



# The Acorn

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Historical Society of Montgomery County, PA

Vol. LXXIII No. 1 - Winter 2019

## Synagogues of Greater Philadelphia Presentation by Ira Poliakoff Thursday, March 21, 2019, 7:00 pm

Join us for our next presentation in our Making History Greater Series when Ira Poliakoff presents **Synagogues of Greater Philadelphia**.

**Synagogues of Greater Philadelphia** traces the history of the Jewish people in the greater Philadelphia region through the eyes of the more than five hundred synagogues that exist or have existed in the five-county Philadelphia area. Included are many illustrations and picture of synagogues no longer in use and reproductions of several historic documents. Ira Poliakoff, the author of the forthcoming book, *Synagogues of Philadelphia*, explored many libraries and archives to assemble this history.

Ira Poliakoff was born in New York City just as World War II was ending. His father, a physician, returned from five years of naval service when Ira was five months old. His family lived in Manhattan and attended Congregation Shaare Zedek and later moved to Rockville Centre where they were members of Temple Bnai Sholom. As a young man, Ira served as youth director at several shuls in metropolitan New York and worked for the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism as a Field Worker. In 1973, he married Judith Braude of Philadelphia and they moved to Wynnewood shortly thereafter. He later enjoyed a long and successful career in business.



Author Ira Poliakoff

The Making History Greater series features scholars, authors, and historians who are currently working on telling new stories about the complexity of our region’s history. **Synagogues of Greater Philadelphia** will take place on Thursday, March 21, 2019. The evening will begin at 6:30 with a social gathering and light refreshments. The presentation will begin at 7:00 pm and last for about an hour with time for questions at the end. This program is free and open to the public.

### The Historical Society of Montgomery County

#### Visit Us

Research Library - Archives  
Books & Gifts - Galleries

1654 DeKalb Street  
Norristown, PA 19401

Monday and Thursday, 10am - 5pm  
Tuesday and Wednesday, 1pm - 8pm

First Saturday of Each Month or by  
Appointment, 10am - 2pm

Historic Montgomery  
Cemetery

Located at the end of  
Hartranft Avenue in  
West Norriton Township, PA

Open from dawn to dusk.

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# Upcoming Events

## FEBRUARY

**Monday, February 18, 2019**

### CLOSED

We will be closed in honor of the Presidents' Day Holiday.

**Tuesday, February 19 & 26, 2019**

**6:00 pm - 8:00 pm**

### Workshop

*Reading Your House, Researching Your Home*

## MARCH

**Thursday, March 21, 2019**

**7:00 pm - 8:00 pm**

### Making History Greater

**The Synagogues of Greater Philadelphia**

Presented by Ira Poliakoff

## APRIL

**Tuesday, April 16, 2019**

**6:30 pm - 8:00 pm**

### Workshop

*Capturing the Stories of Your Family:  
Oral History Interviews*

## MAY

**Saturday, May 4, 2019**

### International Firefighters' Day

*Save the date for this special event at  
Historic Montgomery Cemetery. More  
details available soon!*

# Our Mission

The Historical Society of Montgomery County engages with the public to collect, preserve, and interpret the documents, artifacts, and stories that reflect the evolving mosaic that is our county.

## Board of Trustees

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Many thanks to those Trustees and Officers who have elected to step down at the end of 2018. We thank them all for their years of service:

Charles Christine

Robert McGrory

Hon. William T. Nicholas

# Planning for the Future

Barry Rauhauser  
Executive Director

For the past year the community that surrounds the Historical Society of Montgomery County – our staff, board members, volunteers, neighbors, friends, colleagues, members, and many others – have been looking ahead to the Historical Society’s future. After many meetings, workshops, brainstorming sessions, and lots of emails, we feel that we have put together a new strategic plan for us that will help us create a foundation for our future. Thanks to everyone who helped us along with this process!

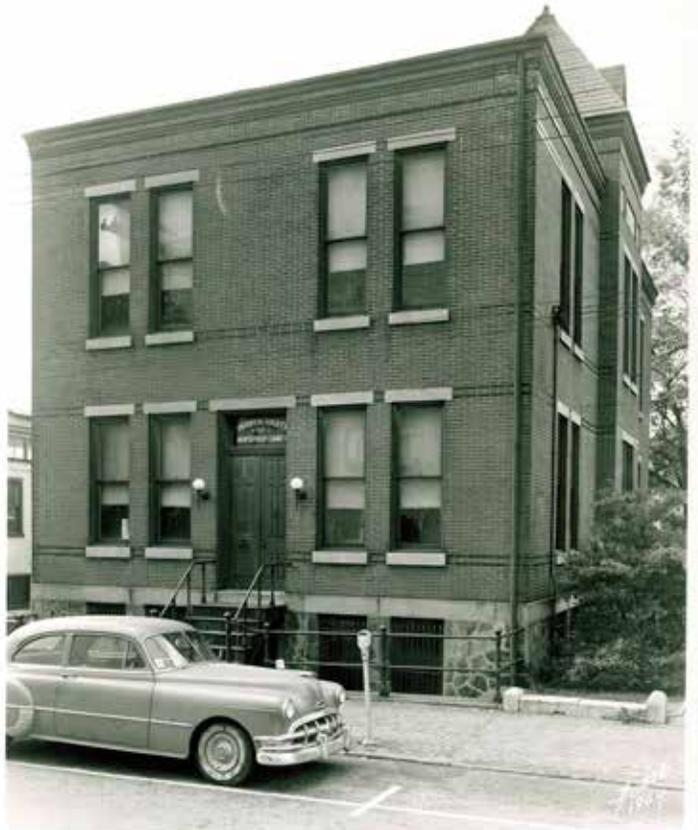
At the heart of this new strategic plan is a revised mission statement (you’ll find it at the top of page 2). While not drastically different from our previous mission statement, we feel it does a great job of succinctly capturing our new focus in preserving Montgomery County’s history.

To ensure that we are driving towards our mission, the board of trustees approved a new set of strategic goals that arose as a product of a community workshop in October of 2018.

- Decide the best long-term solution for HSMC’s facility/location issues with the goal of improving our ability to serve the public.
- Broaden and deepen the organization’s revenue streams.
- Make the history of Montgomery County more accessible and relevant to audiences throughout Montgomery County.
- Increase access to HSMC’s resources through digital technologies.
- Improve professionalism to better serve our community, ensure the preservation of our collections, and advance our mission.

As part of our work towards meeting these goals, HSMC will be forming two new task forces. The first task force is called simply “The Future Task Force.” They will be charged with examining the various potential solutions for the long-term facility needs of the Historical Society. Our other task force, the “MontCo Mosaic Task Force” will work towards diversifying the historical society’s programming, audience and collections to ensure that we are doing our best to capture the ever-evolving mosaic that is Montgomery County’s story.

Look forward to updates as we progress and if you feel that you or someone you know would be a good candidate for one of our new task forces, feel free to send me an email at [barry@hsmcpa.org](mailto:barry@hsmcpa.org).



Historical Hall, the home of HSMC until 1954.

# Amelia Earhart in Norristown

## From Our Blogs

by Nancy Sullivan, Archivist

On March 19, 1936, Amelia Earhart came to Norristown to speak at the Norris Theater. Her appearance was sponsored by The Business and Professional Women's Club of Norristown and was the concluding event of 1936's National Business and Professional Women's Week.

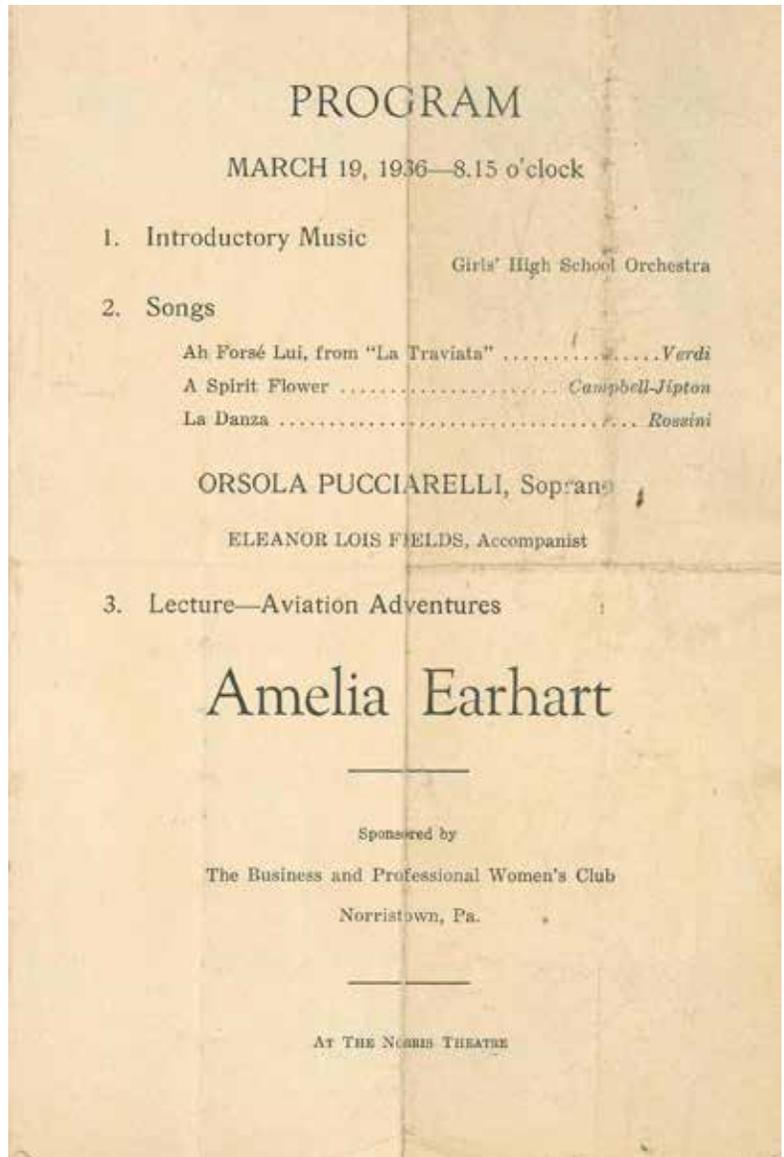
In our collection, we have a program from that night. The girls' orchestra from Norristown High School played the opening music and local soprano, Orsola Pucciarelli sang three songs before the lecture.

Coverage of the event in the Norristown Times-Herald was very enthusiastic. The paper had two articles on Earhart's talk. Both articles begin by describing her appearance. "Slim, trim, and decidedly feminine" one says, while the other devotes the entire second paragraph to the blue evening gown she designed herself.

In her lecture, the aviatrix expressed her confidence in flight. "There is no doubt about it," the newspaper quotes her saying, "transatlantic air service will soon be regularly scheduled." She also spoke in support of working women, saying that they had every right to fly in commercial aviation as men did. She also spoke about her flights across the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans and her love of flying in general. The Times-Herald records, "I have no fear of flying, if I did I would not fly. I am a firm believer in preparedness and leave nothing to chance that I can possible help."

Earhart was born in Kansas, but she was not a stranger to Montgomery County. After completing high school in Chicago, Earhart attended the Ogontz School for Girls in Rydal (now Penn State Abington) with an eye towards applying to Bryn Mawr eventually. Earhart clashed frequently with the school's owner and headmistress Abby Sutherland, according to Penn State University Libraries' website dedicated to the Ogontz School. After a visit to her sister in Toronto in 1917 where she saw wounded soldiers returning from Europe, Earhart left the school to become a nurse's aide there. She and her husband visited the school, which was still in operation then, the day of her talk. She told the Times-Herald, "My husband considers himself an alumnus of the school he has heard me speak of it so frequently."

Earhart said in her lecture that she had no concrete plans for another flight. However, the following year, she attempted to fly around the world with her navigator Fred Noonan. In July of 1937, Amelia Earhart's Lockheed Electra disappeared over the Pacific Ocean.



# Capturing Your Family Stories: Oral History Interviews Workshop

April 16, 2019, 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

“It never hurts to ask.” An expression you’ve probably heard many times before. When researching your family stories, it really doesn’t hurt to ask. Led by our Executive Director, Barry Rauhauser, our newest course offers some tips and tricks to recording interviews with your relatives so that you can ask questions and capture some of the stories of your family and others around you.

While archival, photographic, and other documentary research is the core of many historians’ work, for more recent history about the world an oral history interview captures personal knowledge of past events. This often reveals much more than is available through paper records. Oral history interviews can examine the culture of days-gone-by, rekindle the stories of a forgotten business or store, or they may even be able to capture a favorite recipe that has been passed down through the generations.

The program is \$15 for members of the Historical Society of Montgomery County and just \$20 for non-members. Please contact the historical society at (610) 272-0297 to reserve your spot!

## Renew Your Membership Today!

The Historical Society of Montgomery County has been a membership-based organization since 1881. For over one-hundred years, the members of HSMC have kept this organization a living part of Montgomery County’s cultural landscape. We have these members, those living in our county and across the nation, to thank for telling the history of this region, preserving the county’s important documents, photographs and other historic collections, and for making sure that others are inspired to investigate the history of Montgomery County and the role it has played in shaping the stories of our region today.

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### Historical Society of Montgomery County - 2019 Membership

Indicate your selected level of membership and payment method on the reverse of this form. Mail to: Historical Society of Montgomery County, 1654 DeKalb St, Norristown, PA 19401.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## WORKSHOP

# Reading Your House, Researching Your Home

*Reading Your House* will introduce attendees to the fundamental tools needed to start seeing your house in a new light. We'll cover introductory topics on historic architecture and how to look around at the landscape of houses in Montgomery County.

*Researching Your Home* will examine various documents related to house construction and occupancy that will give researchers more information about how houses and architecture function.



Cost to attend each individual class is \$25.00 per class for members of the Historical Society of Montgomery County and \$30.00 for non-members. Cost to attend both sessions is \$40.00 for members of the Historical Society of Montgomery County and \$50.00 for non-members.

**February 19, 2019, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm - Reading Your House**  
**February 26, 2017, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm - Researching Your Home**

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### 2019 Membership Form

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**Select Your Level of Membership**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$35.00  | <input type="checkbox"/> The Acorn Society \$250.00               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dual/Family \$50.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> The Rittenhouse Collectors Club \$500.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer \$100.00  | <input type="checkbox"/> 1784 Sponsorship Circle \$1000.00        |

Please add \$\_\_\_\_\_ above the cost of membership to support the efforts of HSMC.

\$\_\_\_\_\_ Total amount to be billed to the credit card indicated below or by check mailed in the enclosed envelope.

American Express     Discover     Master Card     Visa     Check

\_\_\_\_\_  
Credit Card #

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Exp. Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
CVV2 code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name (as appears on card)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## New Additions to Our Collections

Photographs and Family Documents – Gift of Lindsay Robb

Citizens Building and Loan Records – Gift of Joseph Romano

Various Archival Materials – Gift of Robert MacMullan

Various Materials Related to the Frantz Family – Gift of Frank A. Sternad

Book, Records of Bridges of Montgomery County, 1920-1930 – Gift of Mark Armstrong

Postcard, Norristown – Gift of James Brazel

HSMC Membership Card, 1968 – Gift of Edward Ziegler

Photograph of East Greenville Class of 1942 – Gift of Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College

Marriage License, St. John's, Norristown, 1827 – Gift of Raymond and Jan Bednarchick

Photographs of Adam Scheidt Brewery – Gift of Susan Shannon Dean

8 Note Cards, Norristown – Gift of Janice Boyer

Diploma and Class Picture, Montgomery Hospital Training School of Nurses, 1933 – Gift of Debi Schalch

Paper Ruler and Business Card, Sears, King of Prussia – Gift of Charles Paul Stone

3 Books by Jerry Spinelli – Gift of Nancy Sullivan

Photographs of Alan Wood Steel Co. – Gift of Tim Metz

Various Archival Materials – Gift of Katheryn Taxis

Indenture – Gift of Jean M. May and John F. Moore

Various Items Related to Montgomery County – Gift of Marty Shinn

Stirrup Cup, 1954 – Gift of Susan Strange

Various Museum Objects – Gift of Carolyn J. Mattern



### Stirrup Cup, 1954

The silver cup shown below was given to Henry A. Bonyng (right) at the June Fete Horse and Pony Show in 1954. Recent Gift of Susan Strange.



The Historical Society of Montgomery County  
1654 DeKalb Street  
Norristown, PA 19401-5415

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**The Historical Society of Montgomery County**

**Founded in 1881**