#### Occasional Photos by Dennis McGlade

# Denis McGlade captures summer colors in our planting beds and fall colors in our neighborhood.



All summer, stunning white caladium leaves dominated the plant beds which frame our building.



Gingko trees in the neighborhood welcomed the arrival of autumn when their leaves turned a brilliant gold.







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## Two Updates: The History Museum and Painted Bride

Lynn Miller

#### Philadelphia's History Is in Drexel's Hands

n last spring's issue of I on the House, I discussed the possible fate of the enormous collection of artifacts held by the Philadelphia History Museum following its closure at the Atwater Kent building near us on S. 7th Street. Six months later, it's a near certainty that Drexel University will assume ownership of the entire archive, some 130,000 artifacts now owned by the city. At a public meeting in September, both museum officials and Drexel administrators sought to project a benign future for the collection under such an arrangement. If the Philadelphia Orphans' Court approves the plan, Drexel will assume responsibility to evaluate the collection, deaccessioning those items not deemed of historical importance, then loan out segments to local institutions for exhibition. Meanwhile, the university would work to digitize the entire collection, making it available online for access by the public. Schools, libraries, and other appropriate organizations would be encouraged to borrow items for exhibitions of their own, although Drexel itself would be a "significant location" for exhibits curated by its staff.

The meeting's organizers clearly were intent to reassure those critical of the announced intention of the city to transfer these valuable assets to a private institution. Attendees no doubt came away with a clearer sense of



Public meeting in September, 2019, where museum officials and Drexel administrators addressed the collection's future.

the resources Drexel intends to devote to this enterprise and of the commitment on the part of its leaders to "enable more objects than ever before to be seen and appreciated by the public," in the words of Drexel's president, in commentary he provided to *The Philadel*phia Inquirer following the meeting. They also were assured that the city will retain the ability to petition for return of the collection if things don't work out with Drexel, and that Drexel also may petition to give it all back to the city. The city reportedly has appropriated funds to Drexel to subsidize the transition for five years. After that, taxpayer-supported funding would cease.

In spite of these assurances, nagging concerns remain, especially for those aware of the long and fruitless effort by the museum's trustees both to raise an endowment sufficient to sustain its growing collection and to find a partner institution to help support its mission. It's because of those failures that we will no longer have a headquarters building to house this

unique collection. Even if Drexel's stewardship is exemplary in all respects, the collection will be distributed across the city, making it impossible for interested residents and tourists to visit a core exhibit at a central site. Moreover, in the words of a Philadelphia historian and expert in this field, "outsourcing curatorial responsibilities may amount to relinquishing them," especially if target institutions lack the budgets and expertise to care for what is entrusted to them.

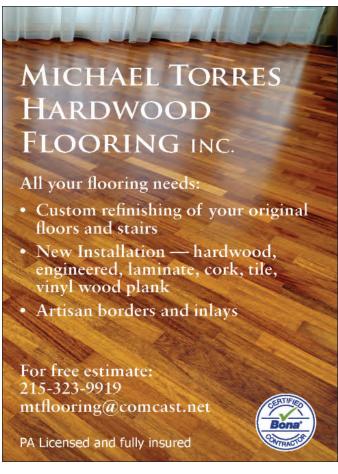
Those supporting the new model have buttressed their case with the argument that the old facilities at the Atwater Kent permitted only a fraction of one percent of the vast archive to be displayed there at one time, and that far more can be made available for display at a variety of sites. They spoke of how schools, in particular, can better acquaint their students with this history, once much of it is available in neighborhoods near them. As they see it, the goal is a "democratized museum without walls." Yet, these undoubted benefits nonetheless need

to be balanced against the question of how it will be possible for the public to gain anything like a holistic understanding of Philadelphia's history when its artifacts are parceled out all over the city. A museum without walls may also be one without a recognizable physical presence in the city.

And other issues remain. I've not considered the need for Drexel to raise an adequate endowment specifically to support and preserve the archive. Without that commitment, it would be unconscionable for the city to give up this treasure. That should be at the heart of the Orphans' Court consideration of this move. Nor has there yet been any resolution to the question of what's to become of the Atwater Kent building, which was the museum's home from its inception in the 1930s. Designed by John Haviland in 1825, it's an important part of Philadelphia's architectural heritage, and its exterior is protected. At the moment, its future is unknown.

#### Painted Bride Mosaics Are Saved

In last summer's issue, I discussed the fallout from the decision by the Painted Bride's board of directors to sell its building at 2nd and Vine Streets to a developer. It was expected that the buyer would raze the structure to construct a multi-story condo, thereby destroying the iconic mosaics that cover the entire façade in a fanciful continued on page 17





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continued from page 15

work of art. The Bride's board had argued that the developer's \$4.8 million offer would endow its operations to the point that it could work with arts organizations all over the city, that being its declared new mission. Even so, many in the arts community objected to the Bride's move. Then, late in September, the Philadelphia Orphans' Court blocked that sale specifically because of the threat to the "priceless" mosaics created by Isaiah Zagar in the 1990s. That's where the matter stands as I write this, so I must speculate as to what may follow.

One possibility is that the same developer might agree to revamp its plans in a way that would keep the murals intact, since that would comply with the judge's order. But that would probably mean lowering its initial offer, which might or might not satisfy the board. That could be the most obvious path forward, but only if the board concluded that the price was acceptable.

The Bride's directors could also reopen the bidding to any who were willing to redevelop the property while maintaining the Zagar art. Again, it seems unlikely that the bids of new players would match the original one of the real estate company. Remember that the Lantern Theater had offered \$2.3 million and the promise to maintain the structure's exterior just as it is while adapting the interior to its own needs

as a leading theatrical producer. Whether that offer will be made again remains to be seen. Other organizations might join the bidding, although it is still hard to imagine that any wanting to preserve the art would match the \$4.8 million bid.

The Painted Bride's board might also choose to appeal the judge's decision to the Commonwealth Court, although that would mean they would have to face both big legal fees and an uncertain outcome in court. Finally, they could decide simply to remain where they are and try to continue as they have in the past. That would surely look like swallowing defeat from the directors' point of view. It

could, however, maintain the status quo while cultivating interests in the property from others in both the forprofit and non-profit sectors.

Here's an intriguing footnote: the Atwater Kent building's exterior is protected under a preservation ordinance. The Painted Bride's exterior, though nominated for historic landmark status, was denied that designation last year when the Historical Commission's chairperson voted no after a tie vote. Yet the decision last month by the judge of the Orphans' Court required the building's exterior to be preserved, which seemed to give it the same protection as historic landmark status. Or did it? Stay tuned.

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## The Philadelphia History Experience at City Hall

Paul Steinke, Executive Director, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

he closure of the ■ Philadelphia History Museum in 2018 means that there is now no place to go to learn about the rich history of the city of Philadelphia. This is an almost unthinkable situation in a city that considers itself the beating heart of a modern, economically and culturally robust international metropolis. In a city whose legacy includes that of a Holy Experiment in religious freedom, the Birthplace of American Democracy, and the Workshop of the World, the closure of PHM has left a void.

In the wake of the museum's closure, City government is preparing to turn over its collection to Drexel University, which is planning to take responsibility for its storage, conservation, curation and management. As currently conceived, this transfer of responsibility leaves open the possibility that some portion of the collection may one day be displayed on the Drexel campus. But that is by no means a certainty.

There should be a place where residents and visitors can go to learn about the history of Philadelphia. Why not on the ground floor of Philadelphia City Hall?

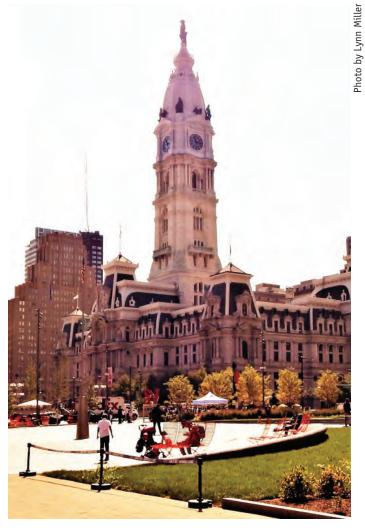
Installing a Philadelphia history exhibit at City Hall makes a lot of sense. The building stands as a widely recognized, even iconic symbol of the city, easily accessible to all, including the physically handicapped. It's even topped by a statue of the city's founder. The

building is publicly owned, so costs of occupancy should be lower as compared to a non-public building. Moreover, the ground floor contains rooms that are generously proportioned, with high ceilings and many original architectural details.

The "Philadelphia History Experience" at City Hall need not be a complex, artifact-heavy and overly expensive proposition. Rather, it can be heavily constituted by colorful and attractively designed, twodimensional, wall-mounted interpretive panels, along with several interactive video screens. Interspersed within the exhibit can be a selection of carefully chosen artifacts that help to tell the story of the city. Among them could be several items that are most closely associated with the City's founding: Penn's Plan for Philadelphia, his 1701 "Charter of Privileges" and the famous wampum belt that symbolizes Penn's treaty with Native Americans.

A present, the ground floor of City Hall is where several public-facing functions of City Hall are housed: the 1st Judicial District, Department of Records, Register of Wills, the City's 311 Center, and the City Hall Visitors Center. Surely some of these functions could be relocated, either within City Hall or to another nearby public building.

An analogous history exhibit opened in 2017 in the grand, Victorian city hall of another world city:



Belfast, Northern Ireland. There, a wonderful city history exhibit along the lines of the foregoing is open at their city hall, which like our own, is a lavish Victorian building constructed in the late 19th century. Watch a one-minute YouTube video to get a sense of it.

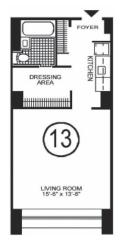
Realizing the Philadelphia History Experience at City Hall would require a combination of City, corporate and philanthropic support. But surely a city as proud and historic as Philadelphia can find a way to turn this modest idea into an essential part of the experience of our city.

There should be a place where residents and visitors can go to learn about the history of Philadelphia. Why not on the ground floor of Philadelphia City Hall?

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## Happy 91st Birthday, Dr. King!

#### Martha Cornog

he scrambled eggs I in my scooper looked good, even if they were cold. Around me, a teens-throughadults assortment of folks fumbled with scoopers, knives, huge basins of veggies and eggs, and stacks of flat, tan dough to assemble en masse into a gazillion breakfast burritos. It was Martin Luther King Day 2019, and I'd joined folks from my local alumni association to volunteer in MANNA's kitchen. Next to me labored a stringer for the *Inquirer*, a fellow alumna. MANNA's chefs, we had learned, are tasked with preparing 95,000 meals per month to bring free, nutritious fare to Philadelphians battling life-threatening illnesses. The organization depends heavily upon some 6,500 volunteers, in teams like ours and singly.

King's birthday was first celebrated as a national holiday in 1986, as signed into law by President Ronald Reagan. But it had taken a petition with six million signatures to get the law through Congress—several

southern senators had led strong opposition. In 1994, President Bill Clinton signed new legislation to make the holiday a day of volunteer service in King's honor. Still, the South's legacy lingers. Even today, Alabama and Mississippi combine the holiday with the birthday of—ironically—Confederate general Robert E. Lee.

Why not think ahead to your 2020 New Year's resolutions, and resolve to join with other volunteers to honor King's legacy on January 20th, the next MLK Day? Volunteering does you good, too, regifting the volunteer in mind and body (www.psychbytes.com/ psychological-benefitsvolunteering). And you'll have plenty of company. The Greater Philadelphia Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service is the largest in the country, starring more than 150,000 volunteers in some 1,800 community projects for 2019, and 2020 will be its 25th year.

Where might you volunteer? It's likely that you have

an affiliation now with an organization running an MLK Day of Service project. Your place of work? House of worship? Alumni association? Civic association? If not, check out the website of Global Citizen, a nonprofit that nurtures civic engagement and hosts the Greater Philadelphia MLK Day of Service. Through its sister website, www.mlkdayofservice.org/ you can sign up to volunteer at any of the service projects registered on the site, or create and register your own project. A search feature lets you plug in categories, preferred zip code, and keywords.

Another option for finding a volunteer gig in January is AARP (see link below). AARP Philadelphia offers a variety of volunteer opportunities in the city, from librarian at a North Philly Giving Library, to docents for leading historic property tours, to Habitat for Humanity construction helpers. These would be mostly continuing engagements, but note that the



AARP Volunteer Wizard online module lets you select "occasionally" to tailor your request to short-term assistance. And you might want to come back later and do more!

Or you could volunteer around the Thanksgiving holiday—MANNA, for example, welcomes drop-ins for that day. For additional possibilities, The Philadelphia Inquirer runs a story each November listing charitable organizations needing extra hands for holiday events. (See link below for last year's list.) Watch for this year's suggestions soon. No doubt many of these charities would also welcome a hand for the MLK Day of Service.

Happy 91st Birthday, Dr. King! ■

#### Links

AARP: www.local.aarp.org/philadelphia-pa/volunteering/?cmp=CSN-KNC-AARPLOCAL-ECPPAIDSEARCH-PHILLY-2018-G00GLE Inquirer: www.inquirer.com/philly/blogs/things\_to\_do/thanksgiving-volunteer-charity-donate-2018-philadelphia-20181107.html

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## A Fall Comfort Food Dinner

#### Jane Hickman

If you roast a turkey on Thanksgiving, you may be looking for a way to use leftover turkey. This recipe includes turkey, peas, and mushrooms in a creamy, cheesy sauce. It will feed six to eight people, so cut it in

half if you want to make less. If you do not have turkey on hand, this recipe also works well with meat from a rotisserie chicken. The last time I made this for dinner, I had leftovers for lunch for a few days.

Serve with a simple green salad and your favorite warmed baguette. We also include here a delicious, homemade pumpkincheese pie, compliments of Judy Lamirand.

## Chefs' Corner

Note: If you have a favorite recipe, we would love to test it and put it in this column. Send your recipes or requests to jhickman@upenn.edu. Thank you!

#### Turkey Tetrazzini

- 12 ounces spaghetti, snapped in half
- 6 tablespoons butter, divided 8 ounces white mushrooms, sliced
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 to 1½ cup chicken stock
- 2 cups half-and-half (or 1 cup fat free milk and 1 cup heavy cream)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons cooking sherry
- 3 cups chopped cooked turkey (or chicken)
- 1 cup frozen green peas, defrosted
- 3/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese 1/3 cup grated Gruyere cheese

#### Topping:

- 1/2 cup regular or panko breadcrumbs
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese

Bring large pot of water to a boil. Add 1 tablespoon salt and pasta. Cook to al dente and drain. Reserve ½ cup cooking liquid, in case the tetrazzini is too thick.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

While water comes to a boil, add 2 tablespoons butter to a large skillet over mediumhigh heat. Add mushrooms and sauté until brown. Remove mushrooms to a bowl and set aside.

Add remaining 4 tablespoons butter to skillet along with flour. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly for 2 minutes.

Gradually add chicken stock and half-and-half, whisking to avoid lumps. Cook until smooth and bubbly, about 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. (You may



Photo by Jane Hickman

need to turn up the heat to medium to get it to bubble. But no need to boil.)

Add salt, thyme, pepper, nutmeg, lemon juice, sherry, and mushrooms.

Stir in turkey, peas, and cheeses. Check for seasoning and add more salt and pepper if needed.

Add cooked pasta to the skillet, or, if not enough room, combine both in a large bowl. Stir to combine. Add some of the reserved

pasta water if you think it is too thick.

Transfer mixture to a greased 9 x 13-inch baking pan or casserole dish.

In a small bowl, combine the breadcrumbs, melted butter, and 1 tablespoon Parmesan cheese. Scatter on top of the casserole.

Place in oven and bake for about 30 minutes. It should be brown on top, but broil briefly if desired.

#### Granny Farkas' Old Fashioned Pumpkin-Cheese Pie

#### Crust:

- 1¼ cup graham crackers, crushed
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 cup melted butter

Combine and press into pie pan. Bake at 350° for 5 minutes.

**Note:** Filling measurements are for a 9"pie. If you have a 10" pie pan, you can use 8 oz. of cream cheese and 1½ cups (the whole 15 oz. can) of pumpkin.

#### Eillina.

- 6 ounces cream cheese at room temperature
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1½ tablespoons flour
  - 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger and cloves
- 11/4 cups canned pumpkin
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

**Optional:** Sprinkle top with chopped salted peanuts or walnuts before baking.

Cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Beat in eggs, flour, and spices. Slowly blend in pumpkin. Stir in vanilla and lemon juice. Pour in shell. Bake at 350° for 50 minutes. Then raise the oven temperature to 425° and leave the pie in the oven while it pre-heats again and you mix the topping.

#### Topping:

1 cup sour cream 2 teaspoons white sugar



Combine sugar with sour cream. Spread over baked pie. Return pie to 425° oven and bake 3-5 minutes only. Transfer to refrigerator immediately and chill before serving.



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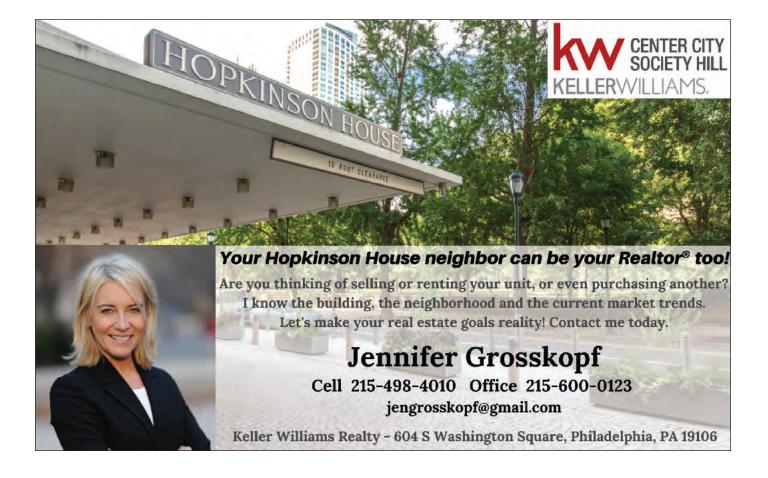
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