

# GERMANTOWN *CRIER*



The Society's  
90th Year



*The Society's first major public event — the "Loan Exhibition of Colonial Relics" — took place in the Alumni Building of Germantown Academy, in June 1902. See page 8.*

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# THE SITE AND RELIC SOCIETY OF GERMANTOWN

## Minutes of the First Meetings

*The Germantown Historical Society began life in 1900 as the Site and Relic Society of Germantown. We offer the following excerpts, slightly edited, from the official minutes of the original meeting of interested persons, October 9, 1900, at the home of the Reverend C. P. H. Nason (6135 Greene Street, the manse of Second Presbyterian Church), and the first public meeting, November 30, 1900, at the rooms of the Germantown Library and Historical Association, Germantown Avenue and School House Lane, northeast corner, second floor.*

Germantown, October 9, 1900

On Tuesday the above date an informal meeting was held at the suggestion of the Rev. C.P.H. Nason and Mr. Theodore Barrett in the Manse, the home of the former, No. 6135 Greene St. Germantown. The purpose of this gathering as first explained was to consider the desirability of forming an organization having for its object the more perfect preservation and identification by tablets, of historic points on the Battlefield of Germantown and the preservation and public exhibition of the relics of the battle. Those present were Major Lambert, Dr. Nason, Mr. Cornelius N. Weygandt, Mr. Chas. F. Jenkins, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Howard W. Lloyd, Mr. Harold Pierce, Mr. Henry L. Davis, Mr. Alfred S. Miller, Col. Sheldon Potter, Mr. Herbert Welsh, Mr. William G. Foulke and William E. Chapman. Major Lambert was upon motion by Mr. Barrett requested to occupy the Chair. The secretary of the meeting was then chosen. Letters from the Hon. Judge Pennypacker and from Mr. G. Harry Davis were read expressing the regret of these gentlemen at being absent. Mr. Lloyd stated that Mr. Shoemaker also would be absent. Mr. Barrett here took the floor and briefly stated the object of the gathering as above expressed. After calling attention to the importance and magnitude of the battle fought at Germantown, Mr. Barrett said that he feared that unless some such organization as the one proposed were formed all the landmarks and relics connected with Germantown's Revolutionary history would be forever lost.

Dr. Nason followed Mr. Barrett and after welcoming his guests spoke with enthusiasm of how Germantown's many historic points had early in his pastorate appealed to him and of how Dr. Edward S. Field when in Germantown a few years ago had expressed surprise that so little had been done to make the history of the town more widely known. In conclusion the Doctor referred to what had been done at Lexington and at Deerfield.

Mr. Charles F. Jenkins in response to the request for his views said that while in sympathy with all that had been said, the civic and industrial side of Germantown's past was of such a unique character that he felt that they too should be commemorated; that though Germantown had twice during her history been the capital of the United States and was possessed of a vast fund of historic associations other than those connected with the Battle of Germantown nothing had ever been done to commemorate these. —Mr. Herbert Welsh expressed his

entire sympathy with the last speaker's views as to marking points of civic as well as military interest. He thought that the preservation of the Chew place alone would be a magnificent central idea for the organization. A short general discussion upon names which might be adopted ensued, the discussion being closed by the suggestion that this could more properly be dealt with later.

The chair called upon Mr. Weygandt who agreed with what had been said as to broadening the scope of the proposed organization, adding that Philadelphians were too (got!?) not to exploit what was noteworthy all around them.

Col. Sheldon Potter called to mind a number of places of interest which had been destroyed within a comparatively short time and noted the tendency to change and encroach upon these old landmarks would constantly increase. The Battle of Germantown though carefully planned was a disastrous failure but nevertheless should be commemorated as a memorial of love for country and liberty. Mr. Albert E. Miller after alluding to the careful way in which each point over the route of Paul Revere's ride [had been marked (?) referred by way of a suggestion to what had been accomplished at Salem Mass. from a small beginning. Mr. Weygandt stated that he too had visited the Museum at Salem and that he too agreed heartily with Mr. Miller in saying that what they had done we can do.

At that point Mr. Barrett suggested that as all present seemed agreed that some action should be taken, as a step towards such action he would make a motion which might be amended as desired. The motion, which was the same previously mailed to those present was "Resolved, that a committee of \_\_\_\_\_ be appointed to consider and report at an adjourned meeting to be called by the chair what action, if any, should be taken for a permanent organization having for its object the more perfect preservation and identification by tablets of historic points on the site of the Germantown Battlefield and the collection, preservation and public exhibition of the relics of said battle."

After this motion had been seconded, Mr. Welsh moved to add the words, "It is understood the scope of the above Resolution shall embrace historic points in Germantown and the vicinity of civic interest." The amendment was accepted by Mr. Barrett.



Mr. Jenkins offered as a substitute for the Resolution and Amendment the following: "Resolved that a committee of five be appointed to outline a plan for perfecting an organization having for its object the identification, preservation and commemoration by suitable signs or tablets of historic spots in Germantown and the collection, preservation and exhibition of relics connected with its past history." The Committee to report to an adjourned meeting to be called by the Chair.

Another substitute resolution was also offered but after some discussion the form of resolution as suggested by Mr. Jenkins prevailed and was with the following amendment offered by Mr. Henry L. Davis and accepted by Mr. Jenkins

upon vote adopted. The amendment reads: "And that the committee be authorized to invite such gentlemen to meet with us at our next meeting, as would naturally be interested in this project."

The Chair at once appointed Mr. Jenkins, Mr. Barrett, Dr. Nason, Mr. Weygandt, and Mr. Lloyd, after which appointment a motion to adjourn was made and carried.

Respectfully submitted by  
William E. Chapman  
Secretary

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*An interim meeting was held on November 9, 1900, at the Rev. Dr. Nason's Manse, to which the Committee of Five submitted its recommendations: It proposed 1) a public meeting, to be called on the evening of Friday, November 30th, to be held in the rooms of the Germantown Library and Historical Association, on the second floor of the Mutual Insurance Company building at Germantown Avenue and School Lane. The rooms were offered at a "nominal charge of \$2 for lighting and attendance," and would accommodate 150 persons. 2) Postcards should be sent to "those "most likely to be interested," and public invitations printed in the Telegraph, the Guide, and the Philadelphia Public Ledger. 3) That an application for "Charter or Constitution and By Laws," prepared by this Committee, be presented to the meeting for amendment and adoption. 4) "That you prepare with great carefulness and with the desire that interests be represented nominations of officers for the proposed organization that the names may be submitted to the public for consideration and that the work proposed by the organization may proceed at once under proper guidance," and that the "gentlemen (or ladies)" proposed for officers give their consent beforehand. 5) That cards of membership should be prepared, with those signing considered charter members, and that an ultimate membership goal of 250 should be set. 6) "That efforts should also be made to enlist the goodwill and co-operation of the City History Club of Germantown, the Germantown Library and Historical Association, the Colonial Dames, (the) Historical Society of Penna., the Business Men's Association of Germantown, and all patriotic and public spirited citizens particularly those who live in or own historic homes. 7) That a committee be appointed to make all necessary arrangements.*

*Major Lambert, in the Chair, accepted the report and appointed to the Arrangements Committee: Dr. Nason, Henry L. Davis, Howard Williams Lloyd, Theodore Barrett, and William E. Chapman.*

*Minutes of the public meeting, November 30, 1900, follow, somewhat edited:*

In response to a call issued by a number of citizens of Germantown, a public meeting was held . . . to consider the desirability of forming an organization having for its object the identification and preservation by suitable signs and tablets of historic spots in Germantown and the vicinity and the collection, preservation and public exhibition of relics connected with its past history.

The meeting was called to order by the Rev. C. P. H. Nason who after speaking of many reasons for being proud of Germantown said that early in October a number of gentlemen actuated by this feeling of pride in their town had held an informal conference at which a committee had been appointed to go over the entire ground, correspond with kindred organizations and if to them it should seem best, make plans looking toward forming a society having such objects as to preserve and attract attention to spots of local and national historical character. That in response to the suggestion of that committee this meeting had been called. Dr. Nason in conclusion called for the nomination of a Chairman. Col. Sheldon Potter took the floor and after a few remarks moved the nomination of Mr. Cornelius

N. Weygandt. This nomination was seconded by Mr. Barlow who also moved that nominations close and this motion having been seconded and unanimously passed, Mr. Weygandt was asked to take the Chair. As Chairman Mr. Weygandt in a few words referred briefly to some of the causes which had led to calling the meeting and to the work already done by Dr. Nason. The Chair then called for the nomination of a Secretary. Mr. Thomas W. Barlow nominated William E. Chapman and there being no further nominations Mr. Chapman was requested to act as Secretary.

Discussion of the objects of the meeting was called [for, and] the Chair suggest[ed] that those present would be glad to hear from Mr. Charles F. Jenkins as one who could speak with authority upon Germantown's past. In response, Mr. Jenkins read a carefully prepared paper which by a later motion was ordered to be printed . . . .

In the absence of further discussion, the Chair called for the report of the committee referred to by Dr. Nason in his explanations of the call for the meeting. Mr Charles



Jenkins as Chairman of the Committee presented its report which was as follows: "Owing to the scope of the work to be undertaken it has seemed best that our proposed organization or society should be an incorporated body and with this in view your committee has carefully prepared for the consideration of those present a constitution in the form of an application to the courts for a charter with accompanying by-laws:

#### Charter of Site and Relic Society of Germantown

Be it known that the subscribers having associated themselves for the purpose of organizing the \_\_\_\_\_ desirous of becoming incorporated agreeably to the provisions of the Act of General Assembly of Pennsylvania . . . do hereby declare, set forth and certify that the following are the purposes, objects, articles and conditions of their said association for and upon which they desire to be incorporated:

- I. The name of the corporation shall be [this was afterwards filled in]: "Site and Relic Society of Germantown."
- II. The purposes for which the Corporation is formed are the identification, preservation and commemoration by suitable signs or tablets of historic spots in Germantown and the vicinity and the collection, preservation and exhibition of relics connected with its past history.
- III. The business of the Corporation shall be transacted in the City and County of Philadelphia.
- IV. The Corporation shall exist perpetually.
- V. The names of the subscribers are as follows. [Mr. Jenkins here stated that it was the idea of the Committee that cards be distributed and that as many of those present as desired to sign them be considered charter members.]
- VI. The Officers of the Corporation shall be a President, three Vice-Presidents, Treasurer, Secretary and Assistant Secretary and a Board of thirteen Directors (the number being the same as the original company of Germantown settlers) to whom shall be entrusted the management of the affairs of the Corporation. The names of those chosen for the first year are as follows (see below).
- VII. The Corporation has no capital stock.
- VIII. The yearly income from property other than real estate shall not exceed the sum of \$20,000.
- IX. The Board of Directors shall make such By-laws for the management of the property and the regulation of the affairs of this Corporation as its objects may require, provided such By-laws be not repugnant to this Charter, the Constitution and Laws of this Commonwealth and Constitution of the United States.

Witness our hands and seals this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ A.D.

. . . At the conclusion of this report Mr. William G. Foulke moved, after referring briefly to the possibility of the proposed society's locating and marking the grave of Pastorius, that the report of the Committee embodying the Charter and By-Laws be adopted and that a nominating committee be appointed in accordance therewith. This motion was seconded by Mr Ellwood Johnson. The Chair at once calling for discussion, Mr Chas. P. Sherman inquired of the Chair if it would not be proper to determine the name of the proposed organization and incorporate it into Charter prior to action thereon. The question was answered in the affirmative, the Chair saying that it would entertain a motion to settle this question prior to disposing of the previous motion to adopt.

Mr Barlow at once moved that the name of the new organization be "The Germantown Memorial Society." This motion was seconded by Mr Harold Peirce who said a few words as to the fitness of this name. Further discussion having been asked for, Mr Charles Jenkins suggested that a member of the Committee had favored the name "The Germantown Landmark Association," while the Chairman had proposed that the organization be called "The Site and Relic Society". Mr. Peirce begged leave to suggest "The Germantown Memorial and Relic Society" as a possible combination. Dr. Nason followed Mr Peirce on the floor explaining the attitude of the Committee with regard to the name "The Landmark Association." The Doctor said that this name seemed to express the objects for which the society was planned and though perhaps less catchy than some others suggested, it had a dignity and solidity which would immediately entitle it to respect. Major William H. Lambert having been called upon by the Chair for his opinion said in substance that we are living in an age when catch-words are highly esteemed . . . It might be so with the name "Site and Relic Society," which was certainly unusual . . . At the conclusion of the voting the secretary reported the following result: For "Site and Relic Society," 51 votes; for "Germantown Memorial Association," 22 votes; and for "Germantown Landmark Society," 13 votes. (The Charter and By-Laws were then unanimously adopted; a nominating committee appointed which retired to deliberate; membership cards were distributed, and persons returning them within two weeks with annual dues of \$2 were to be considered charter members.) The report of the nominating committee was as follows: *President* Charles J. Wister; *Vice-Presidents* Mrs. Mary J. B. Chew, Elliston P. Morris and Miss Hannah A. Zell; *Secretary* Charles F. Jenkins; *Assistant Secretary* William E. Chapman; *Treasurer* Charles W. Otto; *Directors* Ellwood Johnson, William E. Meehan, D. Pastorius Bruner, Mrs Francis Howard Williams, Howard Williams Lloyd, Miss Jane Haines [she resigned before the next meeting, and was replaced by Sarah M. Whitesides], Thomas H. Shoemaker, Theodore Barrett, Dr. Naaman H. Keyser, Major William H. Lambert, and Charles W. Henry. [Mr Elliston P. Morris declined nomination and even membership, being personally unwilling to have a tablet placed upon his house; Mr. Wister, the Chair, and others disclaimed any intention "unduly (to) importune any person," and Mr. Morris, on urging, withdrew his resignation. The slate was then unanimously accepted.] Some discussion followed as to the possibility of including a category of junior membership, which was deferred. The meeting adjourned.



## The Founders and First Officers

The Committee of Five recommended that "interests be represented" in nominating the first officers and directors. What interests? From the names listed below, we can infer that the nominators wished to include 1) representatives of early families, (Bruner/Pastorius, Wister, Johnson/Jansen, Chew, Keyser, Weygandt/Bechtel, Shoemaker); 2) owners of historic sites (Morris, Chew, Johnson); 3) lecturers, collectors, writers on Germantown history (Wister, Shoemaker, Keyser, Jenkins, Lambert, Zell); and 4) ladies involved with historical and patriotic societies, etc. (Chew, Williams, Whitesides (replacing Jane Haines), and Zell). If it was Nason, of Second Presbyterian Church, with or without Barrett, also of Second Church, who provided the Site and Relic Society's original spark, then it is not surprising to find other communicants of Second Church influential (Lambert, Davis, Chapman). Shoemaker, Jenkins and Weygandt lived nearby.

**Theodore Barrett**, 1844?-1919, (who joined Dr Nason in the call for the first meeting; Director) was a lawyer, a member of Second Presbyterian Church, and "active in the affairs of the Sunday School." He had been an assistant city solicitor from 1911 to 1916, and was said to have been "widely known in real estate and religious circles." He was a Civil War veteran.

**Daniel Pastorius Bruner**, -1901? (a Director)

**William Edwards Chapman**, 1878?-1919, (secretary of both founding meetings and Assistant Secretary of the Society) a graduate of the College and the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania, was the Society's first Secretary, acting for 12 years in that capacity. His obituary, in the *Germantown Independent*, credits him with the original suggestion for the Society, resulting in the meeting at the Nason manse. He practised law with his two brothers, and served on the boards of two Germantown banks.

**Mary J. Brown Chew** (Mrs. Samuel Chew), 1839?-1927, (vice-president) had been chairman of the Women's Committee to recondition Independence Hall, and was vice-president of the Colonial Dames. She lived, of course, at Cliveden, and was an Episcopalian.

**Henry L. Davis**, 1846?-1919, (speaker at the first meeting) was an elder of Second Presbyterian Church and a native of Meadville, Pa. He came to Philadelphia about 1869. He became vice-president of Atlantic Refining Company, and served on the boards of several financial institutions.

**Charles Wolcott Henry**, 1852-1903, (a Director) was a nephew of the city's former mayor, Alexander Henry, and a descendant of Oliver Wolcott, a Signer of the Declaration. He lived in Chestnut Hill, and belonged to the First Presbyterian Church of Germantown.

**Charles Francis Jenkins**, 1865-1951, (Committee of Five, Secretary) will appear often in our survey of the Historical Society, writing several of its publications, and becoming in due course President. Born in Norristown, of Quaker parentage, he came to Philadelphia to work under his uncle, the founder of the *Farm Journal*; married a Germantown girl, whose family lived across Tulpehocken Street from Second Presbyterian, and settled nearby. By 1900 he was already known as a lecturer on Germantown history — in fact, it was after one of his talks that William Chapman is said to have been inspired to propose an organization dedicated to local history. He is listed as first Secretary of the Site and Relic Society (though the minutes are signed by Chapman as Assistant Secretary).

**Ellwood Johnson**, 1823-1907 (a Director), descended from one of the very early families, lived at 6313 Germantown Avenue, in the house built in 1760 by his great-grandfather.

**Naaman H. Keyser** -1921 (Director), dentist, besides being a descendant of one of Germantown's most prominent families, had helped organize the City History Society in Germantown, and, of course, was to contribute to and edit the *History of Old Germantown* published in 1907.

**Major William H. Lambert**, 1842-1912, (Chairman of the first meeting; Director) is best remembered as a major collector of Lincoln manuscripts and memorabilia. The library in his "mansion house" at 330 W. Johnson Street, with its Thackeray and Lincoln treasures, was the subject of many stories in local newspapers, especially after a disastrous fire in June of 1906, destroying several prized relics, but none of the remarkable Lincoln manuscripts. Lambert was born in Reading, brought up in Philadelphia, and graduated from Central High School in 1859. He enlisted in the 15th Pennsylvania Cavalry; then became a lieutenant in a New Jersey regiment, and was brevetted Major in March of 1865. "He participated in the battles of Fredericksburg and Chattanooga, in the campaign about Atlanta, and in Sherman's 'march to the sea.'" After the war, he went into life insurance, also holding public offices, and became a trustee of Second Presbyterian Church.

**Howard Williams Lloyd**, -1901, (Committee of Five; Director) was influential in the early meetings. He pursued genealogical researches, leaving unpublished work behind him at his death.

**William E. Meehan**, 1852-1930, (a Director) Commissioner of Fisheries of Pennsylvania, and a member of the first relief expedition in 1891 to rescue Admiral Robert E. Peary, was a son of Thomas Meehan the famous horticulturist.

**Elliston Perot Morris**, 1831-1914, (a vice-president), lived in what is now called the "Deshler-Morris" house, occupied by George Washington in the summers of 1793 and 1794.

**Charles Pinckney Holbrook Nason**, 1843?-1937, the pastor of Second Presbyterian Church (now Community Presbyterian) from 1889 to 1901, is credited with calling the organizing meeting at his home, the Manse of the church. He was a graduate of Williams, and of Princeton University, and is said to have been present at the Battle of Gettysburg as a volunteer aide. Quite evidently a man of varied interests, Nason had acted, says his obituary in *The Evening Bulletin* as "secretary to the architect of the U.S. Capitol," and had studied organ and piano in Paris and Vienna. In 1899 he had served an exchange pastorate at the American Church in Paris. He was to return to France as the American consul at Grenoble from 1901 to 1914. He collected material on the life and martyrdom of St. Joan of Arc, delivering illustrated lectures on the subject. Upon retirement, he settled in Chestnut Hill, where he died at the age of 94.



**Charles Witman Otto**, 1823-1901, (Treasurer) was a native of Reading, coming to the Bank of Germantown in 1864 as bookkeeper, and becoming its President in 1898. He was also President of the Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Germantown.

**Thomas H. Shoemaker**, 1851-1936 (a Director), represented one of Germantown's early families, and published useful compilations of local information. Hewould contribute historical photographs to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the Library of Congress, and later to this Society.

**Cornelius Nolan Weygandt**, 1832-1907, (Committee of Five; Chairman of the public meeting, and first Secretary), a lifelong resident of Germantown, and descended from the Bechtel family, was President of Western National Bank, and president of the Science and Art Club of Germantown. His son, Cornelius, long-term Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, wrote several books of reminiscence including Germantown.

**Sarah M. Whitesides**, (a Director), of whom we know very little otherwise, lived at Grumblethorpe and would have been a cousin of Charles J. Wister. She was inserted as a replacement for Miss Jane Haines of Wyck, who had declined after the election. She appears to have attended Board meetings faithfully.

**Mary B. Houston Williams** (Mrs. Francis Howard Williams), 1845?-1920 (a Director) was prominent in local affairs, patriotic, cultural, and benevolent. She actively supported the adoption of "The Star-Spangled Banner" as the national anthem; she opposed woman suffrage. The City History Society, which originated in Germantown, was one of her interests and she was its first vice-president.

**Charles Jones Wister, Jr.**, 1822-1910, (first President), and often mentioned previously in these pages, was born, lived and died at Grumblethorpe. A lifelong Quaker, he was involved in nearly every benevolent and cultural enterprise in the town. He had also dabbled in painting and photography, and wrote a long and affectionate memoir of his father. The Society has some of his photographs and sketches.

**Hannah Ann Zell**, 1820-1911, (a vice-president), was the President of the Germantown Library and Historical Society, in whose rooms the first public meeting of the Site and Relic Society was held, and some of whose books our present Library inherited. She had served as a nurse during the Civil War, and is said to have founded 16 libraries in small towns. She contributed several essays to the Society's *Publications*, passing on reminiscences handed down from several Germantown ancestors. She was regarded as one of the town's most notable women.

## "Loan Exhibition of Colonial Relics," 1902

For its first major effort, the Site and Relic Society presented on June 10 through 14, 1902, at the Germantown Academy, an exhibit of "several hundred" documents, pictures, books, pieces of furniture, china, glassware, articles of apparel, dolls, toys, etc., etc. Since the fledgling Society had as yet no collections of its own, and no home of its own, both exhibits and the building to house them had to be borrowed. And since the Committee on Arrangements held its first meeting on March 14th, only three months before the opening, it all had to be done in a considerable hurry besides. More than 120 persons were co-opted to serve on the various Committees. In spite of — or perhaps because of — these difficulties, the Loan Exhibition was remarkably successful.

The Entertainment Committee presented an evening of "Pictures and Tales of Colonial and Revolutionary Germantown" by Charles F. Jenkins and Naaman H. Keyser, with old-time music performed by ladies in Colonial dress. Admission was 25 cents, and the hall was packed.

The onus of the affair, of course, lay on the Relic Committee (Dr. Keyser, Chairman), which had to collect the materials to be shown. The old family names of Germantown — Pastorius, Rittenhouse, Johnson, Shoemaker, Wister, Morris — were represented on the Committee, and they and their friends and relations came through in style. Samuel Pennypacker loaned the original map of Germantown, and the original Articles of Agreement of the Frankfort Company for the settlement of the Township, the "first medical diploma" in the Colonies (by Christopher Witt); the Sauer Bibles of 1742, 1763, and 1776, and a full set of the Sauer New Testaments. Betsy Ross's tack hammer and her spectacles were shown; there was a "Washington corner," with a Stuart portrait, and a bust, and a few domestic articles; Rev. William Ashmead Schaeffer showed an 18th century lady's costume, and some relics from the Battle; Pastorius' "Beehive" manuscript was loaned by his descendants; the Chews loaned a coach and a gig. Some of the articles exhibited were afterwards presented to the Site and Relic Society: the Ashmead table and the Ashmead sleigh, William Penn's chair, and Major Andre's wooden figure, the "British Grenadier."

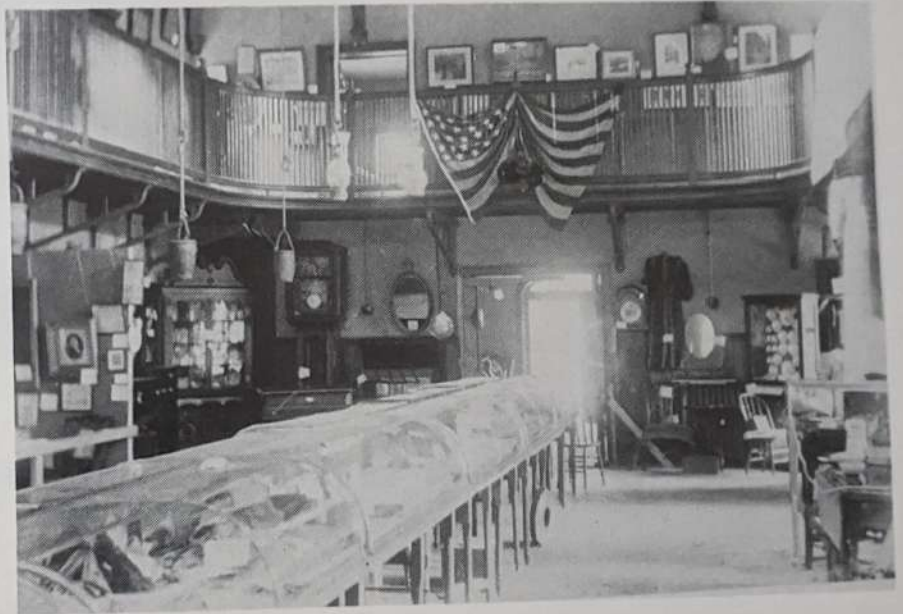
In spite of the presence of a policeman (and a fireman) during the hours of opening, four items disappeared from the exhibition, including a cane which had belonged to Thomas Jefferson, some Colonial paper currency, and a shirt belonging to General Agnew, which were apparently never recovered, though advertised for, Dr. Keyser personally offering a \$50 reward for return of the cane.

The Exhibition was credited with about a hundred new memberships, bringing the Society's total to 401. It also made some profit on the 25-cent admissions collected from "several thousand visitors", brought public recognition, and "placed our Society on a firm and permanent footing."





*So many articles were offered that the Academy's Alumni Building could not house them all. What was shown had to be so crowded together that the viewer must often have felt a kind of visual indigestion.*





Much attention was attracted to the exhibit of the Marshall family dining-room furniture and tableware, because it was attended by Ann Collins, aged 92, who had been in the service of the family from the age of 15. She was the daughter of Cato Collins, a well-known black caterer in Philadelphia. Her reminiscences of "persons and events over seventy years" were apparently the hit of the exhibition.

