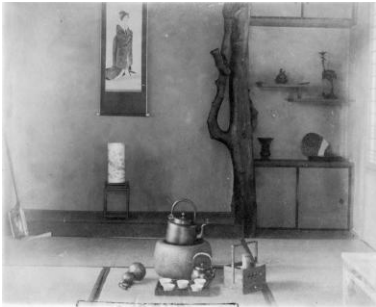


From the Archives

By

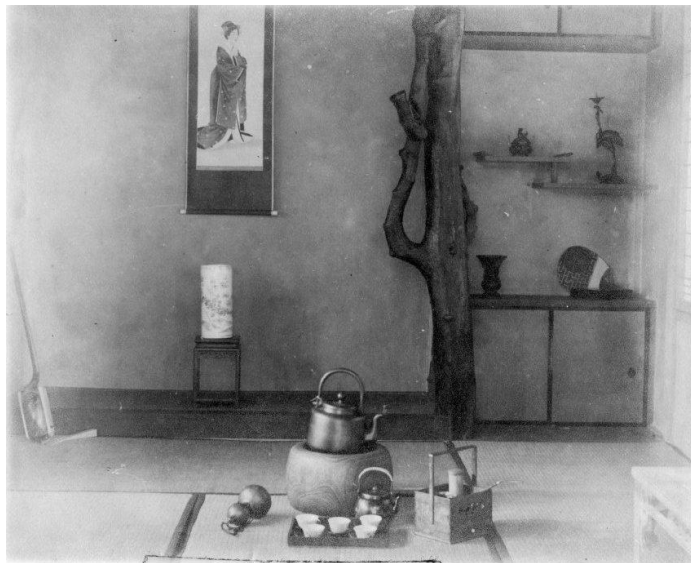
Joyce H. Munro, Morris Arboretum Archives Volunteer

A compilation of articles appearing in the *Morris Arboretum Volunteer Newsletter* in 2020





A Picture Worth 300 Words...The Teahouse



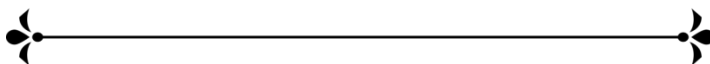
Morris Arboretum Archives, 2004.1.257

In late October, 1889, John and Lydia Morris embarked on a trip around the world with their travel companion, Louise Kellner. They set a brisk pace through Europe and Egypt, then after a few weeks' stay in India, they sped east to their ultimate destination—Japan.

For the next three months, they explored the main island of Honshu at their leisure, consulting English-language guidebooks and employing English-speaking guides for tours and side trips. One of their excursions was particularly noteworthy because of its difficulty. For eight days, they traveled the ancient Nakasendo road between Kyoto and Tokyo via rickshaw and spent each night in a different roadside tea house. By the time they reached Tokyo, they had seen a variety of tea houses, including the diminutive houses at the Horikiri iris gardens.

In Tokyo, John began negotiating with a construction company for a tea house for their new Chestnut Hill estate and during the following weeks, he and Lydia shopped for furnishings for the house. Everything they purchased was “true Japanese style,” Louise wrote in her diary—from square tea-box to hanging scroll. They celebrated the Fourth of July in Yokohama by packing their purchases and shipping everything home. Meanwhile, the completed tea house, a mortise and tenon structure, was dismantled and shipped to Compton, where it was reconstructed by Japanese builders the following winter.

Although the architect is unknown, his artisanship is apparent in the simple, rustic setting for a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. The interior contains elements that reference nature, like the tree trunk serving as support pillar and the brass candlestick shaped as a crane perched atop a turtle. Other furnishings, like tatami mats and cylindrical lamp, help create the ideal place for a serene and respectful tea ritual. View more photographs of the Japanese tea house [here](#).



A Picture Worth 300 Words...

The Highboy



Morris Arboretum Archives, 2004.1.741GN

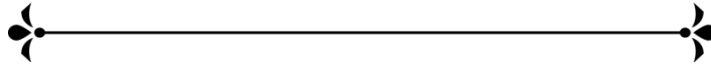
This distinctive piece of furniture, originally called a “high chest of drawers,” was crafted in Philadelphia and never left the city. It was constructed primarily of walnut and adorned with brass escutcheons in the shop of carpenter John Head at 3rd and Mulberry (Arch) Streets. Head’s customer was Caspar Wistar, a prosperous brass button manufacturer, recently engaged to Catherine Jansen. He paid 10 pounds for this two-part chest, matching dressing table and an oval table, for their new home on High Street.

After three decades of use by the Wistar family, the chest was moved to South Second Street, to the home of Wistar's daughter Rebecca, on her marriage to Captain Samuel Morris. Eventually, the piece made its way to the Harrogate section of Philadelphia, to Cedar Grove, the summer home of Isaac Paschall Morris, Rebecca's grandson. Imagine movers carrying the upper chest, then the lower, up the narrow winding stairs of Cedar Grove! For many years, the chest stood in the second floor bedroom, full of the belongings of Mr. and Mrs. Morris and their four children, James, Isaac, John and Lydia.

Years later, when John and Lydia inherited Cedar Grove, they loaned the house to a relative and moved the important pieces of furniture, including the chest, to their summer home, Compton, in Chestnut Hill.

Then—two hundred years after Head created this masterpiece—Lydia Morris returned it to Cedar Grove (which had been dismantled and rebuilt in Fairmount Park as a house museum). There, it became an object of admiration. Today, it's housed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, alongside the dressing table.

Read more about Wistar's high chest and dressing table [here](#). Incidentally, a design feature of the chest has stumped furniture historians for years. Christopher Storb attempts to clear things up in his blog post [here](#).



A Picture Worth 300 Words...
744 Spring-Blooming Bulbs

Bell Telephone Philadelphia, *Oct. 31st 1919*

Flower, Bought of **Hosea Waterer**
Vegetable and Grass Seeds **Seedsman**
Bulbs, Plants, and Importer of BULBS AND PLANTS
Garden Tools, 107 and 109 South Seventh St.
Fertilizers Insecticides *Mail L. J. Morris*
876 Drexel Bldg., Phila.

We give no warranty, express or implied, as to description, quality, productiveness or crop. If not accepted on these conditions goods must be returned at once.

<i>10/11</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>Agapanthus, Miniature of Syracuse</i>	<i>18 00</i>
<i>10/14</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>" Scitrandz</i>	<i>1 25</i>
	<i>12</i>	<i>" Licantea</i>	<i>1 25</i>
	<i>12</i>	<i>" Queen of Pink</i>	<i>2 00</i>
	<i>12</i>	<i>" fo. Fictoria's</i>	<i>1 50</i>
	<i>12</i>	<i>" fo. Grande M</i>	<i>1 50</i>
	<i>12</i>	<i>" L. Syracuse</i>	<i>1 50</i>
	<i>12</i>	<i>" British Queen</i>	<i>1 50</i>
	<i>12</i>	<i>" Enchantress</i>	<i>1 50</i>
	<i>12</i>	<i>" Grand Maitre</i>	<i>1 25</i>
	<i>12</i>	<i>" King of Blues</i>	<i>1 25</i>
	<i>12</i>	<i>" Dutch "</i>	<i>1 50</i>
	<i>12</i>	<i>" Rides Belles</i>	<i>1 50</i>
	<i>100</i>	<i>Marcosus Emperor Mare</i>	<i>7 50</i>
	<i>100</i>	<i>" Emperor "</i>	<i>7 50</i>
	<i>100</i>	<i>" Fictoria "</i>	<i>7 50</i>
		<i>prepaid Expressage</i>	<i>50</i>

NEW 14 2010

PLEASE SEND RECEIPT TO
876 DREXEL BUILDING.

RECEIVED PAYMENT,
HOSEA WATERER
Pha. 11/15/19
Thank you.

58 50

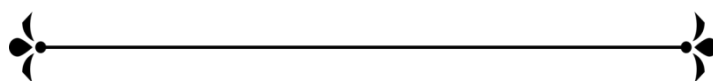
From Morris Arboretum Archives

Spring-blooming bulbs weren't the only items John and Lydia Morris purchased from Hosea Waterer to beautify the grounds of Compton through the years. Waterer's company in Center City Philadelphia supplied everything a gardener would need, from seeds to plants to fertilizers

to tools. Hosea, a descendant of a prominent family of horticulturalists in Surry, England, came to the United States in 1876, to assist with the family company's exhibition of rhododendrons at the Centennial Exposition. The Waterer display covered 3600 square feet and was said to be one of the greatest attractions of the show.

Three years later, Hosea returned to Philadelphia and established the American branch of the Waterer company. Eventually, his sons, Anthony and Harry, joined him in the business. Through the years, all three were active members of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society; in fact, Harry Waterer served as Secretary of the Philadelphia Flower Show during the 1950s. The Waterers were well-known for their trademark exhibits at regional flower shows—"exhaustive displays" of masses of spring blooms framing elaborate structures, like the replica of a house or a Dutch windmill. They were also known for their support of the city's "Flower Mission," a volunteer-led effort by churches, gardeners and women's civic organizations to distribute flowers and fruit to hospitals, missions and homes for the elderly. And each spring, garden lovers were invited to Homebush, the Waterer's farm near West Chester, for a stroll through fields of tulips.

Tulips weren't on the 1919 Waterer invoice for spring-blooming bulbs for Compton, but daffodils and hyacinths were. *Emperor* and *Empress* daffodils had become old favorites by then and *Victoria* was gaining in popularity. *Emperor* and *Empress* can still be purchased, but *Victoria*, which tends to split into tiny bulblets and suffers during hot weather, has practically disappeared on the East coast.



A Picture Worth 300 Words...Professor York's Candid Camera



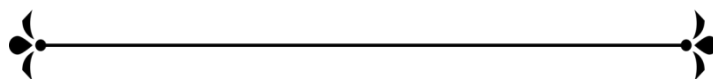
Morris Arboretum Archives, 2004.1.416

H. H. York took this photograph of the weeping European beech near the Orange Balustrade in 1933. York was not a professional photographer but a Professor of Botany at the University of Pennsylvania and Plant Pathologist at the Arboretum. During his 20-year tenure, York took a number of photographs on Arboretum grounds.

Harlan Harvey York was born in Indiana and completed his undergraduate degree at DePauw University and Master of Arts at Ohio State. When York received the Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins in 1911, the field of plant pathology was rapidly expanding and he had no trouble landing a job. By the time he joined the University of Pennsylvania, Department of Botany in 1927, York had held three academic positions, in Texas, Rhode Island and West Virginia, as well as concurrent positions with the Bureau of Plant Industry in Washington, D.C. and the New York Conservation Commission. His change of jobs is somewhat unusual for a plant pathologist in that era, but the focus of his work was always the same—control of tree-killing diseases like blister rust, the most destructive disease of white pines in North America. He once boasted that he had worked in every state east of the Mississippi, tracking brown spot and gall rust.

After retiring from the University at age 75, York moved to Montgomery, Alabama, where he worked with the State Department of Conservation for ten years and authored, *100 Forest Trees of Alabama*. He concluded his book with this statement: “The basic elements that have contributed to our forest’s success have been private ownership; public programs which provided technical assistance; protection from fire, insects and disease; favorable taxes; and availability of diversified markets for forest goods and services.”

Wonder what York would think of the state of the world’s forests today?



A Picture Worth 300 Words...

The Year of the Pandemic



Morris Arboretum Archives, 2004.1.849GN

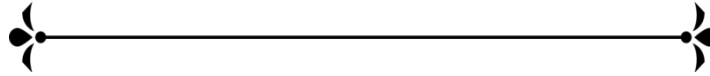
In 1918, when this photograph of English Park was taken, Philadelphia was getting ready for a parade. The “Liberty Loan Parade,” scheduled for September 28, was an enormous event to recognize the nation’s military heroes and drum up support to pay for the war. On that Saturday afternoon, two hundred thousand residents lined the streets for the two-mile-long parade, oblivious to the fact that the Influenza pandemic, rampant in Europe, had reached city limits. Philadelphia paid dearly for the parade—within six weeks, 12,000 residents had died.

Earlier that year, Lydia Morris, had ramped up her involvement in the war effort. She joined the War Service Committee of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, charged with hosting receptions for military officers stationed in Philadelphia. As a “patroness,” she served tea at these weekly events and sang along to popular war tunes during the “Liberty Sing” but she probably left before dancing started around 10 P.M. Lydia was also a board member of a new organization, The Ship Society, whose mission was to promote shipbuilding by selling lapel pins and persuading fellow citizens of the importance of the shipping industry. And she participated in a project of the Society of Colonial Dames to raise money to equip two new hospital ships—the USS *Comfort* and USS *Mercy*.

It’s impossible to know, come parade day, whether Lydia stood along the parade route or sat in the reviewing stand at Broad and Pine or stayed home out of an abundance of caution. After all, she was close to seventy. But, given her war activities leading up to September and her sense of civic duty, it wouldn’t be a surprise to find Lydia Morris front and center, cheering battalions of

marines and sailors and shipbuilders and gunpowder-makers, clapping to the music of marching bands and waving to the 5000 women war workers parading in close order.

Lydia and all of her staff survived the Influenza of 1918 (there is no way to know if any of them were infected). Once the war was over, Lydia took on other civic projects, in keeping with her family's commitment to preserve Philadelphia's past.



A Picture Worth 300 Words...

Dairy Equipment for Bloomfield Farm

By June 1919, the deadliest Influenza outbreak in modern history had run its course in Philadelphia and people were back at work. Manufacturing companies were hiring, though prices of raw materials were rising and stocks were in decline. Hospitals were fully operational again, despite shortages of equipment. Bloomfield Farm was fully operational as well. In fact, most farm operations continued throughout the pandemic, especially milk and butter production. With each Jersey cow giving an average of ten quarts of milk twice daily, 20% of which was cream, butter-making was ongoing.

And when equipment was in short supply, Lydia Morris turned to Dairymen’s Supply Company, providers of “everything for the dairy.” Heading the company was George R. Meloney, a dairyman and inventor of dairy equipment, including a milk cooler, weighing machine and scale. No doubt, his inventions were on display at the 1900 Paris Universal Exposition, where his company won a Silver Medal.

The future of the nation’s dairy industry brightened in 1919, when public health officials called for increased milk consumption in cities like Philadelphia. As a way of endorsing this effort, the U.S. Department of Agriculture declared July 1 “Buttermilk Day.” Not that buttermilk had to be drunk straight; its nutritive properties could be enhanced by adding ingredients like lemon and sugar.

Dairymen's Supply Co. H 3945
 1919 Market Street
 Philadelphia, Pa.
 Manufacturers of and Dealers
 in Everything that pertains to the
 Dairy and Creamery

BESTOV TRADE MARK
 BOTH PHONES
 CABLE ADDRESS "BESTOV"
 PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

SOLD TO Miss L T Morris
 876 Drexel Bldg.
 Phila., Pa.
 P. O. Shipper's Check

SHIP TO _____ FROM ORDER _____
 STA. _____ TO ORDER _____

QUANTITY	TERMS	WANTED	HOW SHIP	DATE REC'D	DATE SHIPPED	PACKED BY	YOUR ORDER NO.
1	30			6/6/19	dlvd		
1		10-gal cylinder churn				6.50	
1		#3 Philabutter worker 20 lb				10.50	
1		Gal B-K				2.50	
1		60 lb P Scale				4.50	
						24.00	

VERMARD, ROSS BROS & MONTGOMERY

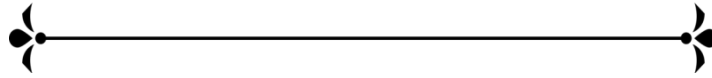
P Chk. 7.00 JUN 9 1919
 Bill is due 2/6
 If paid before 6/16 Net Price 23.52
 Prices Net
 THIS PRICE IS NOT CONDITIONAL UPON DATE OF ARRIVAL. IF IT IS NECESSARY TO MAKE GOODS ARE RECEIVED, TO GUARANTEE DELIVERY.

PLEASE SEND RECEIPT TO 876 DREXEL BUILDING.

RECEIVED PAYMENT JUN 10 1919
 DAIRYMENS SUPPLY CO.
 PER _____ THANK YOU

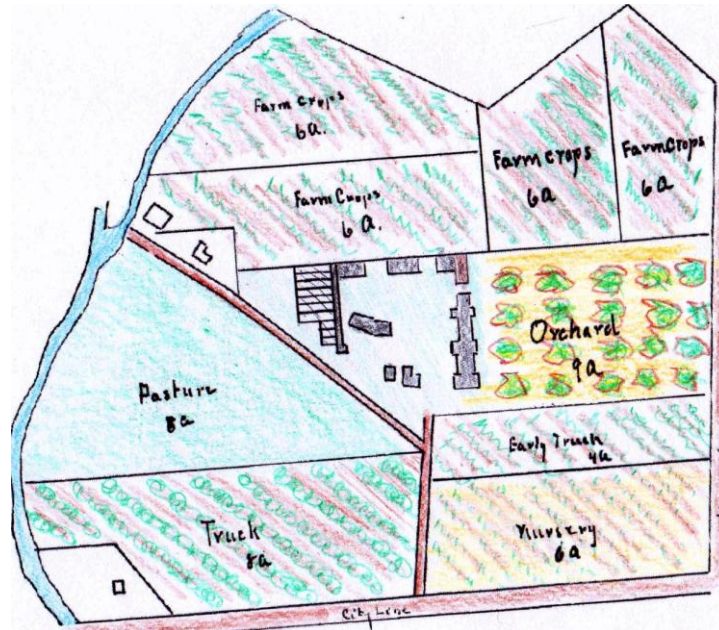
We ship goods in perfect order, after which our responsibility ceases. All claims must be made on receipt of goods. No goods to be returned without our consent.
 TERMS: CASH 30 DAYS. Accounts payable monthly. Please remit for bills due without the formality of a statement.

That June, operations at Miss Morris’s dairy were upgraded with the purchase of a churn, a table for working the butter, and a scale. The dairy may have been small but it played an important wartime role by supplying local families with milk and butter. As to buttermilk lemonade—it’s quite possible Miss Morris’s cook concocted it in the basement kitchen of Compton. After all, the Ag Department proclaimed it was the perfect hot-weather drink.



A Picture Worth 300 Words...

A School at Bloomfield Farm



Sketch of Bloomfield Farm and School by Frank Bartram, 1915 (color added)

In 1914, John T. Morris bought a 72-acre farm called Bloomfield, situated across the road from his summer home in Chestnut Hill. He intended to turn the farm into a school for gardeners, complete with classrooms, laboratories, greenhouses and dormitories. His faculty would teach botanical subjects, students would live on campus and work in the greenhouses. And in four years, they would be prepared for positions as gardeners or farmers.

We may think opening a school—particularly one with a limited curriculum for a specific student population—would be a simple matter in the 1910s. But in those days, schools were heavily criticized for failing the public and regulations were tightening. Yet it was also a time of optimism as teacher pay was increasing, taxpayers were voting for more school spending and the curriculum was broadening. John Morris had a lot riding on the notion of a school whose science-based curriculum would be permeated with practical training.

To get things rolling, Morris hired a consultant who traveled far and wide to learn about state-of-the-art horticultural education. Then, periodically, Morris met with the consultant to discuss his findings and tweak the plans.

After a year's worth of research and planning, the consultant was ready to present Morris with a series of sketches for submission to an architect. Sadly, John Morris died before seeing the sketches. But Lydia Morris, John's sister, saw them and although those sketches weren't turned into bricks and mortar during her lifetime, in due time, a state-of-the-art facility was built at Bloomfield Farm.

But as visionary as the Morris siblings were, they could never have imagined the LEED Platinum certified horticultural complex that sits on the sweet spot of the farm, the very spot John Morris chose!

See photos of Bloomfield Farm [here](#)

Learn more: "To Start a School," *Philadelphia Stories*, [here](#)





A Picture Worth 300 Words...The Cattail Fountain



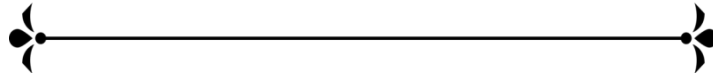
Photograph by the author

This nature-inspired metal fountain was installed at Compton around 1913 in the [center](#) of a shallow concrete pool in English Park. Water sprayed from the tips of the cattails and from a circle of lotus blossoms, creating a multi-tiered cascade.

With few clues to go on, we're unsure who designed the fountain or when the Morrises bought it. The designer could have been a student at the School of Industrial Arts of the Pennsylvania Museum, where John served on the Board of Trustees. In those days, trustees and donors sponsored student competitions in several areas of study, including sculpture, drawing, painting and metalwork.

During the early 1900s, Charles J. Cohen, a fellow Museum trustee with John, sponsored the competition for fountain design and in 1912, the winner was Lillian May Daiss. No examples of Lillian's work have been located, but plenty of work exists for the student who received Honorable Mention that year—John Ray Sinnock. A decade after graduating, Sinnock was appointed Chief Engraver of the U.S. Mint and is best known for designing the Roosevelt dime and Franklin half dollar. I would give a stack of Roosevelt dimes to see the fountain designs of both Daiss and Sinnock, on the chance that one design features cattails, lotus blossoms and a giant ruffled-edge lotus leaf for the basin. But it's not likely the cattail fountain was designed by Janet Scudder, whose playful "water baby" fountains were in high demand—she dubbed fountains of dogs and stags, storks and cattails "equally dreary."

At some point after Compton came under the custodianship of the University of Pennsylvania, the cattail fountain was moved to the [center](#) of the Rose Garden, where its graceful waters splashed a while longer. Today, the fountain resides indoors at Bloomfield Farm.



A Picture Worth 300 Words...

The Right Stones



Stonework for the Ravine Garden, 1913

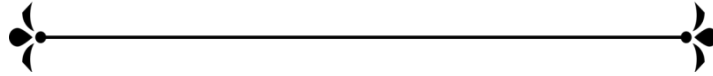
It's all about finding just the right stones. That's what makes classical garden structures like Seven Arches and Mercury Loggia visually appealing. And the person in charge of finding, hauling, placing and mortaring stones for these structures was Pringle Borthwick, John Morris's go-to stone mason from the 1890s on. Borthwick was thirty-seven when he was hired to do the Orange Balustrade stonework at Compton.

But the largest stone Borthwick ever found was twelve miles from Compton—not to haul back to English Park—but for a different project. Borthwick was finishing up the Ravine Garden for Morris when he trekked through the woods near Pennypack Creek and spied a granite boulder weighing seven tons, the perfect cornerstone for a building of massive proportions—the Bryn Athyn Cathedral. He had just begun work as General Contractor of the Cathedral, with responsibility for exterior stonework, plus oversight of lumber, glass and metal sub-contractors. Over the next three years, the Cathedral occupied most of his time.

Borthwick learned his trade in Cavers, Scotland, as a stone mason's apprentice, then he immigrated to the U.S. at age 21 and settled in Chestnut Hill. From the 1910s to mid-1920s, he partnered with a real estate developer to construct Cotswold style cottages on Benezet and

Crefeld Streets, Willow Grove Avenue and Winston Road. More than fifty houses in Chestnut Hill show his handiwork in cut stone lintels, sills, foundations and quoins, including Half Moon Court, now a member of Chestnut Hill Conservancy's Architectural Hall of Fame. Despite a very busy career, Borthwick made time for service on several community agency boards, including the Philadelphia Common Council.

Fast forward to the 1920s and you'd find Borthwick on Mount Desert Island, Maine, searching for just the right stones, then hauling them around the Sound to build rustic bridges on carriage roads owned by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.



A Picture Worth 300 Words...

Carey's Chrysanthemums



Chrysanthemums at Compton greenhouse, Morris Arboretum Archives, 2004.1.635

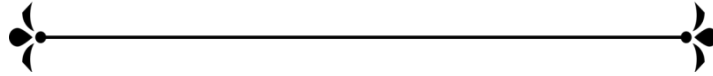
The chrysanthemum, that ubiquitous flower of autumn, was once exhibited by the thousands at the annual Philadelphia Chrysanthemum Show. Every November, people strolled through Horticultural Hall in Fairmount Park, oohing and aahing at flowers large as plates or small as buttons and opining on hundreds of award winners. The show reached its zenith in 1921 with an unprecedented extravaganza, marked by flowers raining down from an airplane flying over Center City to announce the opening.

One of the frequent award winners was Robert Gilling Carey, an estate gardener and champion mum grower in Chestnut Hill. He bred both the reflexed variety, with petals curving away from the center, and incurved, naming them for family (Alice F. Carey), for employers (Mrs. Edward H. Trotter), and estates where he worked (Spotswood and Oakshade). In 1896, Carey exhibited a record number of mums at the show, garnering such praise that the Philadelphia Florists Club asked him to present a paper at their next meeting on twenty-five of his favorite mums and why. He prefaced his remarks by acknowledging he was currently growing 70 varieties, but all were too new to include in the top 25.

About the same time John and Lydia Morris purchased property to build Compton, Carey bought a couple of acres in Flourtown and set about breeding new mums in earnest. A few years later,

Carey was elected Secretary and John Morris, President of the newly established Chestnut Hill Horticultural Society. Not long after John died, Carey capped his successful career by working with Lydia's head gardener, Frank Gould.

We don't know if Carey named any chrysanthemums for the Morrises but we do know his reputation endured—in 1922, he was recognized as a leading mum breeder by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.



A Picture Worth 300 Words...

Preserving Wissahickon Creek



Wissahickon Creek near Compton greenhouses. Morris Arboretum Archives, 2004.1.676

I invite you to join me in thanking John and Lydia Morris for their efforts (together with neighbors and city officials) to preserve the upper reaches of Wissahickon Creek. Without their foresight, the banks of the Wissahickon from the city limits to Upper Gwynedd might have ended up clogged with factories. After all, access to waterways and rail lines was paramount for “America’s Workshop” in the 19th century.

The belching furnaces and boilers of the Morris family ironworks notwithstanding, John and Lydia valued clean water and clear air for themselves and for their city. Their efforts began in 1888, when they joined fellow citizens in establishing the Open Space Association of Philadelphia, committed to creating parks within the city and conserving open spaces on the outskirts.

At their first meeting, the association identified a dozen spaces for preservation, including Stenton, Bartram’s Garden and Juniata Park. These small parks were intended to augment the 1800-acre Wissahickon Gorge acquired in the 1860s to ensure the purity of the city’s water supply.

Over the next twenty years, the association (renamed the City Parks Association) expanded its capacity, bringing dozens of parks into existence. But the mother park along the Wissahickon

Creek was incomplete in John and Lydia's eyes, for it was not protected north of city limits. That left thirteen miles of water and woodland, plus two Revolutionary War sites, at risk.

In 1912, the Morrises helped form a new committee of the Association (with John as Chair), to lobby for extension of the city park system into Montgomery County along the banks of Wissahickon Creek, with east and west bump-outs around Fort Hill and Militia Hill. After John's death in 1915, others continued the cause, and today there is a continuous swath of protected space from Philadelphia to Upper Gwynedd (well, almost continuous).

