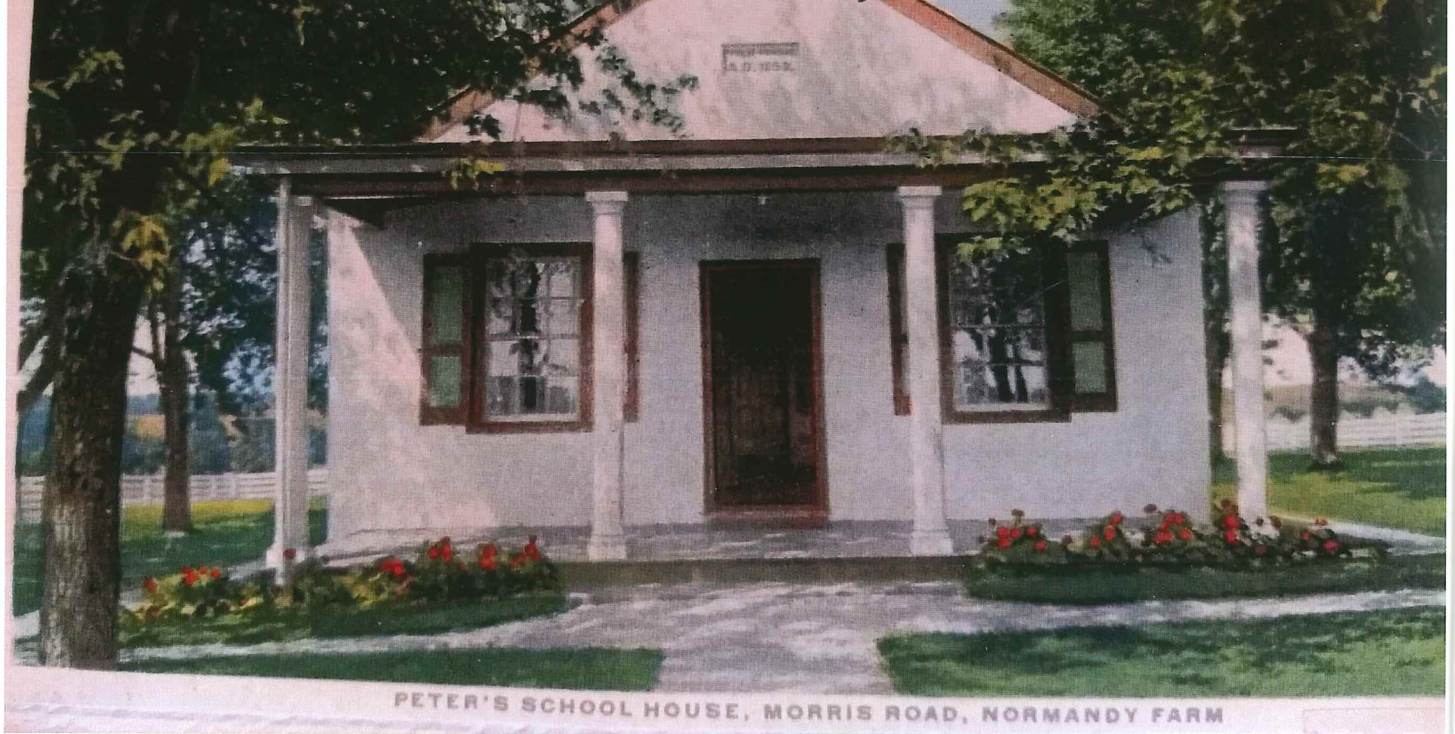


Normandy Farm Owners, the Strassburgers: *Wealthy Local History Lovers*



PETER'S SCHOOL HOUSE, MORRIS ROAD, NORMANDY FARM

around town

By Carol Kalos, St. Andrews Resident Writer

The Strassburgers were a prestigious couple. A resume for Ralph Beaver Strassburger shows that he:

- Graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy
- Served in the diplomatic corps and intelligence
- Bred and raced thoroughbred horses in the U.S. and Europe
- Applied scientific research to raising his dairy cattle
- Published vast volumes of his genealogy research
- Owned the *Norristown Times-Herald*



His wife, Mae Bourne Strassburger, was wealthy, inheriting millions from her father, president of the Singer Sewing Machine company. His sewing machine was one of the first mass-marketed products (3 million machines in 1913) and was one of the first multinational industries ever.

Mae's hobby was collecting antiques. One source says that in Europe, she collected sterling silver, but in Pennsylvania, she collected "homespun textiles" and other old items from the local farmers. Today those Gwynedd Valley antiques have value.

Winterthur Museum has the receipts for her purchases, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art displays some of these antiques.

Another example of the couple's appreciation for old things is how they regarded the Franklinville School. In 1916, when local students were sent to the consolidated school (now the Korean Presbyterian Church on Skippack Pike), the Strassburger's bought

the one-room school adjoining Normandy Farm to use for their son's private education. The school's image often appeared on the Strassburgers' note cards, labeled "Peter's School." Later they used the building as a community center for their employees and subscribers to the *Norristown Times-Herald*. The National Register of Historic Places recognized the importance of these activities when it added the Franklinville School.

Certainly, the Strassburgers' appreciation of old things inspired them to cherish the Franklinville School, today preserved by the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society. Its president is Saint Andrews resident Carol Kalos.

M
CO
Whe
refina
mort
M
CO
Whe
refina
mort
M
CO
Whe
refina
mort

