THE HAVERTORD-AND-MERION ROAD TO PHILADELPHIA: A WALK OVER AN OLD TRAIL

By CHARLES R. BARKER

In 1770, a petition was presented to the Court of Quarter Sessions of Philadelphia, praying the opening of a road along the east bank of the Schuylkill, from Levering’s Ford to Righter’s Ferry. The preamble of this petition recites:

That on the first settlement of the said Township [Lower Merion] & other Townships adjoyning Many of the Inhabitants made use of the ford on Schuylkill near Anthony Levering’s Mill which being on experience found beneficial to the Inhabitants they according to the Mode of those times (no law of the Province being then provided for laying out roads) Opened a Road from Haverford to the said Ford And from thence on the East side of the River to the Ferry (now Peter Righter’s). ¹

Although not presented until a long lifetime after the facts above recited, this petition stands as the only official record of the laying out of one of the earliest roads in the Province. Its significance lies in the fact that, just below Righter’s Ferry (as it was known to the petitioners) this road joined the Ridge road, thus opening, from Haverford to Philadelphia, a way which antedated the road laid out from Haverford to Powell’s Ferry (Fairmount) in 1705. Ridge road, which, it is believed, follows an Indian trail, was in use very early, and it is plain that no small portion of its travel came from the west side of Schuylkill, as evidence its connection, via ford and ferry, with Spring Mill, Young’s Ford, Hagy’s Ford and Righter’s Ferry roads (to mention the chief of them), leading through Lower Merion. So it is readily understood that, when dwellers in Haverford sought to open the most con-

¹ Philadelphia Quarter Sessions Court Road Docket 3, p. 435.
venient route to town, they should connect with Ridge road, the already established highway to Philadelphia.²

The actual opening of the road was probably a very simple matter. Even when a road was laid out at the county’s expense, the Court’s order was usually to “cut and clear,” which meant that the trees would be felled, the trunks removed, and the stumps left standing; but when, as in this case, it was at private expense, it is not to be supposed that farmers with land enough of their own to be cleared, would give more time than necessary to the highway, so probably only a line of blazed trees marked the course of the road through the open woods, in which, we are told, a horseman could ride anywhere, the undergrowth having been removed by successive burnings.

With this as the genesis of the Haverford-and-Merion road, we start to relocate it, just as a colonial court sometimes did with a road which had become “lost” in the woods—except that, in this case, it is the identity of the road which has become lost under a multiplicity of names. Our point of departure is Oakmont, in Haverford township, Delaware county, at the point where the road opened from Darby to Radnor, in 1687, is joined by the one we are about to trace—or, as the finger-boards would have it, at the intersection of Darby and Eagle roads. For it is under the latter name that we here find the Haverford-and-Merion road. But first, let us have a look at the neighborhood.

The greater part of Oakmont is built upon the large tract patented in 1684 to Thomas Ellis, and extending from the center line (or “street”) of the township to Cobbs creek; but along the south side of Eagle road, from Darby road to the creek, there is a strip of land which was patented to William Howell in 1682. A few

²Colonial Records, II. 206; The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, L. 357, et seq.
farms, with a shop or two, made up this neighborhood, until the steam railroad from Fernwood to Newtown Square was built, and Grassland station (later called Cassatt) was established. In 1902, the electric railway connecting Ardmore with 69th Street Terminal was completed, one of the stops being Eagle Road. Later, this call was changed to "Hansell's Corners." Then the tracks were swerved to their present position, and the station known as Grassland, now Oakmont, was built. Oakmont is the "capital" of Haverford township, the Commissioners' Hall having been built here, in 1917.

We now follow Eagle road northeastwardly. Just beyond Oakmont station (right) is the township's first high school (left), built 1911, and enlarged, 1917, but now superseded as a high school by ampler buildings at Brookline. Farther along appears Haverford Friends' burying ground (right), and not far beyond is Haverford Meeting-House. Haverford Monthly Meeting at first included the preparative meetings of Schuylkill, Merion and Haverford, and its first meeting was held in 1684, at the house of Thomas Duckett, on the west bank of Schuylkill, above Market Street bridge. Meetings continued to be held in private houses until the completion of Haverford Meeting-House, where, also, the first marriage was solemnized, 1st month, 20th, 1690. In 1700, a more substantial meeting-house was raised, which was rebuilt in 1800, and still stands. The burying-ground was laid out in 1684, by George Painter and William Howell, it being on Howell's land.

Next to the grounds of Haverford Meeting, is the cemetery of St. Denis' Roman Catholic Church (right), and opposite the cemetery is the older churchyard, ad-

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8 George Smith, History of Delaware County, p. 149, and plate facing p. 201.
joining the church itself. The ground for St. Denis’ was donated by Dennis Kelly, proprietor of the nearby mills. He had come to this country a poor man, but after working at his trade of weaver, at what is now Ardmore, he borrowed money, and purchased a mill seat on Cobbs creek, on which he built a small woollen-factory. This venture proving a success, he finally bought the Humphreys grist-mill, and changed it to a cotton- and woollen-factory, which he named “Castle Hill Mills.” He became known as one of the most successful manufacturers of cloths in Pennsylvania, and furnished to the United States government, on contract, large quantities of army and navy goods. His real estate holdings, especially along Cobbs creek, were very large; his farm house, now a modernized dwelling, stands at Beechwood, as does his little school-house, built before the advent of public schools, on Powder Mill lane, and now also become a residence; while Manoa road, in Lower Merion, was formerly called Kelly’s lane.

Dennis Kelly died July 21, 1864, aged nearly 85. Besides giving the land for St. Denis’, he was the largest contributor to the church, which had been established chiefly for the accommodation of employees of his mills. The original building, raised in 1825, but superseded by the present one, was the first Roman Catholic church building in Delaware county.4

At the foot of the hill, the road crosses, one after another, Cobbs creek, with the site of Castle Hill Mills (left); the Philadelphia and Western Railway; and the Haverford road. When the Philadelphia and Western was built, in 1905-07, its stations were given names suggesting those of nearby Main Line towns; thus West Overbrook, Ardmore Avenue, Haverford College, and so on. The station at Eagle road (right) was,

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4 Henry G. Ashmead, History of Delaware County, pp. 570, 574.
in the same way, named *Wynnewood Road*, to the confusion of local geography.

The Haverford road, which crosses our path at right angles, appears one continuous highway, but it is really made up of two, the right-hand branch being the road laid out to Powell’s Ferry, in 1705, while its continuation on the left came later, and was perhaps opened as an outlet to the Humphreys lands and mill, not far upstream. Daniel Humphreys, the immigrant, received a patent, in 1703, for a tract of 241 acres there. Of this land, a portion, with house and mills, descended through an entail to his great-grandson, Edward D. Humphreys, who, after extinguishing the entail, sold the property to Dennis Kelly, in 1821. The house of General Andrew Atkinson Humphreys, distinguished Civil War engineer, and great-great-grandson of Daniel, the immigrant, can almost be seen, in the same direction, from the cross-roads—where, however, we have already tarried too long.⁵

No sooner are we across Haverford road, than our trail, without having deviated one iota, changes its name from Eagle road to Wynnewood road, thanks to the name of the station just passed. The suburb of Ardmore Park (left), however, suggests the bigger and busier town beyond. Since crossing Cobbs creek, and until County Line road is reached, our way lies through the tract patented, in 1688, to John and Charles Bevan.

Crossing County Line road, one passes from Delaware (formerly Chester) county to Montgomery (formerly Philadelphia) county, and from the first-class township of Haverford to that of Lower Merion, whose “capital” is Ardmore. With the change of authority, comes a different system of streets and street-names, so that our trail now becomes *West* Wynnewood road, although we are traveling eastward! The way now lies

⁵ Delaware County Deed Book O, pp. 360, 364; Frederick Humphreys, *Humphreys Family in America*, p. 999.
across the corners of the tracts patented in 1687 to David Powell and David Lloyd. In later years, a large part of these, together with some lands adjoining, was acquired by the Knox family, who carried on farming here for four generations. Their farm sixty years ago comprised more than two hundred acres, extending for three-quarters of a mile along the right-hand side of the road. On the left-hand side, in the middle of the last century, Samuel Saunders owned and occupied a small farm. "Sam," it turned out, was a counterfeiter, and was finally arrested here by United States marshals, tried, convicted and sentenced to a term in prison. At the time of his arrest, diligent search failed to discover much but his "money-making" machinery—tools, molds, etc.; but in recent years, while excavations for building were being made in the old garden, a large quantity of spurious half-dollars was unearthed there. After his release, Saunders returned to this farm, where he died in 1861. He was interred at Friends' burying-ground, Haverford. The old farmhouse, which was reached by a lane on the line of Athens avenue, was torn down in 1905.

At the corner of Athens avenue, the road bends southward about thirty degrees, to follow the division line between the tract of David Lloyd (already referred to), and that of Francis Lloyd (left). Francis Lloyd's hundred acres, which he acquired in 1686, passed through several ownerships until, in 1760, the house and about sixty-six acres were purchased by John Atkinson, victualler. The property was described as fronting on the road leading from Merion to Haverford. Four years later, the owner advertises the property, which includes "a neat well-finished Frame House, two Stories high" with "a clear Prospect to the River Delaware off of an Eminence." In Septem-

ber, 1765, it was purchased at sheriff’s sale by John Hughes, who was evidently acting for the trustees of the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, to whom, in October, he reconveyed it. Services were presumably held in the house (probably identical with the William G. Lesher house, which stood until 1892), for Aaron Coates advertises his farm in Haverford, in February, 1769, as “within a mile of a Dutch Lutheran Church;” but in the following April (1769), the congregation, unable longer to hold the large property, were obliged to dispose of all but 133 perches, at the corner of Argyle road, which was then the farm lane. On this small lot, in the same year, a log church was built. Interments had already been made in the adjoining ground for several years past. In 1787, the congregation raised the stone school-house, now standing in the corner of the cemetery. An extension to this school-house, built in 1800, replaced the former log church. Again, in 1833, came the third, and last, church building to occupy this site, and with the laying of its cornerstone, the church was, for the first time, named St. Paul’s. This building was, in turn, demolished, after the completion, in 1875, of its successor, the present building, on Lincoln Highway.⁷

Through all these vicissitudes, the school-house has stood, practically unchanged, and has answered to various names. Originally intended as the parish school, for the education of the children of its members, it must, as the only school in the neighborhood, have been made available, sooner or later, to all, especially as the church membership gradually dwindled. Before many years, it was depending on the slim thread of neighbor-

hood subscription, and picking up such teachers as it could. Joseph Price mentions in his Diary, in November, 1797, having met John Sutherland—"he keep School at Church very Drunken Silly fellow." Three years later, Price records, "Of with Barny Madden an Irishman to Several Subscribers to make a School at the Church;" and a week after this, "At the Church one Madden begun to keep school." In the following February (1801), "Hugh Knox & I Round about trying to make a school for Maddin again at Church, but faild." This is the last heard from Price about the school until, in January, 1803, he notices the death of Madden—"keep school at Church Last winter."

Little is learned of the succeeding period, but an old resident recalled, in 1911, having visited the school, where her two elder sisters attended, some time in the 30's. The teacher at that time was William Sibley, who later became widely known as a civil engineer. The sessions lasted all day, and (she thought) continued all the year round. The establishment of the public school system, at about this time, put an end to the pay school in this building. Reverend Titus, pastor of the church in 1860, refers to the building as being a lecture-room at that time. It is also recalled as a Sunday-school. In our own time, it has been used chiefly as a receiving-vault.

Four inscribed stones, displayed in the walls of this old school-house, have aroused some discussion as to their so-called "hieroglyphics." Their explanation is probably simple: the initials are those of men who furnished labor or material towards the building, while the "hieroglyphics" are a rough attempt at the tulip decoration so familiar in the Pennsylvania German crafts. As to the initials, an old paper, found among the church records, shows that Michael Fimble, Peter May, George Fimbel, William Stadelman, Lewis Knoll, Conrad Goodman, Matthias Hoffman, Michael Herse,
and others, labored on the building. Now, on the two stones beside the door, appear, among others, the initials "W.S.", "C.G.", "P.M.", "L.K.", "M.H.", "M.F.", etc., and on the date-stone in the gable, "G.F.", with the swastika symbol. Other members of the congregation presumably represented by their initials are Martin Miller, Simon Litzenberg and George Horn.

By successive purchases, the cemetery has grown to its present extent. The oldest tombstone decipherable, some years ago, bore the date 1765; several are dated 1766. The house at the corner of Athens avenue is the former parsonage; the smaller one, next, is the home of the sexton. From the latter building, during the World War, the lights at Hog Island, ten miles away, could be plainly seen, while on a clear day, there is the same prospect into the blue distance of New Jersey, as in Atkinson’s time.

In striking contrast to the little Lutheran schoolhouse is the modern Wynnewood Road School, which stands just across the road (right). The latter building faces on Argyle road (formerly part of Church road), which here crosses our trail. We have already noticed Argyle road as a farm lane in 1769, but much before that time, it had formed part of a trail which, crossing the site of Ardmore, led to John Roberts’ mill, and thence to Rees ap Edward’s ford on Schuylkill. This road, being wholly "on sufferance," was stopped by some property-owner, about 1750, and the Court, though petitioned, refused to re-open it on its original course.


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When Argyle road was widened, in 1930, it was necessary to remove the remains of several persons buried just inside the cemetery fence. Among these was Max Hugo Hoehne, murdered near Elm (now Narberth) station, in 1876.

Another quarter-mile forward brings us to what was once Maple Grove, the farm of Henry Morris, of Philadelphia. The group of quaint little houses still standing here (right) must certainly have been the forerunner of all the "English villages" in this country. From this point to Lincoln Highway (formerly Lancaster Turnpike), our road was swerved, about 1882, northward to its present position; but its original course may still be traced through the estate of Isaac H. Clothier, who laid out his country-place, Ballytore, on Maple Grove Farm.

Because of the swerving of the road, just referred to, it is necessary to turn right, along Lincoln Highway, in order to regain our trail. In doing so, we pass old Wynnewood school-house (left), built 1836, burned and re-built 1878. Near this site was erected, in 1834, a log building which was the first public school-house in Montgomery county, its establishment here having been due to the efforts of Charles Kugler, a public-spirited citizen and surveyor of Lower Merion township, and a member of the Legislature, 1842-3 and 1843-4. Mr. Kugler having been elected a school-director of the township in 1834, was thereafter continuously re-elected until 1870. Not less than his service to the township in this and minor offices, was his service to his fellow-townsmen in positions of trust. He also presented the ground on which, in 1875, was erected the present building of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

*Philadelphia Quarter Sessions Court Road Docket 3, p. 151; Ardmore Chronicle, August 22, 1930, legal advertisement; Tombstone of Max Hugo Hoehne; Robert C. Moon, M.D., Morris Family of Philadelphia, II. 699.
When the use of one-story school-houses was discontinued by the township, the Wynnewood school-house was abandoned. Within recent years, it has been used as a pottery shop; it is now a realtor’s office.¹⁰

The Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike Company was incorporated in 1792. Work on the section through Lower Merion must have begun late in that year, or early in 1793, for Joseph Price, in his Diary, records making a visit, in January, 1793, to “Streeper’s” (the “General Wayne” tavern), where nine men, workers on the Turnpike, were then boarding; and this is Price’s first mention of the road. Later, he speaks of following the surveyors through the “fairfield,” which seems to have been the Price family’s way of designating the extreme southern part of their property—upon which we are now about to enter. After the construction of the Turnpike, Joseph Price built upon it, in 1798–1800, a house, which he christened the “William Penn,” and there he started tavern-keeping. His sign, he tells us, was painted by “B. Drinker,” of Philadelphia. Later, this tavern was leased to others; in our own time, it has been known as the residence of N. Parker Shortridge.

Joseph Price was a great-grandson of Edward Price (formerly spelled ap Rees, then Prees), who settled in this part of Lower Merion in 1682, when he purchased land here, later adding to the original tract, until the whole totaled two hundred acres. From Lincoln Highway eastward, our trail—which we have now picked up again, under the name of East Wynnewood road—divides the Price estate centrally, for a mile and a half.¹¹

Approaching East Wynnewood road in a great curve

¹⁰Date-stone, Wynnewood School House; M. Auge, Lives of the Eminent Dead, etc., 1st ed., 1879, p. 298; Pearce, Early Recollections of Ardmore.

The Haverford-and-Merion Road

from the left, the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Railroad finally meets it at Wynnewood station. From Ardmore to Fifty-Second street, the Main Line follows the old right-of-way of the West Philadelphia Railroad Company, which, having been incorporated in 1835 to provide a route to avoid the Inclined Plane at Belmont, actually laid out and graded the railroad, but, for financial reasons, was unable to complete it. The line of this railroad at first intersected the Haverford-and-Merion road at three points. The high railroad embankment wiped out two of these intersections; the third, at Wynnewood station, was made a grade crossing, from which the highway was then extended eastward along the north side of the railroad. But later, the dangerous grade-crossing was eliminated, by carrying the highway along the south side of the railroad, from Wynnewood station to the present underpass, at the north end of which, one again joined the former road.  

So that, between the present railroad stations of Wynnewood and Narberth, almost nothing remains of the original road. However, a portion of its name survives, for after passing (left) the two Wynnewood stations—first the present one; then its predecessor—and turning left through the underpass, we find that the road from that point eastward is called Haverford avenue, which can be only a contraction of Haverford-and-Merion road. On Campbell’s Plan, it is called Church road, no doubt from its having led to the old Lutheran church, of which we have already spoken. Haverford avenue is one of the highways of the borough of Narberth, which was laid out as Narberth Park, in 1887, and incorporated under its present name, in

1895. Indian creek (formerly Price’s run) was at the same time trained to supply a tiny lake, in the center of which was a tinier island—but both have since given place, first, to a nursery, then to the Narberth Community Grounds (left). In 1835, according to Campbell, this land was owned by “Mrs. Price,” while that on the right (and south of the railroad) belonged to “W. N. A. Price”—showing that, after a century and a half, the land was still in the family name.

About a quarter-mile beyond Indian creek, is the business section of Narberth, with Narberth station (formerly Elm) on the right. Half a mile beyond the station, our trail, instead of continuing to Montgomery avenue, as now, originally turned a right-angle to the left, and reached what is now Meeting-House lane, at the corner of the grounds of the Merion Meeting-House. The earliest mention found of this “missing link” is in a deed of April 23, 1709, from Edward Rees to Robert Jones, for a lot of ground which we may briefly describe as follows:

Beginning at the south-east corner of the Meeting-House stable, thence by “a settled road” to a corner post by Haverford road, thence by Haverford road (land of Edward Jones); thence by land of said Edward Rees, thence by the grave yard belonging to the Meeting-House, to the place of beginning; containing one acre.

As the Robert Jones lot is easily identified as that which later became the “General Wayne” property, we have here a precise location of the old highway, which, after passing along the north-eastern side of the tavern lot, and of the Merion Friends’ burying-ground, turned sharp to the right, at the north-east corner of the latter, and, following the course of the present Meeting-House lane, kept on towards the Schuylkill. The burying-ground, at that early date, was much smaller than at present; subsequent additions have carried it far beyond the line of the road on which it once
bounded. A brief inspection of the present burying-ground will show that the earliest interments must have been made in the portion nearest the meeting-house. The latter, looking across its graves, faced the old road, and so it becomes plain that what is now the side of the Meeting-House, was once the front, and vice versa. This explains why both the Meeting-House and the "General Wayne," which would be "square" with the old road, are out of line with Montgomery avenue, which, although opened very early as the "road to Radnor," must have been of later date than the Haverford-and-Merion road.

The subsequent extension of both Meeting-House lane and Haverford avenue into Montgomery avenue, have completely masked the disappearance of this "missing link" of the original road. That the latter was in use, however, as late as 1766, is proved by Court proceedings of that year relative to a petition for the opening of a road from Levering's mills, on Schuylkill, to Ford road. In denying the petition, the Court states that there is "no hindrance to the petitioners for said Road of a free communication of about forty perches through John Prees's Land to a road called Harford [Haverford] Road which leads into the Conostogoe Road [Montgomery avenue] near Merrion Meeting House."¹³

Reference to B. H. Smith's map shows that this "link" of forty perches forms the extreme north-eastern boundary of the Price (Prees) tract.

The south-western boundary of the tavern property is marked by a row of towering sycamores. Evidently a similar row once bordered the old road which formed the north-eastern boundary, for the two trees which

are still standing close to that side of the stable, form a straight line with a third, standing in the burying-ground. A remnant of the ancient road still does duty as a driveway leading to the rear of the tavern, while beside the stable there is every appearance of the existence of a roadway, perhaps not so long ago. Reference to John Hills' Plan, of 1809, reveals the fact that this part of the "missing link" (from Haverford avenue to Montgomery avenue) still existed at that date.

Robert Brooke, in his survey of the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike (begun November 3, 1806), notes down, at a certain point, "the intersection of a road leading from Marion Meeting House on the Old Lancaster road to Haverford road and Meeting House," and adds, "This road leads nearly in a direct course from the T [turnpike] road to Levering Ford."

Crossing, in imagination, Montgomery avenue, and passing through the burying-ground, we come to Meeting-House lane, and are ready to resume our eastward course. The date-stone of Merion Friends' Meeting-House informs us that it was "Built 1695; Repaired 1829," but it must have been some time after the latter date that the road which now runs beside the Meeting-House came to be called "Meeting-House lane." A deed of 1763, by which Joseph Tunis conveys to the trustees of Merion Preparative Meeting a piece of land for the extension of the burying-ground, calls it "the road leading to Schuylkill ford." As late as 1835, it is called "Manayunk road," but in 1851, the property map of the township gives the thoroughfare its present name.

For nearly half a mile, Meeting-House lane follows the division line between the lands of Hugh Roberts (left), patented to him in 1681, and those of Edward Jones (right), patented in the following year. It was at the house of Hugh Roberts (famed as a preacher among Friends), somewhere on this land, that a num-
ber of the early marriages of neighboring Friends were performed, 1686-1691, before the building of the present meeting-house. Dr. Edward Jones, Hugh's neighbor, was the leader of the first company of Welsh settlers that came into what is now Lower Merion. To this company, there was laid out, in 1684, the original township of Merion, which covered a nominal 2500 acres in the eastern corner of the present township, of which it occupied about one-fifth. Holme's Map of Pennsylvania indicates this tract as "Edward Jones & Compa. being 17 Families." The notice of the death of Dr. Jones, and of his burial at Merion, in February, 1737-8, forms the earliest item of local news thus far discovered by the writer.

Meeting-House lane and its continuation, Levering Mill road, together divide almost centrally the Jones purchase. The tract of Hugh Roberts was sold, in 1707, by his son and heir, Robert Roberts, of Maryland, to Edward Rees, in whose descendants, the Price family, title remained vested for more than 160 years. Then, a large part of it was acquired by the Belmont Driving Club, which, in 1876, began to lay out there a one-mile race track. A hotel (for racing makes dust, and dust makes thirst!) was also established on the grounds. The whole was surrounded by a high board fence, with a row of fine trees shading the front. On days when "heats" were to be run, there was always a preliminary "heat" at Elm station, when the patrons of racing, arriving by train, raced one another, in joyous

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John Hills, Plan of the City of Philadelphia and Environs, 1809; Philadelphia Deed Book H 19, p. 84; Campbell, Plan of West Philadelphia Railroad, 1835; Records of Radnor Monthly Meeting; William J. Buck, History of Montgomery County Within the Schuylkill Valley, p. 28; Thomas Holme, Map of Pennsylvania; The American Weekly Mercury, February 21–28, 1737–8; Papers and Addresses, Lancaster County Historical Society, XX. 269.
and uproarious disorder, for first seat in the 'bus for Belmont.

After a notable career, Belmont Driving Park went out of business. For years, the dilapidated fence, the shabby buildings, and the small forest which sprang up within the oval of the track, made it a forlorn spot. Then came the suburban development, Merion Park, which, an improvement in every sense, has effectually blotted out all but the word "Park," and the "racy" recollections of the neighborhood.\(^{15}\)

Were we to follow our old trail as it once was, we should keep straight on to Bryn Mawr avenue; then right, to Levering Mill road; then left over the latter. But this, one can no longer do, for in recent years Meeting-House lane has been swerved, by a curve southward, to meet Levering Mill road at the corner of Cynwyd Public School. This building, erected in 1914, stands on a part of the grounds of a much earlier school-house—Lower Merion Academy—which it faces across the campus.

The founder of Lower Merion Academy, Jacob Jones, came of a long-lived family. His grandfather, Edward Jones, chirurgeon (of whom we have lately spoken) reached the age of 80—some say, an even greater age. Jonathan Jones, father of Jacob, lived to be almost 90, while of Jacob himself, an eye-witness relates that, at the age of 89, he attended on horseback, with his wife (who was six years younger) the funeral of a relative in the next township. He reached the ripe old age of 97, dying in 1810. By his will, made in 1803, he devised to a board of trustees a tract of about eight acres, for a free school for the poor and orphan children of both sexes living in the township,

without regard to creed. To build the school-house, he left £800; to employ a teacher and to support the school, £500. On this financial foundation, the building later known as the Lower Merion Academy was raised in 1812. A day- and boarding-school was conducted there for a few years, but the boarding feature was soon given up, and the school was then named "Lower Merion Benevolent Institution," under which name it continued to flourish until merged, in 1836, with the public school system. The building continued to be used as a township school-house until entirely outgrown by neighborhood requirements, and for many years it continued to be governed by a board of trustees, on which have served many well-known men of the township.  

The little group of houses, facing the Lower Merion Academy and the Cynwyd Public School across Bryn Mawr avenue, was known for many years as Academyville. We are now at the corner of Academyville, and are about to follow eastward the Levering Mill road. For somewhat more than half a mile, this road traces the division line between the tracts granted, in 1681 and 1682, respectively, to Robert David (right) and William ap Edward (left). Robert David, dying in 1732, left his real estate entailed, and his heirs (two granddaughters and two great-grandsons), fifty years later, divided his farm of 280 acres, which extended from the Schuylkill westward for more than a mile, and included a large part of West Laurel Hill Cemetery.

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Our trail steadily dips into the little valley by which it must descend three hundred feet, in somewhat more than a mile, in order to reach the Schuylkill. With the same destination in view, the Schuylkill Valley branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad is approaching in a curve from the right, and just beyond Belmont avenue, road and railroad come side by side to Barmouth station. The green slopes of two cemeteries face one another across the valley into which railroad, highway and stream have now converged. Farther down the track, old West Laurel Hill station, which was succeeded by Barmouth, and is now dedicated to other uses, may still be seen. Before the coming of the railroad, in the eighties, the woollen industry flourished in this valley, where several factories drew their power from Vine creek. The Levering Mill road, instead of stopping short (as it does today) just beyond Barmouth station, continued straight onward down the valley, passing through farms and a small mill settlement, until it arrived at the bank of the Schuylkill. Here the traveler, in the old days, turned up-stream in order to reach Levering's ford. This part of the road later became a link in the River road, which in time extended along the entire Schuylkill front of Lower Merion, but which has now been abandoned from Green Lane bridge to City avenue.

Levering's ford lay just to the eastward of the concrete bridge which now carries the Schuylkill Valley branch across the river, and, like the bridge, followed a diagonal course. The landing place on the left bank was at or close to the present Levering street, Manayunk. The ford took its name from the family of Wigard Levering, who, in 1691, bought a large part of the site of Manayunk. In 1770, it is called the "ford on Schuylkill near Anthony Levering's Mill," and in 1777, Captain Montrésor, chief engineer of the British
Army, lists "Levering’s" among the fords of the Schuylkill between Potts’ Grove and Philadelphia.\(^1^8\)

The founder of Levering's mill was Jacob Levering (son of Wigard), who, in 1753, bequeathed a saw-mill and fifteen acres of land, "in Merion Township," to his son Anthony. The latter then bought 100 acres adjoining, and later established a grist-mill, also. To promote carriage by water, he cut a canal from mill to river, but for some reason not clear, he seems to have met with opposition in his efforts to open roads from the mill to public highways. In 1774, he offered the whole property for sale, but the outbreak of war probably prevented his disposing of it. He died in 1788.

Just a mile separated the landing-place of Levering’s ford, on the left bank of the Schuylkill, from the ferry known for a half a century as Righter’s (although earlier, as Robeson’s), the road following practically the course of the present Main street in Manayunk. Not far beyond the ferryman's house, the traveler reached Ridge road.\(^1^9\)

From Haverford Meeting-House to the city of Philadelphia, via Levering’s ford, the distance was twelve miles. By the action of the Provincial Council, in 1705, opening the road from Powel’s ferry to Goshen, via Haverford Meeting-House, this distance was shortened by two or three miles, besides which, steep grades were eliminated, and a ferry substituted for a ford. In the preceding year, a road had been opened from Powell’s to Merion Meeting-House. Here we see the tendency to abandon the upper fords in favor of the ferries.

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\(^1^8\) Philadelphia Quarter Sessions Court Road Docket 3, p. 435; John Levering, Levering Family History and Genealogy, pp. 93, etc.; Pennsylvania Archives, 3d Series, III. 474; Collections of the New York Historical Society, 1881, p. 410.

lower down the river, which finally crystallized in the convergence, at High Street ferry, of most of the main roads leading west from the Schuylkill. This movement marks the passing of the Haverford-and-Merion road as a main artery of travel. Its subsequent disintegration into half-a-dozen differently named roads probably dates from the building of Fairmount dam, which made Levering's and other fords, things of the past; so that the Haverford-and-Merion road, like the road in the ancient anecdote, no longer "went" anywhere but henceforth stayed where it was!\textsuperscript{20,21}

\textsuperscript{20} Colonial Records, II. 111-2, 206; Philadelphia Quarter Sessions Court Road Docket 2, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{21} To avoid repetition, the property maps particularly used in this article are, Benjamin Hayes Smith's map of "Haverford Township," forming Plate 8 of his Atlas of Delaware County; his map of "Lower Merion Township," forming part of his Atlas of the Welsh Tract (Manuscript Division, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania); John Levering's Map of Lower Merion Township, 1851; and G. W. Hopkins & Company's map of "Lower Merion Township," forming part of their Atlas of Montgomery County, 1871. Much of the other data is based on the writer's knowledge of the neighborhood, gained during a residence there of thirty-seven years.