



Please Join Us

for an “Evening in the Garden”

Thursday, May 3rd

at the “Hayward House”, home of Tom and Bessie Speers
1517 Mt. Salem Road, Wilmington, Delaware 19806



Cocktails & Hors d’oeuvres 5:30 - 7:30 pm
Catering by Caffé Gelato | Business Casual Attire



"Evening in the Garden"

An "Evening in the Garden" is the much-anticipated Preview Party for one of the Brandywine Valley's premier Spring events, Wilmington Garden Day, now in its 71st year. Together these annual events continue the tradition of showcasing gardens, entertaining spaces, and grand homes to benefit two Wilmington nonprofit organizations serving children and families: St. Michael's School and Friendship House.

In 2009, Tower Hill School acquired the property at 1517 Mt. Salem Lane, one of the few early 20th century houses remaining in Wilmington. Landscaping improvements revealed a handsome red-brick Federal-revival house. The home was renamed the "Hayward House" in memory of Rosa Laird Hayward McDonald (1916-2009). Her father, William Winder Laird, was a founder of Tower Hill School.

The earliest records of the property date to 1847 when a 12-acre plot of land between 19th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue was acquired by Mt. Salem Methodist Church. A four-acre parcel was eventually purchased by Hamilton M. Barksdale and Ethel du Pont Barksdale. In 1905-06 the Barksdales built "Wyncrest," a very large brick, gambrel-roof house as well as a carriage house and stable at 1501 Mt. Salem Lane. The carriage house remains and now serves as a garage.

A second house, 1517 Mt. Salem Lane, was built in 1916 as a wedding present for the Barksdales' daughter, Greta Barksdale Brown, and her husband, Frank Donaldson Brown. This was a five-bay house with Georgian style balance and two windows on each side of the front door. Between 1917 and 1919, a game room, a spectacular circular game room hall stairway, a living room, a master bedroom and bath, and a playroom were added onto the southern end of the original house, increasing the size of the home by nearly one third.

Today the 2 ½ story residence of almost 10,000 square feet boasts 10-foot ceilings and generous door widths. The main staircase with its mahogany rail is stately, while the circular staircase from the addition is of extraordinary grace and refinement. Some of the construction details reflect uncommonly high engineering standards. While no plans or records appear to have survived for the original house or the 1917-1919 additions, it is believed that both 1517 and Wyncrest were likely designed by the same architect, which may explain why certain details at 1517 look a bit old fashioned for a 1915-16 construction. The 1917-19 additions have a more up-to-date, slightly more "chic" feel and may reflect a different hand from the one who designed the original part of the house.

The home is situated in a park-like setting surrounded by established rhododendrons and mature trees. The property is the site of Tower Hill's graduation ceremonies.

Source: Based on excerpts taken from the article "1517 Mt. Salem Lane: The Hayward House" by Edmond L. Lincoln '67, Tower Hill Bulletin, Fall 2009.

Parking: From Pennsylvania Avenue, turn left or right onto Tower Road. Park in one of the two Visitor Lots at Tower Hill School located on the left. The main entrance to the Hayward House is directly across the street from these lots and is accessed by walking up the driveway past the Carriage House. Designated parking for special needs is available.