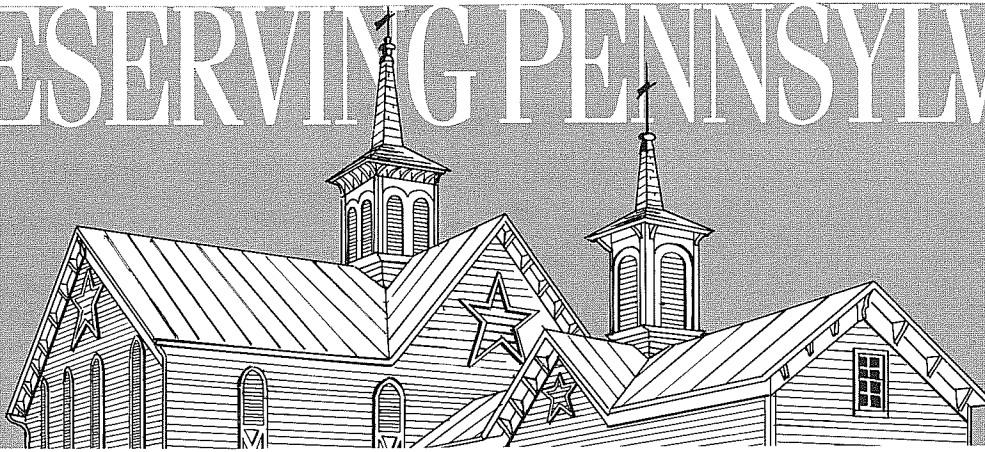


# PRESERVING PENNSYLVANIA



STAR BARN  
DAUPHIN COUNTY

Volume 9, Number 1

1995

## PENNSYLVANIA AT RISK 1995

This fourth annual listing of Pennsylvania's most endangered historic resources comes at a time of unprecedented threats to places treasured and honored by generations of Pennsylvanians. As we actively promote our Commonwealth's heritage, our cities, villages, and rural areas to potential visitors and to new residential and commercial development ventures, we risk losing the very tangibles and intangibles that we value.

The issues being debated and lessons being learned from ever-increasing commercial and residential sprawl within historic Lancaster County are sounding a wake up call to concerned citizens around the nation. Lancaster County was placed on Pennsylvania's endangered list last fall in response to discussions with the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Preservation Pennsylvania joins both the National and Lancaster Trusts in the firm belief that to save individual historic buildings means little if context and community are lost. The growing body of research shows that rampant sprawl can kill the very soul of our communities, not to mention destroy the local economy and the ability of communities to provide adequate infrastructure and vital services.

Since its 1994 annual meeting in Boston last October, the National Trust has convened two conferences specifically to address the issue of sprawl. The research and documentation presented at each conference support sprawl's serious threat to communities and their heritage. Preservation Pennsylvania, in response to the issue, is sponsoring the publication this spring of *Save Our Land, Save Our Towns: A Plan for Pennsylvania* written by Pulitzer prize winning journalist Thomas Hylton. The book is a call for Pennsylvania to take action to manage growth; find solutions to the challenges facing our cities, towns, and rural areas; and make these places vital, livable communities.

Among the properties described in the following pages, half are threatened in some way by sprawl. The signs are clear, from rural Oley Valley to scenic Allegheny River Boulevard. Sprawl, if left unchecked and unmanaged, promises to make Pennsylvania indistinguishable from Anyplace, U.S.A..

Pennsylvania's heritage is at risk as never before. The representative historic places described in these pages demand your attention. The issues raised by the debate over sprawl and its long-term, far reaching effects, demand our careful consideration and our prompt and definitive advocacy.



*Jacob Esbenschade Farmhouse, Manheim Pike, Lancaster County. Demolished 1992. Photo: Lori Stahl.*

# Allegheny River Boulevard Allegheny County



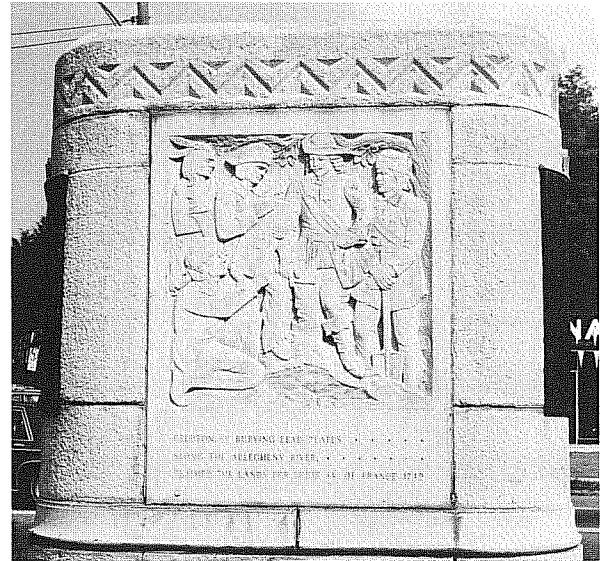
*Scenic vista looking north to Verona from Allegheny River Boulevard.*

Allegheny River Boulevard represents both the vision of the City Beautiful Movement and a grand concept for 1920s and 1930s auto touring. A public work of the Allegheny County Planning Department, the roadway was conceived in the 1920s, designed by 1929 and constructed between 1930 and 1934. Extending from Pittsburgh to Oakmont on the south and east banks of the Allegheny River, its course hugs the northward meander of the river.

The boulevard conveys an aesthetic of urban planning calculated to take advantage of scenic vistas by leisurely paralleling the river and offering designed opportunities to park and view the river and its islands. The boulevard's designed features include eight automobile observation turnouts with laid stone walls, a continuous alley of London Plane trees, picnic areas, and pylons along the road's course. Two of the pylons, in

the Borough of Verona, have bas-relief scenes depicting the region's 18th century era of exploration and Native-European conflict.

The Bureau for Historic Preservation determined the boulevard eligible for listing in the National Register in 1994. Threats to its integrity include the removal of some original trees for utility lines to serve nearby development, alterations that could include widening the road surface, and continued development along the boulevard's length.



*Commemorative pylon depicting Celeron burying leaden plaques along the river claiming lands for Louis XV of France in 1749. Allegheny River Boulevard, Verona.*

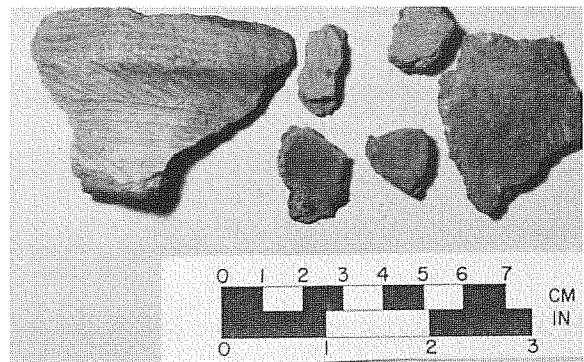
## Plymouth Flats Archeological Sites Plymouth Township, Luzerne County

Native Americans began to utilize Plymouth Flats, a flood plain along the North Branch of Susquehanna River, at least 5,000 years ago. First as hunter-gatherers, they ultimately shifted to agricultural subsistence and appear to have settled here in farming villages. The Flats contain buried strata of multiple occupation components, and have thus far exhibited cooking hearths, freshwater shellfish dumps or "middens", and a human burial. These types of features are characteristic of large, intensively occupied prehistoric villages, and typically contain important information about prehistoric patterns of community, architecture, and diet. Additionally some artifacts found here are "diagnostic", meaning that they are roughly dateable and assignable to specific cultures and their technologies.

These artifacts belong to late Woodland Period cultures identified today as the "Clemson's Island" (c.1300) and "Shenks Ferry" (c.1475) peoples. Large floodplain villages from these time periods have rarely been archeologically investigated. The sites on Plymouth Flats appear to have considerable potential to yield data on how different Late Woodland Period cultures established their own distinct settlement systems. Also, since the Flats contain an intact sequence of occupations from hunter-gatherers through agricultural village economies, it could serve as a win-

dow on the Native American transition to a more sedentary, crop-based culture.

The multi-component Plymouth Flats site has been determined eligible for the National Register. Currently, a significant part of the site is threatened by topsoil mining operation and most of the rest of the site is owned by a coal mining company.



*Pottery sherds from Plymouth Flats.*

# The Moland House Warwick Township, Bucks County

General George Washington used the Moland House, also known as Headquarters Farm, as a headquarters from August 10 until August 23, 1777, with more than ten thousand soldiers camped in the immediate vicinity. Washington occupied the property during two of his most anxious weeks of waiting, trying to anticipate whether British General Howe would assist General Burgoyne in cutting off New England, or move against the rebel capital, Philadelphia. As Washington awaited intelligence on the direction of Howe's naval embarkation, the Moland House served as his respite from maneuvering in the summer heat. When he received information that Howe was moving on Philadelphia, he broke camp to defend the city.

Three men significant to the course of the war marked important events in their careers during Washington's stay at the Moland House. Lieutenant Colonel "Light Horse Harry" Lee was court-martialed and exonerated here, and the professional foreign soldiers Count Pulaski and the Marquis de Lafayette launched their involvement in the war after meeting Washington at the Moland House. Young Lafayette assumed his congressional command and attended his first American council of war in the Moland House.

The house, which was listed in the National Register in 1989, was constructed in the mid 18th century by John Moland who died there in c.1760. Moland's widow, who resided in the house at the time of Washington's sojourn, was compensated for the use of the property by the general upon his departure.

Despite subsequent World War II era building extension and interior remodeling, the house remains substantially preserved, but in rapidly deteriorating condition. In addition to the historical significance of the house, it is likely that the immediate setting and vicinity could yield archeological information from the period of military occupation. Warwick Township has used condemnation proceedings to attempt to acquire the neglected house and forty-nine acres of open space for a park. However, the township needs to raise the cost of the purchase price determined by the court.



*Moland House. North facade. Photo: Judith Hayman Moore.*

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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.



## John McCullough House West Pennsboro Township, Cumberland County

The McCullough House, constructed c.1820 by John McCullough, is a fine example of vernacular Federal Style architecture. Its outstanding feature is a two-tiered portico centered on its Flemish bond brick main facade. The central two-story bay of the facade wall has a semi-circular recess to complement the portico, creating a circular outside space on each portico level and, on the interior, curvilinear walls in the front parlors. Beyond the graceful portico, the house is a highly intact, traditional farmhouse of the Cumberland Valley. The McCullough family, whose progenitor in America was a Scotch-Irish immigrant, became prominent farmers and landholders in the Valley.

Listed in the National Register in 1978, the house suffers from deferred maintenance. The tract of land on which it is sited is zoned for industrial use.



*John McCullough House. Front facade. Photo: L. Kenny.*



*Allentown National Bank.*

## Allentown National Bank Allentown

The Allentown National Bank building, located on Center Square in the first block of North 7th Street in downtown Allentown, was built in 1905 by what was then the leading financial institution in Allentown. The fine Beaux-Arts style eight-story commercial structure was designed by the prominent local architectural firm of Jacoby and Weishampel. The building is distinguished by its use of the vocabulary of classical elements from its division into three horizontal sections mirroring the base, shaft and capital of a classical column, to its use of detail such as bas relief panels, corbel swags, and the heavily bracketed cornice. As the last pre-1920 structure on the most prominent intersection in downtown Allentown, the building maintains a commanding presence on Center Square.

In addition to its architectural importance, the building is significant in the financial and commercial history of Allentown during this period. It was built by a consortium of businessmen headed by Robert E. Wright, Jr., scion of the city's leading law firm. Wright was then president of Allentown National Bank, which was founded in 1855 and continues today as Meridian Bank. The building was determined eligible for listing in the National Register in June of 1994.

In the spring of 1994, a major sinkhole developed under the adjoining Corporate Plaza, which was subsequently demolished. Also as the result of damage from the sinkhole, four of six vacant buildings along North 7th Street were slated for demolition. Local preservationists have launched a campaign to find a new use that would preserve the Allentown National Bank, which is one of the two buildings whose fate has yet to be determined. The building is reported to have sustained no damage from the sinkhole and is considered structurally sound.

## Siegmund Lubin Studio Philadelphia



*Siegmund Lubin Studio, 1920 West Indiana Avenue, Philadelphia.*

The Siegmund Lubin Studio was constructed in 1911 as a silent film studio by Lubin, who has been called "America's first movie mogul".

The structure is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for its significance as a silent film studio, its association with Siegmund Lubin, who was instrumental in the early evolution of the film industry, and for its architecture, which is uniquely designed to facilitate the use of the property for film production. This design includes prism glass, developed and patented in 1889 by Lubin. The prism glass diffuses light into the studio, creating less contrast and improved gray tones in the films produced.

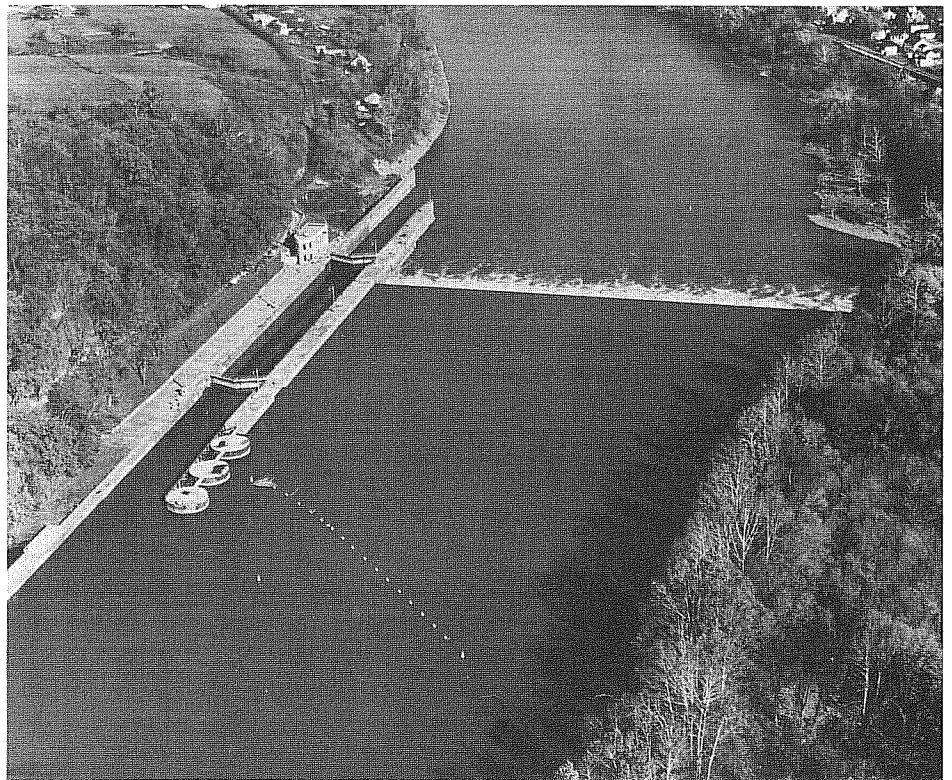
The Lubin Studio is threatened by the proposed expansion of an adjacent corporate site which would result in the demolition of the building for new construction and parking.

## Lock and Dam 7 Monongahela River, Greene and Fayette Counties

Lock and Dam 7 was constructed near Greensboro between 1924 and 1925 as part of the Monongahela River Navigation System. It replaced Old Lock 7, constructed 2.3 miles downriver in 1883 and removed from service in 1926.

The Lock and Dam and the adjacent lock tender's dwelling are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for their significance in facilitating year-round navigation of the Monongahela River. The uniformity of pool levels created by the Monongahela River Navigation System enabled continuous navigation of the river and fostered the development and flourishing of numerous industries in the region. These included coal, iron, steel, and such early industries as the glass and pottery factories in Green and Fayette counties.

A new lock and dam project, which calls for the construction of a dam on the Monongahela River near the community of Grays Landing and for the removal of the riverward features of Lock and Dam 7, threatens the future of this historic engineering resource. In addition, the lock tender's dwelling is being marketed as excess government property. If no reuse proposals are forthcoming, the structure will be abandoned and left to deteriorate.



*Lock and Dam 7, Monongahela River.*

# Oley Township Historic District

## Berks County

Oley has the distinction of being the only entire township in Pennsylvania listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The district encompasses most of the Oley Valley, a rural farming landscape, remarkably preserved, with the village of Oley at its center. Settlement of the area began early in the 18th century, and much of the built environment of the valley predates 1860. Especially significant are the district's uniquely preserved and concentrated early buildings that reflect continental European building traditions of the 17th and 18th centuries. Distinctive steeply-pitched roofs, some still covered with clay tiles, and outstanding decorative wood carving are among the preserved architectural features of Oley houses and farm buildings that have attracted visiting scholars of Pennsylvania German architecture to this valley since the early 20th century.

The district, which was listed in the National Register in 1983, has very limited local preservation protection. While increasing subdivision within the district is compromising its open rural character, surrounding development, as well as quarrying operations, exert traffic pressure and produce visual impacts on the landscape. A recently proposed replacement of a covered bridge within the district is yet another example of changes effecting a cumulative erosion of the district's character.



*Daniel Knabb Homestead, Oley Township Historic District. Photo: Terry Geise.*



*Charmingdale, residential subdivision, Oley Township Historic District. Photo: P. Hopkins.*



*Carroll House. Photo: Emlyn Olsen*

## George Carroll House, Erie

One of the largest Queen Anne residences remaining in downtown Erie, the Carroll House was built in 1872 by lumber dealer George Carroll. Carroll lived in the house, located on the southeast corner of Fourth and Peach Streets, until his death in 1904 after which the family continued to occupy the house for a number of years. Constructed of brick, the building's fine period detailing included an Eastlake style wraparound porch, fish scale wooden siding on the second floor gable ends and carved panels around the windows on the gable ends of the roof. The slate roof has low cast iron cresting at the top and prominent fluted chimneys.

Despite some alterations, the interior, with 5,400 square feet of living space, retains much of the original window and door moldings, baseboards, floors, doors, and railings. Some interior elements, including mantels and a newel post, were removed from their original locations, but are still in the building. For its architectural significance to the City of Erie, the Carroll House has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Vacant for the past ten years, the house is in need of substantial renovation to return it to its former grandeur. Water damage to interior plaster and evidence of decay in the ornate exterior wooden trim are among the areas in need of repair. The building has been on the market for several years, but has yet to garner an acceptable offer. The current owner recently lowered the asking price and is working with the Erie County Historical Society to find a buyer.



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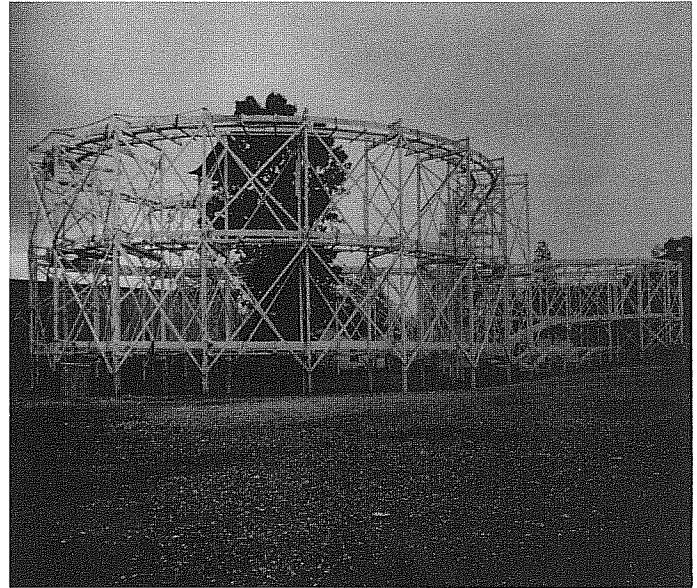
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## Leap the Dips Lakemont Park, Altoona

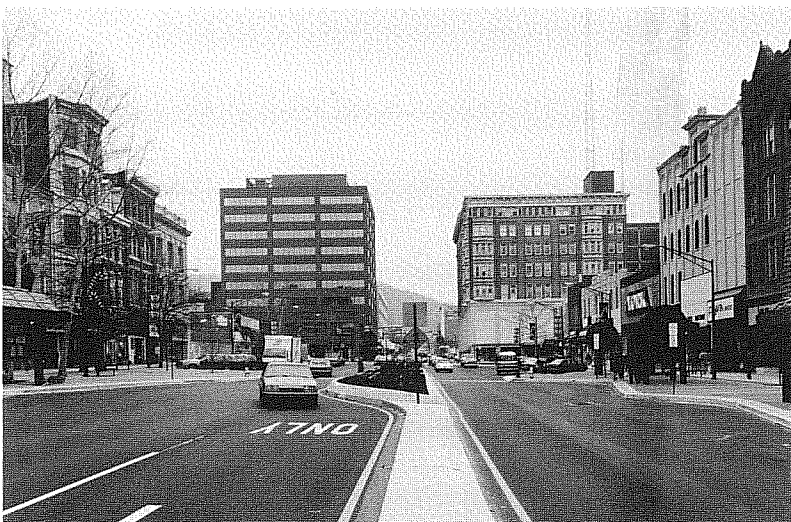
Leap the Dips, built in 1902 by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company, is the oldest side friction figure-8 wooden roller coaster in the United States. Once the highlight of a visit to Altoona's Lakemont Park, Leap the Dips replaced an earlier roller coaster destroyed by fire. Lakemont Park opened in 1894 and was for many years renowned as a picturesque wooded area with rustic bridges, scenic paths, a casino, and a thirteen acre lake used for a variety of recreational activities. In the park's heyday during the late 19th and early twentieth centuries, the summer months brought visitors to the park by streetcar to picnic, fish, boat, swim, attend theatrical events, and ride the famous Leap the Dips. The roller coaster is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Although Lakemont Park, which has experienced changes over the years in ownership and in the public's recreational preferences, is open during the summer months with a variety of rides and arcade amusements, Leap the Dips is no longer operational and the wooden structure is deteriorated from lack of maintenance. The Leap the Dips Preservation Foundation, Inc. has formed recently to preserve and restore the coaster. The group hopes to raise a half million dollars to accomplish the restoration and they are pursuing having the coaster declared a National Historic Landmark.



*Leap the Dips, Lakemont Park, Altoona.*

## Penn Square, Callowhill Historic District, Reading



*Penn Square, looking north. Photo: Noble Preservation Services, Inc.*

The Callowhill Historic District, located in the center of the City of Reading, encompasses nine blocks of Fifth Street, the main north-south thoroughfare, and is focused on Penn Square at the intersection of Fifth and Penn Streets. The name Callowhill was the family name of William Penn's wife, and was given to this area in 1748 when Penn's sons originally laid out Reading.

A broad spectrum of building types and architectural styles contribute to the character and fabric of the historic district. Commercial, residential, and institutional buildings display a diverse range of architectural styles from Federal to Art Moderne. The character of Penn Square is dominated by late 19th and early 20th century commercial buildings, including blocks of structures that reflect the city's historic regional strength in retailing.

In 1980 the National Park Service certified the Callowhill Historic District as substantially meeting the criteria for listing in the National Register. At present, at least two large historic retail blocks on Penn Square, including Pomeroy's and Witner's, suffer advancing deterioration, and are suggested targets for demolition and redevelopment.

## Pennsylvania's Endangered Heritage

*Pennsylvania at Risk* is published annually by Preservation Pennsylvania. The list is a representative sampling of the variety and richness of our Commonwealth's historic properties and the types and severity of threats they face. The list is compiled from recommendations made by our members, local heritage organizations, the board and staff of Preservation Pennsylvania, and the Bureau for Historic Preservation, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

In addition to the annual listing, released each April, Preservation Pennsylvania will occasionally add to the endangered list in the summer, fall, and winter issues of this newsletter in response to timely threats to significant historic properties.

Criteria for listing are:

- the property is listed or determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, **or**
- the property is considered a contributing structure in a National Register Historic District, **or**
- the property is designated historic by local government, **and**
- the property is faced with imminent, recognized endangerment either from overt action, neglect, incompatible use, or loss of context.

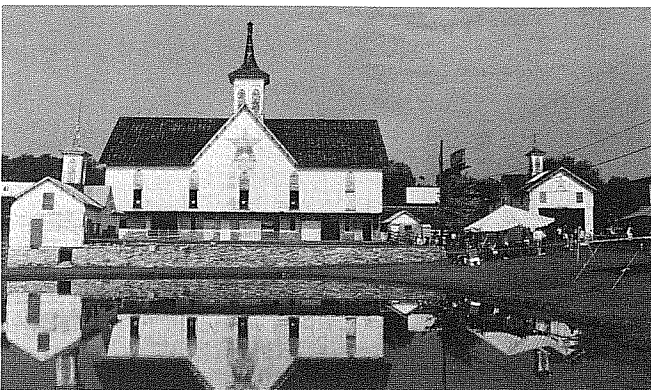
We welcome your comments on this year's list and your suggestions for future listings.

## Star Barn Still At Risk

First listed as an endangered property in the inaugural *Pennsylvania at Risk* (1992), Dauphin County's Star Barn continues to deteriorate as plans for its future remain unresolved. Located along Route 283 in Lower Swatara Township, the barn is a landmark to travelers and a favorite subject for countless artists.

To increase awareness about its importance and its plight, the Star Barn, with its distinctive cupola and gable-end stars, becomes the cover illustration for the upcoming year's issues of *Preserving Pennsylvania*.

Friends of the Star Barn, formed to raise funds to rescue the building and its surrounding acreage, have been forced to scale back their original plans for the property. Their vision of an agricultural education and research center on thirty acres has been revised to a heritage center consisting of the barn and five acres. The original plan needed \$1.8 million; to purchase the smaller parcel will require \$120,000. Grassroots organizing and fund-raising continue, and the group hopes to acquire the property by fall.



1993 fund-raiser for endangered Star Barn. Photo: S. Shearer.

*Celebrate Our  
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