

# GERMANTOWNE *CRIER*



OLD VIEW OF MAIN STREET  
Looking North from School House Lane

# GERMANTOWNE CRIER



Volume 26

SUMMER, 1974

Number 3

## CONTENTS

|  | PAGE |  | PAGE |
|--|------|--|------|
| MEMORIES OF BLUE BELL HILL<br>GERMANTOWN (1895-1905) . . . . .                                 | 73   | OLD CHURCHES . . . . .   | 85   |
| <i>By Iredell Logan Aucott, 1888-1971</i>  |      | <i>By Josephine Ritter (Part 3)</i>  |      |
| HISTORICAL NOTES . . . . .   | 82   | REMINISCENCES . . . . .  | 89   |
| <i>From "The Scrap Book"</i>   |      | <i>By William H. Emhardt</i>   |      |
| <i>Compiled by N. K. Ployd (1911)</i>  |      | SEVENTY AND SEVENTEEN . . . . .  | 91   |
| YESTERDAY AND TODAY<br>CURTIS SISCO IS NEW OWNER OF<br>C. A. ROWELL DEPARTMENT STORE . . . . . | 83   | COME TO MAXWELL MANSION<br>ON SEPTEMBER 21ST . . . . .                     | 91   |
| <i>By Helen M. Comly</i>   |      | TO OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS<br>WINE TASTING PARTY ON SEPTEMBER 22 . . . . . | 92   |
| GUIDE BOOK TO HISTORIC GERMANTOWN . . . . .  | 84   | ADVERTISERS INDEX . . . . .  | 94   |

### PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

MISS HELEN M. COMLY  
The Baynton House, 5208 Germantown Avenue

### Editor

MISS HELEN M. COMLY  
615 Vernon Road, Phila., Pa. 19119  
WALLACE S. MARTINDALE, JR., *Controller*

### EDITORIAL STAFF

|                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| MRS. RALPH H. BELCHER   | MRS. JOHN W. FARR      |
| MRS. M. BACON BOSTWICK  | MRS. MULFORD B. SIMONS |
| MRS. THEODORE FINCKH    | MISS NANCY C. SELLERS  |
| DR. MARGARET B. TINKCOM |                        |

Editorial contributions should be mailed to the GERMANTOWNE CRIER, 5208 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa. 19144

FRANK J. OLLINGER, *Advertising Representative*    29 W. Walnut Lane, Philadelphia, Pa. 19144    Telephone: VI 3-0295

Published as Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter Issues  
Germantown Historical Society  
5214 Germantown Avenue  
Philadelphia, Pa. 19144  
VI 4-0514



# Yesterday and Today

CURTIS SISCO IS NEW OWNER OF C. A. ROWELL DEPARTMENT STORE

By HELEN M. COMLY



C. A. Rowell Department Store  
Corner of Germantown and Cheltenham Avenues

Photo by Geo. E. Stauffer, Jr.

**A**LWAYS progressive, the firm of C. A. Rowell has again taken a step forward.

Mr. Rowell came to Germantown in 1919. He already had a wide business experience elsewhere and had attracted considerable attention in the shirtwaist era when he advertised his store at 1609-1615 West Susquehanna Avenue as "the greatest shirtwaist store in Philadelphia."

When he passed away in 1931 he, by Will, converted his entire estate into a trust known as the "Clarence A. Rowell and Grace Rockwell Rowell Memorial Fund." The income from this fund Mr. Rowell directed "is to be paid annually to certain Germantown institutions." By this action he felt the money he made in Germantown would continue to work for Germantown year after year indefinitely.

An important advance was made by the C. A. Rowell Store in 1934 when a new front was constructed as well as the installation of modern fixtures, cases, carpets and redecorating throughout.

For the past several years many have felt Germantown's shopping district has been slowly deteriorating, including Rowell's.

In January of 1974 a new chapter was begun. Curtis Sisco purchased the name and inventory of C. A. Rowell from Wanger Bros. a Chicago retail chain. He rents the building from the Rowell estate.



Photo by Eugene Amen Ra

Curtis Sisco, President of C. A. Rowell

Residents of Germantown are fortunate to have the new owner in our midst. He also has risen by his own efforts and is conscious of and interested in the unique



historical past of Germantown Avenue and vicinity.

Mr. Sisco was the youngest of twelve children of a Birdsnest, Virginia sharecropper and came to Philadelphia at the age of nineteen after graduating from high school. He spent four years in the United States Army, attended a tailoring and design school and in 1962 joined the Philadelphia Police Department. He was assigned traffic duty in the Germantown business district.

During his tour of duty on the force he won two official commendations, one a Hero Award. He expected to make a career of police work but in 1968, while on highway patrol, he was injured in a motorcycle mishap and as he puts it "an accident changed my life—it forced me out on my own."

While on the force Mr. Sisco spent his off-time serving as a clerk in a menswear store in West Philadelphia and when it came up for sale he purchased it using his modest savings which, with his pension, enabled him to "get started."

His fine record as an officer, his determination and promise in the retail field helped him get a bank loan which was guaranteed by the Small Business Administration. Sisco Menswear did well and nineteen months later he purchased a second store. That also prospered.

In 1972, a group of four stores on Germantown Avenue directly across Chelton Avenue from Rowell's were foreclosed. The bank looked for a purchaser and found Mr. Sisco. In July of 1972, he bought the four stores plus second-floor office space. He opened his third menswear store at 5703 Germantown Avenue and rented out the other facilities. In August, 1973 he sold one of his West Philadelphia properties. Then came the Rowell opportunity.

Mr. Sisco is very positive in what he hopes to accomplish. Quality merchandise is being stocked to continue to attract Germantown residents as well as many from adjoining districts. There is already a new aliveness evident in the entire store. He plans to make Rowell's a community hub, with space for public meetings. Also, to involve himself in Germantown

affairs. He knows there is much to be done but feels the section has stabilized and has an unlimited future.

Mr. Sisco was honored by the Menswear Retailers of America as its minority businessman of 1972 and his purchase of Rowell's puts him in a class by himself, according to the United States Department of Commerce's Office of Minority Business Enterprise.

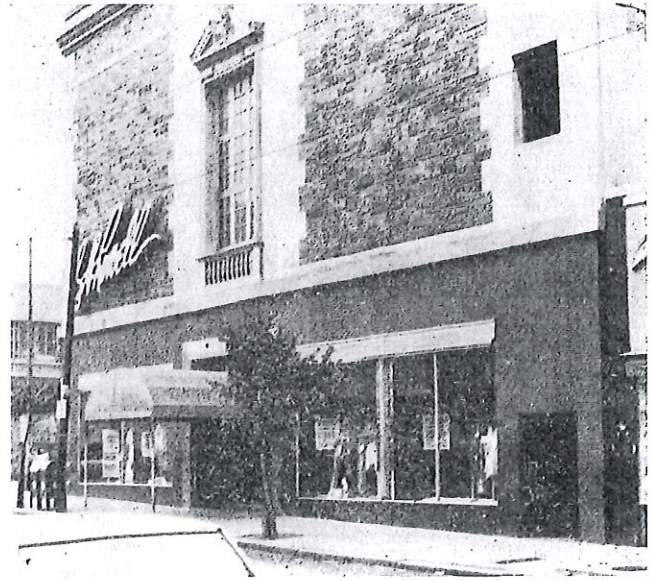


Photo by Geo. E. Stauffer, Jr.

C. A. Rowell Germantown Avenue entrance—partially seen in other view.

Mr. Sisco has three children, two boys and a girl. His wife, the former Artrianna Griffin, who died very recently, was for the past five years Vice President and Secretary of Sisco's Menswear, Inc., C. A. Rowell and C. S. Enterprises, Inc., an advertising firm and holding company for the stores.

His advice to young people "Trust in God, work hard and think big." All three are very important. If you trust in God and work hard, the opportunity will come."

## GUIDE BOOK TO HISTORIC GERMANTOWN

This very popular and informative book has been reprinted for the fifth time. It is of course by Charles F. Jenkins, well-known Germantown historian. One page has been added listing changes that have occurred in the area covered since its original publication in 1902.

Copies can be purchased at the Society's Library,

5208 Germantown Avenue (open on Tuesdays) or by sending order to GERMANTOWNE CRIER, 5208 Germantown Avenue, Zone 19144.

Checks should be made payable to the Germantown Historical Society.

Price is \$2.00—please add 25c to cover postage and handling.