



Ambler's Lindenwold Castle, Part I: Its Owner, Dr. Mattison

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One of our area's most impressive landmarks is Ambler's Lindenwold Castle. Local architect Milton Bean designed the mansion, built in 1890, for Dr. Richard Mattison (1851-1936). Mattison's degree was in medicine, but he was most interested in creating "remedies" (over-the-counter medicines) until he accidentally discovered asbestos' insulating and fireproof properties.

In 1881, with funding from his classmate from Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, Dr. Henry Keasbey, Mattison moved their company, Keasbey and Mattison, from Philadelphia to the Ambler train station. Soon, trains brought asbestos from Quebec, Canada, to make

theater curtains, oven mitts, firefighters' uniforms, roofing shingles, and pipe covering; then the trains exported the products. During World War I, Keasbey and Mattison became the world's largest manufacturer of asbestos! At the time, researchers did not know the health effects of asbestos, and the company's 900 workers (many brought from Italy) and their families would ultimately suffer from lung disease. (The company's acres of asbestos waste still exist in Ambler, but the Environmental Protection Agency has covered them.)

With the company's success, Keasbey retired to Europe, and Mattison took charge, providing low wages but offering



discounted rates for his workers' water, electricity, stores, and housing, creating a "company town." Although often aloof, he aided the area by adding streetlights and building Ambler's library, an Opera House, and the Trinity Memorial Episcopal Church.

Next month's *Stroll Blue Bell* will describe Mattison's 40-room castle, Lindenwold.