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## Discovering Chestnut Hill: Foxlea's 20 years of transformation by Emilie and Peter Lapham

Posted on January 23, 2020 (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/01/23/discovering-chestnut-hill-foxleas-20-years-of-transformation-by-emilie-and-peter-lapham/>), updated on January 23, 2020 (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/01/23/discovering-chestnut-hill-foxleas-20-years-of-transformation-by-emilie-and-peter-lapham/>) by Contributor (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/author/contributor/>)



Garden at Foxlea

**By Shirley Hanson**

You may know the property in Springfield Township as "The English Village." It is a 4-1/2 acre portion of what was a 31-acre estate called "Lane's End."

"Lane's End" was developed in the mid-1920's by Samuel and Allethaire Rotan with Robert McGoodwin as the architect. In 1945, Louise Elkins Sinkler and her husband Wharton Sinkler purchased the estate.

In 1967, Louise Sinkler donated the property to the University of Pennsylvania. Then, it became the Wharton Sinkler Conference Center. The university made the decision to sell the conference center in 1999, opening the possibility for new development among the remarkable existing buildings.

Enter Peter and Emile Lapham. Peter brought to the struggle his training and experience as an architect and a city planner. For nine years he had been Executive Director of the Chestnut Hill Historical Society, now the Chestnut Hill Conservancy.



Along with other devoted preservationists, the Laphams fought to reverse this plan to subdivide and build on the lots. Their efforts prevailed. The university sold the estate (land and existing buildings) in seven parcels with all of the land protected from future development through conservation easements.

The Laphams' adventures continued. In 2000, they purchased Foxlea and invested a year in construction, calling on the architect Steve Bonitatibus along with a team of local contractors and craftworkers. Their goal was to create a home from a collection of Tudor style buildings that includes a 16th century cottage from Frimley, a village in Surrey. A small conservatory links the cottage to a former woodshed, a four-bay garage, and a workshop with a tractor shed.



A section of Foxlea.

In 2001, the transformation had progressed enough for them to move into the village. As construction manager, Emilie Lapham was active almost daily in retaining and preserving the details and sense of the English Village. She oversaw, for example, the restoration of the period steel casement windows.

Emilie's skills reach from photography, decorative painting, restoration of historic rooms, interior design, floral design and landscape design to window restoration and beyond.

"I have worked in all of these fields and look forward to new adventures," she said.

Later the Laphams converted the former stable to a studio and an apartment. Other remaining outbuildings include a sheep shed, a seed and feed house, an open shed, a garage, and a corn crib with a chicken house.

"The buildings and enclosing walls create rooms, ideal for small gardens," Emilie said. Peter Lapham became the non-stop gardener.

Now a sought-after site for tours and events, Foxlea has attracted visitors from the Garden Conservancy, Garden Club of America, Pennsylvania Horticulture Society, the American Society of Landscape Designers, and others. "Tudor Style in America," a book from Rizzoli Publishing, features the Laphams' home.

At its annual meeting on January 5, the Chestnut Hill Conservancy honored Emilie and Peter Lapham and Steve Bonitatibus with Preservation Recognition Awards for their insight, imagination, and achievement.

"It has been a joy working with the Laphams to realize their vision for restoring their historic property," said Steve Bonitatibus.

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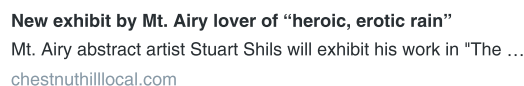


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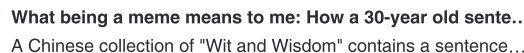


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