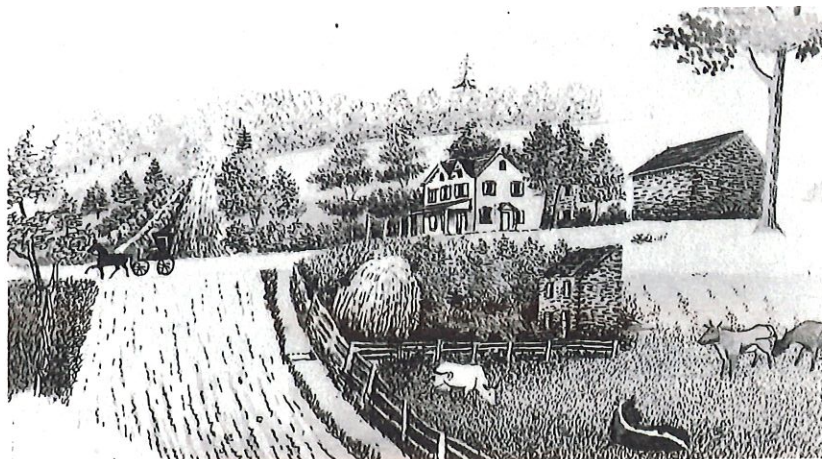
The area also has Revolutionary significance, as an encampment of British soldiers on "Taggart's field," south side of Manheim Street, and as the site of the main body of Washington's army, before and after the Battle of Brandywine. Washington used as his headquarters a farmhouse, "ruined by the war," and afterwards rebuilt as the mansion Carlton, demolished in mid-20th century. Pulaskitown may be considered a sub-section of Manheim.

NEW JERUSALEM. Near Haines and Crittenden Streets.

O'KANE'S POINT. "In the triangle bounded by the Reading Railroad 'Y' and Cheltenham Avenue," according to Hocker. Edward O'Kane was a tavern keeper, according to "The Man on the Corner," in his column of March 26, 1926, and also ran a hotel in the building, which fronted directly on the railroad tracks.

PELHAM. Named by the developers, among whom were Anthony J. Drexel and Edward T. Stotesbury, who bought in 1893 the property extending from Upsal to Carpenter Streets and from Greene to Germantown. This had been the estate of George W. Carpenter, "Phil-Ellena," (*Germantown Crier* 18(3):73 ff., September, 1966), built from 1841-44 in or just below Franklinville, and the most elaborate and pretentious private establishment German town ever boasted. A planned suburban development rather than an old-time neighborhood, Pelham's substantial turn-of-the-century houses remain comparatively unchanged on the winding roads which an indignant contemporary had deplored as a foolish modernity.

PITTVILLE. Haines Street and Limekiln Pike. "An old and quaint village," standing mostly on ground once owned by a William Pitt. Here was a toll-gate, and a general store, once a part-time post office. Cedar Park Stock Farm trained horses, trotters and pacers, and had a race course. The National Cemetery is nearby.



Pulaskitown, from John Richard's Sketchbook

PLEASANTVILLE, see under Cedar Park.

POTTERTON HEIGHTS. In lower Germantown, on the east side, according to Hocker.

PULASKITOWN. Near Queen Lane and Pulaski Avenue; name derived from supposed encampment of Count Pulaski on "Taggart's place" during the Revolution.

William H. Shingle in 1927 (see GHS Clippings under "Neighborhoods") recounted anecdotes of his Sorber and Shingle ancestors. John Richards lived hereabouts, and left drawings of the area. See also Manheim, above.

RITTENHOusetown. On Paper Mill Run, near its convergence with the Wissahickon, stood a settlement of millworkers, "mostly English," employed at Ammidown's, the cotton mill which made blankets during the Civil War, at McKinney's Quarry, and also at the paper mill itself. They had their own school, averaging sixty pupils, their own volunteer fire company, and a Baptist chapel, which flourished from mid-1860's till 1888. By then the Fairmount Park Commission had removed the mills, and most of the houses.

SAWDUST VILLAGE. East of Reading Railroad and south of Fisher's Station; inhabited by employees of Redles' wood-turning and lumber mill on Wakefield Street above Wister. So called because the workers came home covered with sawdust. Formerly an amusement and beer garden, run by Harry Whartman; complaints by neighbors

eventually encouraged the impecunious "sawdusters" to an old-fashioned "self-help" project they dug their own cellars and quarried the stone to line them, in lieu of down-payment. F. E. Stutz, as quoted in the Independent Gazette (see GHS Clipping File under "Neighborhoods").

SMEARSBURG. East side, south of Penn Street. Included also Brickyards, Sawdust Village and Fisher's Hollow. So called, supposedly, from the "smeary" faces of its residents, who had to come home from work without benefit of soap and water. Another account, however, attributes the name to the production of "Schmearkase," or cottage cheese, by German farmers. The Columbia volunteer fire company, one of the feistiest of the feisty, was always remembered as one of Smearsburg's great glories. Some of Smearsburg's enthusiastic sons (Giles S. Stafford, in *The Beehive*, XII, No. 5, August, 1927; Robert L. Pitfield, M.D., *The Beehive*, XXVII, no. 4, August, 1935) enlarged its boundaries to the west side, or claimed a patriotic or spiritual identity. "All who lived conveniently near the pump" a "healthy" town pump standing on Main Street near Manheim; there was also a pump in Spring Alley which had once been infected with typhoid bacilli and caused an epidemic 'were considered Smearsburgers.' Pitfield mentioned Owen Wister, Thomas Gates, Tom Daly the poet, proficient in both Irish and Italian dialect, but gave his warmest praise to "old Bob Hargreaves," cricketer, famous at bat and as bowler, who raised the pride of Smearsburgers to its highest pitch.



Society News

By Michael Mann, Treasurer

The demolition of the Queen Lane Lounge at Germantown Avenue and Queen Lane probably ranks below the Fall of the Bastille in historical significance, but as a symbol of Germantown's revival it is more than adequate. The Wister family and the Landmark Society are responsible for this wonder and we thank them heartily. With the removal of this bar and the two stores between the Costume Museum and the Grumblethorpe Tenant House, some of Lower Germantown's important 18th century buildings now form an almost unbroken group. Wrought iron fences and gardens will take the place of the demolished eyesores. This coupled with the recent painting—in beautifully vivid and authentic colors—of the Howell and Endt Houses of the Society, the previous demolition of Victory Furniture's burned shell, the garden and landscaping proposed for the Society, and we hope, soon, a parking lot . . . all of this certainly makes a dramatic change.

Margaret Vincent, the costume curator, is leaving the Society on completion of a year's grant-support work. She

is going to Allentown to become full-time curator of textiles. Because of Ms. Vincent's work the Society's clothing collection is better understood and in a better position to last for future generations. The collection is large and important and we all owe Margaret Vincent thanks for a demanding year's worth of effort.

Your Society has received a \$3,000.00 grant from the Office of the City Representative. The money can be used for general operating expenses and is a recognition of the Society's educational and preservation roles.

For some time the Board of Managers has been discussing the creation of an endowment fund. Until recently, however, our finances held very little promise for the immediate present, let alone for the future. Your Treasurer and others being unwilling in financial matters to proceed by faith alone, resisted any move which could mean even a temporary strain on working capital. But with a larger membership, stronger tourist receipts and generous giving, things have improved. Therefore, in keeping with the original vision of Germantown which foresaw a prosperous community emerging from the forest, we have named the proposed endowment the Pastorius Fund. It is our hope that members will not only continue to give for the immediate needs of the Society but will add something extra for the future.