

May 8, 1997

THE CORNER IN AMBLER WHERE HISTORY WAS MADE

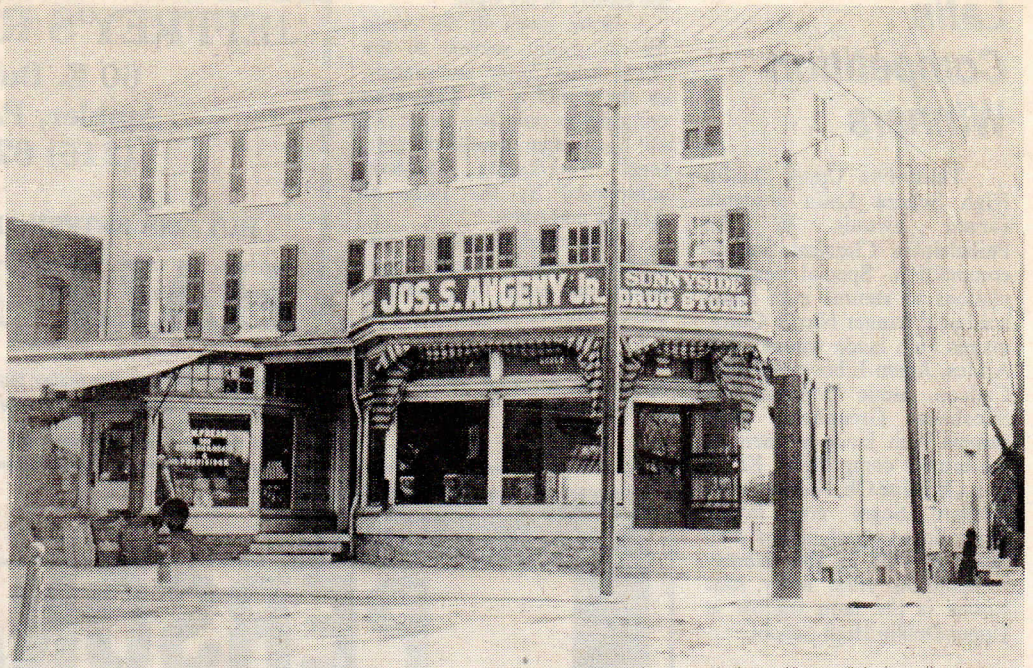
by Newton M. Howard

The oldest building in Ambler's business district has played an important role in our early history. Built before the Civil War, when the town was called Wissahickon, it was the site of our first post office and general store in 1861, and our first school in 1869. The first bank began operations here in 1884, after the name changed to Ambler. And finally, the congregation of an early church first met here as a mission in 1891 for almost a year.

This building, at Main Street and Butler Avenue, is presently the property of Ralph and Dorothy DelConte, who operated a successful business for years before retirement.

In 1857, Joseph L. Wilson purchased this land from the Reiff family, early settlers of this western sector of Upper Dublin. He erected the building sometime before 1861.

This same year he learned



This building at Main & Butler was occupied for over half a century by Joe Angeny's "Sunnyside Pharmacy". Built before the Civil War, it was the site of Ambler's first post office, the first general store, Ambler's first school, our first bank, as well as an Episcopal mission that became one of Ambler's earliest churches.

Photograph from Henry Scholtz collection.

that Upper Dublin postmaster Isaac Thomas, who operated the general store on the Bethlehem Pike, would soon be retiring.

Wilson applied for the position, and was appointed postmaster March 19, 1861, his new building thus becoming the location of the first post office within the present borough limits.

Two years later, in 1863, he sold the building to George K. Knight. Samuel Comly bought the contents of the store, succeeding Wilson as postmaster. In 1865, Miss Elizabeth Knight became postmistress with Comly continuing as operator of the general store.

Civil War veteran Benjamin J. Hilles became the next postmaster in 1870, followed in 1873 by Evan J. Ambler, son of Andrew and Mary Ambler. Wissahickon had been changed to Ambler to honor his mother in 1869, with the post office name remaining Upper Dublin.

Evan Ambler was the last postmaster in this building. In 1876 he purchased land from Knight, across Main Street, erecting a three-story Mansard-roofed building. His general store and post office were on the Main Street side of the building. On December 5, 1883, history again was made when the name of the post office was changed from Upper Dublin to Ambler, thus making Evan Ambler the first postmaster of Ambler's Post office.

Ambler's first institution of learning was a private school

called Sunnyside Academy, founded in 1869 by former postmistress, Miss Elizabeth K. Knight. Opening in a small building on South Main Street with only six pupils, increased enrollment made it necessary for her to ask for and receive permission to move into the upper floors of her father's building before the year was out.

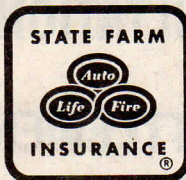
Larger quarters allowed the school to grow rapidly, with her sisters, Miss Sallie and Miss Cordelia, joining in the successful operation of the school. Space formerly occupied by Evan Ambler's general store became Sunnyside's main room.

In 1884, while Sunnyside was in operation, the First National Bank of Ambler was founded, using a section of the school's first floor to conduct their banking business while their building was being erected.

In 1891, an Episcopal Mission, sponsored by St. Thomas' church of Whitmarsh, met here for nearly a year. In 1898 this group became the congregation of Trinity Memorial Episcopal Church, built by Dr. & Mrs. Richard V. Mattison in memory of their daughter Ester Victoria, who died of typhoid fever at the age of four.

In 1903, a decision was made by Miss Sallie Knight to close the doors of Sunnyside

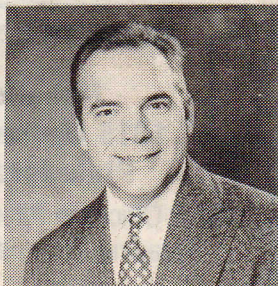
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AMBLER HISTORY

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forever. Her father, George, had died that year, leaving Miss Sallie, Miss Cordelia, and their brother Alexander as executors of his estate. She felt that tending to his extensive real estate holdings and operating the school would be too strenuous, and also, 34 years of association with Sunnyside was quite enough time to spend.

Sunnyside School's closing coincided with Keasbey & Mattison's announcement that leases of tenants in the Opera House Block stores would not be renewed. The company was growing and wished to use this space for corporate offices. For one of these tenants, Joseph S. Angeny, Jr., who operated the Opera House Pharmacy, the news that the Sunnyside building would be renovated into stores was very welcome. He opened for business in 1904, calling his pharmacy the Sunnyside Drug Store. Angeny ran a very popular business for more than half a century at this historic location, his family closing the store in 1959.

The building, after continuous occupancy for more than 135 years, now has as tenants an insurance agent and a food store.

Jon Fox Supports President's Summit

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President Bush, as he and his wife, Barbara, did throughout his term, stressed the importance of literacy and revitalized the spirit of the Points of Light Foundation which they founded. President Carter called for Americans to reach out to others as he and his wife, Rosalyn, do through their work with Habitat For Humanity. President Ford, recognizing the fact that it is easy to become discouraged, called for the volunteers to "never give up the fight."

"So today we gather to pledge that the dream can no longer be deferred and it should never become a dream denied," said General Powell. "Let's go save our children!"

Part of saving our children, Fox said, is making sure that they have a caring, nurturing environment in which to grow.

For Mary Zeigler, creating that environment has been a goal for the past 25 years. Ziegler, a resident of Lafayette Hill, owns Zeigler's Carousel, a day care center in the Germantown section. Zeigler joined Fox at his press conference in Norristown.

"We need to enable people to achieve their fullest potential and supplying them with affordable, accessible day care is one way to do that", said Fox who announced that he would be reintroducing the Affordable Child Day Care Assistance Act this week which will supply

increased tax credits for employers who implement a day care program for their employees.

Fox also announced his support for a second piece of legislation designed to benefit those who volunteer their time to help their neighbors.

"Unfortunately, too many obstacles stand in the way of volunteerism," said Fox. "and oftentimes the most intimidating to volunteers is the filing of frivolous lawsuits. That's why I'm proud to be a supporter of HR 911, the Volunteer Protection Act."

More than 200 non-profit organizations - including the Boy and Girl Scouts of America, the American Red Cross, the YMCA, and the United Way - support this bill.

"The challenge of Philadelphia and our nation is to ensure we continue to focus on volunteerism when the cameras and reporters have left. The Volunteer Protection Act is an important step that Congress and the President can take to keep alive that spirit of volunteerism and generosity."

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