

# ON THE WEST SIDE

THE UNIVERSITY  
CITY HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY



May, 2010

<http://www.uchs.net>

Mike Hardy, Editor

## HISTORIC POWELTON



In the March, 2010 “On the West Side” a piece on “Mapping Poweltonians” introduced **Doug Ewbank** and some of his initial research on historic **Powelton Village**, its architecture and the people who occupied the homes and properties in this **University City** neighborhood. It focused on an interactive map located at [www.poweltonvillage.org](http://www.poweltonvillage.org) (Click on “history” then on “interactive property map” which provides a “finger pointer” for some 350 houses for which research findings, including old photographs, about the property, and drawn from about three censuses, about the people who knew the house together with their relationships).

At the end of that introductory piece, we promised to provide you with an extended version of Doug’s presentation, which will occur on Saturday, June 5, from 4:30 to 6 pm, for UCHS members and the general public when Doug and his partner, **Scott Ryder**, give an extended version of their exploration of “**The People of Powelton Village in the 19th Century: Their Homes and Their Businesses**” which they describe as follows:

“From its beginning in 1860, Powelton Village was the home of many Philadelphia businessmen who

were attracted by large lots, tree-lined streets and easy access to center city. They were bankers, insurance company executives, small business owners, and captains of industry.

The presentation will explore the reasons they chose Powelton. The presentation will include pictures of their homes and businesses, brief biographies and discussions of their role in Philadelphia society. We will include brief discussions of the architectural styles their homes reflect.

The presentation will include two prominent Powelton families: **the Wilsons** and **the Sellers**. **Wilson Brothers & Co.** was one of the most prominent architectural and engineering firms in the country. Their output included such prominent buildings as the **Drexel Institute**, several buildings for the **Centennial Exposition**, and the **Reading Terminal Headhouse**. We include photos above of the **W. H. Wilson House at 3501 Powelton Avenue**, their family home, and below the **B. K. Jamison House at 3912 Walnut Street**, one of several other homes they designed and built in Powelton and **West Philadelphia**, some, like these, which are no longer standing.

There were two branches of the Sellers family living in Powelton. Both were inventors and manufacturers. We will discuss some of their major accomplishments and show pictures of their homes (some no longer standing), their businesses, and the



products that made them famous. The list of other families we will discuss includes **the Poths** (brewing), **the Du Ponts** (chemicals), **Alexander Brothers** (industrial belting) and **the Pughs** (drilling bits).”

This free presentation, followed by some light refreshments, will take place in the main sanctuary of **St. Andrew’s and St. Monica’s Church** at **36<sup>th</sup> & Baring Street** in Powelton Village, with plenty of space to accommodate all who come to what should be a fascinating excursion into some truly significant local history.

Douglas Ewbank and Scott Ryder have lived at **315 N. 35<sup>th</sup> Street** in Powelton Village since 1993. Dr. Ewbank is **Emeritus Research Professor** at the **Population Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania**. One of his research areas is the demographic history of the U.S. from 1800-1940. In addition to collecting most of the information now included in the interactive map, he has written more than a dozen short pieces on the history of Powelton for the *Powelton Post* which can be seen at: [http://www.poweltonvillage.org/Powelton\\_Post-bios/PostItems.htm](http://www.poweltonvillage.org/Powelton_Post-bios/PostItems.htm). Scott Ryder is trained in art and architectural history. He works as a consultant to individuals and interior decorators on the arrangement and display of private art collections. He is **Chairman** of the **Powelton Village Historic Preservation Committee**.

## INTERNSHIP

## SEARCH

Impressed with this Powelton research initiative, UCHS is searching for an intern to do further research under the direction of members of the **UCHS Board**, along with Doug Ewing & Scott Ryder, some of which would be added to “The Powelton Village Interactive Map” (see: <http://poweltonvillage.org/PVIMap.html>) which combines

an architectural inventory and a social history of Powelton Village. The basic map image is from the **1927 Bromley Atlas of the 24<sup>th</sup> Ward of Philadelphia** with structures torn down before 1927 shown as red boxes. The information page for each structure offers census data and biographies with links to sources, previous and subsequent addresses of the occupants, and neighboring houses.

The research would also begin updating a 1984 **Inventory** of houses in Powelton Village, completed as part of Powelton’s application to become a **National Register Historic District**. This would include a more accurate dating of each structure and describing its important architectural features. It might also involve a variety of tasks such as checking city directories to find the earliest resident of each house, checking the deed records, noting significant changes and collecting photographic evidence of the current state of each property.

Powelton Village is planning a special issue of the *Powelton Post* for September as part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the start of Powelton, and the research here could be published there and in **UCHS’s “On the West Side.”**

The intern would work for a period between 4 - 8 weeks this summer (depending on the number of hours/week) at \$15/hour, for a maximum stipend of \$2000. To apply, please send a resume, cover letter and contact information for two references by email to **UCHS Board Member, Michael Jones**, [mjones1@swarthmore.edu](mailto:mjones1@swarthmore.edu).

**AND**, this summer, join volunteers, neighbors and amateur gardeners in maintaining the green jewels along **Baltimore Avenue** at a series of Sunday workdays to keep **Baltimore Avenue in Bloom**\_\_\_\_\_



university  
city district®



---

## KEEP BALTIMORE AVENUE IN BLOOM

Spend a few hours on select Sunday mornings planting, weeding, deadheading, and discussing gardens on the Baltimore Avenue Corridor.

*Afterwards, explore the local food scene and grab a bite at one of the many eat-in and take-out venues along Baltimore Avenue.*

**Sunday, May 16:** 10am-noon—40th & Baltimore Ave

**Sunday, May 23:** 10am-noon—45th & Baltimore Ave

**Sunday, June 6:** 10-noon—46th & Baltimore Ave

**Sunday, June 13:** 10-noon—47th & Baltimore Ave

**Sunday, June 27:** 10-noon—49th & Baltimore Ave

### We'll take a heat break and return:

**Sunday, August 1:** 10am-noon—39th & Baltimore Ave

**Sunday, August 8:** 10am-noon—40th & Baltimore

**Sunday, August 15:** 10am-noon—45th & Baltimore

**Sunday, August 22:** 10am-noon—46th & Baltimore

**Sunday, August 29:** 10am-noon—47th & Baltimore

**Sunday, September 12:** 10am-noon—49th & Baltimore

*No experience necessary. For all events, bring gloves and trowels if you have them. Extra tools provided. For details and updates please visit [www.ucgreen.org/events.html](http://www.ucgreen.org/events.html)*



---

## WALKING TOUR

On Sunday, May 23rd at 10:00am, **Mark Silber**, of the **4200 block of Baltimore Avenue**, will be giving a free walking tour of historic **Spruce Hill**. The tour is sponsored by the **University City District** and is one of many that Mark has provided in **Spruce Hill, Baltimore Avenue, Garden Court** and **Powelton Village**. They all testify to his love of the area and his active research into its architectural and social history.

The spotlight will be on the history and architecture of Spruce Hill's leafy neighborhood of **Victorian** homes, which was developed as a mid-nineteenth century "streetcar suburb" of Philadelphia.

The meeting place will be the corner of **Spruce and 40th Street** and will last about 90 minutes. The tour is free, but space is limited. Persons interested should make a reservation by calling Mark at 215-387-4213 or e-mailing him at [buddmar@mail.com](mailto:buddmar@mail.com).

## AND SPECIAL

## THANKS TO

All who recently renewed their dues in **UCHS**, and in particular, to those who gave particularly generous additional contributions as **Sustainers of UCHS**, **Mary E. Blackson** along with **Dan DeRetis, Apartments@Penn, Inc.**

## SEND EMAIL PLEASE

If you haven't done so before, we would appreciate your sharing your current email address, at [info@uchs.net](mailto:info@uchs.net), to receive future issues of "**On the West Side**" and help us save postage, paper and the planet.

---

## *ON THE WEST SIDE*

*THE UNIVERSITY CITY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 31927  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19104*