

## HISTORY, ART, AND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:

### A Unique Story from Montgomery County

BY FOSTER C. HILLEGASS

THE Commissioners of Montgomery County believe that County government is not something remote from the life of the average citizen. The organization chart of the services available to the citizens of the County not only includes the governmental background, the sources of revenue, and the cost of operation, but shows development in the last fifteen years of a long-range, comprehensive Park System Plan.

In a historic setting Upper Perkiomen Valley Park was established in 1939 with facilities for active recreation. It now consists of 553 acres, and in 1952 nearly a million visitors made use of its picnic grounds, boating, and swimming facilities.

At the other end of the County a tract of 134 acres was presented to Montgomery County by the late George Horace Lorimer, along a wooded section through which flows historic Pennypack Creek, now known as Lorimer Park.

By 1949 the growth of population placed an increased load on that important part of government, the administration of the law. The County Commissioners were confronted with the problem of renovating the existing court rooms. Two of them had been in service for a major part of the time since the first section of the Court House was built in 1854.

The lighting system was modernized, acoustic material was installed, new furniture was purchased, and historical mural panels were installed, thus creating not only more efficient court rooms for the Court Officers in the transaction of their business, but more attractive surroundings for the ever-increasing number of taxpayers that are required to attend Court Sessions.

In conformity with the "Pay as you go" policy of the Commis-

sioners, and the essential continuous use of the Court Rooms, the work was spread over a four-year period.

The rich historical background of Montgomery County provided source material for a mural panel in each of the five Court Rooms. Effort was made to select material singularly significant to Montgomery County.

Large groups of high school students are brought by bus to the Court House to observe the functions of county government. At stated times court procedure is explained by the sitting judge. The installation of historical mural panels was another step in furtherance of this program.

George M. Harding, a resident of Lower Merion Township, Montgomery County, is the artist to whom we, as Commissioners, turned over the responsibility of designing and painting the murals. The mural painter worked in collaboration with the associated architects, George Trautwein, R.A., and E. Lane Crawford, R.A. The Consulting Engineer of the County, Henry P. Friend, was liaison officer.

The five Montgomery County Judges, President Judge Honorable Harold G. Knight, Honorable George C. Corson, Honorable Wm. F. Dannehower, Honorable E. Arnold Forrest, and President Judge Honorable J. Burnett Holland, Orphan's Court, reviewed the developed studies.

County Commissioners Frederick C. Peters, Raymond K. Mensch, and I spent interested hours in consultation when the results of historical research, and the step-by-step studies, were presented.

In 1951 the Commissioners, upon recommendation of the Montgomery County Park Board, acquired Mill Grove Farm, a tract of approximately 150 acres. A singular sequence of events followed the installation of the Audubon Mural Panel in Court Room "B," just prior to this date. It was the centennial year—Audubon died in 1851—and it was possible to purchase at that time the historic landmark. It is the Commissioners' plan, over a period of years, to restore the Mansion House, built in 1762, to its original state. The farm and adjoining land will be open as a shrine and wildlife sanctuary. The land across the Perkiomen and separated from the shrine and wildlife sanctuary will be developed as a park area for use by residents of Montgomery County

for recreational activities. This part of the Montgomery County Park System serves another section of the County midway between the Upper Perkiomen Valley Park and Lorimer Park.

In all these projects the historical heritage of Montgomery County has been preserved and recorded. Also, recreational needs are provided for the ever growing population of our County, not only today but of tomorrow.

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### JEAN HENRI BOUQUET?

More information on Bouquet's service in the Sardinian army has just been supplied by Dr. Paul-Emile Schazmann, whose article on "Henry Bouquet in Switzerland" appeared in *PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY*, July, 1952. According to this data which was found in the State Archives at Turin, Italy, by Mr. Max F. Schafroth, *Jean Henri Bouquet* of Rolle became a Second Lieutenant in the Bernese Regiment of Diesbach in the Sardinian service on June 1, 1739, replacing Bartholomé Bouquet, who had resigned. On August 10, 1744, he was promoted to a lieutenancy, in place of a Lieutenant Pélissié, who was killed at the Battle of Pietralonga on July 19. On March 8, 1745, he was made *Aide-Major en second* (roughly equivalent to regimental adjutant), and he left the regiment on May 1, 1748. The military records add precision to what was already known, but what are we to conclude from the fuller name, Jean Henri?