

Decemberists, at the Academy. **E6**

Wyeth art up for auction. **E4**

"Making It," a new design feature, debuts today. **E3**



MNW C

Friday, June 17, 2011 ★ Section E



Changing Skyline By Inga Saffron

A PARK ON HIGH

The extension of New York's vibrant High Line sparks excitement for our own Reading Viaduct — what could be a linear version of Rittenhouse Square.



CLEM MURRAY / Staff Photographer

Above, imagine a curved walkway with a city skyline view from the Reading Viaduct — like the curved walkway, left, in the new second phase of Manhattan's High Line. The project is gaining support from the city and funders, and activists are starting to see a payoff.

INGA SAFFRON / Staff

Historical photo of the Reading Viaduct. Hurdles remain: The city must gain ownership of the viaduct from the Reading Co.



NEW YORK — It's easy to find the new entrance to the High Line park. Just follow the stream of people in skinny jeans and espadrilles heading west from the subways around Penn Station. The parade becomes a throng as you near 10th Avenue, once a lonely outpost where the blocks were lined with trucks and streetwalkers and

not much else.

The Pied Piper of Parks opened its second section only last week, extending its reach to 30th Street, but the surrounding streets have already assumed the vibe of a real neighborhood. So many people have been trekking to the far west side that there have been lines to enter the park, built on an old rail trestle.

Designed by Philadelphia's James Corner and New York's Diller Scofidio & Renfro, the two-year-old High Line may turn out to be the most influential work of architecture completed during the boom years, the Guggenheim Bilbao of its decade. Every city wants one.

That includes Philadelphia. And now the city is taking the first steps toward creating its own version on the viaduct that carried the Reading Railroad's trains into Center City. See **SKYLINE** on E7

philly.com

For a video tour of the Reading Viaduct, go to philly.com/viaduct.

Riverton house is a thread of Clothier family's fabric

Descendants of department store founder gather at a home their ancestor owned.

By Sally Friedman
FOR THE INQUIRER

By midafternoon on a recent spring Sunday, about 40 visitors were cascading through the stately Riverton home of Mary Louise Bianco-Smith and Ken Smith.

This was a "house tour" of a most unusual sort.

The Smiths had invited over several generations of Clothiers. Yes, those Clothiers — descendants of Caleb Clothier and his son Isaac, the cofounder with Justus Clayton's Strawbridge & Clothier department stores.

"We knew that most of them had never seen the home, and when I was contacted by a family member, I was happy to arrange this visit," said Mary Louise. "It's a wonderful house, and we're in some ways just the custodians of its history."

The house, built for Caleb Clothier, is one of a colony of 10 formed in the mid-1800s by



HON CORTES / Staff Photographer

The living room of the historic Riverton house, filled with antiques collected by owners Mary Louise Bianco-Smith and Ken Smith.

Clothier and nine other Quaker businessmen — including Robert and William Biddle and Rodman Wharton. They got together to stake out summer homes in what would become the coun-

try's first planned residential subdivision. Riverton was far enough from Philadelphia to provide a sanctuary, and close enough to be convenient.

See **CLOTHIERS** on E5



MICHAEL S. WIRTZ / Staff Photographer

The Topel home in Kennett Square was built with timber framing. Post-and-beam construction (as opposed to conventional 2-by-4s) is ancient, sturdy, beautiful.

Old-style timber framing is a solid energy-saving hit

By Art Carvey
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

When health problems forced Ave Topel, a hotelier and developer, to retire early, he and his wife, Vicki, decided to build a single-level house that would be easy to maintain and inexpensive to heat and cool. They also wanted a home that included timber framing

and featured plenty of light and exposure to the outdoors.

Their affection for timber framing — a system of construction that uses hefty posts and beams (as opposed to the 2-by-4s of conventional "stick-built" dwellings) — stemmed from a carriage house they once commissioned. So pleased were they with See **TIMBER** on E4

Auctions

Artwork on canvas, paper, and cigar boxes

By David Iams
FOR THE INQUIRER

While Freeman's sale Sunday of fine American and European paintings and sculpture will feature works on canvas and paper by such acclaimed local artists as Andrew Wyeth, N.C. Wyeth, and Howard Pyle, a sale Saturday will offer works of art on cigar boxes.

The more than 50 lots of cigar boxes are part of Morphy Auctions' 880-lot sale of antique and vintage advertising items, beginning at 9 a.m. at its newly expanded gallery near Reading. The boxes, along with humidors and other tobacco-related items, notably two life-size cigar-store Indians, come from the Gotham Cigar Museum of Tampa, Fla.

They include depictions of Indians, among them an 1898 Black Hawk cigar box from Illinois; an 1880s "Merry Christmas" box from New York; a Hoffman House "Bouquet" box depicting nymphs and a satyr frolicking in an Arcadian setting; and, significantly, a full box of Rose-O-Cuba cigars dating to the 1950s.

The Rose-O-Cubas are examples of "clear" Havana cigars, those rolled in the United States using Cuban tobacco until the U.S. embargo of the early 1960s. Like most of the cigar-box lots, it has a presale estimate of \$200 to \$400.

The life-size cigar-store Indians, one a chief made in the late 1800s by W. Demuth & Co. of New York, the other a princess possibly carved by John Phillip Yeager of Baltimore, have presale estimates of \$20,000 to \$30,000 and \$25,000 to \$35,000, respectively. The sale will open with nearly 100 lots of shaving mugs.

Previews are from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and 7 a.m. to sale time Saturday at the gallery, 2000 N. Reading Rd. (Route 272 near the Route 222 Reading/Lancaster exit of I-76). For further information, call 717-335-3435.

Illustrations at Freeman's. Now back to Freeman's. The Wyeths and the Pyle are among the 117 lots that will be offered beginning at 2 p.m. Sunday at the gallery, 1808 Chestnut St.

Works by Andrew Wyeth, who was active well into old age, come up at auction fairly often. But those by his father, N.C. Wyeth, and Pyle, usually literary illustrations, are auc-



A full box of Rose-O-Cuba cigars dating to the 1950s is expected to fetch \$200 to \$400 at Morphy Auctions, near Reading.

tion rarities. Pyle's *In the Prison*, from the collection of the Wilmington Institute Library and done for a story by S. Weir Mitchell for the May 1897 *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, has a presale estimate of \$12,000 to \$18,000.

N.C. Wyeth's chilling *The Gibbet*, offered by Freeman's in December with a presale estimate of \$50,000 to \$80,000, was done for Robert Louis Stevenson's 1924 novel *David Balfour*; it has a presale estimate of \$15,000 to \$25,000. And his illustration for Lytton Strachey's *Elizabeth and Essex* in a 1928 issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal* — with the 35-word title *And there, quite close to him was Elizabeth among her ladies, in a dressing gown, unpainted, without her wig, her gray hair hanging in wisps about her face and her eyes starting from her head* — has a presale estimate of \$30,000 to \$60,000.

According to the catalog description, Andrew Wyeth's *The Lobster Man*, a 19½-by-26½-inch watercolor on paper, was commissioned

through American Artists in New York as a potential Maxwell House Coffee advertisement. It was done sometime between 1945 and 1948 and has a presale estimate of \$80,000 to \$120,000.

It is one of several works that could bring six figures in the sale, which boasts a number of other well-known artists. Martha Walter's *A Hot Day at the Beach*, Robert Spencer's *The Gray House*, done in 1910 and widely exhibited thereafter, and Roy Cleveland Nuse's *Three Children on a Fallen Log* all have presale estimates of \$70,000 to \$100,000.

And *The Breaker Out*, by the Irish painter Jack Butler Yeats (1871-1957), has a presale estimate of \$150,000 to \$250,000. The brother of the poet William Butler Yeats, Jack B. Yeats also began as an illustrator. And *The Breaker Out*, a highly impressionistic dock scene done sometime before 1925, when it was first exhibited in Dublin, has overtones of illustration art.

The 49 European lots also include Yeats' pre-World War



"The Lobster Man," a watercolor by Andrew Wyeth, is expected to be sold for \$80,000 to \$120,000 at Freeman's.



"The Breaker Out," by Jack Butler Yeats, is offered for sale at Freeman's with an estimated price of \$150,000 to \$250,000.

I Kerry Mountains (\$20,000 to \$30,000), Pierre Bonnard's landscape *Paysage du Dauphiné* (\$30,000 to \$50,000), Carl Wilhelm Friedrich Bauerle's *Portrait of a Young Girl With a Basket of Flowers and Her Dog* (\$40,000 to \$60,000), and Edouard Vuillard's *Still Life With Cherry Plums* (\$50,000 to \$80,000).

Previews: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and noon to 5 p.m. Saturday.

Jewelry at Freeman's. Beginning at noon Monday, Freeman's will offer more than 170 lots of jewelry and watches with presale estimates ranging from \$100 to \$200 for a pair of sterling silver shell-form earrings to \$80,000 to \$120,000 for a mid-20th-century

platinum and diamond necklace from a Main Line consignor.

Proceeds from two of the rings in the sale, expected to bring \$1,500 to \$3,000 each, will benefit the Salvation Army, and proceeds from a half-dozen lots, including a vintage Hamilton woman's platinum and diamond wristwatch (\$2,000 to \$4,000) and a platinum and diamond dinner bracelet (\$5,000 to \$7,000), will go to the Temple University Boat House Project.

Other items of note include a 33-inch-long yellow-gold belt set with various jewels (\$7,000 to \$9,000), an M. Waslikoff & Sons art deco platinum and diamond dinner bracelet (\$20,000 to \$30,000), and an archaeological revival

Antiques/Art/Crafts

Cape May Designer Show House Showcases the talents of the region's best-known designers & vendors. Osprey Landing, 109 Rosemans Ln., Cape May; 809-884-5404. \$15; \$10 children. 6/17.

Chester County Craft Guild — Fine Crafts Show Features 30 artisans working in wood, metal, fiber, jewelry, photography, glass. Downingtown Friends Meeting, 800 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown; 610-269-4223. 6/18.

Dressed to the Nines: A Century of Women's Fashions More than 50 accessorized outfits dating from the 1830s through the 1930s. Gloucester County Historical Society Museum, 58 N. Broad St., Woodbury. Included in admission. 6/17.

Flea Market Middletown Senior Center, 2142 Trenton Rd., Levittown. 6/21.

Flea Market & Craft Fair Household goods, children's items, books & gifts. 5:30 pm until dusk. Graeme Park, 859 County Line Rd., Horsham; 215-343-0965. 6/22.

Headhouse Square Craft & Fine Arts Fair Jewelry, clothing, photography, ceramics, glass, paintings. Rain or shine. Historic Headhouse Square, Second & Pine Sts.; 215-413-3713. craftfair.com. 6/18.

Horriestown Lions Club Flea Market and Craft Fair Northtowne Plaza Shopping Center, Delsab Pike, Norristown; 610-275-1724. 6/18. 8 am-3 pm. Rain date 6/19.

Plaza Celebrates Crafts Juried crafts & fine arts show. The Piazza at Schmits, N. Second St. 6/18. 11 am-6 pm.

Size Matters Textile work by 27 artists from across the country. Some Things Looming, 526 Washington St., Reading. 6/18.

West Philadelphia Flea Market West Mill Creek Tennis Courts, 5200 Wyalusing Ave. 267-278-1142. \$8. Setup time 8 am. 9 am-5:30 pm. 6/18.

necklace made around 1899 by Giacinto Meilillo, a manager for the Castellani family of Neapolitan jewelers (\$15,000 to \$20,000).

Previews: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and noon to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. For further information on both sales, call 215-563-9275 or see the catalogs online at www.freemansauction.com.

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An archaeological revival necklace made around 1899 by the Italian Giacinto Meilillo has a presale estimate of \$15,000 to \$20,000 at Freeman's.

Timber

Continued from E1

the result that they contacted the builder, Hugh Lofting, of Hugh Lofting Timber Framing in Kennett Square, to help design and build their dream house.

That 2007 collaboration, with a team of other contractors and consultants steeped in green and sustainable building, produced a simple yet spectacular structure that captures the rustic flavor of Chester County in striking contemporary fashion.

"The whole experience changed us," says Ave Topel, 60. "We went from not knowing about green building to becoming advocates."

The couple even wrote a book about their adventure, *Green Beginnings: The Story of How We Built Our Green & Sustainable Home*, that celebrates what they call TGA — The Green Aesthetic — their joyous resolve to display the environmentally responsible features of their distinctive home.

In many ways, the Topel house, which earned a coveted LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) silver certification, exemplifies the latest trends in timber-framing, an ancient form of construction as beautiful as it is sturdy. Revived during the energy crisis of the 1970s, timber framing, sometimes referred to as post-and-beam construction, has proven remarkably adaptable to modern needs.

"Timber framing is about melding the ancient and modern, the past and future," says Tedd Benson, founding owner of Bensonwood Homes, a timber-frame construction company in Wal-

pole, N.H. Benson has written books about timber-framing and is regarded as an industry sage and visionary.

Early timber-frame structures, such as 12th-century cruck houses and 14th-century manor houses, tended to be enclosed and dark. The hallmarks of 21st-century timber-frame houses are light, glass, openness, and energy efficiency, Benson says.

Those are the characteristics of the Topel house, which is two structures linked by a glass connector or foyer. The public space or lodge contains a kitchen and dining area separated from the family room by a massive stone fireplace. The skeleton for this part of the house is a timber frame of Douglas fir, harvested from a sustainable forest approved by the Forest Stewardship Council.

"The timber frame is not so much for structure as to give a sense of scale, a sense of history, and a sense of craft that you wouldn't find in a Sheetrock space," says the Topels' architect, Matthew Roger, who describes their residence as "the new vernacular farmhouse." The appeal of a timber frame, often hand cut and hewn, with pegged mortise-and-tenon joinery, is "visceral" and universal.

"It resonates with people," says Joel McCarty, executive director of the Timber Framers Guild. "The movie *Witness* cemented a series of images in people's minds. It makes us look like we think we are — builders of durable structures that can be used and loved for generations."

Or as Lofting bluntly puts it: "With a timber frame, you can see the whole structure, so there's no hiding a bunch of shoddy workmanship."

The long spans of the beams create large spaces and flexible possibilities for



Builder Hugh Lofting (left), owner Ave Topel in the timber-framed Topel home. "You can see the whole structure," Lofting says. "so there's no hiding ... shoddy workmanship."

interior design and configuration. That comes in handy when homeowners want to integrate the latest technology, and some companies have amplified the versatility.

Bensonwood pioneered "open building," a system of construction that untangles the elements of a house, based on the premise that its parts (frame, roof, sheathing, etc.) have different life spans. Plumbing and electrical wires are routed through chases — a baseboard conduit, for example, or the space between the ceiling of the first floor and floor of the second. The idea is to make

the guts of the house more accessible so utilities can be readily revised and updated, and walls and fixtures can be easily moved.

The practicality, as well as the charm and longevity, of timber frames have contributed to their popularity in recent decades, even though they can cost 10 to 15 percent more, depending on design and materials, than conventional structures. Timber framing is often employed in luxury second homes and vacation homes.

"We learned a lesson from some of the tract homes that have been going up: You get

philly.com

To hear more about the Topel house and post-and-beam construction, go to Philly.com/post.

what you pay for," says Pam Hinton, the Timber Frame Business Council's executive director. According to the council, based in Gettysburg, there are 290 companies in North America engaged in full-time timber framing. "With a timber frame, you don't have as much repair work because things are so solid. If you look at pictures of Haiti after the earthquake, the structures still standing are timber frames built hundreds of years ago, while commercial buildings next door are piles of sticks."

The Topel house, adorned with recycled barn boards, bricks, and floors, is loaded with clever features and devices that reduce its energy needs. Foremost among them are the structural insulated panels, or SIPs, that wrap the house as tightly as the skin of an orange. The panels are sandwiches of dense foam between sheets of board made of compressed strips and flakes of wood. With this system, heating and cooling costs are typically reduced by half, Lofting says. The Topels discovered that sunlight alone made the south-facing side of the house toasty in winter.

A house that Bensonwood Homes built in Vermont using SIP technology requires no furnace. Says Benson: "The energy efficiency is so high you're basically using body heat."

Typically the SIPs are pre-cut in the shop, as are the components of the timber frame. Prefab may carry a stigma, but in the timber-frame industry, "off-site fabri-

cation" has become standard practice.

This enhances precision and reduces waste, says Lofting, 65, who might have become a Montana rancher had he not been awed by the first timber frame he saw in the '70s. ("It was gorgeous," he recalls, "like a huge piece of furniture.")

Still, the housing recession battered the timber-framing industry, driving some small operations out of business and forcing large companies to lay off employees. Many timber-frame firms have adapted by moving into hybrid construction — conventionally built houses that incorporate timber-frame elements. The goal: affordability.

"As our projects have become smaller, simpler, and more focused on energy efficiency," Benson says, "it's essential to become more mainstream and build houses for the common man."

The Topel residence is anything but common. "People still think going green means a mud hut with a fire hole in the middle," Ave Topel says. "We did it right. We overdid a lot of things intentionally, but it really turned out to be a magnificent, fun place to live."

But with their two children grown and out of college, the Topels are beginning a new chapter in their lives. They are planning to move to their summer home in Rehoboth Beach, Del., and are selling their Chester County timber-frame showcase.

"It was a labor of love," says Vicki, 55. "You come in here and you just instantly feel calm. I love the outdoors and feel like we brought the outdoors indoors. We're one with nature."

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