

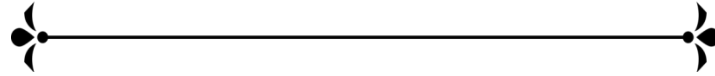
# From the Archives

By

Joyce H. Munro, Morris Arboretum Archives Volunteer

A compilation of articles appearing in the *Morris Arboretum Volunteer Newsletter* in 2019





## Five Things You Might Not Know About...

### The Mercury Loggia

1. In 1913, John and Lydia Morris celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Compton, their country estate, by constructing a new garden folly—the Mercury Loggia.
2. As centerpiece of the loggia, the Morrises selected a facsimile of “Sitting Mercury,” a sculpture buried in lava from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. They likely saw the original on one of their tours of Italy.
3. The sculptor they chose to create their “Sitting Mercury” was Umberto Marcellini of Naples, whose facsimile of “Winged Victory” is at Hearst Castle in San Simeon, California. The final cost of “Sitting Mercury” was \$330.00
4. The contractor who built the loggia for “Sitting Mercury” was Pringle Borthwick of Chestnut Hill. The cost of the 15’ x 20’ stone structure and grotto beneath was \$2200.00.
5. Louise Kellner, the Morrises traveling companion and diarist, gives us a clue about why they chose a contemplative figure instead of one of the triumphal, imposing, or lively sculptures salvaged from the buried villa. After touring Pompeii in 1894, Louise wrote:

“It is almost impossible for anyone to attempt to give a description of these ruins, or to convey an idea of the reality of the desolation, and at the same time of the wonderful preservation of these ruins. A feeling of infinite sadness and melancholy steals over one, a solemn stillness fills the air, and as one passes through those silent streets and goes from house to house, from door to door of the dwellings once thronged, but now empty and voiceless, one really feels as if it was indeed the city of the dead. Nineteen hundred years ago, and these streets were crowded with a people whose hopes and joys and sorrows were perhaps not far different from our own. How fearful, how terrible must have been the death-stroke that in a moment swept them all away! No one left to tell the sad story!”



The Mercury Loggia, a perfect place for quiet reflection.

See more photos of the Mercury Loggia [here](#).

---

❖ ————— ❖

## Five Things You Might Not Know About...

### The Morris's Dogs

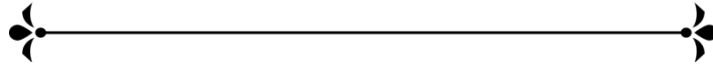
1. Gyp was John and Lydia Morris's pet in the 1870s. Franklin D. Briscoe painted "dear little Gyp" in two versions—a large study and smaller portrait—neither of which has been located.
2. Rowdy was small enough for Lydia to hold in her arms. Lydia's cousin, Marriott Morris, photographed her with Rowdy tucked under her chin at Cedar Grove in 1885.
3. Teufel, Harry and Caesar were the Morris's pets in the early 1900s. Teufel may have been named for a then-popular children's book, *Teufel, the Terrier*. While John and Lydia were in Paris in 1900, Lydia bought rubber boots for Caesar. Louise Kellner, their travel companion and diarist, wondered what Teufel would think when Caesar "trots around the grass in boots, if he will ever hold still enough to put his little feet into them..."
4. Billie, a dachshund, and Fritz, a "black & tan," were purchased in 1903 while John, Lydia and Louise were touring Germany. When the dogs arrived by freighter, Louise picked them up in New Jersey and took them to Compton. This is what happened next, in Louise's words:
 

"We were received by Miss Morris, who had been on the lookout for us, and Mr. Morris joined the party within a few minutes to witness Caesar's displeasure over the arrival of his two new brothers...Then Mr. & Miss Morris & I, with the three four-footers, took a walk through the grounds, and though Caesar endured Fritz, a friendship between him and Billie could not be established right then & there, and it was thought best & wisest to let Billie camp in a stall of the stable...until his highness, Master Caesar, will favor the pretty Dachs with approval & grant him the right to be treated like himself."
5. Buster and Sonny were father & son Airedales during Lydia's later years. See photos of Lydia with Buster [here](#) and [here](#).



Painting of Fritz, Billie & Caesar by Meyer M. Dantzig, 1905.

Courtesy of Phoebe Driscoll



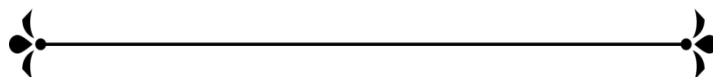
## Five Things You Might Not Know About...

### The Japanese Gardens of Compton

1. Between 1898 and 1912, five Japanese gardens were created at Compton—the Rockery in the Fernery, the Teahouse Garden in Wissahickon Woods, the Hill & Cloud Garden near the Swan Pond, the Overlook Garden near Hillcrest Avenue and the Rock Pond by the katsura tree.
2. The Japanese landscape designers were named Furukawa (Rock Pond), Sato (Teahouse Garden), and Muto (Hill & Cloud and Overlook). The name of the Rockery designer is unknown.
3. Naturalist Mulford B. Foster photographed the [Rock Pond](#) and [Overlook](#) around 1920.
4. The significance of the “three wise monkeys” carved on a *fudo* stone in the Overlook Garden is explained in an undated note, written in English, in the Arboretum Archives. It may have been written by Y. Muto, creator of the garden. The monkeys, the writer states, visualize an old Japanese proverb: *thou shall not speak, look at or hear anything which is not worthwhile and beneficial to you as well as to others.*
5. In 1917, the Imperial Japanese Mission, composed of the Japanese Ambassador, diplomats and senior military officers, traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with President Wilson and members of the Cabinet and Congress. The purpose of the Mission was to congratulate America on entering World War I and to strengthen collaboration between the two nations. The Japanese emissaries then traveled to Philadelphia to exchange greetings with the Mayor and the newly appointed U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Roland S. Morris (a distant relative of John & Lydia Morris). After a visit to Independence Hall and luncheon, they motored out to Compton for a tour of the Japanese gardens and a “typical American garden party” hosted by Lydia Morris.



*Ikekomi-Doro* (planted lantern) in the Overlook Garden



## Five Things You Might Not Know About...

### Cedar Grove

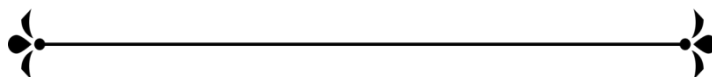
1. Cedar Grove, the childhood summer home of John T. and Lydia T. Morris, was originally located in the Harrowgate section of Philadelphia, northwest of Kensington. According to the 1823 *Geographical Dictionary*, Harrowgate was once a “place of resort for bathing and drinking the waters.”
2. The blush rose bushes in the flower garden of Cedar Grove at Harrowgate were believed to date back to the original owner, Elizabeth Coates Paschall. Elizabeth also grew an extensive variety of herbs used to concoct medicinal salves, tonics and remedies.
3. The fifteen-acre tract of land around Cedar Grove, once a working farm with barn, carriage house and several small dependencies, was diminished in size when the Pennsylvania Railway declared eminent domain after 1871 and the “place of resort” soon became noisy and cramped.
4. A cousin of John and Lydia’s, Morton Morris and his family lived at Cedar Grove for a dozen years at the turn of the century, rent free. Morton’s daughter, Margaret Fort Morris, taught at the Isaac Paschall Morris Primary School, three blocks from Cedar Grove.
5. In his 1909 will, John Morris stated what he wanted done with Cedar Grove:

*I will and direct that the dwelling house shall be preserved as an example of Colonial architecture and as a museum of old-fashioned things, and that nothing shall be done to it nor shall it be put to any use which will take from it its colonial simplicity.*

In 1926, Lydia fulfilled John’s wishes to preserve Cedar Grove, but she did so by having it removed from Harrowgate and re-erected in Fairmount Park.



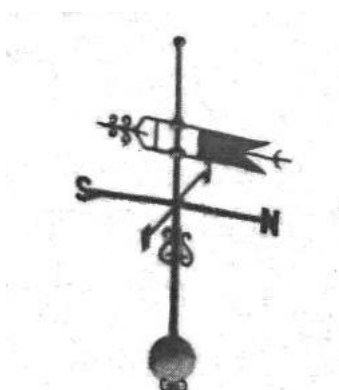
See more photos of Cedar Grove [here](#).



## Five Things You Might Not Know About...

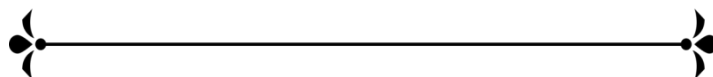
### The Weathervanes

1. Shortly after the round pavilion (aka the Summer House) was built at the corner of the Rose Garden in 1908, its shingle roof was adorned with a “vignette” weathervane. Though the designer is unknown, this vane tells a familiar tale of hospitality. A man (thought to be Frank Gould, Head Gardener of Compton) presents a pineapple to a woman wearing a wide-brimmed hat and summer suit (Lydia Morris). Around them are symbols of the Morris’s gardens—potting bench, watering can, and potted plants. At one end, a terrier barks at something “out there” and at the other, a rabbit keeps a wary eye on things. See the pavilion weathervane [here](#).
2. Years ago, the Summer House vane was broken almost in two by a falling tree. Eventually it was removed and placed in storage. In 2011, the damaged vane was repaired, re-patinated and mounted once again on the roof. See conservation details [here](#).
3. The tallest feature of the Compton mansion—a canted-corner tower—once had a pyramidal roof. And pointing to the sky at the peak of the roof was a slender weathervane. Around 1940, the weathervane was removed (along with the roof) but look closely and you will see it [here](#).
4. In 1941, Paul Cret designed a stone workhouse behind the Fernery with a cupola topped by a “banneret” weathervane. But the weathervane was evidently an option because shortly after the workhouse was erected, a visitor from McKeesport named Thomas Williams noticed the cupola was missing its finishing touch. He returned home, crafted a vane and donated it to the Arboretum. Williams’ vane featured the four directional arms topped by a fanciful arrowhead with banner tail. The vane has disappeared but fortunately a photograph of it was published in the *Morris Arboretum Bulletin*.



Thomas Williams’ weathervane

5. When Thomas Williams visited the Arboretum, he was actually coming to visit family—his sister Margaret was the wife of John Tonkin, the Supervisor of Grounds.



## Five Things You Might Not Know About...

### Horticultural Books in John Morris's Library

1. Among the oldest books in the library of Compton were the twenty volumes of *The Botanical Cabinet, Consisting of Coloured Delineations of Plants from All Countries*. The author, a nursery owner in Britain named George Loddiges, took on the mission of introducing over 2000 rare plants to the public between 1817 and 1826. See Volume I [here](#).
2. If Morris was interested in the etymology of a plant name, he could look it up in Benjamin Maund's 13-volume series, *The Botanic Garden*. Composed between 1825 and 1851, the series was not just a scientific compendium but a literary tour de force, with poetry, observations and illustrations by his daughters. A similar first-edition set can be purchased today for \$6500 at a rare books dealer.
3. Morris owned sixty 'botanical' books that went unnamed in the final inventory of his library, a likely indication that they were contemporary and of less value.
4. Perhaps the most unusual (and earliest) horticultural book in Morris's library was *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* by Humphry Repton, which incorporated small slips of hinged paper pasted over selected engravings (overslips) showing "before and after" improvements to prominent estates. It was, and still is, an entertaining pastiche of renovations to mistakes others had made and went well beyond landscaping into symmetry, color and proportions.
5. Repton pulled no punches in naming less-than-perfect estates, like historic Wingerworth Hall in Derbyshire, an estate he claimed had been "unfortunately treated." What Wingerworth needed, according to Repton, was a more dignified entry gate, a lake, and mass plantings rather than the "dots and clumps with which modern gardening is apt to disfigure an open lawn." See Repton's overslips in action [here](#).

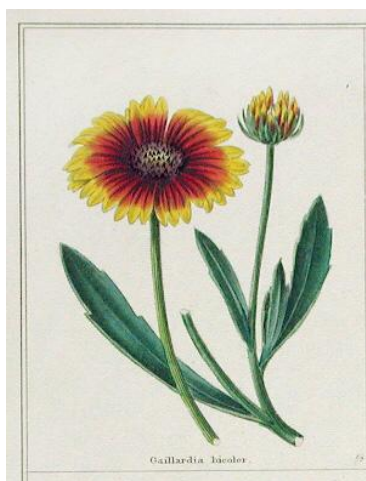
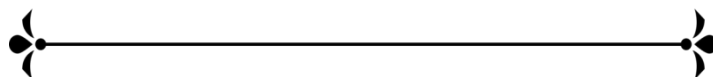


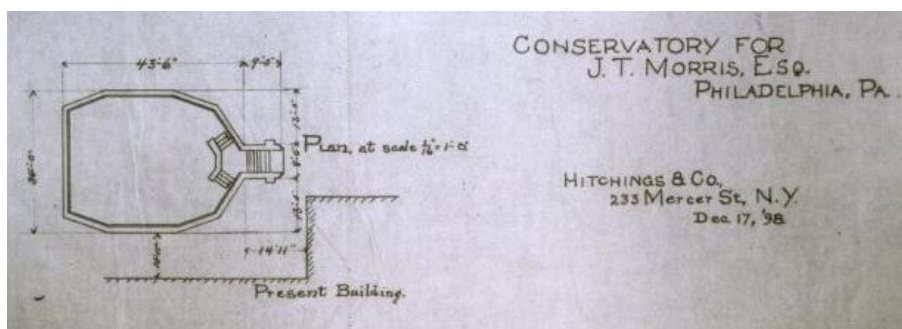
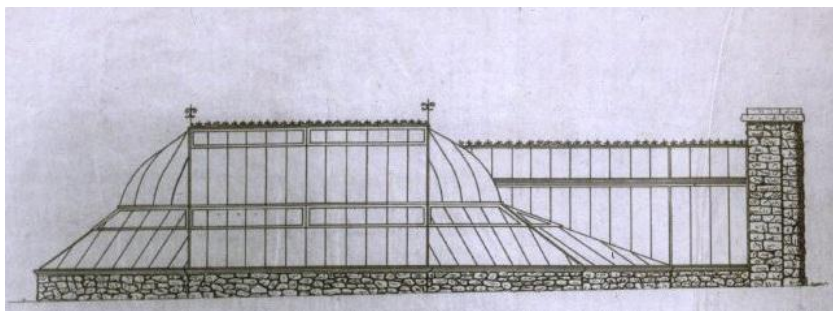
Illustration from *The Botanic Garden* by Benjamin Maund



## Five Things You Might Not Know About...

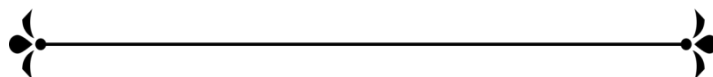
### The Fernery

1. Completed in 1899, the Fernery cost \$8,000 to construct and equip. Hitchings & Company, horticultural builders in New York, supplied the structure; the W. & J. Birkenhead Nursery in Manchester, England supplied the ferns and selaginellas.
2. The budget for restoring the Fernery in 1993 was \$1.5 million.
3. In addition to providing ferns, John Birkenhead, co-owner of the nursery, advised prospective fernery owners on construction of the interior: "Where it is possible to go down into the ground, the effect will be much finer than when the rockwork is all above the ground level. The beauty of Ferns is seen to best advantage when looked down upon. The walks should undulate and wind to and fro..." (*Ferns and Fern Culture*, 1892)
4. John Morris played a role in designing the Fernery, as he did with other garden features at Compton. As plans for the interior were being finalized, he sent Birkenhead sketches and notes of changes, including the addition of a stream of water that would "fall in a series of small cascades, dropping into a pool below."
5. The two stone pillars at the Fernery entrance were designed to camouflage the boiler chimney and the ventilation shaft.



See more photographs of the Fernery [here](#)





## Five Things You Might Not Know About...

### John and Lydia Morris's Vacation Destinations

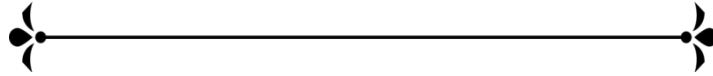
Every August, siblings John and Lydia left their Philadelphia townhouse on Pine Street to go on summer vacation—but their destination was not Compton or Cedar Grove. Here are some of the places they went through the years:

1. Saratoga Springs, New York (1887 & 1894). People flocked to Saratoga Springs to “take the waters” and go to America’s oldest race track. When the Morrises vacationed here the second time, the resort town held its first floral parade and “Grand Floral Ball,” which became annual events until 1905.
2. Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island (1889, 1891 & 1892). In the 1890s, the Gladstone Hotel was the “centre of gayety” for Philadelphians. The highlight each week was the Saturday night hop at the Casino Ballroom. Read about the Narragansett Pier [here](#).
3. Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada (1890 & 1899). Banff Springs Hotel, the “castle in the Rockies,” was a luxury hotel in a dramatic setting made accessible by the Canadian Pacific Railway. John and Lydia first stayed here on the way home from their “trip around the world” with Louise Kellner.
4. Lake Louise, Laggan, Alberta, Canada (1905). August weather can be iffy at Lake Louise, as John and Lydia found out when they were caught off guard by a snow storm while taking a walk around the lake.



Lake Louise Chalet, University of Alberta Libraries

5. Bretton Woods, New Hampshire (1908-1915). After experiencing the prestige of Saratoga Springs and Narragansett Pier, and the grandeur of the Canadian Rockies, the Morrises chose the White Mountains as their repeat destination. The Mount Washington Hotel, where the Morrises stayed, continues to attract guests. Learn why [here](#).

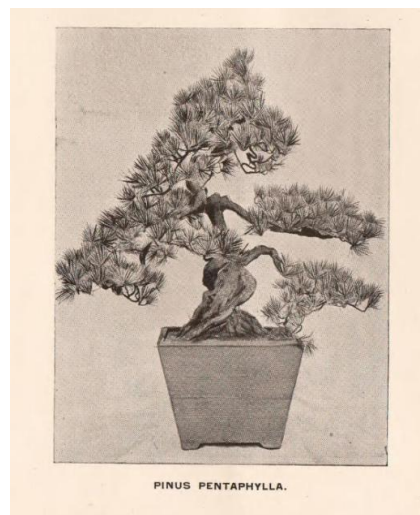


## Five Things You Might Not Know About...

### Plants & Seeds the Morrises Bought on Their “Around the World” Tour



In October 1889, John and Lydia Morris and their travel companion, Louise Kellner, started on a ten-month tour that took them to eleven countries. Along the way, they visited gardens, both large and small, where they occasionally bought fresh flowers or plants for Compton. In her diaries of the trip, Louise wrote about some of their botanical purchases.

1. On their visit to the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kandy, Ceylon, “Mr. Morris bought five Rupees worth of different seeds and if he will have good luck with them in his greenhouse at Compton, he will have the handsomest & rarest flowers in the United States.”
2. At the Governor’s Palace garden in Macao, China, “Mr. M. was made a present of the seed of the most beautiful Chinese aster, which, so he hopes, will be in bloom by the time he returns to Compton.”
3. “We had a lovely rickshaw ride all around the Bluff (Yokohama), and stopped at a gardener’s where some plants were ordered. Miss Morris bought 50 cents worth of pinks, for which she got 16 flowers only, and I picked for myself 3 lovely Mignonettes.”
4. In Tokyo, they toured a small garden: “It was very pretty and had the loveliest little trees shaped in all sorts of twisted ways. Mr. Morris bought one of them, a wee pine tree, and I do hope that he will get it home safely.”



From 1899 Cleary & Co. auction catalog for Kushibiki & Arai Nurseries

5. After landing in San Francisco, they went north to British Columbia for two weeks. In Banff, “Mr. Morris was out getting slips of different trees & shrubberies to be sent to and planted in the woods of Compton.”

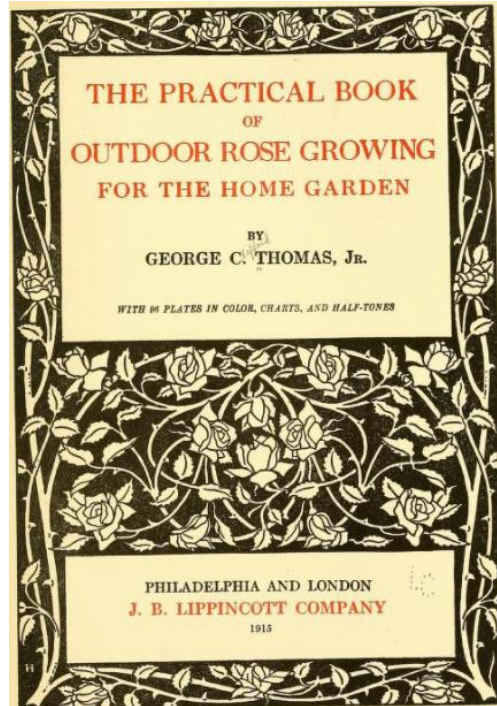



## Five Things You Might Not Know About...

### A Botanical Book in Lydia Morris's Library

First a caveat: John and Lydia Morris shared the library at Compton and both of them purchased books through the years. It's not possible to know precisely which volumes Lydia purchased while John was alive, but volumes published after 1915 were definitely her own choice. One of the botanical books listed in the final inventory of her library is particularly interesting because it was written by a neighbor.

*The Practical Book of Outdoor Rose Growing for the Home Garden* by George Clifford Thomas, Jr. Learn more [here](#).

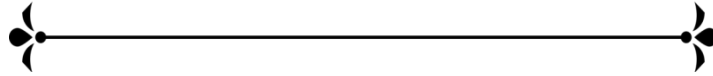


1. The connection between Thomas and Morris began shortly after the turn of the century when Thomas's father gave Thomas several adjacent homesteads in Springfield and Whitemarsh Townships. Thomas named all of the property on both sides of the Wissahickon Creek "Bloomfield Farm" and he had big plans for it.
2. His first plan was to design a golf course on a choice section of the farm, which he then sold to the newly-formed Whitemarsh Valley Country Club in 1908. The following year, Thomas began selling off acreage for building sites.

3. But Thomas held onto a portion of the farm, where he bred hybrid roses, some on rootstock imported from France and Ireland. Thomas was a serious rosarian with an ambitious goal: to produce hardy, ever-blooming climbers adapted to Philadelphia's climate.

4. The remaining portion of Thomas's farm, across the road from Compton, was bought by John Morris in 1914. Morris kept the name Bloomfield Farm and he, too, had big plans for it. But that's another story, told [here](#).

5. By the time Lydia Morris purchased the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of Thomas's book in 1917, Thomas had moved across the country to Beverly Hills, California. He continued producing roses on his estate and at his test gardens in Portland, Oregon. In 1924, he produced "Bloomfield Beverly," forever linking two very different locales. A few years later, the dapper George C. Thomas, Junior, sauntered through his extraordinary rose garden with the camera rolling. See the video [here](#).



## Five Things You Might Not Know About...

### Seven Arches

1. It may be one of the most picturesque structures in the Arboretum, but Seven Arches is not a garden folly. It plays a vital role in English Park.



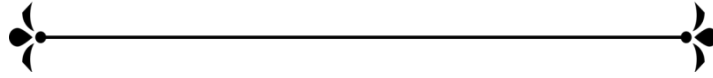
Morris Arboretum Archives, 2004.1.571

2. Built by Pringle Borthwick, a Chestnut Hill stonework master, the design draws on historic multi-arched bridges and buildings John and Lydia Morris would have seen while traveling in Europe.

3. Behind the arches is a 220-foot well and cistern, powered by hydraulics, to carry water to the Japanese Overlook Garden, the Key and Step Fountains, and the Mercury Loggia. For a time, the system fell into disrepair but has since been fully restored. During restoration, the original wooden water wheel was replaced by a metal wheel.

4. The arches are topped with a wide parapet and balustrade—the perfect spot for a grand view of English Park and beyond to the Wissahickon Valley.

5. In 2016, the arches were commemorated in music composed by Nicholas Escobar. His eight-part suite, titled “The Morris Arboretum Suite,” ends with “Seven Arches.” Listen and watch this evocative tribute to the arches [here](#).



## Five Things You Might Not Know About...

### How the Morrises Spent Christmas

1. John and Lydia usually spent Christmas at 826 Pine Street, though some years they went to Compton. On Christmas Day 1900, John and Lydia celebrated at Pine Street with Louise Kellner, their travel companion, by lighting sixteen candles on the tree...and while the candles burned, they ate a leisurely breakfast.
2. John and Lydia's gift-giving custom was simple and straightforward: each year they gave close family members, servants and business acquaintances a modest cash gift. Occasionally, the Morrises gave someone a special Christmas gift. In 1901, the gift was a doll house "fixed up" by Lydia with Louise's help and the recipient was Amy Gould, the Head Gardener's daughter.
3. In the 1920s, Lydia set up her Christmas tree in the glassed-in porch of Compton. She must have been quite proud of her tree and its lavish decorations, because she arranged for Frederick B. Scheetz to photograph it and send her a dozen copies. The photograph below is probably the one taken by Scheetz.



## Courtesy of Springfield Township Historical Society

4. Holiday feasting would not be complete without a tasty Christmas pudding. In Lydia's handwritten recipe book is the recipe for [Christmas pudding](#), contributed by her friend, Mrs. George Henry Lea (Alice Van Antwerp). If you're interested in making Mrs. Lea's version of this holiday tradition, be aware that the recipe leaves out a couple of key ingredients!

5. Three times in their lives, the Morrises celebrated Christmas on distant shores. In 1889, the Morrises and Louise Kellner were in Bombay, where they were served a "native Christmas meal" with plenty of cakes and candies made of camel's milk and sugar. Then in the evening, they attended a performance of a Hindi opera. In 1894, they celebrated the day onboard ship bound for Egypt. Louise wrote that it was cold and windy and although the dining room was decorated with mistletoe and holly, the food was "just so so—not bad enough to starve on and not good enough to thoroughly enjoy."

