

# MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION

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WWW.MERIONCIVIC.ORG

MERION, PA 19066

W I N T E R / S P R I N G 2 0 1 0

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Scott Feuer



Dear Merion Neighbors,

We are all trying to survive this nasty winter and are looking forward to a beautiful spring in Merion. There are some very important issues that we will be discussing throughout the current year which affect you, your family and the neighborhood in which you live. Let me encourage you to come to our meetings and participate in active discussions as we develop plans and take action to address the many issues impacting our community.

You need only to examine recent events within our community to recognize how important it is to be aware of what's happening in Merion such as zoning related to St. Joseph's University campus and the Stern Hebrew High School site or the departure of the Barnes and the future of the Barnes Arboretum or issues with spraying along the Septa/Amtrak train tracks, just to mention a few. On an on-going basis, Merion neighbors in conjunction with the Merion Civic Association monitor and address noise issues, traffic impact, storm water management, and safety and lights.

I encourage every resident to be involved in the community process in order to keep our community the desirable place to live that it is today. I also invite you to go to the Merion Civic Association website at [www.merioncivic.org](http://www.merioncivic.org) for the latest information on what's happening in Merion and the Township.

I look forward to seeing you at our meetings. This is also a great way of meeting your neighbors.

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## LOWER MERION POLICE REPORT DAYTIME BURGLARIES.

Since October 8, 2009, there have been several daytime residential burglaries. Residents are reminded to secure their homes and to report suspicious persons, vehicles or activity to Police by calling 9-1-1.

## LOCAL RESIDENTS

Featured in Controversial  
Barnes Documentary

A "must see" new documentary was recently released delving into the struggle for control of the Barnes Foundation and its multi-billion dollar art collection following the death of the founder, Albert C. Barnes. The documentary entitled, "The Art of the Steal" tells the story from the viewpoint of Dr. Barnes and details the controversy over how the plans to relocate the internationally renowned art collection from Merion to the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia came about. The documentary, which includes interviews with local Merion residents, has received rave reviews. The film was released throughout the United States beginning February 26th. Locally, the film opened first at the Ritz V in Philadelphia to sold out performances. It opened at the Bryn Mawr Theater on March 12th.

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## RED CROSS HOUSE (1917-1919)

By Michael Seiden

An article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* states "Under the auspices of the Merion Civic Association, the Main Line suburb will shortly open what is said to be the first distinctly Red Cross house in the United States." The work done at the Red Cross House was described in the Fifth (published in 1918) and Sixth Year (published 1919) Annual Reports of the Merion Civic Association, and was also cited in a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article of January 22, 1919. However, it is not mentioned in the Eighth Year Book, in 1921, so we must conclude that it was closed by the then. A description of the work done at the Red Cross House can be found on the history page of the Merion Civic Association website.



**In 1918:** Merion installed new fire hydrants, so that now no house is farther than 700 feet from a hydrant.

## WHY GREEN BUILDINGS MAKE SENSE FOR LOWER MERION

By Brian Gordon, Lower Merion Township Commissioner, 12th Ward



What can we do as a community to save our planet from excess energy consumption which leads to burning of fossil fuels to generate electricity, which contributes to global warming? One answer lies in using environmental technologies to design, build and operate our homes and offices.

In the United States, buildings account for approximately 72% of all electricity consumption; 39% of carbon dioxide emissions; and 40% of all land fill waste as a by-product of the building process.

Environmental or "green" building significantly reduces or eliminates the impact of buildings on the environment in five areas: site planning to take advantage of natural light, limiting water use; energy conservation and use of renewable energy; conserving materials and resources in the construction process; and indoor environmental quality. Specific green initiatives used in buildings around the country include: recycling construction waste; using glass coatings that allow natural light to pass while blocking heat producing light rays; recycling rainwater for use in toilets and to irrigate plants; and installing solar panels, wind turbines or geothermal wells. In addition, vegetative roofs (that's right, dirt and grass) has the benefit of extending the life of a roof. Vegetative roofs, protected by the sun's rays, insulate buildings in the summer from heat and the winter from the cold and slow storm water runoff.

As Township Commissioners, we are limited in our power to change building codes to require green building standards for private developers and owners. However, **as an owner of properties, we can require our Township buildings to be environmentally designed and operated.**

Accordingly, **several commissioners and I are working on a resolution to require that our buildings are built and operated in this fashion.** But here is the really good news. After small incremental costs, it will now cost us less to operate green buildings. On average, when energy use and other operational cost savings are taken into account, environmental building initiatives have a 20 to 1 average annual return on investment. According to a 2005 Turner Construction Study in the private sector, green building have other benefits including increased productivity among workers, increased job satisfaction among occupants, reduced absenteeism, increased building values, increased rents, and increased occupancy rates.

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## MERION BOTANICAL PARK

By Frank Strawbridge, President,  
Botanical Society of Lower Merion

In 1944 a small group of Merion residents, eager to preserve open space, created the Botanical Society of Lower Merion and, together with Lower Merion Township, purchased twelve acres of land from the Weaver Estate near the Pennsylvania Railroad's Merion Station. The agreement between the Township and the Botanical Society states that the land will be forever kept, maintained and used solely as a public park and botanical garden for the beautification of Lower Merion Township and the education and quiet enjoyment of its residents. Since the Park's inception in 1944, the Township and the Botanical Society have successfully managed this unique joint venture.



At a Botanical Society Board Meeting on September 26, 1990, Henry R. Hallowell was reminiscing about the open space that was to become the Botanical Park and was quoted as saying the following about the condition of the park in the early 1940's:

**"As far as the park goes, that was an open space from City Line all the way up to Bowman Avenue... The condition of the park was pretty terrible, it was a place for rats and all kinds of unpleasant animals... So we began to raise the money, we found they wanted \$30,000 for the land... Finally, we made a deal with them (the Township) that we would buy half the land if they would buy the other half, with the proviso that they could never have anything but a botanical park there."**

As part of the original agreement, the Township and the Botanical Society share responsibility for the maintenance of the Park. The Township's roles includes: grass cutting; replacing dead or dying trees; tree trimming; repairing the bridge and the stepping stones; resurfacing the pathway; and hauling away piles of dead branches and debris.

The Botanical Society's commitment is to: keep the Park clean of trash; replace dead or dying bushes and shrubs; plant new trees (in fact, some of the trees are memorial trees donated by Merion residents), bushes and shrubs as appropriate; and increase awareness of and participation in the care of the Park by the community.

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## UPDATE ON THE MCA WEBSITE

By Michael Seiden  
[www.merioncivic.org](http://www.merioncivic.org)

The Merion Civic Association (MCA) launched its website last June and continues to enhance and expand the information available on the website. If you have not visited the website recently, the following updates have been added since Fall, 2009:

### 1. History now includes:

- Complete text of the Merion Civic Association Fifth Year Annual Report from 1918
- Merion Time Line with links to source documents
- New "Where are they now?" item for the Red Cross House (see page 2 article)

### 2. News now has a quick-link section to the various items below it.

- Lower Merion Township 2010 Budget
- Ludington Library closing
- Lower Merion Police report with link to LM Township Police Alert
- Lower Merion New Solid Waste Fees
- Zoning Hearing for St. Joseph University Maguire Campus

### 3. Calendar includes events for other local groups and items of interest to the community.

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**PLEASE REMEMBER TO PICK UP AFTER YOUR DOGS AND DISPOSE OF THE WASTE APPROPRIATELY**

To those residents...and there are many of you...who pick up after your dogs in our neighborhoods, **THANK YOU!**

To the few of you who do not, please understand that cleaning up after your pet is the law in Merion. In addition, please dispose of your dog's waste at your home.



A number of people throw dog waste in the trash cans at the Train Station which makes for a pungent wait for trains, especially in the summer months.

**Von Trapp Family (1939-1943)**

- The Trapp Family emigrated to the U.S. and settled in Merion, PA in 1939.
- The family moved to Stowe, Vermont in 1943.
- They now run the Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe, VT. Excerpt from *The First 300: The Amazing and Rich History of Lower Merion*

**STREETS, LIGHTS, TRAFFIC & POTHOLES!**

By Renee Hill

Civic Association's Streets, Lights and Traffic Committee would like to hear from you if you have any problems on your street with street lights, traffic, and now that it is winter/spring, any potholes which need to be filled. Contact her via the Civic Association at 610.664.0441

**HISTORY OF BARNES ARBORETUM**

By Ester McCrea



People in Merion know the Barnes Foundation, but its beautiful Arboretum is not as well known. In the beginning, it was part of the Jacob Latches farm. In 1880, a Civil War veteran and Pennsylvania Railroad lawyer, Joseph Lapsley Wilson bought 12 acres of the Latch's farmland. On it, he built a Victorian Gothic mansion and began to collect trees for an Arboretum. Over the next 35 years, Captain Wilson filled his Arboretum with 200 selected trees of which at least 14 are still standing. In 1920, he wanted to sell his property to someone who would promise to take care of the trees and let them live out their lives. His next door neighbor, Dr Albert Barnes, was very interested because he wanted a beautiful place to put his beautiful paintings.

Dr. Barnes built a Dutch Colonial house for Captain Wilson and his wife, across Lapsley Lane. A special gate was made in the fence so Wilson could come and go as he wished. Barnes charged him \$1.00 a year so he would not feel kept.

The Mansion was removed and the Gallery with its attached residence was built over the footprint of the Mansion to protect the surrounding trees. The Gallery was designed and built by Paul Cret, a French architect working in Philadelphia. The stone was Mt. Moyan limestone from Northwest France. Dr.



Barnes had seen a building made of it in Brittany and decided that was what he would use when he built his gallery. It holds the light in a special way and is the rose-beige tone that Renoir used and Barnes loved.

Dr. Barnes asked Mrs. Barnes to do something with the grounds. She began by moving her shrubs from next door and interplanting them with the Wilson's trees to soften the lines. She also began a fern garden in the wooded area. It eventually numbered 93 species.

Mrs. Barnes started her Arboretum School in 1940. partly as result of the depression in the 1930's. Universities across the country were cutting back to basic curriculums because of the economy. There were no horticulture classes available in the area. Mrs. Barnes invited Dr. Jack Fogg from the University of Pennsylvania Botany Department, known for his work with the International Magnolia Society, to work with her. He would teach the technical courses while she taught horticulture.

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## MERION GARDENING

By Carol Lavoritano



After a winter with record snowfalls and lots of cold weather, everyone is ready for spring, and the gardeners are itching to get to work. We are fortunate to have many opportunities to enjoy gardens and gardening in and around Merion. **This year, the spring train station cleanup and planting has been consolidated with the Merion Botanical Garden spring cleanup. Plan to come out on May 2, to meet neighbors, beautify the station and the park, and enjoy refreshments.** Bring gloves, rakes and clippers. On an ongoing basis, the reclamation of the weedy beds at the inbound side of the station continues. The beds at the inbound end now include many flowering perennials and shade plants, mostly donated by neighbors. The path up the hill at the outbound end of the platform features a bed at the base and a border of hostas, also planted by neighbors. Most Sunday mornings will find the “station gardeners” out keeping the grounds cleaned up and blooming.



Other opportunities to enjoy gardens in the Merion area include the Barnes Arboretum and the Narberth Garden Tour. The Barnes Arboretum is often overshadowed by the museum collection, but the Arboretum is quite impressive by itself and it can't be moved! **The Narberth Garden Tour is scheduled for June 13 this year, and always features spectacular gardens – some of which are actually in Merion.**

**For those who are interested in gardening, the Narberth Area Garden Club (NAGC), which meets monthly from October through May, always welcomes new members.** The NAGC is a local community of gardeners who have come together to exchange ideas, plan programs, and enjoy field trips to area gardens. There is also an online discussion group for seeking advice, sharing ideas and exchanging plants. For more information, go to the website at [www.narberthpa.org/nagc/index.htm](http://www.narberthpa.org/nagc/index.htm).

Another resource for gardeners is **Narberth Greens** ([www.narberthgreens.org](http://www.narberthgreens.org)) **which is a community-based initiative to encourage and support environmentally friendly living.**

This winter more than ever, spring can't arrive soon enough!

## WHY GREEN BUILDINGS MAKE SENSE FOR LOWER MERION

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### So what does it cost to go green?

According to the Turner Construction Study, the added construction cost for green certified level was .66%, the silver level was 2.11%, the gold level was 1.82% and the platinum level was 6.5%. Also the cost is dropping. As the experience of the architect and contractor increases, the costs drop with each project.

In the coming weeks, you will see your commissioners debating and hopefully passing a resolution which advances green building ideas for the benefit of the environment and reducing the cost of government. At its best, government can be an example for others to follow.

## HISTORY OF BARNES ARBORETUM

Continued from page 4

Today, the trees and shrubs continue to be replaced as they succumb to old age. Gardens last about 50 years before they need refurbishing. The goal of the Barnes Arboretum is to continue to open the gardens to the public and the school will continue to teach as it has continuously since 1940.

## UPDATE ON THE MCA WEBSITE

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### 4. Links reorganized into sections

- Emergency Telephone Numbers
- Your Representatives (elected officials from LM Township Commissioner to President of the United States) with email or contact links.
- Lower Merion Township
- Montgomery County
- Philadelphia
- United States
- United States Postal Service (with hours)
- Education & Libraries (with hours)
- Entertainment
- Media (including frequency of publication and contacts)
- Neighboring Civic Associations and Community Organizations
- Organizations
- Travel  
Air, Bus, Train
- Utilities

Michael Seiden serves as the webmaster for the site. He can be contacted at [mcawebmaster@gmail.com](mailto:mcawebmaster@gmail.com)



## YOUR LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS

By Kevin Murphy



The Merion community is fortunate to be served by two outstanding fire companies that respond when our residents need assistance. Both Union Fire Department and the Narberth Fire Department seamlessly cover the territory within the boundaries of the Merion Civic Association. The fire service in Lower Merion and Narberth is a volunteer system (with the exception of a few housemen) consisting of seven fire companies which respond in minutes to emergency calls. The volunteer firemen help to keep our taxes lower than surrounding areas who have full time paid fire services. Although the system is volunteer based, the fire fighters have certifications and training comparable to paid, full time fire fighters. In addition to being the first responders to our neighborhood, both Narberth and Union assist the surrounding areas with back up, equipment and fast teams as needed.

In 2009, Union Fire Fighters responded to 277 fire calls and Narberth responded to 228 calls. These calls occur at any time of the day, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. While most people are at work or sleeping, the average fire call has 17 fire fighters responding. These responders are people from our community: local business owners; coaches; and civic minded individuals that interrupt their family time to assist others in need. If you have ever had the need to call the fire department for help, you would be amazed by the prompt response, the professional service and their years of experience. It is nice to know there are electricians responding to electrical fires and other trades that greatly assist the local fire companies.

**How can you help your local fire companies?** Recruitment and retention of fire fighters is essential along the Main Line. Every volunteer association can use a helping hand. If you can't give of your time, a donation to the local fire company fund drive is always appreciated. Last year, the percentage of people donating to the Narberth Fire Company from within their district was 32%. Narberth responds to 75% of their calls from outside of the Borough of Narberth. In 2009, our community had two notable fires at 191 Presidential and Valley Road that had amazing fire service response for which citations were issued afterwards. In my several years with the local fire companies, I have met many fine community servants that put service above self. If any residents have specific questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at [KMurphy@merionfireco.org](mailto:KMurphy@merionfireco.org).

## WHAT DOES MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION DO FOR YOU?

The Association works closely with the **Lower Merion School Board, Lower Merion Township, Federation of Civic Associations, Narberth Fire Department, Lower Merion Community Watch, St. Joseph's University Planning and Development Committee, the Barnes Foundation & Arboretum** and other local organizations to assure that Merion residents are informed and have a voice on issues impacting Merion residents such as development, zoning, transportation and traffic concerns.

The Association holds their Annual Meeting each October which includes a local prominent speaker, dinner and the Association President's report of the annual accomplishments. Additionally, the Merion Civic Association publishes and mails a newsletter to all Association members to keep the residents informed on important community issues and events.

The Association sponsors Spring and Fall Clean Up Days to beautify the railroad and post office grounds including maintaining the window boxes and plantings surrounding the area.

The Association sponsors various concerts and speakers throughout the year including:

**Neighbor to Neighbor** where notable Merion residents share their expertise and experiences with the community;

**Historical Walking Tours** provided by local historians providing a glimpse of the rich and fascinating history of the area;

**Flag Day Concert on the Lawn** on the Merion Tribute House lawn featuring our own talented and entertaining Merion Concert Band;

**New Residents Reception** where new residents can become acquainted with their new neighbors and community issues.

The Association monitors the condition of Merion's streets, trees and road conditions.


## MERION BOTANICAL PARK

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As such, the **Botanical Society holds two Clean-Up Days every year – one in the Spring (this year, scheduled for 9:30 AM on Sunday, May 2) and one in the Fall (usually in late September).**

The entire Merion community is invited and encouraged to participate in these half-day events, where you can meet your neighbors and join in the effort to preserve this valuable community asset.

The Botanical Society also sends out a Spring and a Fall Solicitation Letter inviting Merion residents and friends to become members of the Society. **The Merion Botanical Park is a jewel of Lower Merion Township** and we all want to keep it that way. It is a wonderful example of how our community can work together to enhance and preserve the green space in Lower Merion Township.



**MERION** CIVIC ASSOCIATION

*"To be nation right and state right we must first be community right."* — EDWARD BOK/Founder, 1913

97 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE MERION AREA COMMUNITY 1913-2010

PLEASE JOIN THE MERION ASSOCIATION

Enclosed are my/our dues for 2010:

<input type="radio"/> \$15.00 Individual	<input type="radio"/> \$25.00 Couples	_____ Name
<input type="radio"/> \$35.00 Family	<input type="radio"/> \$50.00 Business	_____ Address
<input type="radio"/> \$100.00 Institutional	<input type="radio"/> \$100.00 Patron	_____ City / State / Zip
<input type="radio"/> \$500.00 Sponsor	<input type="radio"/> Other	_____ Phone Number / Email

Make checks payable to **MCA** and return with this form to: **Merion Civic Association, PO Box 263, Merion, PA 19066**  
Merion Civic Association is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your dues are tax-deductible. Please ask your company if they will match your donation.

Merion, Pennsylvania 19066 | 610.664.0441 | email: [mca.secy@merioncivic.org](mailto:mca.secy@merioncivic.org)



# MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION

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19066  
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## THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION

### OFFICERS

President	<b>Scott Feuer</b>
1st Vice President	<b>Kevin Murphy</b>
2nd Vice President	<b>Renee Hill</b>
Treasurer	<b>Bob Marmon</b>
Secretary	<b>Helen Guy</b>

### DIRECTORS

Ann Bagley	Marjorie Mudrick
Randy Blakeney	Martin Piltch
Bruce Eisenberg	Adena Potok
James Ettelson	Frances Quinn
Judith Flaks	Janet Rutzel
Peter Gardner	Michael Seiden
Brian Gordon	Jim Stevenson
Scott Kalner	Nancy Tompkins
Harriet Lam	Lauren Wylonis
Carol Lavoritano	

### NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Marjorie Mudrick, editor  
Scott Feuer, design & layout  
Helen Guy, distribution

### MEETING TIMES

Meets at 7:45 PM (7:30 PM in winter months) the fourth Tuesday of each month except December, July and August at the Merion Tribute House. (Call 610.664.0441 to confirm time).



To address the association, please call 610.664.0441 and request to be added to the agenda. Community members are always invited to attend the meetings, contact the Association with a concern or submit articles of community interest to the newsletter.

Send to: Merion Civic Association  
PO Box 263, Merion, PA 19066  
P 610.664.0441  
E [mca.secy@merioncivic.org](mailto:mca.secy@merioncivic.org)  
[www.merioncivic.org](http://www.merioncivic.org)

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR



### MARCH 12 • 8:00 - 9:00PM • BRYN MAWR FILM INSTITUTE

Topic: The Art of the Steal

Don Argott's new documentary about the struggle for control of the Albert C. Barnes Foundation's \$25-billion art collection has fanned the flames of controversy since its premieres at the Toronto International Film Festival and the New York Film Festival.

### MARCH 14 • 3:00 - 5:00PM • MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION: NEW NEIGHBORS RECEPTION

Merion Tribute House, 625 Hazelhurst Ave, Merion  
Merion Civic Association Board welcomes our new neighbors.

### APRIL 17, 18 AND MAY 1, 2 • 8:00AM - 5:00PM • LOWER MERION CLEANUP WEEKENDS

Koegel Public Works Complex, 1300 N Woodbine Avenue, Penn Valley  
Free disposal of Refuse and Recyclables.

### MAY 2 • 9:30AM • MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION AND MERION BOTANICAL PARK SPRING CLEANUPS AND PLANTINGS

Merion Train Station, Rain Date May 16th  
Bring clippers, loppers, other garden tools, & gloves.  
Open to the public. Refreshments provided.

### MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

Merion Tribute House, 625 Hazelhurst Ave, Merion			
Tuesday, March 23rd	7:45PM	Tuesday, May 25th	7:45PM
Tuesday, April 27th	7:45PM	Tuesday, June 28th	6:15PM

See other updates on the Merion Civic Website under Calendar  
[www.merioncivic.org](http://www.merioncivic.org)