Preservation Profile

WEXFORD ACTS TO SAVE HISTORIC COMMUNITY

At the turn of the century, the small town bustled with activity as the electric rail line whisked passengers and freight to and from the nearby city center. With the increasing popularity of the automobile, the rail line was disbanded and highways were built to connect the town to the city. The community changed and grew. Today, some residents, including the owners of the former railway station which they now operate as a deli, appreciate the town’s historic character and see that character as key to the town’s future. Convincing others of the positive power of that vision, and protecting the community from unwanted growth is not always such an easy task.

Wexford, a small community north of Pittsburgh at the crossroads of Routes 19 and 910, was once on a major railway line linking towns north of the city with downtown Pittsburgh in the early years of the twentieth century. Today, Carol Mitchell and her son Paul run the Wexford Post Office Deli in the old Wexford Harmony Line Station building, and they are deeply concerned about the future of their community and its historic buildings.

The village business area, looking much as it did at the turn of the century, includes the station, the 1876 Wexford Hotel (now Cole’s Tavern), the Wexford General Store and Antique Center, and St. Alphonsus Church. Carol Mitchell is spearheading an effort to create a historic district and provide some protection for Wexford’s heritage against a proposed PennDOT road widening project and the anticipated sprawl she sees as inevitable if the road is widened.

Publicity has helped. A recent series of articles in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette by local historian Judith Oliver chronicles Wexford’s history and buildings, bringing the town’s story to both a local and regional audience. Oliver details the establishment of the community in the 1830s by German and Irish immigrants and the building and successive ownership of the town’s principal structures. She describes both major events and important people that are part of Wexford’s history, from the fire bombing of the hotel in 1946 as the AFL and CIO battled each other during the 178-day Pittsburgh beer war over who would represent brewery workers, to Dr. Jonas Salk, who was a regular customer of the general store in the late 1940s and early 1950s while he was working on his polio vaccine.

Carol Mitchell and others in Wexford want to have a say in determining the future of their community. They are working on the creation of a local organization and are pursuing local historic district status for the enclave of historic commercial buildings. In early July, the creation of a local historic district was put before the Pine Township planning commission. “Now is the time for the township to assess this resource and plan to preserve and enhance it, or in five years we will look back and see what has been lost,” said Mitchell.

Lauren Uhl of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania agrees. “If they (PennDOT) widen the road, Wexford will definitely lose what it has,” said Uhl, who has followed the growing support for preserving this historic crossroads.

Wexford is at a critical juncture for its historic buildings and its small town way of life. Pine Township supervisors have the opportunity, with the support of local residents, to keep the best of Wexford’s past for future generations.
PA AT RISK
Update

PRESERVED

• Eric’s George Carroll House was in danger of not being listed on this year’s Pennsylvania at Risk. Hopes for a workable plan to restore the residence were high, but the owner’s mid-April deadline for a solution had to be extended as negotiations with a prospective buyer continued. Happily, in this instance, all the pieces came together and the Carroll House will be renovated into a bed and breakfast.

• The Stegmaier Brewery in Wilkes-Barre will find new life as a major federal office building for the Wilkes-Barre region. The first phase of the project, scheduled to be completed by November 1996, has already begun with Bohlin Cywinski Jackson as architect. The U.S. Postal Service is the developer of the $18 million project which will provide 120,000 square feet of office space for the U.S. Postal Service’s Computer Data Center and other anticipated tenants in the Stegmaier’s former Brew House. The historic Stegmaier is now assured of its continued commanding presence on the Wilkes-Barre skyline.

“The newly renovated Stegmaier complex will serve as an anchor for the downtown Wilkes-Barre revitalization.”
Congressman Paul E. Kanjorski, U.S. House of Representatives, 11th District/PA

LOST

The Steigmund Lubin Film Studio in Philadelphia was destroyed in a fire on April 26. The property, listed in this year’s endangered list, was important in the development of the early motion picture industry.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT
FEDERAL LEGISLATION

House Committee Action on Appropriations

In a July 13 vote, the House of Representatives defeated an amendment to the Interior Appropriations Bill that would have eliminated all funding to the National Trust in the upcoming fiscal year. Proposed by Arkansas Republican Rep. Hutchinson, whose district includes Wal-Mart headquarters Bentonville, the amendment met defeat after an all out campaign of calls and faxes from preservationists across the country. The National Trust, which is now in the FY’96 budget at $3.5 million, is based on a new funding level as the bill goes to the Senate. Long range prospects for continued funding are bleak and the Trust is seeking a 5-year phase-out, which would enable them to develop alternative funding sources. Funding for the Advisory Council, also proposed for elimination, was restored in full.

Homeowners Tax Credit Bill

The Historic Homeowners Assistance Act (HR 1662) was introduced by E. Clay Shaw (R-FL) and Barbara B. Kennelly (D-CT) on May 17, 1995. The National Trust for Historic Preservation was primarily responsible for authoring the proposed legislation and obtaining congressional co-sponsors. To date, twenty-seven members signed on although no Pennsylvania representative has yet to join this list.

The legislation would amend the Internal Revenue Code to provide a credit against income tax to individuals who rehabilitate historic homes or who are the first purchasers of rehabilitated historic homes for use as a principal residence.

Takings: Hearings Held in Senate; House Bill Passed

The Senate held its first hearing on the takings issue on April 6 when the Committee on Judiciary took up the Omnibus Property Rights Act of 1995 (S 605). Introduced on March 23 by Sen. Robert Dole (R-KS), the legislation seeks to establish a uniform and more efficient Federal process for protecting property owners’ rights guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment. The Dole bill attempts to consolidate a number of property rights legislative proposals into one bill. The House previously had passed HR 925, the Private Property Protection Act of 1995, on March 3 by a vote of 277 to 148.

STATE LEGISLATION

Private Property Rights Legislation

No action has been taken to date on House Bill 1215 or Senate Bill 805, the subject of a Preservation Pennsylvania alert in mid-May. To those who wrote and called their state representatives and senators expressing concern over the possible effects legislation could have on historic districts and individual properties, your efforts were effective in alerting legislators to potential problems with the legislation. Preservation Pennsylvania continues to be involved in the private property rights debate and to monitor the status of pending legislation.

“Senate Bill 805 would establish a radical new rule that says government must pay property owners in order to take any action that adversely affects the value of private property, regardless of whether the action would constitute a ‘taking’ under the Constitution. This would be a dangerous infringement on a system that has worked well in the courts for 200 years.”

State Senator Allyson Y. Schwartz, 4th District

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!
1996 PENNSYLVANIA HERITAGE PARTNERSHIPS CONFERENCE
April 28-30, 1996 Pittsburgh, PA

continued on page 7
SAMUEL J. DORNSIFE RECEIVES OTTO HAAS AWARD

Noted scholar on 19th century architecture, interior design, and social history, Samuel J. Dornsife is the recipient of the 1995 Otto Haas Award for outstanding achievement in historic preservation. Mr. Dornsife's long and distinguished career has included involvement in nationally recognized restoration projects such as the Iolani Place in Hawaii, the Hermitage in Nashville, Gallier House in New Orleans, as well as Pennsylvania landmarks including Preservation Pennsylvania’s first revolving fund project, the Peter Herdic House in Williamsport.

Mr. Dornsife has been a recorder and collector of information on the history of interior design and is known internationally as an expert on historic wall coverings. Among his many consulting projects, he has served as design consultant to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City for permanent exhibits such as the Rococo Room and the Greek Revival Room. Now in his eightieth year, he has just completed a book with Eleanor Wolson, on the architectural heritage of his native Williamsport.

Other awards presented by Preservation Pennsylvania at the Heritage Partnerships conference in Wilkes-Barre included the following:

Initiative Award for Community Involvement to the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County for their leadership role in the battle against sprawl and its devastating impact on the heritage of Lancaster County.

Initiative Award for Stewardship to the Hopewell Area Seniors Center for their diligent efforts to preserve the 1850s Keystone Foundry in Hopewell, Bedford County.

Initiative Award for Preservation Publication to the Historic Religious Properties Program of the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation for their walking tour brochure on the religious landmarks of Center City Philadelphia.

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WILKES-BARRE CONFERENCE FACES CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Breaking all records for attendance at a Pennsylvania statewide heritage conference, more than three hundred twenty registrants came to Wilkes-Barre for the 1995 Heritage Partnerships Conference in April. The issue of sprawl and growth management clearly led the conference agenda receiving in-depth treatment by experts from across the Commonwealth, the region, and the nation. Tom Hylton, author of Save Our Land, Save Our Towns: A Plan for Pennsylvania sounded the challenge to preservationists and other state leaders to develop a comprehensive state plan to stop rampant unplanned growth with its devastating social, cultural, psychological and physical ramifications. Hylton’s remarks sparked a debate that will clearly intensify as his book is read and discussed over the next year.

Preservation Pennsylvania, as a sponsor of the book, plans to continue the debate concerning Pennsylvania’s future at next year’s conference in Pittsburgh (April 28-30, 1996). Sprawl, private property rights legislation, riverboat gambling, open space protection, historic designations, are all linked to this discussion and will be incorporated into next spring’s sessions and workshops.

As we build on the productive dialogue of the past three heritage partnerships conferences, we look forward to the continued forum this conference provides for all heritage-related disciplines to come together to learn and find solutions to specific issues and challenges. We look forward to seeing you in Pittsburgh in April.

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.
The Bureau for Historic Preservation, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission joined Preservation Pennsylvania (see page 3) in presenting the annual historic preservation awards at the Heritage Partnerships Conference on April 25, 1995.

Recipients honored this year in the categories of preservation construction projects, based on original use, ranged from a preserved pharmacy to one of the largest and most complicated adaptive reuses in the history of historic preservation in Pennsylvania.

- In the category of public buildings, the 1909 Queen Lane Power House of the Philadelphia Water Department was honored for restoration of the building's elaborate terracotta cornice.

- The Pennsylvania National Bank Building, located in Pittsburgh's Lawrenceville neighborhood, was abandoned for more than fifteen years and threatened with demolition before the efforts of Lawrenceville Development Corporation and Charles L. Desmone and Associates collaborated to rehabilitate the building for commercial office space. Beyond preserving the building itself, this project is serving as a catalyst stimulating further economic growth and revitalization in the area.

- Norris Apothecary (now known as "The Phantom Fountain") sits on the northeast corner of Pine and 21st Streets in Center City Philadelphia. Closed in 1953 and frozen in time, recent discovery and preservation of the totally intact 1950s drug store and soda fountain by owner/architect Martin Jay Rosenblum included detailed interior photography so that the retail stock could be cleaned and replaced in its original locations. The Phantom Fountain is now used for special events, private parties and virtual reality tours.

- Rehabilitation of the National Historic Landmark Reading Railroad Terminal Train Shed in Philadelphia is certainly one of the most ambitious adaptive reuse ventures in the annals of preservation in Pennsylvania. Abandoned as a rail terminal in 1984, this industrial landmark survived as what is deemed to be the largest long-span iron roof structure in the world, and the sole surviving single span train shed structure in the United States. In its rehabilitated state, the shed now serves as part of the new Pennsylvania Convention Center, accommodating 30,000 square feet of state-of-the-art meeting space, a 33,500 square foot ballroom and "intimate" formal dinners for up to 3,000 people. Design work was a joint venture between Vitetta Group of Philadelphia and TVSA Associated Architects of Atlanta.

  - On a decidedly more intimate, residential scale, Easton's College Hill boasts an array of magnificent late 19th and early 20th century houses. When Cristiano and Susan Camacho purchased 305 March Street they had no award from the state, the house also received a 1994 award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

  - The Greek Revival style Wilmot Mansion in Bethany, Wayne County, was built in 1827 by Randall Wilmot, father of David Wilmot who authored the Wilmot Proviso. Prior to its acquisition by Dennis and Donna Cerrigan, the mansion had suffered from long neglected maintenance, a leaking roof and substantial structural decay. Fortunately, the architectural detailing had survived, and with extensive research by the owners, the mansion has been rehabilitated into an art gallery and residence.

  - In a new category of award established this year by the PHMC, the Sands Eddy Site Archaeological Data Recovery Project in Northampton County was recognized for outstanding achievement in the recovery and preservation of archaeological resources. One of the most rigorous, thorough and challenging investigations ever conducted in the eastern United States, the site contains archaeological resources stretching continuously back to 8000 B.C. The project proved to be extremely complex and required the participation of a number of players including: the Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corporation of Houston, Texas; the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission; the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission; and the 3D/Environmental Services of Cincinnati, Ohio. The efforts of the private utility to reduce impact on the site from the construction of a section of pipe line included realigning its utility corridor, restricting workspace requirements, and creatively using directional boring during construction. Principal investigator for the project was Christopher Bergman. The site is owned by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.
NEW PROGRAMS DOCUMENT REGIONAL HERITAGE

SOUTHWESTERN PA PROJECT FOCUSES ON AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE

African Americans owned many barber shops throughout Pennsylvania in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The above photo shows the Cramer Barber Shop in downtown Tyrone circa 1920. (Tyrone Area Historical Society)

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission is funding an African American History Project covering the nine county region served by the Commission. Administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) and coordinated through its Johnstown Regional Office, the project will develop a historic context discussing the experience of African Americans in the region. This will provide a framework for identifying and documenting historic resources for possible listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Pittsburgh consulting firm of Brown Carlisle and Associates have been retained to carry out the theme study. Brown and Carlisle completed a similar study in Allegheny County with funding assistance from the PHMC. The consultants will develop the historic context and identify related cultural resources. Some themes that will be addressed are patterns of settlement and housing, migration in and out of the region including the underground railroad, the work experience, the role of cultural, educational and social institutions, the industrial and mining experience, the role of religion and church, race relations/racial tensions, and recreation and leisure activities. Initial documentation of the cultural resources is being accomplished by a summer intern, Stewart Bruce, provided through the PHMC Summer Intern Program.

A regional African American History Project Advisory Committee, comprised of knowledgeable and active community members throughout the nine counties, has been invaluable in helping the consultants and intern accumulate data and identify important cultural resources. The Advisory Committee plans to meet regularly throughout the process to provide guidance as well as review and comment on the consultant’s products. It is hoped that the products of this project, the historic context and list of significant cultural resources can be a springboard for future local and regional initiatives such as focused research, educational curriculums and programs, local marker programs and other forms of commemoration.


ANTHRACITE STUDY IDENTIFIES SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES IN PENNSYLVANIA’S COAL REGION

A cooperative project to research and document the national significance of Pennsylvania’s Anthracite Coal Region is currently being developed under an agreement between the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA) and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC). Other partners include the National Park Service, the PA Department of Community Affairs and the Architectural Heritage Association of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

The project, entitled “The Age of Anthracite: The Anthracite Coal Resources of Pennsylvania”, will produce a historical context study, which is being prepared under contract by the Cultural Resources Group of the Philadelphia-based firm Kise, Franks & Straw. The context study will include a concise history that places the contribution of anthracite coal production into national perspective and identifies historic buildings and other structures significant to the heritage of the entire anthracite-producing region. In a second step, this project will also identify and nominate four properties from the Lackawanna Valley as National Historic Landmarks.

Bruce Bomberger, who is monitoring the grant for the PHMC, says, “By funding this context study, the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority is providing a foundation for historic property designation which other entities elsewhere in the region can emulate. They can do this by taking the secondary step of nominating properties in their area which have either been specifically referenced in the study, or identified by type to be significant to the history of anthracite production and culture.”

National Register listing or National Historic Landmark designation will not only help prioritize which historic resources to preserve, but also enable the owners of these properties in some cases to apply through the PHMC for continued on page 8
PLACES

Erie. The long-vacant Boston Store, once a major downtown department store, is the subject of a planned apartment-retail complex that would give a significant boost to downtown revitalization in the Erie. Although specific details of the plan for the building are still tentative, a Portland, Maine developer has signed an option to buy and develop the historic Boston Store into apartments on the upper floors with commercial and retail uses on the first and possibly second floors.

Philadelphia. One of Fairmount Park's most historically significant but less well known treasures, the Sedgeley Porter's House, will undergo restoration. With assistance from Preservation Pennsylvania's Philadelphia Intervention Fund supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust will restore the Benjamin Latrobe-designed Gothic Revival building for use as the organization's offices. The Porter's House is the last remaining fragment of the once great Sedgeley Estate which overlooked the Schuylkill River until the mid-19th century. As its name implies, the building was originally used by the carriage tenders or porters who would greet arriving guests, unload their baggage and escort them to the main house.

Lancaster County. FAST (Friends of the Atglen-Susquehanna Trail, Inc.) are working to preserve the Low Grade rail line and its historic bridges in southern Lancaster County. Built by the Pennsylvania Railroad at the turn of the century, the 23 miles of abandoned line are proposed for a multi-use recreational trail. But acquiring the authority over the line and the bridges poses significant hurdles. According to Julie Nettke, FAST project director, for current owner Conrail to abandoned the line it must go through the PA Public Utility Commission to abolish the crossings. Although abolition of the crossings does not necessarily mean removal of the structures, for the structures to stay the PUC must assign future maintenance responsibility for them to an entity over which the PUC has jurisdiction. FAST needs to find a suitable government entity as a partner to satisfy the PUC requirements and to keep the fine stone arch bridges from being demolished. The entire line has been designated eligi-
YES I WANT TO SUPPORT HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

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Around the Commonwealth...continued from page 6

• Jane Sheffield, former Altoona Main Street Manager and most recently executive director of Inherit New Hampshire, has returned to Pennsylvania as executive director of the Allegheny Ridge Corporation.

• Beth Spokas, executive director of the Pennsylvania Downtown Center since its formation, has resigned to move west to Colorado. She returns to her roots as a Main Street Manager in her new position as director of the downtown program for Colorado Springs.

• Indiana, PA native Jimmy Stewart was honored on May 20, 1995 with the opening of the Jimmy Stewart Museum in downtown Indiana. The museum houses memorabilia from Stewart's early life and distinguished film career, including his Oscar for Philadelphia Story.

Allegheny Traveler...continued from page 1

gin when he meets Albert Gallatin whose own stories lead the traveler to southwestern Pennsylvania. From Allegheny Portage, to the Civil War, to the Johnstown Flood, the traveler is in the midst of all the significant events of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The comic book is receiving wide distribution in the region. In addition to the story of the Allegheny Traveler, it includes discount coupons for admission to many of the region’s most popular sites. For more information on the comic book and the heritage of the region, contact the Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission, PO Box 565, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648-0565 or call 814-696-9380.

PRESERVATION RESOURCES

• Gambling with History is the theme of the most recent issue (Summer 1995, Volume 9, Number 4) of Historic Preservation Forum, the Journal of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Seen as a boon to preservation by some because of dollars generated, gambling is viewed by others as, at best, an element to be carefully watched and controlled. Six articles by preservationists involved in gambling initiatives from Florida to Colorado address the benefits and the concerns to historic areas brought by legalized gambling.

For information on Forum membership and obtaining a copy of this publication contact: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington D.C. 20036; 202-673-4000.

Also available from the National Trust is The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leaders’ Guide by Donovan D. Rypkema. The 132-page book presents sound economic arguments for preserving historic buildings and areas. $20 plus $5 postage and handling from: Information Series, NTHP, (address above); 202-673-4286.

Correction: Volume 8, Number 4 of Preserving Pennsylvania incorrectly reported that new titles in the National Trust’s Information Series are available free on request. New titles are free only to National Trust Forum members. Others may order Information booklets for $6 each plus postage and handling.

• Two recently revised National Register Bulletins have been published by the National Park Service:

How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices (Bulletin 13) includes a history of post offices in the United States through post World War II construction, as well as guidelines for evaluating the significance of buildings for National Register listing.

Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties (Bulletin 21) provides updated guidelines and case studies on selecting, defining, documenting and, in some cases, revising boundaries for properties being nominated to or determined eligible for the National Register.

To order copies of either of the above contact: National Register of Historic Places, Interagency Resources Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Suite 250, Washington, DC 20013-7127; 202-343-8012.

• A Legacy in Bricks and Mortar: African American Landmarks in Allegheny County, published by Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, tells the story of African-Americans in Allegheny County from the mid 1700s to the present day and shows sixty-two surviving buildings and places significant in that story. Photos, many of which were taken by photographers at the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild, illustrate essays by journalist Frank E. Bolden and historian Laurence A. Glasco. The book also includes a sites inventory prepared by Eliza Smith Brown. Available from PHLF, One Station Square, Suite 450, Pittsburgh, PA 15219-1170; 412-471-5808; cost is $8.95 plus 7% tax for PA residents, plus $3.00 postage and handling.

Legislative Report continued from page 2

could encourage the building of new, suburban sprawl-type complexes and further erode our major cities.

Archaeological Surveys and the Permitting Process

House Bill 1657, introduced by Rep. Frank Pistella (D-Allegheny) incorporated a 1994 compromise which would grant the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) legislative authority to conduct archaeological surveys in return for a more timely process and provision of funding for actual work. House Bill 597 sponsored by Rep. David King (R, Mercer) and Senate Bill 1879 sponsored by Sen. D. Michael Fisher (R, Allegheny) would impact that process. SB579, passed by the full Senate on June 26 and now in the House State Government Committee would remove PHMC surveys from the permitting process of other agencies.

This legislative report was prepared by Mary Werner DelNadal, president of Preservation Pennsylvania, and John Nikoleff, Capital Associates.
CALENDAR

1995

Saturdays thru August 26  Heritage Partners Tours of restored buildings in the 18th century industrial quarter of Bethlehem. Noon to 4 p.m., admission fee. Contact: 610-691-0603.


September 7-9  Place, Past, Perspective: Local History and Communities, annual meeting of American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), Saratoga Springs, NY; 615-255-2979.


October 11-15  49th National Preservation Conference, Fort Worth, Texas. Contact: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036; 1-800-944-6847.


October 13-14  Pennsylvania Historical Association annual conference. Bucknell University, Lewisburg. 717-948-6416.


1996


April 28 - 30, 1996  Pittsburgh

PENNSYLVANIA HERITAGE PARTNERSHIPS CONFERENCE

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For information on becoming a member of The Pennsylvania Heritage Club, contact Preservation Pennsylvania.

Anthracite Study...continued from page 5

grants or investment tax credits to help finance rehabilitation or restoration projects.

The PHMC plans to publish the anthracite context, which is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year.

Public participation in the project is welcomed. For information on public meetings to be held in the region in late summer, contact: Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority, 717-876-6188.