



Haverford Township Historical Society



JOSEPH R. CONNELL (1866-1926) AND FAMILY

Compiled by Richard D. Kerr

[The following is excerpted, adapted and abridged from A History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania and Its People, John W. Jordan, editor, published by Lewis Historical Publishing Company, New York in 1914.]

JOSEPH R. CONNELL, a progressive West Philadelphian, is a representative scion of a family that has since the last century was in its teens done things, big things, for the good of the city, state and nation. Bred to great activity and responsibility, versed in the study of human nature, actively participating in extensive enterprises, the success of Mr. Connell is conceded in the business world to be due to the rare sagacity and original methods he has displayed. Public-spirited motives have always characterized his affairs. As an instance of this there stands at Oakmont, a beautiful suburb of Philadelphia, the massive high school [Oakmont School] of Haverford township, Delaware county. When the people of that vicinity were perplexed as to ways and means to acquire a suitable site for a building for the education of their children, Mr. Connell settled the question by donating two acres of valuable ground and a portion of the money toward the construction of this magnificent building, which today is the pride of the entire county. All of his enterprises have been eminently successful, and many of his companies have made profits of over one hundred per cent within a year after their formation. The increase in realty values in some of his enterprises has reached the two million dollar mark within two years, and others have forged ahead more rapidly.

Heredity had much to do with Mr. Connell's success. He comes from colonial stock, being a lineal descendant of **ISAAC PENNOCK**, an officer in the army of William, Prince of Orange, who settled in Chester county, Pennsylvania, in 1685, and upon the paternal side the first of his forebears in this country was the son of an Episcopal clergyman, **GEORGE CONNELL**, who settled at Marcus Hook, Delaware county, and at his own expense fitted out a fleet to patrol the Delaware river during the revolutionary war.

In the next generation came **JOHN CONNELL**, merchant prince, man of affairs, scholar, traveler, philanthropist and servant of the people. He it was who presided at the first great meeting held in Philadelphia to raise funds to carry on the war of 1812. The Connell homestead in those days stood at the corner of Broad and Chestnut streets, and there John Connell entertained Lafayette on his memorable visit to the United States. There, too, Webster, Clay, Gallatin and President John Quincy Adams were his frequent guests. It was in his arms that John Quincy Adams, in the speaker's room of the national capitol, breathed his last.

GEORGE CONNELL, son of John Connell, was a constructive statesman, elected to the Pennsylvania senate in 1860. Cameron, Curtin, Connell, was a trio that rendered heroic service to the state and nation at a time that "tried men's souls." Colonel Alexander McClure, the veteran editor and historian, than whom no other man had more intimate and comprehensive knowledge of the state's history, referred to Senator Connell "as the brainiest man in the brainiest senate of Pennsylvania." In truth, the activity of this man during the twelve years of his incumbency was prodigious. As chairman of the finance

committee, a position he held until the time of his death, he introduced, a full month before Fort Sumter was fired upon, a bill to place the state of Pennsylvania on a financial war footing. This bill, while defeated, was passed by the same body within thirty days after the above unhappy event, at an extra session of the legislature upon the urgent recommendation of Governor Curtin. His also was the bill for a stay law to save innocent debtors from sacrifice. Among the many other measures introduced and advocated by him, which would in themselves establish his far-seeing statesmanship, were the repeal of the state tax upon real estate and imposing in lieu thereof a tax upon banks and gross receipts of railroad companies; an act for the payment of the interest of state debts in national currency in place of coin, and, the redemption of the odious tax upon our state loans. Among many of the great things accomplished by Senator Connell in the interest of Philadelphia was the extension of Fairmount Park from a little parcel of ground of about three acres to over three thousand acres, in which Philadelphians pride themselves today. As a part of this magnificent plan, there grew out of his fertile brain the Fairmount Park commission, which has since administered the affairs of this great holding of the city. It was largely due to his influence that something like adequate compensation was secured to the judges of the courts of Philadelphia. Realizing that the office should be one of dignity and permanency, he made earnest efforts to have a similar bill enacted in favor of the judges of the supreme court. The handling of the city trusts and the reforming of the management of Girard College were "footprints" which he left "upon the sands of time." His heroic battle which resulted in the taking of Girard College out of politics, placed that great institution upon the basis where it stands to-day, the greatest of its kind in the world.

A son of George Connell, and the father of Joseph R. Connell, is **HORATIO P. CONNELL**, one of Philadelphia's most esteemed citizens, who, through the persuasion of his friends, took up the work of his distinguished sire. During his four terms in the assembly, he was one of the most popular and influential members, where honorable success characterized his legislative career. Subsequently, as sheriff of Philadelphia, he established moral business standards in that office which were quickly recognized and most gratefully appreciated by the members of the legal profession, and at the expiration of his term of office he was highly eulogized by the newspaper press of the city. He is a life member of St. Albans Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons, many clubs and societies, and in any of these bodies where wits assemble his versatility and originality fairly flows and sparkles. His repartee comes with equal rapidity and ease, either from his own resources, or from a mind well-stored with the best in English literature. When he puts his whole soul into jest, it leaves no sting, but rather makes happy and brighter the lives of those about him.

These inherited traits, coupled with a genial personality and a soul filled with faith in his Creator have made Joseph R. Connell popular with his friends and acquaintances and successful in his business.

[The following is from <http://www.genealogy.com/ftm/s/n/y/Horatio-C-Snyder/GENE1-0008.html>, accessed August 14, 2016.]

JOSEPH RICHARD CONNELL, the second son of Horatio P. Connell, devoted himself almost exclusively to real estate developments, in which field he was eminently successful. He took a leading part in the forming of the Haverford Development Company and the bringing of the golf course of the Merion Cricket Club to Haverford, the environs of which are unsurpassed in beauty and magnificence, about which time he applied himself to the development of the then Grassland, Delaware County, now the flourishing town of Oakmont, to which township he donated a piece of ground of considerable value, for the site of a schoolhouse, where the same now stands.

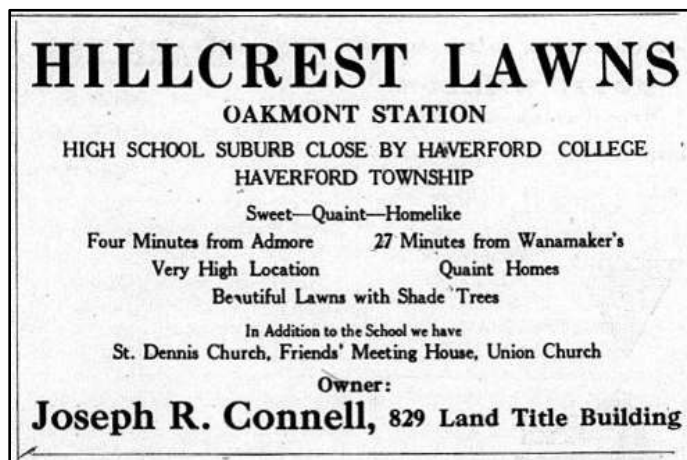
[The following is from the history website page of Haverford Township's Oakmont Fire Company, <http://www.oakmontfire.org/history.html>, accessed August 14, 2016.]

[The Oakmont Fire Company was] organized Thursday evening, December 18, 1912, in the basement of George W. Long, 35 W. Hillcrest Avenue, Oakmont. At this meeting, the following officers were elected to serve for the year 1913: President George W. Long, 1st Vice President: Frank Zeiss, Sr., Treasurer: William Hersey, Recording Secretary: Wilson T. Young, Fire Chief: Horace White, BOARD OF MANAGERS: George Deaves: Chairman, Joseph R. Connell, George S. Jenkins, Thomas P. Carter, David W. Stewart, Frank Zeiss, Sr., William McMullan, I.R. Warner White, George McConaghy, Sr.

September, 1914: Mr. Connell was asked to permit the fire alarm (locomotive Fire bell obtained from PRR) put on his property at the corner of Eagle and Coopertown [now called Darby] Roads.

[The following is from <http://www.golfclubatlas.com/forum/index.php?topic=39657.1935;wap2>, accessed August 14, 2016.]

Also, it was reported in January 1911 that "The Merion Cricket Club has purchased for use as a golf course about 117 acres of ground between Ardmore Avenue and College Avenue, Haverford, adjoining the large tract owned by Haverford College. The purchase was made by H. G. Lloyd ... on behalf of Merion Cricket Club, from the Haverford Development Company, which was represented in the transaction by Joseph R. Connell and E. W. Nicholson. The company owns 221 acres adjoining the tract purchased by the club. Mr. Lloyd has also obtained from the company an option on 13 acres additional, which will probably be taken up by the club. This will give the club a new golf course of 130 acres instead of the tract of 60 acres at Rose Lane and Gulf Road, which it leases from the Pennsylvania Road as a golf course."



1914 Joseph R. Connell local newspaper ad for Hillcrest Lawns

[The following is from the "Delaware County Daily Times," Chester, Pennsylvania, Wednesday, May 14, 1913.]

Joseph R. Connell has purchased from the estate of James Magee a tract of 50 acres at Haverford, adjoining Hillcrest Lawns, his development near Oakmont Station, for a consideration not disclosed. The ground lies directly between the 18-hole golf course, which was laid out two years ago by the Merion Cricket Club, and the new 18-hole course of the club, which is now being completed. The last sale of ground in the vicinity was that of a tract of ten acres, purchased by Alfred B. Eaton of \$4000 per acre.

The tract just purchased is bounded on the east by Coopertown [now called Darby] road and Ellis road, the latter of which was laid out in 1784. It will be developed in connection with Hillcrest Lawns.

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