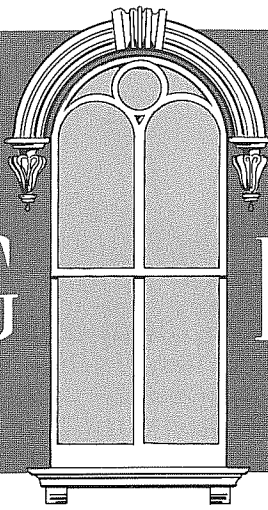


PRESERVING PENNSYLVANIA



Volume 6, Number 2

1992

PENNSYLVANIA AT RISK

Last fall Pittsburgh's Syria Mosque was demolished despite overwhelming community opposition. Its loss focuses a dramatic spotlight on the precarious future of ALL Pennsylvania landmarks. Economically dysfunctional communities, nonexistent capital, directionless suburban sprawl, forgotten neighborhoods, and absent owners pose problems that incentives, regulation and community outrage may not overcome. NOW is the time for Pennsylvania preservationists to come together to find answers to the future of the resources we value.

Preservation Pennsylvania's Most Endangered List is a representative sample of the richness of our heritage and the diversity of the dangers that threaten it. Many significant threatened properties are not listed. It is our hope, however, that by drawing attention to the plight of the few, we may begin the titanic task necessary to rescue the many.

Pennsylvania's Most Endangered List will be updated regularly, and we plan to include other representative properties in the future. We welcome your input.



Syria Mosque

Deshong Estate, Chester

The estate of Alfred O. Deshong consists of the mid-nineteenth century Deshong family home and carriage house, an art museum building and landscaped grounds. The Deshong House, constructed in 1850, is a stuccoed masonry Greek Revival house of strict proportion and symmetry. Alfred Deshong was born here into a family of established industrial wealth. He applied a considerable part of his energy and fortune to collecting art. He acquired an impressive assemblage of oriental carvings, ceramics, bronzes and textiles, and American and European paintings and sculptures. When he died in 1913, he left a will empowering his trustees to erect a museum building to display his collection for "the education, entertainment, and recreation of the public," and to maintain the estate as a recreational park. A marble-clad Renaissance Revival museum was built on the northeast corner of the property and dedicated in 1916.



Deshong Estate

By 1984, the portion of the city surrounding the estate had deteriorated by a rise in crime and vandalism to an extent that visitation was drastically reduced and the collection became endangered. At that point the trustees petitioned the Delaware County Orphans' Court to terminate the trust. The art collection was given to Widener University, and ownership of the property transferred to the Delaware County Industrial Development Authority. The Deshong Estate is threatened with property subdivision and the house and museum buildings with demolition.

Danville West Market Street Historic District, Danville

The Danville West Market Street Historic District is composed of a highly intact residential neighborhood that reflects virtually every popular American architectural style of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its substantial middle and upper class houses convey the prosperity generated by the town's nineteenth century iron works and other industries. Four of the district's five largest houses are clustered at the east end, at the intersection of West Market and Factory Streets. The district was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.



Legionville Campground

Legionville Campground, Harmony Township, Beaver County

Legionville was the camp used by Anthony Wayne to train and drill his troops prior to their successful military campaign against the Indians in the Old Northwest. The failure of prior American expeditions convinced President Washington of the need for discipline and marksmanship in order to defeat the British supplied Indians. Following military reorganization, Washington appointed Wayne to command the Legion of the United States. Wayne selected a place bounded by the Ohio River and Legionville Run for winter encampment and training. He and his troops occupied this site from November 1792 until April 1793 when they descended the Ohio River. In 1794 the Legion decisively defeated the Indians at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in the Ohio country. The winter spent in training at Legionville is credited with instilling professionalism in the army, and with laying the groundwork for the success of its subsequent campaign. The twenty-five acre site of Legionville was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

The Legionville site is threatened by the development of an industrial park.



Danville West Market Street Historic District

Proposed replacement and realignment of the bridge crossing the Susquehanna River at Danville could impact the eastern end of the district. One of two principal construction alternatives proposes to align the bridge with Factory Street and tunnel under the West Market Street intersection. This would drastically affect the character and traffic volume in this critical part of the district.



*Highway Routes 23 and 30 Expansion Project
Courtesy Jerry Irwin, photographer*

Highway Routes 23 and 30 Expansion Projects, Eastern Lancaster County

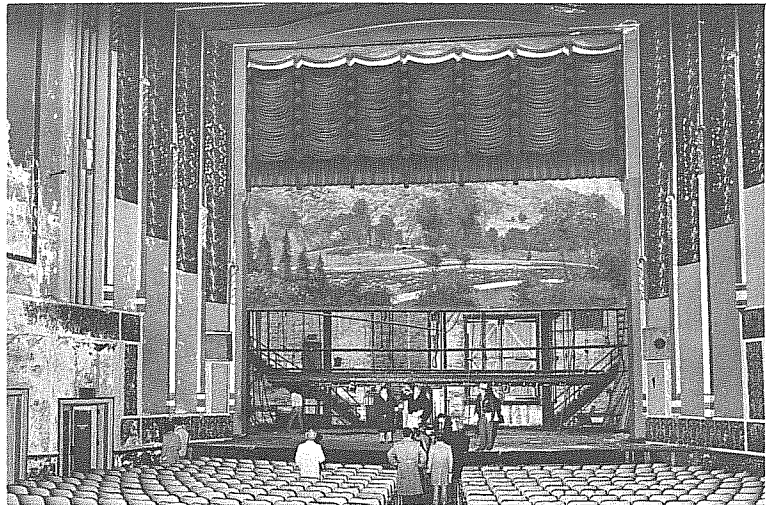
Eastern Lancaster County has traditionally been a region of prosperous Amish and Mennonite farms, traversed by rural roads strung with linear villages and towns. The area's anachronistic nineteenth century character has been the sustaining feature of its sense of time and place. Its location, however, between Lancaster City, the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and the ever-widening suburban area of greater Philadelphia has placed enormous development and transportation pressure upon this region. Housing subdivisions, light industrial growth and tourism have made the area not only a transportation corridor, but also a destination point in itself. Routes 23 and 30, radiating northeast and southeast out of Lancaster City define the pie wedge shape of this area and suffer increasing congestion and surface deterioration. In order to alleviate the traffic problems on these two highways, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has proposed a combined relief solution. Seven principal alternative routes are under study. PennDOT is giving the concerns of the plain sect community a high level of consideration.

At stake are not only tangible historic and cultural resources such as farmsteads, potential historic districts, and prehistoric remains which lie in the path of construction, but also the life-ways and community of the plain sect people. Any alternative to increase the traffic capacity of these routes is likely to also increase future development pressure upon the area.

Astor Theater, Reading

The Astor Theater was listed in the National Register in 1978 for the high architectural quality and intact condition of its Art Deco interior. The theater was completed in 1928, based upon the exterior design of William H. Lee, and the interior design and decoration of Harry Brodsky, both of Philadelphia. While the exterior has been altered by renovations, the interior and its detailing remain remarkably undisturbed. Decorative plaster, gilded wall panels, ornamental mezzanine grille work and original sconces and chandeliers preserve the environment of this early twentieth century movie palace.

The Astor is threatened by undetermined development plans and ongoing deterioration.



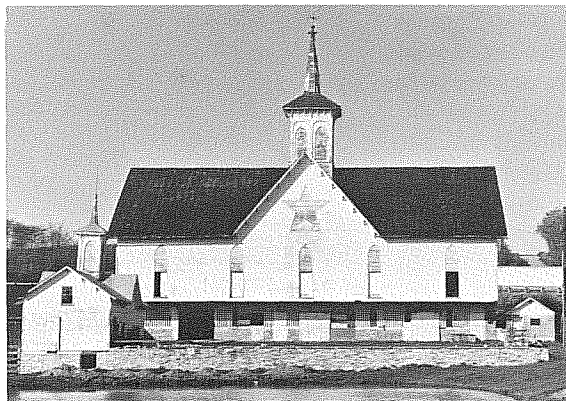
Astor Theater

Star Barn, Lower Swatara Township, near Harrisburg

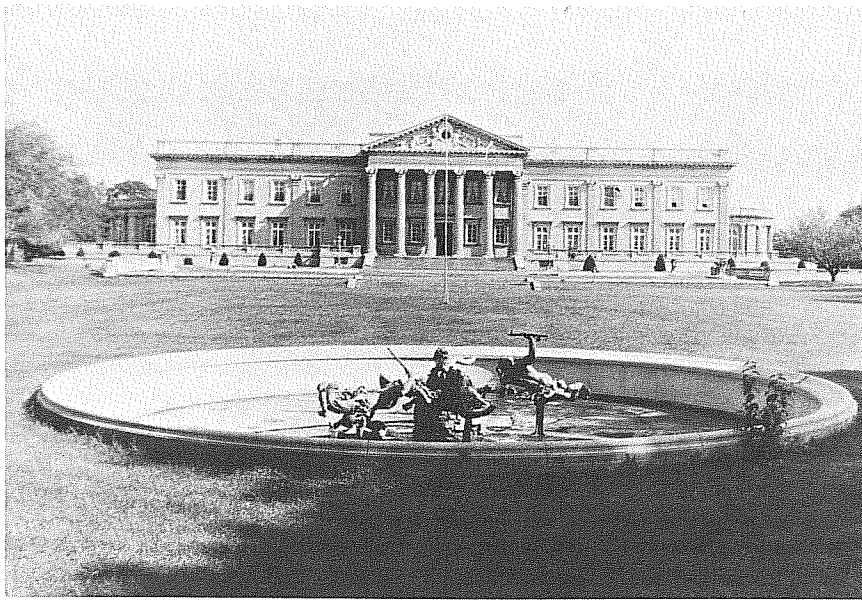
The Star Barn, as it is widely known, is a large highly distinctive Gothic Revival style barn. It is the dominant building of the former John Motter farm along Route 283. Motter accumulated substantial wealth and land holdings as a shipper, trader and breeder of horses and mules, furnishing thousands of these animals to the Union Army during the Civil War. In obvious expression of his rising wealth and social status, he constructed the barn and matching smaller outbuildings in 1868. The barn's architectural character is defined by its large scale cupola with spire and wall ventilation louvers in the pattern of gothic lancet arches and stars. Although essentially a traditional wood frame Pennsylvania German/Swiss barn

in form and intended function, it is stylistically unequaled among Susquehanna Valley agricultural architecture in design detail. Its heightened visibility since the construction of Route 283 has made it a landmark to travelers and an attraction to artists.

The Star Barn is threatened by ongoing deterioration.



Star Barn



Lynwood Hall

Lynwood Hall (Widener Mansion), Cheltenham Township, Montgomery County

Lynwood Hall is a large Neo-classical Revival mansion designed by prominent Philadelphia architect Horace Trumbauer for street car magnate Peter A. B. Widener. Trumbauer gained a reputation for designing country houses for the

entrepreneurial class and also for his institutional commissions. Lynwood Hall, one of his larger residential works, features a symmetrical seventeen bay facade dominated by a monumental portico with sculptured pediment. The interior contains one hundred and ten rooms with detailing and features that include hand-carved woodwork, hand-painted ceilings and Italian marble floors, walls and fireplace surrounds. Among its many fine rooms is an exhibition hall that housed the Widener's art collection, including works by Titian, Rembrandt, Rubens, Manet, and others, now housed in the National Gallery. Since 1952 Lynwood Hall has been owned and occupied by Faith Theological Seminary.

Lynwood Hall is threatened by an uncertain future and development pressure.

Meason House, Dunbar Township, Fayette County

The Isaac Meason House is one of the premier examples of a Georgian period Palladian villa-type house in America. It displays a projecting three-bay central pavilion with pediment, flanking wings and dependencies. A broad circular front lawn is encircled by an ashlar masonry wall and carriage drive. The house, wings and dependencies are coursed ashlar sandstone and limestone. The overall integrity of the property, including that of the interior, is extraordinary. Architect Adam Wilson erected the house for iron maker/entrepreneur Isaac Meason in 1802. Principal among Meason's pioneer industrial activities was the commercial success of his iron production and early success in rendering wrought iron by roll milling rather than hammer forging. The Meason House was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1990.

The Meason House is structurally sound despite nearby surface mining but is under-utilized and threatened by continuing loss of context.



Meason House

Special thanks to Bruce Bomberger, Preservation Specialist, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, for his contribution to this issue.

Bedford Springs Hotel, Bedford

The Bedford Springs Hotel is one of the finest surviving nineteenth to early twentieth century mineral spring resorts in the country. It is the centerpiece of the Bedford Springs Hotel Historic District and is surrounded by 2,332 acres of land, seven principal and many smaller mineral springs, as well as miles of wooded trails and outbuildings. The hotel's enduring popularity and success over the course of more than a century was marked by repeated campaigns of building expansion. This is reflected in the sprawling complex of lodging, recreational and support buildings which survive with remarkable continuity and integrity. The hotel's architectural character is chiefly defined by the monumental portico of its Greek Revival central building, and the multi-story Italianate galleries which unify the facades of a continuous northern wing of lodging buildings.

The hotel was a favorite retreat of five ante-bellum American presidents; its most notable connection was with James Buchanan, who utilized it as a summer White House. The hotel's owners successfully enlarged and expanded the facility to capitalize upon major historical developments of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: railroad accessibility, the rising popularity of active recreation and automobile vacation touring.

The Bedford Springs Hotel was listed as a National Historic Landmark in July of 1991. The hotel and support buildings are threatened by unresolved development plans and ongoing deterioration.



Bedford Springs Hotel

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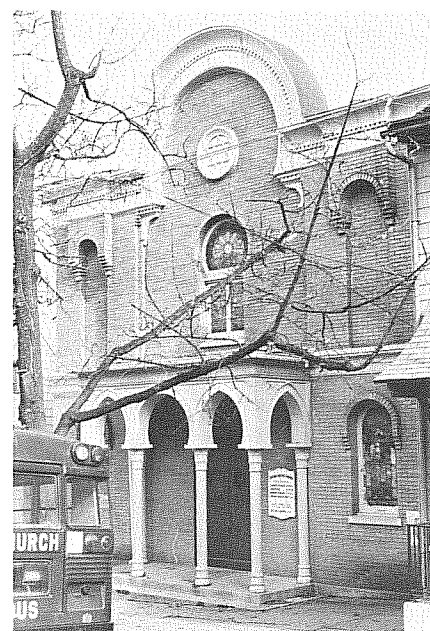
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Brith Shalom Synagogue

Brith Shalom Synagogue, Easton

Brith Shalom (Covenant of Peace) is Easton's oldest synagogue. It was built by a small congregation of German Jews in 1842. During the second half of the nineteenth century the congregation gravitated toward reformed Judaism and the exclusion of newly immigrated orthodox Russian Jews. In 1907, however, the Brith Shalom Congregation elected its first Russian members, and at the same time significantly rebuilt the synagogue. These architectural modifications entailed constructing a new Moorish style facade, erecting a large rear addition and remodeling the interior, resulting in the building's present configuration. Now part of the Easton Historic District, Brith Shalom is a central artifact of the city's Judaic-American heritage.

Recently vacated, the Brith Shalom faces certain deterioration through neglect, with no plans for reuse or development.

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.

Selma, Norristown

Selma is the oldest dwelling within the Norristown Borough limits. Built in 1798 by the Revolutionary War General Andrew Porter, the building is of stone and is one of the most impressive examples of Federal Colonial architecture to be found in Montgomery County. It has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

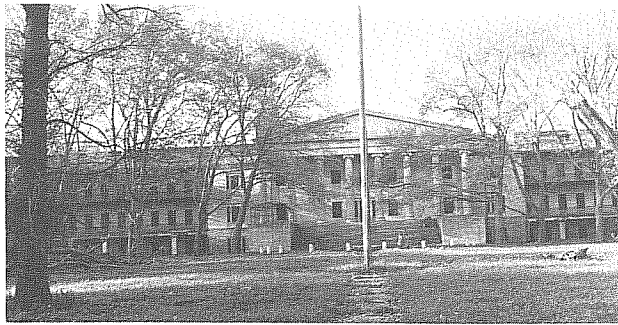
In 1987, the Norristown Preservation Society entered into an Agreement of Sale for the property and subsequently transferred their interest to two developers with the understanding that the building was to be preserved. The developers purchased the property subject



Selma

to a restrictive covenant that covered both the main building and its outbuildings. To date, the property has not been rehabilitated or maintained. The attached summer kitchen has been demolished and the current owners have indicated interest in a demolition permit for the property. The Norristown Preservation Society has gone to court to request protection of the property.

The fate of Selma is currently undecided.



United States Naval Home

United States Naval Home, Philadelphia

The United States Naval Home is a complex of buildings and structures that housed and served as the first national Naval Asylum for sick, disabled and indigent sailors. It also housed the Naval Hospital, and from 1839-1845, part of the U.S. Naval Academy. It ceased to be used by the Navy in 1976.

Prominent early national period architect William Strickland designed (1826), and expanded (1844) the complex. Due to overcrowding in the wake of the Civil War, a new Naval Hospital building, Laning Hall, designed by Philadelphia architect John McArthur, Jr. was constructed in 1867.

The Strickland buildings—Biddle Hall, the Naval Home, Governor's Residence, and the Surgeon General's Residence—constitute the largest ensemble of Strickland's Greek Revival designs. Through design and function the facility conveys the latest contemporary theories on health care and fire safety. The complex was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976.

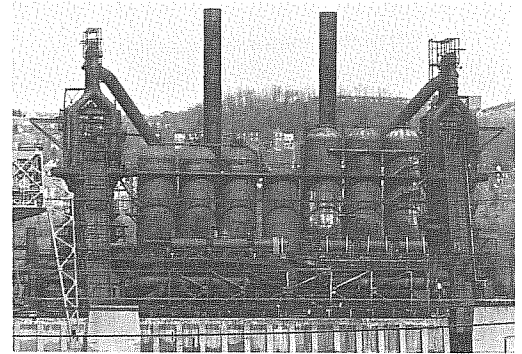
The Naval Home is threatened by development uncertainties and ongoing deterioration.

Carrie Furnaces, Swissvale, Allegheny County

Carrie Furnaces typify the gargantuan smelting facilities that helped make the Monongahela Valley one of the world's most important steel-making regions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Andrew Carnegie joined Carrie Furnaces with the Homestead Steel Works in 1900, creating one of the largest steel plants in the country.

He linked the two facilities, located on opposite sides of the Monongahela River, by erecting a railroad bridge to carry molten iron in torpedo-shaped cars from the furnaces to the steel-making and milling



Carrie Furnaces

operations. The Homestead Works, including Carrie Furnaces, subsequently became part of the United States Steel Corporation, and during World War II was the country's largest producer of steel plate.

Although the present owner of the site is considering preservation and interpretation of portions of the Homestead Works, much of the facility has been demolished, including parts of the Carrie Furnaces. Since the Homestead Works are no longer operating, and the current owner's plans are uncertain, Carrie Furnaces are subject to ongoing deterioration and the potential for further demolition.

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East Broadtop Railroad

East Broadtop Railroad, Rockhill Furnace, Huntingdon County

The East Broadtop Railroad is one of the oldest and most intact narrow gauge lines in America. It was established in 1871 and operated until 1956 as the East Broad Top Railroad and Coal Company. It was built primarily to haul semi-bituminous coal from the East Broad Top area mines in south Huntingdon County to the Pennsylvania Railroad line at Mount Union. In addition to coal the railroad carried timber, sand, rock, freight and passengers. Today, the East Broadtop Railroad consists of thirty-three miles of main track, rolling stock, several rail yards with shop buildings, passenger stations and other buildings. The focal point is the Rockhill yard which includes a roundhouse with turntable, car barn, paint shop, blacksmith shop, foundry, machine and car shops. These buildings contain original machinery and tools.

The East Broadtop Railroad was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1964 and has operated as a tourist attraction since 1960.

The East Broadtop Railroad is threatened by high operating maintenance costs and ongoing deterioration, especially of its outlying buildings scattered along the line.

Native American Ossuary, North East

A private gravel quarry operation near the borough of North East has exposed a multi-component prehistoric archeological site that was periodically occupied for a span of at least 3,000 years. The site's largest occupation was by Woodland Period Indians, circa 1400 AD. Around that time one or more agricultural villages were located here. Thus far, the most interesting feature discovered is an ossuary containing the remains of numerous individuals. Its cultural function appears to reflect the Huron Indian custom of ceremonial reinterment of their dead on a twelve year cycle. In addition to the cultural information which the ossuary and other village features contain, the burials themselves could yield physical anthropological data, including clues to the diet, diseases and longevity of the prehistoric inhabitants of the site.

The property owner has agreed not to mine the portion of the site that encompasses the archeological site until the artifacts have been removed. At this time, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and the owner have not reached agreement as to the extent of the archeological site.



Native American Ossuary

Lackawanna Avenue Commercial Historic District, Scranton



Lackawanna Avenue Commercial Historic District

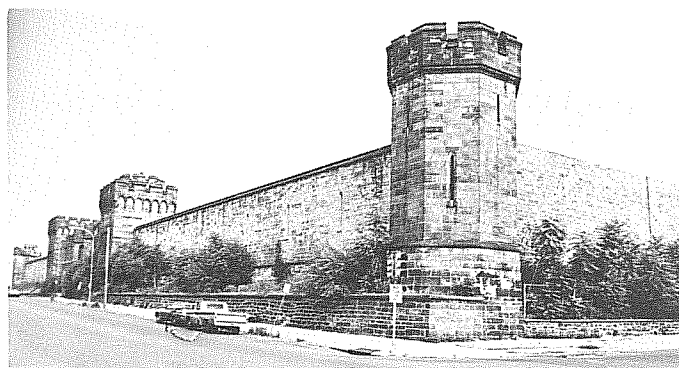
Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia

Significant to the theme of social and humanitarian reform, Eastern State Penitentiary was constructed 1823-1829 from a design by nationally prominent architect John Haviland. He won a design competition guided by prison theories of penal reform held by the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons (founded 1787). Grounded in Quaker thought, its principal aim was to replace the brutal treatment and unhealthy confinement of the contemporary penal practice of work trade. The original Gothic Revival design consisted of a bastioned portal and thirty foot ashlar granite walls and, inside the walls, a central watch tower with seven radiating spokes of cell block buildings. Each prisoner had a separate living cell and small isolated exterior exercise yard. Although widely studied and copied abroad, the theory and building design had less influence in the United States. The practices of trade labor and solitary confinement were ended in 1897 and 1913 respectively. The original design was altered by doubling the height and number of cell blocks. From the original concept of housing 250, the capacity grew to 900 by the time the facility closed in 1970. The facility was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966.

Eastern State is threatened by ongoing deterioration and lack of a viable reuse.

The Lackawanna Avenue Commercial Historic District reflects Scranton's stature as the foremost metropolis of Pennsylvania's anthracite coal region. The City's greatest period of growth, from the 1860s to 1920s, was generated by its iron, coal, railroad and manufacturing industries. Lackawanna Avenue became the commercial heart of the city, lined with retailers, banks and offices. The Lackawanna Avenue Commercial Historic District was listed in the National Register in 1983. In addition to including large-scale Beaux Arts and Gothic terra cotta buildings of the early twentieth century, these blocks possess many of the downtown's oldest commercial buildings. These smaller scale stucco and brick Italianate and Romanesque style buildings represent the first generation of Scranton's urban transformation.

The district's integrity is threatened by the planned demolition of twenty-one contributing buildings along the south side of Lackawanna Avenue in order to make way for a shopping mall.



Eastern State Penitentiary

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