



January 2020

***Philadelphia's Pencoyd Iron Works:
Forging Along the Schuylkill River***

This is the title of a new book that will be published in June 2020 by Kevin Righter. Kevin tells the story of one of the most innovative companies in the United States in the 19th century. It developed into a unique facility for making and rolling structural steel for bridges and buildings. Two cousins – Algernon and Percival Roberts - 5th generation Americans of Welsh descent, started the company in 1852. Initially making railroad car axles with wrought iron and then perfecting the process of open hearth steelmaking, Pencoyd became known worldwide for their innovation and high quality products many of which are still in use today. Pencoyd developed an assembly line of steel making, hammering, forging, rolling, straightening, drilling, riveting, and pressing along a half-mile stretch of the Schuylkill River. The book, with many illustrations, aims to highlight the diverse talent and workmanship that developed and flourished at the forge for nearly 100 years.



The Historical Society and along with Sean McCloskey (Penn Real Estate Group Ltd) have assisted Kevin with his research. We are appreciative of the years of research that Kevin has invested in this project. This original work will add a new chapter to understanding the industrial heritage of Lower Merion. More details to follow!

Camp Discharge Update

Historical Society board member Brad Upp and his research partner, Jim Remsen, are making great strides in their project to write up the history of Lower Merion's long-vanished *Camp Spring Mill/Camp Discharge*. The duo recently reached a book deal with Sunbury Press, a Harrisburg-area publisher with a special interest in Pennsylvania history. This will result in a co-authored, fully illustrated book being released in about a year's time. More details to follow!

Camp Discharge – largely forgotten today – was a Union army camp built in the final year of the Civil War on land in Gladwyne, overlooking the Schuylkill River. It was

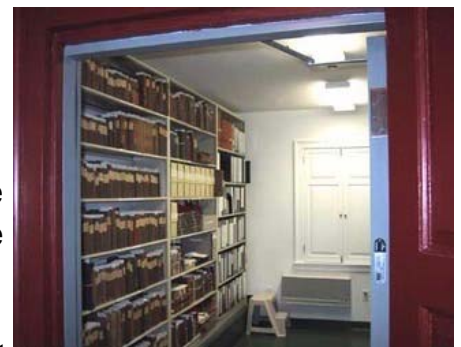
erected quickly and taken apart quickly, lasting little more than a year. Its name suggests its purpose, to house and process Pennsylvania soldiers who were being discharged out of the military. While this was not a heroic function, many of the soldiers sent to the camp were heroes. They had fought in multiple battles. Many were wounded or ill. Hundreds had suffered in Confederate prisons. Many had become separated from their regiments in the chaos of war and straggled into the camp alone or in small groups. Their stories are the primary focus of the book.

Jim, who is pictured on the left, is a Bala Cynwyd resident and a retired *Philadelphia Inquirer* journalist, and the primary writer of the book manuscript. Brad, who is pictured on the right, is a Gladwyne resident and is continuing his literally ground-breaking excavations which have yielded dozens of artifacts at the site. The camp sat on a remote corner of the *Philadelphia Country Club*, which has permitted Brad to do his dogged digging for several years.



Treasures From Our Archive Room

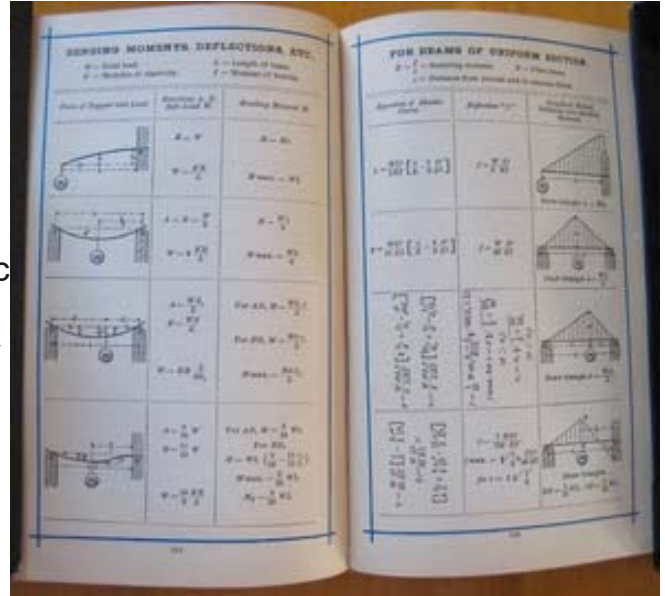
This is the *eighth* of a series of articles that highlight some of the rare and more interesting items in our archive collection. The Historical Society's primary asset is our library collection that comprises more than 38,000 items. Part of our collection is housed in the Archive Room; these are the rare and extraordinary items that need special care and attention. We're proud of our heritage and are fortunate to have so many primary source materials that relate to Lower Merion and Narberth. We are excited about the publication of these two upcoming books involving the history of our community. Below are two items from our Archive Room that relate to the *Pencoyd Iron Works* and



the *Civil War* in Lower Merion.

Pencoyd Iron Works

From our collection of salesman's hand books is this 1900 leather bound publication. "Pencoyd Iron Works, A & P Roberts & Company, Steel in Construction," Twelfth Edition, 6 3/4" x 4 1/2" with 344 pages and 35 color plates with a frontispiece of a panoramic photograph of the river view of the factory that is 4" high x 29" in length. The book cover is engraved with the name "Sam'l Sewall."



The Civil War in Lower Merion

In 1861, the Pennsylvania state legislature passed an act for the organization of the *Reserve Volunteer Corps* to consist of 15 regiments: 13 of infantry, one of cavalry, one of artillery. The men were to be enlisted for three years. Lower Merion men were eager to respond. Most of them were farmer's sons.

Complying with the act, prominent Lower Merion citizen Owen Jones (1819-1878) began raising a company of cavalry, the first unit that Montgomery County sent to the army.

Lower Merion was a good area for cavalry recruiting, since a large part of the population was accustomed to dealing with horses. Recruits were mustered into service in August 1861 at Athenville (the former name of Ardmore).

This is Lower Merion's antique hand-sewn Union Flag showing 35 stars (48"x 87"). The 35-Star Flag became the Official United States Flag on July 4th, 1863. A star was added for the admission of West Virginia (June 20th, 1863) and was to last for 2 years. Holding the flag is Ted Goldsborough (on the left) and George Lonsdorf (on the right).



Mission Statement of the Lower Merion Historical Society

The Lower Merion Historical Society is an organization dedicated to *Preserving Our Past For The Future*. This is accomplished by stewardship of local history, education of the community, preservation of historic resources and outreach to promote awareness of the cultural heritage of the Township of Lower Merion and the Borough of Narberth.

