

Jenkins Journal

LANSDALE, PA

SEPTEMBER, 2011

September show: Fischer's Pool

New program will focus on a favorite summer fun spot

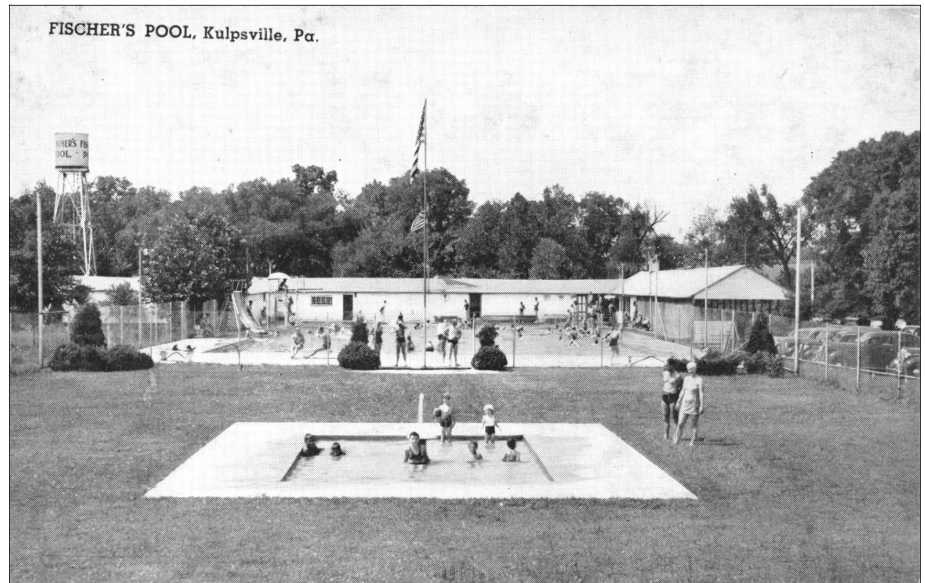
In the days before central air conditioning, relief from summer heat required getting out of the house and finding a cool spot to relax.

For half a century, one of the most popular local destinations was Fischer's Pool, nestled adjacent to the friendly confines of the Towamencin Creek.

On Tuesday, Sept. 13, the society will open its 2011-2012 Community Program series with *The Lure and Lore of Fischer's Pool*, 7:30 p.m., at the Lansdale Parks and Recreation Building, Seventh St. and Lansdale Ave.

Photo archivist Steve Moyer and Sarah DiSantis, director of the Welsh Valley Preservation Society (Morgan Log House), will describe how the Fischer's tract played an important role in our region's history since pre-Revolutionary War times.

For nearly 200 years it was the site of Kooker's Mill, which served farmers in that part of Towamencin Township. By most accounts it was state-of-the-art in its day, but by early in the 20th century its usefulness waned. In 1920, the property was sold to Hugo Fischer.



By the late 1920s, Fischer saw a different potential for the tract. With the car becoming popular he envisioned a recreation center that included an in-ground pool, picnic areas and cabins. In a time before municipal swimming pools, Fischer's was a go-to spot.

Hugo Fischer did not have long to enjoy the success of his retreat. He was swept to his death by floodwaters in 1931 as he tried to recover some picnic

tables from the creek. His widow and family members continued to operate the facility for the next 40 years.

The original mill was torn down in 1934 and the pool, built in 1926, was filled in, another victim of changing times. But Fischer's remains a popular recreation site as a municipal park.

As always, there is no admission charge to the program but donations are greatly appreciated.

2011 Founders Day may be rescheduled

Hurricane Irene did a number on plans for the first Lansdale Founders Day Aug. 27.

But all may not be lost. The Founders Day Committee, which includes Society President Dick Shearer, will reconvene after Labor Day to discuss the possibility of rescheduling the event this fall.

Founders Day was to include the annual

art show in Memorial Park, an open house at the Jenkins Homestead and Research Center, and special displays of historical photos and documents as well as an all-new *Lansdale Now and Then* video at Borough Hall.

Also planned were a kids play zone, live entertainment and a food court on Railroad Avenue, open houses at the

police station, Lansdale Public Library and Fairmount Fire Company and a half-dozen other events. Evening fireworks, fired from Weaver Field, was supposed to conclude the day.

Any announcement of a new date will be made on WNPV Radio, in *The Reporter* and Lansdale Patch, and on the borough and historical society websites.

In October, rewind the clock to 1955

Using the test of time as barometer, some years stand out in history as more important than others. In post-war America, 1955 was one of them.

We've chosen 1955 to lead off a new Community Program series called *Rewind*, a retrospective of the events that defined a specific year in history on both the local and national levels.

Rewind is loosely based on the format of the 1980s ABC documentary series, *Our World*, which featured the sights and sounds of a specific slice of time within a year. Our production – for lack of a TV network budget – will be a little less ambi-

tious, but we hope it will bring back many memories.

The show, the second of this season's Community Programs, will be presented Tuesday, October 11, 7:30 p.m., at the Lansdale Parks and Recreation Building, Seventh St. and Lansdale Ave.

Rewind 1955 will be hosted by Dick Shearer with a video presentation by Steve Moyer. Intern Marcy Weber assisted with research.

The 1950s were watershed years for our region. Post-war residential construction reached an all-time high as

population growth skyrocketed in the townships around Lansdale and other suburban towns.

More people dictated the need for more schools and consolidated school districts were quickly emerging. Lans-

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THE PENNSYLVANIA Turnpike's Northeast Extension opened in 1955.



THE JENKINS HOMESTEAD

Jenkins Homestead and Historical Research Center

•137 Jenkins Ave., Lansdale, PA 19446.

•Hours: Wednesdays, Noon to 5 p.m.; Thursdays, Noon to 5 p.m.; Saturdays, 9 a.m. to noon.

•Telephone: (215) 855-1872; (215) 393-8919 (fax).

•E-mail: info@lansdalehistory.org

•Please send mail correspondence to 137 Jenkins Ave., Lansdale, PA 19446.

•Website: www.lansdalehistory.org.

New porch installed, office coming

For the past several years, the porch attached to the Jenkins Homestead and the adjacent cellar door have needed replacement.

Consider it done. The work was completed earlier this summer by Dale Ziegler Contractors, and includes a new floor, benches and stairs. The original porch was added during the 1970s. The cost of the project was underwritten by the Borough of Lansdale.

Next up is conversion of the society's former office in the homestead into an assessors' office like one that might have used by John Jenkins I in the late 1700s.

Work on the office may begin later this month and could be completed before the end of the year.

The project may include resurfacing the floors in several second floor rooms, removal of a closet, installation of new bookcases,

refinishing an old desk and electrical modifications.

The society will absorb the cost of this work thanks to generous contributions by our members.



Nov. 15: The mysterious Milton Bean

Lansdale architect's work went largely unheralded

At a quick glance, Spanish-born Leopoldo Montoya and virtually-forgotten Lansdale architect Milton B. Bean would seem to have little in common. But first impressions can be deceiving.

Blame it all on a house – Montoya's stately house in Wyncote which was designed by Bean in the late 1800s. The scholarly Drexel University librarian wanted to know more about the man responsible for the home's unique architectural features.

That was 12 years ago. He has since discovered that while many examples of Bean's work still survive around the Delaware Valley, little is known about the personal life of the Bucks County-born architect who spent his most productive years living and working from his home on Green Street.

Montoya's exhaustive efforts to uncover Bean's past and his enormous body of work will be the subject of our Nov. 8 Community Program at the Lansdale Parks and Recreation Building beginning at 7:30 p.m.



MILTON BEAN and Lansdale's first auto, in front of his Green Street home.



THE GEORGE S. SNYDER home in Hatfield is typical of Bean's designs.

A note about our newsletter

Beginning with this issue, the print version of *The Jenkins Journal* will be reduced from six to four issues per year.

The society's board of directors unanimously approved the change at its Aug. 24 quarterly meeting.

Like many other organizations, we must begin the transition from print to electronic distribution of news to address cost issues and the changing preferences of our members who increasingly rely on the internet for information.

While we have not conducted a formal survey, we estimate that more than 75 percent of society members are com-

puter literate and search the web on a regular basis.

The print version of the *Jenkins Journal* is already posted on-line. As part of this change, we will be updating our website (www.lansdalehistory.org) more frequently with news of our activities and special stories about Lansdale area history. We invite you to check it regularly for the latest information on the society.

Again, the printed newsletter is not being discontinued. The next print issue will be mailed in late November or early December.

Despite his research, Montoya admits that considerable mystery still surrounds Bean's life. Little is known about his family, his business, his seemingly tireless work ethic or even his professional training, if he had any. In fact, only one grainy photo of Bean is known to exist – a scene showing him sitting in a horseless carriage he built himself – the first gas-powered car in Lansdale.

For all his transparency, Bean's design credits collectively represent an amazing

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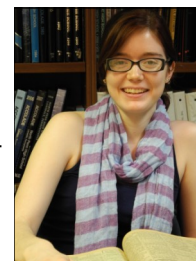
Intern Marcy Weber a welcome surprise

The society's research center staff wants to extend special thanks to Marcy Weber, a Lansdale resident and North Penn High School graduate who is now a student at Ithaca College in New York.

Back in early June, Marcy e-mailed to ask if we needed any volunteer help while she was home for summer vacation. Obviously, the answer was "yes".

Working two days a week, Marcy processed information requests from the public, took on typing duties and still had time to help research and write the Founders Day stories that appeared in the Aug. 26 edition of *The Reporter*. She also compiled background material for our *Rewind 1955* Community Program scheduled for October.

We wish Marcy the best during her sophomore year – and we'd love to see her come back in 2012.



Lansdale's mystery man: Architect M.B. Bean

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body of work. In Lansdale it includes the Broad Street School, the original Trinity Lutheran Church, Lansdale National Bank, the Tremont House, part of the Moyer (Koffel) Building and dozens of houses that were enhanced with his trademark, turrets, towers window styles and porches.

In Ambler he was the key architect for Dr. Richard Mattison, and designed dozens of Keasby & Mattison houses and commercial buildings. Chief among them were Trinity Episcopal Church and the renovation of Mattison's home into castle-like Lindenwold.

Add to those the imposing Souder & Crouthamel Building in Souderton, the Arch Street School and Trinity Lutheran Church in Perkasio, the public school and many private homes in Doylestown and summer resorts in the

mountains.

By Montoya's estimate, perhaps hundreds of Bean-designed buildings are still out there waiting to be discovered.

Montoya and Society President Dick

Shearer will try to put Bean's accomplishments in perspective through a wealth of vintage and current photographs and by discussing what we do know about this mystery man.

Revisit the sights, sounds and news of 1955

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dale High School graduated its final class in 1955; in September, a new, greatly expanded North Penn High School serving the surrounding boroughs and townships took its place.

The Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike opened that year, cutting a wide path through the village of Kulpsville. Also, the region's dire need for more water became apparent, and finally the dreaded disease, polio, met its match with the introduction of Salk vaccine.

"Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White" topped the music charts, but early rockers

like Bill Haley and the Comets, and R&B stars like Fats Domino were about to force big bands off into the sunset. James Dean was enough reason to go to the movies. Color TV emerged – all the better to see *Bonanza*.

The Emmitt Till murder and busing protests escalated racial tension in the South. Albert Einstein and Charlie Parker died, Steve Jobs and Bruce Willis were born, and Winston Churchill resigned as British prime minister.

These events and more played out in 1955. Join us Oct. 11 for a 56-year journey back in time.

Lansdale Historical Society 137 Jenkins Ave., Lansdale, PA 19446



The Jenkins Historic Complex