



Old Morlatton Village MESSENGER

The Historic Preservation Trust of Berks County

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

In December of 2007, the Trust accepted the conveyance of an historic preservation and conservation easement with respect to 20 acres in Exeter Township on which is located one of the Lincoln Homesteads. The house and the surrounding land is an oasis in Exeter Township surrounded by substantial development. A proper part of the Trust's mission is to help private individuals preserve their historic property both with advice when possible and also with legal accommodations to that end. The Trust felt that it was providing a critical private and public service by accepting this preservation and conservation easement. The Trust anticipates that it may accept similar easements on other historically significant properties in the future.

The Trust is also considering helping Spring Township deal with issues involving an historic barn, an addition to which encroaches on the right-of-way of a public road at a sharp curve causing a dangerous situation. The original barn is located far enough back from the road that it does not create sight problems for traffic on the road. However, the addition to the barn brings it close to the road that drivers cannot see around the curve. The Township has talked

to the Trust about helping it take over the barn, remove the addition, preserve the historic nature of the barn, and return it to the original owner. The Trust is waiting to receive a specific proposal from the Township.

At a retreat held by the board members of the Trust on January 12, 2008, the Trust board reaffirmed its commitment to hire an executive director for the Trust, hopefully sometime during 2008. The Trust has many projects in the works and cannot achieve its maximum potential for the preservation of its properties and other historic properties in Berks County without having a full time director.

We also wish to bring to the membership's attention another truly historic house that is at risk. The Hain farmhouse on Route 422 to the west of Sinking Spring is for sale. It is a large house from the early nineteenth century. The interior is in fairly good condition as the result of a sound roof. The house is located very close to the highway. We fear that a developer will buy the house, raze it and use the land for commercial purposes. Hence, we have another beautiful historic property at serious risk.

Dedicated to maintaining and preserving historically and architecturally significant properties

MEET THE VICE PRESIDENT MATTHEW BARNHART

1. *What prompted your interest in historic properties?*

When my mother died last spring, I came across a clipping from my hometown newspaper she had saved. It was a letter I had written to the editor of the Carlisle newspaper objecting to the demolition of a late 18th century barn. The Noble Barn sat prominently on a hill among a number of sites being “malled”. Its demolition seemed wasteful and disrespectful. I was 15.

To me, historic preservation is, in large part, a values issue. The effort and skill invested by our ancestors are worthy of respect, restoration and re-use. Their effort and skill enable structures to endure for centuries. Having done a number of restorations, I can attest to the back-breaking work in stone walls and massive timbers (that doesn't even count gathering or quarrying the stone or felling and hewing the trees). I can attest to their skill in joinery, masonry and cabinetry using only hand tools. I have the upmost regard for those early builders.

The academic and aesthetic aspect is also important. Obviously, the high style homes of the past reflect the status and resources of the builders. The designs are classic and well defined. But even the most modest early houses seem to “get it right”, they just look like they belong in the landscape. We can learn a great deal about our ancestors from the buildings they lived and worked in, what they did, what they valued. We can learn from the way they built towns and cities, true communities.

There is also an economic benefit to historic preservation. The Noble Barn was demolished and replaced with a steak house.

The interior of the steak house was decorated to look like an old barn. Had the barn been used it would certainly have been a more expensive undertaking but the margin on each rib eye served could have been higher. Well preserved well used historic buildings become destinations. Historic districts have proven to boost values.

2. *You are also Chairman of the Property Committee. What are the responsibilities of the Property Committee?*

The Property Committee is responsible for assessing the condition of the buildings in our collection and determining an appropriate course of action for each. Given the limited resources, it is sometimes necessary to prioritize what and when we do repairs. We also prepare specifications for projects which are part of the grant writing process.

3. *What do you feel is a primary issue for the Trust to pursue?*

It is always the bottom line: money. But that has to be addressed in a number of ways. Membership and volunteers, public and media relations, contributions and grants all require a focused, coordinated effort which is difficult with a part-time board and no staff. To that end, we are conducting a search for a staff person and investing some of our limited resources in personnel which will certainly have a great return. If you or someone you know would be a candidate for the position, forward your/their contact information to the Trust.

4. *How can we create more interest in our properties?*

Open them on a regular basis and advertise.

5. *What is your vision of the future for Morlatton Village?*

Morlatton Village can become a “gateway” to Berks County, a tourist destination. That will require investment of both capital and human resources. The White Horse Inn should be used more as an event venue, again requiring investment in equipment, furnishings, etc.

VISIT TO DELAWARE

When the beginnings of Berks County come to mind the tendency is to think of the strong Germanic heritage but in reality the first white settlers in this area were the Swedes who, in 1701, came up the Schuylkill River from the area we presently know as Wilmington, DE. On January 29, 2008 Peggy Gingrich, Linda Hughes, Eleanor Shaner and Priscilla Walsky traveled to Wilmington to meet with Alessa Hogate and Ruth Runkle of the Swedish Colonial Society and visit their new museum. This museum which is located adjacent to the Kalmar Nyckel, a beautiful replica of one of the ships which carried the settlers to the new world, opened in June of 2007. The exhibit titled “Experience New Sweden” does exactly that encompassing clothing, daily life, and transportation in the colony. The tour of the museum was preceded by “Life in New Sweden” an excellent video which acquaints the visitor with the history of the New Sweden Colony. This video will be shown in the White Horse Inn during the Mouns Jones Fair on September 27, 2008. Both the museum and the Kalmar Nyckel are well worth a visit.



OPEN VILLAGE PROGRAMS

The monthly Sunday afternoon programs began August 2007 in an effort to let the public know about Morlatton Village. The programs were advertised via radio, printed handouts placed in public places such as libraries, stores, historic sites and by word of mouth. All programs were free of charge with refreshments served afterward.

August’s program was a fairly well attended “Afternoon of 18th Century Music” with Dr. Helen May at the harpsichord, Nichole Rohrbach playing the harp and Noelle Rohrbach playing the cello, all in lovely 18th century period dress. About 30 people attended.

September featured Darius Puff, Lenape descendant, historian and storyteller. There were 15 visitors.

Helen Seguin, ranger at Hopewell National Historic Site, presented the October program. She explained and demonstrated English Change Ringing with her own special set of tuned bells. Visitors were allowed to experience the action. Only 5 people attended. Two tried the bells.

November’s program was entitled “Christmas Joy - Dance and Song”. The dancing was demonstrated by our own Amity Colonial Dancers accompanied by Dr. Helen May on the keyboard and harpsichord. Nichole Rohrbach, playing the harp, joined Dr. May for group singing of old and familiar Christmas Carols. This was followed by mulled cider and Christmas cookies. The Whitehorse Inn was decorated for the holidays with a cedar tree hung with natural and handmade paper ornaments. All the windowsills and tables were set with lighted candles and natural decorations. A glimpse of Christmas many years ago.

L to R back row: Eleanor Shaner, Linda Hughes, Alessa Hogate, Priscilla Walsky. Front row: L to R: Ruth Runkle, Peggy Gingrich

OPEN HEARTH DINNER

The annual fall open hearth dinner was held November 2007 with dinner at the White Horse Inn and beginning with soup at the Mouns Jones House.

During dinner Dr. Helen May delighted the guests with harpsichord music. The guests were further treated by an impromptu demonstration by four of the Amity Colonial Dancers who happened to be helpers for the dinner: Jen Mills, Mr. and Mrs. Dean Simons and Susan Miller-Speros.

In April the first Spring open hearth dinner will be held requested by people who were too late in making reservations for last November. The seating is limited to 26 by virtue of the amount of food that can be prepared in the fireplace according to the level of elegance and the quality of food that has come to be expected.

In case you wondered what the November dinner looked like:

First course– Cream of watercress soup accompanied by hot mulled cider served in the Mouns Jones House.

Entrée -Carrot and raisin salad
Roast pork tenderloin roasted in the reflector oven with garlic and fresh sage from our own herb garden
Sweet potato and apple casserole topped with pecans baked in our Dutch ovens
Turnips au gratin also baked in reflector ovens
Freshly baked French bread baked by our own Frenchman, Freddie, a real French chef who loves living history.
Hot or cold cider or water was served with the meal or BYOB.

Dessert-Peppermint custard pie
Apple pie
Applebutter-pumpkin pie
Coffee and tea



Please remember to return your membership dues envelope. Your support is basic to the mission of the Trust. These beautiful old structures in Berks County are a vital physical connection to our past. Once they are gone so is that precious link to our history.

The Historic Preservation Trust would like to acknowledge the following gifts:

\$500.00 from the Swedish Colonial Society to help reequip the Mouns Jones House with items that were destroyed in the June 06 flood

\$10,000 from the estate of John and Barbara Newland

DATES TO REMEMBER

April 19, Saturday

OPEN HEARTH DINNER

5:30: First Course- Mouns Jones House

Entrée, Dessert- White Horse Inn

\$50 per person

Limited to 26 people

May 4, Sunday

**MOTHER'S DAY LUNCHEON featuring the
Camerata String Quartet**

1:00 pm and 3:00 pm

\$32 per person

Place to be announced

June 13 & 14, Friday & Saturday

OLEY VALLEY ANTIQUES SHOW

Oley Valley Middle School

September 27, Saturday

MOUNS JONES COUNTRY FAIR

10:00am to 4:00pm

Morlatton Village, Douglassville

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