

# ...publishers choice



# Circa 1841

"History with its flickering lamp  
stumbles along the trail of the past,  
trying to reconstruct its scenes,  
to revive its echoes, and kindle with  
pale gleams the passion of former days."

~Winston Churchill

By Brenda Lange

The roots of the stately white ash on the corner of Bellevue and Watson avenues in Langhorne Borough run deep. The giant tree has seen a lot of history in its 250 years, and was already old when the Quaker Meetinghouse was built next to it in 1841.

The large structure, constructed primarily of stone from a nearby quarry, was the second meetinghouse built in Langhorne, necessary after the original congregation split around 1827. The majority, led by Elias Hicks, kept the original meetinghouse, and the remaining congregants met in individual homes until Mercy Richardson donated three acres in 1840. The new building served the group well for 70 years.

It was bought and turned into a residence by the Gamble family in the early part of the 20th century. At one point, the lovely stone was covered by whitewashed stucco and a large pillared porch was added. More than a dozen maple trees stood guard to the entrance, but were later removed. Today, other large maples grace the property along with flowering cherry trees, mature hedgerows, and the grandfather white ash.

Over the decades, changes came to the home and property. Shutters were removed and stored in the garage. Doorknobs and other hardware were replaced, but not thrown away, and also were kept in storage. The porch was added. A croquet court was built near a formal garden, and large brick patios were built.

"It's easy to imagine that they entertained in a Great Gatsby style here," says present owner, Ginger Flesher.

Then the home sat empty for three years, before being purchased by its current owners in 1999. Only the fifth family to live in it, Ginger and David Flesher set about the task of restoring it to its former splendor.

"It was in such a state of disrepair, that the three of us (their daughter was nine at the time) lived basically in one room while we worked on the rest of the house," says Ginger. "David is a talented carpenter, and has done all the work himself," she adds.

Chipping plaster and peeling wallpaper were just the beginning. The kitchen was missing its cabinets, and some walls had sustained water damage. But the couple set to work, and today the home radiates a sense of comfortable ease and of a history beyond compare.

The Fleshers discovered many antique items to re-use around the home, yard and garden. The original shutters were found and painstakingly restored by David. Doorknobs and latches were replaced with those found in storage—they may not be on the same doors they were on originally, but they are originals nonetheless!

Wherever possible, the missing plaster walls were replaced by the same material, not drywall, and the Fleshers worked hard to maintain other historical aspects as well.

The kitchen and dining room were additions made by the Gamble family. According to Ginger, instead of taking the easy route and using clapboard for the new rooms, the Gambles obviously appreciated the building's history, and built walls that were 18 inches thick, like the rest of the home. They also used stone from the same quarry as the original stone, remaining true to the beautiful earlier construction.

Five working, wood-burning fireplaces can be found throughout the home, some with ornate tiles, resembling Delftware. Each of the two front parlors claims one of these fireplaces. The twin rooms were the original meeting rooms, one for men and one for women, separated by a wide, mahogany pocket door. Each of the parlors also has two exterior doors, one for entering the meeting and one for leaving at its conclusion.

The owners retained the sense of history in other ways. A bookcase that had to be destroyed to replace some pipes inside the wall was rebuilt to match the original. Coffered ceilings were created in the kitchen and dining room, and kitchen cabinetry was built to match one existing antique cupboard. The wood floors—ash on the first two levels, and random-width pine on the third—were polished and protected.

Raised panel wood walls, exposed beams, door transoms, cedar closets, crown molding, turned staircases, claw-foot tubs, 10-foot ceilings, and a Slateline roof are some other unique aspects of this special property.

In spite of all the historical aspects, the home does not lack for 'modern' conveniences, including central air and new windows, perfectly blending the past with the present.

Doors play a large role in the ambiance of the home. Two sets of French doors—one into the breakfast room from one front parlor, and a second to access the covered porch—an oversized solid mahogany front door is a focal point of the home's front exterior. A multitude of deep-set windows also adorn the structure, allowing in abundant light.

The pillared porch had been screened in at one time, but the Fleshers removed the screening and restored the pillars to their former state, making the verandah the perfect retreat from the hot summer sun. Lemonade, anyone?

209 N. Bellevue Avenue is offered by Long & Foster Real Estate, Mary Jane Salley, Realtor. Call her 215-493-5600 or email [MaryJane.Salley@LongandFoster.com](mailto:MaryJane.Salley@LongandFoster.com) for information.



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