The World’s Oldest Floating Steel Warship

By Mindy Crawford

“You may fire when ready, Gridley,” Commodore George Dewey told his executive officer. These famous words marked the beginning of the definitive battle of the Spanish American War. After the loss of the USS Maine in Havana harbor and the United States reluctantly entered into war, Commodore Dewey led the Asiatic Squadron through the Pacific to attack a Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in the Philippines.

The Spanish opened fire long before the Americans were within range, but the fleet moved closer and when those famous words were spoken, each ship within the American fleet began firing. When the battle was over (about two hours later), the Spanish fleet was battered and afire. The battle had been won.

When news of the stunning victory spread, Dewey was declared a national hero. In Philadelphia, the ship that Commodore Dewey commanded during that battle, sits awaiting its future fate. The USS Olympia (one of Preservation Pennsylvania’s 2010 At Risk properties) has been docked in the Delaware River and cared for by the Independence Seaport Museum. For the last two years, the Museum has worked to secure funding for the preservation of Olympia, approaching the City of Philadelphia, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Department of the U.S. Navy, the Federal government, and private funders – with no success. The Museum also conducted a feasibility study, which determined that it would be unable to raise the substantial funds needed for Olympia’s preservation at this time.

In late March, the Independence Seaport Museum launched an effort to identify new stewards for the Cruiser Olympia. Together with their partners – the National Park Service, the United States Navy, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and the Council of American Maritime Museums – a two-day summit was held in late March that convened experts in various fields such as historic preservation, urban planning, maritime history, fundraising and economic development to find the best possible outcome for the endangered historic resource. The summit included six potential transfer candidates who will be entering the process to take on the responsibility for preservation of the Cruiser Olympia.

This is not going to be an easy task and the final candidate may be moving the Olympia to a new location away from Philadelphia. The Museum has been taking good care of the Olympia and doing as much maintenance as possible to keep it dry and sound. Additionally, they have developed a wonderful interpretive tour of the ship and its sister vessel, the Submarine Becuna.

continued on page 3
MISSION STATEMENT

Preservation Pennsylvania, through creative partnerships, targeted educational and advocacy programs, advisory assistance, and special projects, assists Pennsylvania communities to protect and utilize the historic resources they want to preserve for the future.

Preservation Pennsylvania (PPA) is the Commonwealth’s only statewide, private non-profit, membership organization dedicated to the protection of historically and architecturally significant properties.

STAFF

Mindy Gulden Crawford,
Executive Director
mcrawford@preservationpa.org

Jennifer Horn,
Program Director
jhorn@preservationpa.org

Jean Hershner,
Development Director
jhershner@preservationpa.org

Erin Hammerstedt,
Field Representative
ehammerstedt@preservationpa.org

David Kimmerly,
Field Representative
dkimmerly@preservationpa.org

Carol Bostian,
Executive Assistant
cbostian@preservationpa.org

Dear Friend of Preservation,

Spring is finally here and it’s time for us all to get out and see some of those great historic resources across Pennsylvania that you’ve always wanted to visit. Don’t delay! Our historic resources are precious and while we have impressive “saves” all the time, we lose many great places every day, too.

This issue of the newsletter includes information about some of those resources – ones that we have been working on recently. It’s been five years since I came to Preservation Pennsylvania and after working my entire career (29 years!) in this beautiful state, I thought I knew quite a bit about the historic resources. After my first year traveling in my position with Preservation Pennsylvania, I wrote an end of the year recap about all the towns I had visited (Milford to Warren, Avella to Wayne to name a few.) I thought I had a fairly strong understanding of the state.

Guess what? I was wrong! Since that time, I visited, learned about, and became involved with countless other great places that are special—places that matter to people all over Pennsylvania. We have so much to be proud of here and a lot of folks are doing great work out there to protect, preserve and reuse our built environment. Maybe you are one of those grassroots advocates who are diligently working to save something important. If you are, tell us about those places!

We are currently accepting nominations for our next Historic Preservation Awards to be presented in September. Check out the nomination form on our website and consider applying! We need to hear from YOU about the good work being done around the state.

But most importantly, spend some time this spring and summer discovering the rich variety of resources in your own neighborhood, county and all over the state. I promise you won’t be disappointed.

Happy Road Trip!

Executive Director Mindy Crawford and her trusted beagle Scarlett.

Are You Receiving Our E-Newsletters?

In addition to our printed newsletters, we also publish a monthly electronic edition.

Our e-newsletters have a variety of topics and features that provide the most up-to-date historic preservation news, grant opportunities, and current field projects.

Please visit our website, http://www.preservationpa.org and sign up at the bottom of our homepage!
However, a great many long overdue repairs are needed with costs totaling as much as $10 million. First and foremost, the Olympia has not been dry-docked in 65 years (ships should generally be dry-docked every twenty years at a minimum). This would allow a thorough inspection and repair of the outside steel hull. Complicating that process is the fact that after so many years in one location, the Olympia is only floating during high tide. During low tide, she rests on the bottom of the river. So removing her for dry-docking would require an extensive dredging of the river so that she can be towed.

Over the course of the next two years, potential transfer candidates will work through an extensive process to find the best stewards for this nationally significant maritime resource. While it would certainly be disappointing to lose her as a Pennsylvania resource, it is most important that she be preserved in the best possible manner by a group that can assure her long term viability as an important piece of American history.

For more information on the Olympia and the transfer process, visit www.phillyseaport.org/olympia_transfer/

The World’s Oldest Floating Steel Warship

From the moment of her launching in 1892, Olympia was a rare treasure in the U.S. naval fleet, as no sister ships were ever built. She is the world's oldest floating steel warship and the sole surviving naval ship of the Spanish-American War. Olympia served as Admiral Dewey's flagship at the Battle of Manila Bay, which marked the U.S.'s emergence as a world naval power. Olympia's last official naval mission was to carry the body of the Unknown Soldier from France to the United States in 1921.

In addition to being a National Historic Landmark, Olympia is also a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark, on the National Register of Historic Places, and part of the Save America's Treasures program.
FREE TO A GOOD HOME: Orphaned Harman House Designed by Oscar Stonorov

By Dave Kimmerly

Who is Oscar Stonorov?

Oscar Stonorov was a German Modernist architect who worked in Philadelphia with Louis Kahn, George Howe, Robert Venturi, Alfred Kastner, J. Frank Haws and others. Stonorov was a residential design specialist who worked on public housing projects, suburban residences and neighborhoods. He designed the now demolished Schuylkill Falls Housing Project in Philadelphia and wrote several books on planning and suburban design including Why City Planning is Your Responsibility with Louis Kahn. The design and construction of his own home, Avon Lea, in 1938 in Charlestown, Chester County, earned a 1975 listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Another important work of Stonorov includes the Carl Mackley Houses, Philadelphia, a Modernist apartment complex built in 1933.

Harman House History

In 1945, as soldiers returned from World War II, there was tremendous demand for quick and easy-to-construct housing to meet their needs. This, along with the need to retool America to peace-time production, resulted in experiments by architects and manufacturing facilities to create prefabricated housing. Stonorov teamed up with Walter Reuther, president of the United Auto Workers union who was seeking to prevent layoffs of auto workers due to end of the war. Stonorov designed the house which was built by the William H. Harman steel company of Wilmington, Delaware. The parts of the house could be made in a factory and transported to a site for quick construction. To test the effectiveness of the house Stonorov built several near his property in Charlestown. These Harman houses were somewhat of a success and many of them were sold, shipped to and constructed in a variety of locations in the U.S.

A House in Need of a Home

Would you like one? Threatened with demolition, one of the houses near Charlestown was disassembled and is being stored in a nearby barn. It is waiting for your adoption and is free to a good home. It needs a dedicated owner, a decent sized lot, and assembly will be required. Please contact David Kimmerly at Preservation Pennsylvania at dkimmerly@preservationpa.org if you are interested.
As many of our readers know, historic properties are never really “saved.” But through the diligent and persistent efforts of many, the Benjamin Franklin Jones Cottage (commonly known as Braemar Cottage) in Cresson, Cambria County, has been “saved” several times, although it still may not be safe.

After acquiring the Cottage and taking preliminary steps to preserve it in the 1990s, the dormant Cresson Area Historical Association (CAHA) was reborn in 2007 when Cresson Township declared the property a nuisance and began taking steps to have the nuisance abated. Completed in February 2007, a Preliminary Condition Assessment concluded that: “Despite the ruined appearance both within and without the structure the assessors believe that this historic structure can be preserved.” However, they estimated that the cost to address immediate hazards would be approximately $66,000; stabilization of the building would cost another $75 – $100,000, and that rehabilitation of the building in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and bringing it up to code would cost between $2.7 and $4 million. Based upon this information, Cresson Township filed a petition to raze the building, which was countered by CAHA, who scrambled to get liability insurance on the property, install a 6-foot fence, secure the property, and apply for grants to stabilize the building. A hearing to address the demolition of the building was originally scheduled for September 2007, but it did not actually occur until October 16, 2008. As a result of that hearing, the judge authorized the demolition of the building within six to eight months through a controlled burn by the local fire department.

After the hearing, CAHA contacted the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission’s Bureau for Historic Preservation (PHMC) seeking help, and PHMC invited Preservation Pennsylvania’s new Partners in the Field representatives to get involved. Consequently, Erin Hammerstedt first met with CAHA on November 6, 2008 and began working to help them save the building from demolition. In early January 2009, CAHA received an Intervention Fund grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to help fund emergency stabilization of the roof. In March of 2008, CAHA learned that the Cresson Fire Department could not burn the Cottage down per Department of Environmental Protection regulations. For a moment CAHA felt relieved, but within ten days the Township stated publicly that they would pursue demolition alternatives in order to rid their town of this nuisance.

Things were not looking good for Braemar Cottage. The controversial demolition was getting significant media coverage, including a story in the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review on March 23, 2009. This article caught the attention of a couple who had already saved two Jones family homes in Pittsburgh and had an interest in helping with Braemar Cottage. This husband and wife team – an attorney and restoration contractor, respectively – visited the Cottage, bringing with them an architect who prepared a Stabilization Work Plan with cost estimates pro-bono. This provided renewed hope to the Cottage and invigorated CAHA. Since CAHA was not a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, Preservation Pennsylvania entered into a Fiscal Management Agreement with them in May 2009 so that they could begin a fundraising effort that included soliciting donations and applying for a sizeable grant from a Pittsburgh area foundation with the assistance of their new partners. Erin continued to work with CAHA to help strengthen and direct their organization, and submitted a nomination to Preservation Pennsylvania’s Pennsylvania At Risk.

If the court ordered demolition had been carried out, Braemar Cottage would have been gone before September 2009. But, due in large part to the efforts of the group and their new partners, the Township was willing to give them more time. An agreement was reached between CAHA and Cresson Township to delay demolition for 60 days, moving the deadline from September 9th to November 15th, 2009. All were hopeful that during this extended period, CAHA would receive foundation funding to pay for the work necessary to continue the process.
While the battle for Braemar was still far from over, this was a major victory for CAHA. At the recommendation of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s legal staff in Washington D.C., who had been advising Erin and the team’s local attorneys, Erin encouraged the group to gather to celebrate their success and acknowledge their hard work. On November 1, 2009, a large This Place Matters sign was hung on the fence in front of the cottage, and the group gathered for refreshments and an opportunity to unwind from the harrowing week.

Then it was back to work. CAHA continued their fundraising efforts and kicked off a series of “Last Chance Guided Tours” of the Cottage. The group faced another setback when it learned that they would not receive the $150,000 that they had been hoping would fund the first phase of stabilization at the cottage. Caught between a rock and a hard place, CAHA met with the Township in March 2010 and offered to withdraw the outstanding appeal, which could have delayed the case for many months or even years, if the Township agreed to wait on any action against the Cottage until at least August 1, 2010. The Township agreed to the terms of the agreement, but stipulated that the withdrawal be made “with prejudice,” which would prohibit CAHA from filing the appeal again to further delay the ruling. As a result of this action, CAHA now had until August 1, 2010 to raze or rehabilitate Braemar Cottage.

At their annual meeting in June 2010, an entirely new slate of officers took the reins at CAHA. Rather than begin to remove-for-salvage elements of the building, CAHA’s new leaders and members kicked their efforts to repair Braemar into high gear. The roof was repaired, openings secured, porches removed, and the building painted. Antiques were borrowed from local dealers to try to show people what the building was and could be again. On July 15th, just two weeks before the demolition deadline, representatives from the Township met with the almost entirely new Board of
CAHA to tour the building. Three Township Supervisors, as well as their Solicitor and Engineer, agreed to view CAHA’s progress and review their financial statements to assess the current condition of the building and determine whether or not the group could realistically stabilize and eventually rehabilitate the property. Despite the fact that they were impressed by the work CAHA had done, because of the limited financial resources of the group, the Township did not feel that CAHA could rehabilitate the property. Seeing no other way to save the building from demolition, CAHA finally decided to sell the property to a local family who had rehabilitated another historic cottage in the neighborhood. The township agreed to give the Dziabo family an opportunity to rehabilitate the building, although the terms of that agreement are not known.

Erin contacted the new owners to let them know that Preservation Pennsylvania, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and other partners are available to assist, as necessary, but has not heard from them since they acquired the property last November. A brief site visit in April attested to the fact that the building is still standing—despite the many close calls with demolition over the past few years.

So, what lessons can we learn from the battle for Braemar?

- **Saving buildings is difficult.**
  It is best to keep historic properties in good repair—and preferably in use—so that you are not faced with the monumental task of bringing one back from the brink of destruction.

- **It takes teamwork to have success in building preservation.**
  If it were not for the hard work of CAHA members and their partners - attorneys, architects, preservationists, investors and others who provided critical input - this building would almost certainly not be standing today.

### The Lazaretto: A Landmark of Hope

**Standing along the banks of the Delaware River 13 miles downstream from Philadelphia, the historic Lazaretto, in Tinicum Township, Delaware County, has been a beacon of hope for over 200 years.”**

By 2000, however, the miracle of 200 years of near-perfect preservation was in jeopardy as the Lazaretto was sold to developers who planned to demolish the building for airport parking. Fortunately, the township realized the importance of the Lazaretto to the community, acquiring the site and halting the airport parking project. Instead, the township announced plans to build a new fire station and EMS facility on part of the site’s open space. Concern grew among preservationists and community members about this latest project’s impact on the Lazaretto and its grounds.

Three historic preservation groups—Preservation Pennsylvania, the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia and the National Trust for Historic Preservation—stepped up to negotiate an agreement with the township that left the Lazaretto standing and permitted construction of the new firehouse on part of the grounds. This agreement also created a new non-profit organization to seek another re-use for the historic Lazaretto. Last year the Lazaretto Preservation Association of Tinicum Township (LPATT), with board representation from each of the three historic preservation groups, obtained its non-profit status and is now working to raise visibility, funds and a new use for the building.

Today the Lazaretto holds the distinction as the oldest quarantine facility in the Western Hemisphere and the seventh-oldest in the world. As such it is a truly unique historic treasure, even in a region as rich in history as greater Philadelphia. The Lazaretto’s growing legion of supporters can now look forward with renewed hope that this landmark will find yet another use that will ensure its survival for a third century.

“The Lazaretto has been a beacon of hope for over 200 years.”

By Paul Steinke

Photo courtesy of Doug Heller, www.ushistory.org
Helping people protect and preserve the historic places that matter to them.

CALENDAR of EVENTS

1. Canal Days in Saltsburg
   June 4 - 5, 2011

2. Public Form: Statewide Preservation Plan*
   June 8, 2011 • 1:00-4:00pm
   Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

3. Public Form: Statewide Preservation Plan*
   June 9, 2011 • 12:30-3:30pm
   Ambler Theater, Ambler

4. Pennsylvania’s Historic Preservation Awards
   September 16, 2011 at the State Museum in Harrisburg

*FOR MORE INFORMATION visit www.phmc.state.pa.us/bhp and click on “Preservation Plan”.

Time is Running Out...to Share Your Love of Historic Preservation!

Only a few weeks remain until the end of the Share Your Love of Historic Preservation campaign.

Until May 31st, an anonymous donor will continue to match each gift and pledge to the Share Your Love of Historic Preservation campaign dollar for dollar up to $125,000! With your help, we can still raise up to $250,000—two years of funding—to sustain the future of free, on-site Technical Assistance in the Field.

Current funding for the Partners in the Field program will expire on June 30, 2011, so please act now to double your support of historic preservation!

Finally, each contribution is deeply and sincerely appreciated. Thank you to the many donors who have already Shared Their Love of Historic Preservation with us! We are grateful for your support!

Your fully tax-deductible gift may be conveniently submitted via our website, www.preservationpa.org, or sent by mail to: Preservation Pennsylvania, 257 North Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101. Please indicate that the gift is intended for Share Your Love.

If you prefer to make a pledge, we will work with you to establish an individualized payment schedule in which a portion of your gift is submitted monthly, quarterly or annually. Please contact our office at (717) 234-2310 to discuss this option or to obtain more information.

Preservation Pennsylvania is officially licensed as a charitable organization in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation under Internal Revenue Service regulations. A copy of the official registration and financial information of Preservation Pennsylvania may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1 (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement. Questions about Preservation Pennsylvania should be addressed to (717) 234-2310. All contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.