

Spring is around the corner. Stop your hibernating and come join in the great programming going on here at HSP! Our history book club kickoff was a great success with author David Waldstreicher sharing his provocative views on Benjamin Franklin and racism. As this newsletter goes to print, we are looking forward to those *Fiery Frenchified Dames* and

perhaps a few French pastries to help our book discussion along! Both our "Workshops for Educators" and "Finding Philadelphia, Defining Freedom" series are gaining attendance as word has gotten out about how enjoyable the initial sessions have been. Our Treasures Society members enjoyed a special "insiders" look at the current state of rare books, manuscripts, and Americana with a presentation by Carmen Valentino and Dr. Keith Arbour.

Next up is our annual Founder's Award Celebration on April 7, 2005. This year's theme is "From Philadelphia: The News" as we honor those who have given exemplary service to history through contributions to journalism. This year's honorees are:

**Robert W. Bogle**

*CEO & President of the Philadelphia Tribune*  
America's oldest and the Greater Philadelphia region's largest daily newspaper serving the African American community

**Ed Bradley**

*Correspondent & Co-editor 60 Minutes*

**Terry Gross**

*Host and co-executive producer of Fresh Air*  
Produced by WHYY and distributed nationally by NPR

**Albert R. Hunt**

*Managing Editor, Washington Bloomberg News*

**Gene Roberts**

*Professor of Journalism, University of Maryland, Phillip Merrill College of Journalism*  
Former executive editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

**Trudy Rubin**

*Foreign Affairs Columnist*

We are looking forward to a stimulating roundtable discussion with our honorees as well as an elegant dinner celebration at the beautiful Park Hyatt Philadelphia at The Bellevue. We will also be honoring The Bellevue as they conclude their centennial year of celebration. HSP will present the Heritage Award to **Bernard Guet**, General Manager of the Park Hyatt Philadelphia at The Bellevue and **Andrew Speizman**, General Manager of The Bellevue, in recognition of The Bellevue's efforts to become a national historic landmark destination and contributor to Philadelphia's heritage tourism.

For further information about this event or any of our other upcoming activities, please visit our website for up-to-date information. We look forward to seeing you soon. ❖



Delaware Avenue Photo Album—1899

Electric Telegraph Linesmen Gilliams and Straton



A *big thanks* to the facilities crew who made sure we could all safely access HSP after our last big snow storm. Tyrone Lites, Tyrone Martinez, and Bill McGoldrick started shoveling snow at 5:00 PM. Approximately two hours later they had removed more than a foot of snow and ice from the HSP sidewalks, ensuring access for HSP employees and visitors. ❖

## Collections Update:

### Newspaper Shelving Project

The first phase of the Newspaper Shelving Project was a success. With a generous grant from the William Penn Foundation, HSP was able to remove obsolete shelving, reposition existing shelving, and install new ranges to accommodate both the HSP and Balch newspaper collections. All of HSP's newspapers are now back on the shelves and accessible to researchers. By April, we expect to have brought back the Balch newspapers from off-site storage. This will allow researchers immediate access to any of these titles. ❖

### Three Recent Purchases

HSP recently purchased three items. The first is the John Hare Powel copybook (1836–1838), kept by experimental farmer, economist, and diplomat John Hare Powel of Philadelphia, from 1836–1838. It records his supervision of his Philadelphia business affairs from afar (while he was touring Europe), especially to direct his attorney, Eli K. Price, and other Philadelphians in an intense lobbying effort to prevent the Pennsylvania Assembly from sanctioning a public works project that would impinge on Powel's estate, Powelton (West Philadelphia), on which he conducted experiments promoted in his agricultural writing. Next is the East Bridgewater Alliance Record books (1896–1921), the Bridgewater, Susquehanna County affiliate of the Alliance Cooperative Supply Company, a Populist farmers' joint-stock cooperative society. Lastly are the Ranie Dayton letters (1872–1887), mostly written by young music school student Ranie Dayton (later McKean) to her parents and sister, Zaide, of Fairdale, Susquehanna County. Altogether, this rich correspondence chronicles the lives of several young women whose parents may have considered them somewhat headstrong. ❖

## The Department of Rights and Reproductions

is an important liaison for access between the public and our collections. We provide photographic reproductions of collection materials for items that may be too fragile or large to photocopy, such as the atlases or the Horace Traumbauer architectural drawings, and also for people who need better quality reproductions for publication and exhibition purposes. As well, we offer microfilming services for off-site researchers. The R&R department does most of the work in-house, thanks to the talents of our staff photographer, Lou Meehan. Our clientele is largely publishers, exhibit researchers, and television production studios though we also do a lot of work for those researching personal projects. In the past year we have provided images for the American

Experience PBS/WGBH series, exhibition images for the Eastern State Penitentiary, and background images for Wheel of Fortune and the upcoming movie, *In Her Shoes*. R&R offers a benefit to our members seeking photographic reproductions by waiving our usual \$20 service fee on all member orders. This is a great benefit to those members seeking to publish works or for those who would simply like presentation quality prints for display in their homes.

In this and in future issues of *Sidelights* we will feature some of our favorite images from the collections. For further information on R&R services, you may contact Kerry McLaughlin at extension 230 or [kmclaughlin@hsp.org](mailto:kmclaughlin@hsp.org). ❖

# The Legacy of the James Family

A pediatrician from Cincinnati seeks a home for her family's archives and a folklorist from Philadelphia seeks a home for her family—how the lives of two women crossed paths at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

## Dr. Joan Saverino—folklorist and member of HSP's Education and Interpretation Department:

For at least the first six months—each time we walked up the stone steps to our English Tudor Revival Arts & Crafts house on Boyer Street—we could hardly believe that this was our home. It was built by Ashton S. Tourison who, with his son, Sedgwick, a trained architect, had developed what is called Sedgwick Farms, an early 20th-century suburb in the city development in East Mt. Airy. Philadelphia was an industrial powerhouse in the 19th and early 20th-centuries, and that legacy is reflected in the wonderful examples of architecture that remain from that era. In the search for our first house, however, we had learned that even if a house's exterior was intact, the interior was often remuddled, reflecting not good renovation but poor design changes made by different owners.

Even my imagination could not have conjured up a house that matched the unique property we discovered when we entered the front door of 6912 in the summer of 2002. We were greeted by a living room with original unpainted chestnut woodwork on the first floor, original arts and crafts light fixtures, and a kitchen that had not been changed since the day it was built. Well, not quite true. The original stove, most likely a coal burning one, had been replaced with a new model, circa 1926. The kitchen sink had such interesting original brass faucets that my cousin, an architect and a sculptor, photographed them. For most homeowners, this house may sound like a nightmare, but for us it was a dream come true. We only had to decide which antique stove and sink I would keep—the ones that we had in storage waiting for our vintage kitchen or the ones that were already in place.

Our amazement continued throughout the second and third floor rooms as we wound our way through the small paths that had been cleared amidst the almost 100 years of the James family's possessions that had not yet been dispersed. From my collector and professional eye, I could see that this had been a family of savers on a continuum from the mundane to the notable. I still don't know if the family kept the house in its almost pristine original condition out of admiration for the workmanship or because of their frugality or both, but we have been the beneficiaries.

After we purchased the house, we met Liz Brown, the niece of the previous owner. She told me that she had much more correspondence from the family and that I could have access to it. We have stayed in touch. Most recently, just before the holidays this past year, she sent me more correspondence and old photographs of the house that she had found. In my thank you to her I mentioned that I was working at HSP. She quickly wrote back to say she had not realized that and how apropos it was since she had just donated the James family papers, videos, and photographs to HSP.

The James family saved the original documents from the land purchase and house construction, which Liz Brown passed on to us after the house sale. The contractual agreement, the accompanying property surveys, the original house specifications, other correspondence, and photographs, all provide detailed information that help me as someone interested in authentic restoration. For instance, from the contractual agreement signed on November 8, 1909, we know that Charles H. James purchased the property from Tourison and that Tourison was to build a house to specification for the total sum of \$15,000 to be "completed on or about May 1, 1910." We also learned that what were once exterior porches were converted to sun porches in 1927. We know what specifications were

changed from the original and when. This kind of information is also interesting from a scholar's perspective because in American life, a home is a symbol of values and ideals made manifest. Information on this house and family, when tied in with comparative data, could contribute new nuance to our understanding of middle-class family life in the city. We do not know all the kinds of information that the James family collection holds because the collection has not been catalogued yet. It is a large amount of primary source material on one family that, depending on the content, could contribute to our historical understanding in many ways.

## Dr. Liz Brown—Ohio resident and niece of Dr. James:

One of the complexities of reaching middle age is being entrusted with the family archives. In my case it has been a huge job with memorabilia covering the years from 1775 to the present. I have been placed in the fortunate position of finding the perfect place for the historical papers of my extended family—in the vaults of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. My uncle, Dr. Charles Mason James, was a beloved and important figure in my life. Due to his death and subsequent family illness I was entrusted with the family records. Loath to leave them in storage and perhaps improperly preserved, I was delighted to donate them to HSP.

The James family left Wales and arrived in New Britain, Pennsylvania, in 1711. Three generations later Isaac James married Jemima Mason. Their grandson, Samuel Mason James, moved to Philadelphia in about 1833. His son, Isaiah James, married Elizabeth Fry and moved to the Germantown area. I believe Isaiah purchased the land at the corner of Boyer Street and Gorgas Lane. He built the first home there at 6920 Boyer Street. His son, Charles Henry James, then built a house in the "front yard" at 6912 Boyer Street. This classic Arts & Crafts home was completed in about 1910. This home was subsequently occupied by my uncle Charles Mason James and his wife Mary Effie James, both historians. Indeed they spent years working on a biography of William Maclure, first geologist of the United States. They were scholars and meticulous researchers, as well as supporters of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. It was only after the house was sold that I came to learn what an amazing set of circumstances had occurred. Currently Dr. Joan Saverino and her family live at 6912 Boyer Street, being the first people other than the James family ever to live in the house. The combined events of finding the perfect repository for the family historical papers as well as having a family of scholars and historians buy the family home is nothing short of miraculous! ❖

## Spring Calendar of Events Correction:

The How to Research Your Family Home workshop will be held on **Thursday, May 12 at 5:30 PM**, not on Tuesday as previously published. ❖

## Historical Headaches at HSP?

In the process of removing old shelving in our newspaper stacks, staff discovered a small tin of Squibb Aspirin, with three aspirins still inside. The container appears to be from the 1960s or 1970s. While one of the tablets is a bit crumbly, the other two appear to be fine—although no one has volunteered to test their efficacy. Library staff are contemplating sending this find to Squibb for their archives. ❖

Join us for a week of events in celebration of National Library Week. Stay tuned for more information on discounts for new and renewed memberships, "Bring a Friend" 2 for 1 library admission, special orientation sessions, and more! Upcoming details will be available on our Website at [www.hsp.org](http://www.hsp.org). ❖

**National Library Week**  
**April 10-16, 2005**



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