



Volume 11

Number 1

# Preserving Pennsylvania

The Newsletter of Preservation Pennsylvania, Inc.

Spring 1997

## PENNSYLVANIA AT RISK

# 1997

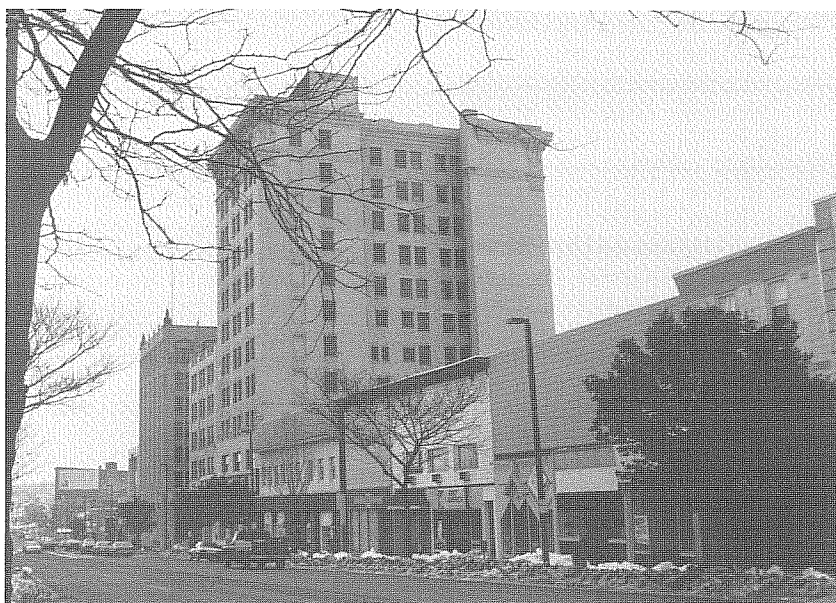
Each spring, as Preservation Pennsylvania takes stock of Pennsylvania's endangered historic properties, the imminent loss of individual buildings and sites stands less and less in isolation. Each loss is intimately entwined in an ever increasing loss of community character and sense of place.

This year we add nine properties to Pennsylvania's endangered list. Each helps define that often intangible sense of place of the community in which it is located. To lose any one would diminish the heritage of all Pennsylvanians, but would be especially devastating to the communities that cherish them.

We present the 1997 *Pennsylvania at Risk* not only as a call to advocate for the preservation of these nine properties, but also as a call for continued efforts on behalf of the properties still at risk from past listings, and to increased vigilance for all the historic buildings and places that represent and define the heritage of our communities and our Commonwealth.

*The tallest building in downtown Hazleton, the Markle Banking & Trust Company defines the city skyline with its massive white terra cotta bracketed cornice and Neo-classical revival detailing.*

*Constructed in 1910, with substantial renovations in 1923 and 1928, the building is threatened with demolition for new development.*



### Markle Banking & Trust Company Hazleton

#### Significance

Hazleton's Markle Banking & Trust Company Building defines the skyline of this northeastern Pennsylvania city. Built in 1910 with renovations in 1923 and 1928, the eleven story commercial block was the first high-rise office building in the city and reflected the importance and scale of banking and commercial activity in the anthracite region at the turn of the century.

The building's exterior is distinguished by a Neo-Classical Revival limestone-faced facade topped with a massive white terra cotta bracketed cornice with modillion blocks and Roman Revival block detailing. At the time of its nomination to the National Register of Historic Places in 1996, both the interior and exterior were noted for their high level of integrity in maintaining the original plan and detailing. The building was recognized

for its significance in the history of commerce in Hazleton and as an excellent example of an early twentieth century high-rise banking and office building.

#### Threat

A 1996 plan to rehabilitate the building using the historic preservation investment tax credits failed to materialize. In the meantime, a local developer has acquired other buildings in the block, and the Markle building remains the only obstacle to controlling future development of the area.

No buyer with an interest in preserving the building has come forward, and political pressure to demolish the building to allow for new development on the site is intensifying, much to the concern of many local merchants and residents.

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## Camp Letterman ("Hospital Woods") Gettysburg

### Significance

Established in the aftermath of the Civil War battle of July 1-3, 1863, Camp Letterman represented the consolidation of at least sixty small field hospitals scattered around the Gettysburg area. From July 20 through November 20 of that year, this field hospital, named for Army of the Potomac medical director Jonathan Letterman and located on one hundred acres of land about one mile east of Gettysburg, housed more than 4,000 patients, both Union and Confederate. Approximately 1200 of these men, primarily Southerners, were buried at the site.

Shortly after the hospital opened, Chaplain William C. Wray of the 24th Michigan Infantry wrote a description in a letter on August 7, 1863: *To-day we visited the General Hospital, and found it...neat, clean, and systematic. The hospital is located on a rise of ground, skirted on two sides by an oak grove. The tents are pitched in an open field which descends gently toward the west and north. A fine spring, sufficient for a bountiful supply of good water is located near the cook house. There are about 126 tents already up, each of which is occupied by 12 persons. The prospect is that the area of the hospital will be materially enlarged, as tents are being put up daily.*



*Camp Letterman, as it appeared in 1863 in the months following the Battle of Gettysburg. The camp served as a field hospital to more than 4,000 patients, both Union and Confederate. Many of those who died here were buried at the site, which is currently under consideration for large-scale commercial development.*

### Threat

With the abandonment of Camp Letterman, the historical significance of the property quickly slipped from public memory. The site was neglected, and by the mid-twentieth century, a mobile home park came to occupy a portion of the site. Today, the trailer park is slated for removal in order to make way for commercial development. An adjacent parcel of land, which is believed to represent a peripheral area of the camp site, is also being considered for commercial development. Located along U.S. Route 30 in Straban Township, one of these two tracts remains the only wooded and undeveloped land in the neighborhood.

Recently, a nominal amount of archaeological reconnaissance was conducted, in order to assess the extent to which the site has been disturbed by previous land use activities. This preliminary work demonstrated that the property maintains considerable sub-surface integrity. The potential for this property to contain significant archaeological deposits, which in all likelihood include human remains and other materials related to the use of the property as a Civil War hospital, is considered to be very good.

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### 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.

# Coal Oil Johnny House

## Venango County

Copyright Oil Heritage Region, Inc.



*The home of John W. Steele, the legendary Coal Oil Johnny, whose high living and wild spending escapades in Philadelphia and New York in the 1860s made him the prodigal prince of western Pennsylvania's 19th century oil boom.*

*The house, unoccupied for decades, is in precarious physical condition. Slated for demolition by its current owners, negotiations have begun that would allow for the building to be purchased by a nonprofit and moved to a location where it can be stabilized, restored, and interpreted.*

### Significance

John Washington Steele (1843-1921), more commonly known as "Coal Oil Johnny", was the oil boom's prodigal prince. Adopted at a very young age by the McClintock household, he lived in this wood frame farmhouse, becoming the man of the house at age twelve when Culbertson McClintock died. In the ensuing years, Johnny assisted the widow McClintock in running the farm and later in managing oil leases on the property. In 1862 he married neighbor Elinor Moffitt and they had one son. When the Widow McClintock died in 1864, John inherited the estate, including well royalties of \$2,000 to \$3,000 per day, plus a huge reserve that the widow had stored in a safe in the farmhouse.

Almost overnight, John changed from a hard-working to a hard-playing fellow. In his autobiography he writes, "I had a hard struggle with the world, the flesh, the devil, and the newspapers." His big-spending habits and flamboyant lifestyle during extended stays in New York and Philadelphia made him the topic of gossips and columnists. His Philadelphia carriage was bright red, with the doors featuring oil wells gushing oil and dollar signs.

The high life, hard liquor, and poorly managed finances quickly caught up with him. In 1866, he returned to this farmhouse where his wife and son had continued to live; the next year he filed for bankruptcy. He stopped drinking and went to work as a teamster operating wagons pulling other people's oil barrels, and tried operating a few small businesses before moving his family to Iowa and then to Nebraska, where he died of pneumonia in 1921.

In spite of the brevity of his heyday, the name and legend of Coal Oil Johnny survived for many

years. Even into the 1890s, a company sold "Coal Oil Johnny Soap" which was guaranteed to clean up anything using any kind of water and which included a description of Johnny's life with each bar of soap.

### Threat

The McClintock/Steele farmhouse, which was constructed in 1842 and has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, has felt the weight of time. Its foundation stones have shifted and are rotating, jeopardizing its structural integrity. Support beams underneath the kitchen wing are so rotten that they crumble when touched. Unoccupied for more than fifty years, the house has become home to rodents and insects. Although intermittent roof repairs were made, water damage is so extensive to both the exterior and interior that a recent study estimates that only seventy percent of the front portion and at best fifteen percent of the rear portion are safely usable in restoration efforts.

In December 1996, the owners of the property, after several unsuccessful attempts to find a preservation organization willing to tackle the project, announced plans to demolish the building. Although Oil Heritage Region, Inc. has come forward to coordinate emergency stabilization measures, long-term restoration of the property will entail significant financial resources, sophisticated restoration techniques, and approvals from multiple agencies in light of the building's proposed relocation across Oil Creek to a more accessible site. As the process of saving and preserving Coal Oil Johnny's House continues, the next phase is to negotiate an Option to Buy Agreement to transfer ownership to either Oil Heritage Region, Inc. or another 501(c)3 organization with a similar mission.

## 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 spring, 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.

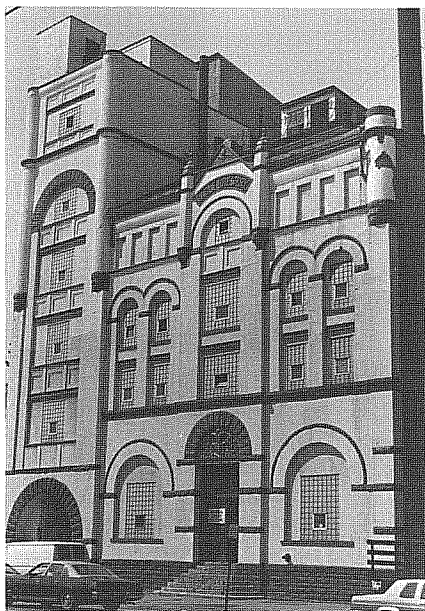
We welcome your comments on this year's list and your suggestions for future listings.

### Contributors to this issue:

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# Jackson Koehler Eagle Brewery

## Erie



*The Jackson Koehler Eagle Brewery was a major producer of beer in Erie in the late 19th and early 20th century.*

*The distinctive 1890 brewery is threatened with demolition if a development plan for the building is not found.*

*Photo: J. Claridge*

### Significance

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982, the Jackson Koehler Eagle Brewery played an important role in Erie's 19th and 20th century tradition of brewing beer to satisfy the tastes of the city's significant German population. The first brewery on the site at 2136 State Street was built in 1855. Although this building burned in 1857, another rapidly replaced it and was named the Eagle Brewery in 1863. In 1883 the property was purchased by Jackson Koehler.

With a very competitive brewing industry active in the 1880s in Erie, Koehler sought to give his operation a boost by enlarging and modernizing his facility. In 1890 he hired Louis Lehle, a nationally recognized architect of breweries from Chicago, to design a new brew house. The distinctive structure can be described as a mixture of Romanesque Revival and Bavarian castle with its towers, decorative brickwork and varied arched window and doorway openings giving the main facade an eclectic yet powerful architectural presence. Although some modifications, such as replacement of original windows with glass brick during the 1950s and stuccoing of the facade in the 1960s, have occurred, the building retains a high level of integrity.

The brewery complex, which covers approximately 17,000 square feet at ground level, was constructed to meet the functional requirements of the brewing process. Walls are over two feet thick to allow the structure to support heavy loads; and the height of the building accommodates the gravity system of beer brewing, as the grain was transported to the roof level where it began its descent through the various steps in the brewing process.

By 1899, Koehler's leadership of the local brewing industry resulted in a merger of a number of smaller local breweries under the Erie Brewing Company. When the operation closed in 1978, the company's brewing patents were acquired by Schmidt's of Philadelphia.

### Threat

Since its closing in 1978, the brewery has been neglected and attempts to find an imaginative developer have been unsuccessful. The current owner is willing to sell the complex, which is eligible for historic preservation tax credits. However, if a buyer does not come forward soon, the owner plans to demolish all or part of the building.

# Scanlon Observatory

## Pittsburgh

### Significance

The popular notion of an astronomical observatory with a shiny metal dome began in 1930 in the north end of Pittsburgh. It was there that Leo Scanlon, an amateur astronomer, conceived and built the world's first aluminum dome observatory in the backyard of his family's summer cottage in the hills above the city.

Scanlon's interest in astronomy began after he witnessed Halley's Comet as a boy in 1910. A plumber by trade, he applied his skills and the knowledge he gained as an avid reader of astronomy books and articles to building his first telescope in 1928. Frustrated with the intrusion of city lights on his viewing of celestial bodies and having only limited success in hiring a boy to shoot out streetlights with a BB gun, Scanlon determined to erect his own observatory to eliminate neighborhood light pollution. He capitalized on assets of the Pittsburgh region by obtaining sheets of aluminum through a friend employed by ALCOA and by enlisting the assistance of a professor at Carnegie Mellon to outline how to sheath a dome. After erecting a twelve-foot square frame building on an existing well housing at the cottage, Scanlon and associates used double-turned standing seam joints to link the metal panels. These joints, in effect, created ribs, which along with the arching shape of the dome, allowed it to be self-supporting, enabling one to swing and position a

*The world's first aluminum observatory dome was built in 1930 by Leo Scanlon in Pittsburgh. Heralded in the popular scientific media of the day, the dome served as the model for generations of amateur astronomers. Today, the building stands neglected, overgrown with vegetation, and the rear wall has begun to buckle.*



*Photo: Barry M. Mitnick*

telescope inside without structural interference. An opening for a slit to view the sky was cut in one of the aluminum panels and covered with a shutter.

Scanlon's dome was heralded in the July 1931 issue of *Scientific American* and later in his chapter on amateur observatories in *Amateur Telescope Making*, a reference work that served for decades as an amateur's bible teaching three generations of astronomers about observatory construction. The observatory was widely reported in the popular scientific media of the day and it was the site of public education in astronomy, as well as Mr. Scanlon's own scientific observing and recording, for decades.

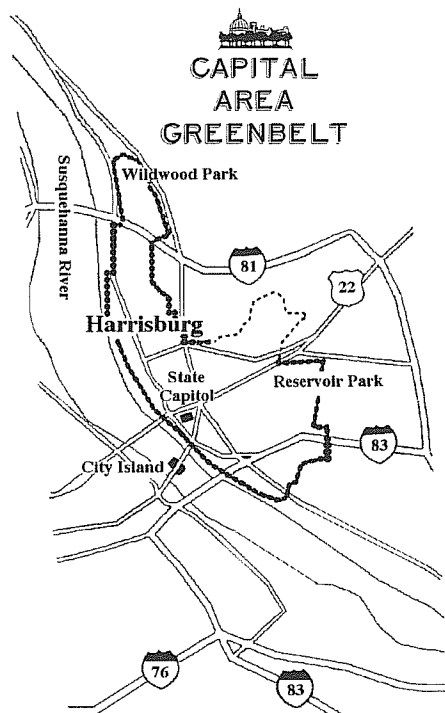
### Threat

The observatory still stands today, although without the original telescope, which went to a World War II navigation training program. Mr. Scanlon, now in his nineties, no longer uses the observatory; and, while the dome remains in good condition, daylight can be seen through a buckling frame wall at the rear of the building. Deferred maintenance to the frame structure and overgrowth of vegetation threaten the structural integrity of the building. The Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, of which Mr. Scanlon was a cofounder in the 1920s, has sought recognition for the site and are pursuing preservation options for the observatory.



# Capital Area Greenbelt Harrisburg

*Harrisburg's Greenbelt is threatened by commercial development plans that would sever the 20 mile chain of trails and parks that were a model for the City Beautiful Movement in the early years of the 20th century.*



## Significance

The Capital Area Greenbelt was conceived in the early years of the twentieth century by Harrisburg Civic Club leaders who believed that practical urban improvements could be combined with natural beauty to create a much more highly livable city. Conceived, planned, and pursued through the 1910s and 1920s - the same period that much of the state capital complex was built - this "Emerald Necklace" was the adornment of a new, modern, capital city, which became a model for the City Beautiful Movement. The Greenbelt incorporated road paving and sewage cleanup efforts with the acquisition of open space and the building of new parks, parkways, and boulevards amidst Harrisburg's burgeoning industry, row housing, and busy commercial areas. The Greenbelt was also significant as the work of landscape design architect Warren Manning, a student of Frederick Law Olmstead. His plan was immediately hailed as a national model of responsible civic planning and as a prototype for the City Beautiful Movement.

As originally conceived, the Greenbelt included development of Harrisburg's River Front and Italian Lake Parks, City Island, Wildwood Sanctuary, and the Swatara and Cameron Street Parkways. It is fully connected through the western, northern and southern edges of the city, though its eastern edge was never formally completed.

## Threat

In 1995, a sales agreement became public between the county and a national fast food franchise concerning a parcel of the public park land in Swatara Township. Development of the site would sever the twenty-mile chain of trails and parks encircling the city and significantly diminish the historic landscape plan. Opponents of the sale, led by the Capital Area Greenbelt Association (CAGA), rallied public support, organized an opposition coalition of organizations, testified at hearings, and filed law suits seeking to protect the public's right to conserve historically significant and aesthetically important public park land for future generations. CAGA, a nonprofit organization which formed in 1990, is committed to the completion, preservation, and continued maintenance of the greenbelt. Court hearings begin this summer on the suits filed by CAGA.

# Logan House Philadelphia

## Significance

Located in the Hunting Park neighborhood of the city and within the city's historic Fairmount Park, the Logan House dates to the late 18th century. The house derives its name from the Logan family of Germantown. James Logan (1674-1751) came to Philadelphia in 1699 as secretary to William Penn. His home, Stenton, was located on an estate that encompassed more than five hundred acres during his lifetime, and which was expanded by his son William (1718-1776) and grandson George (1753-1821).

The parcel now associated with the Logan House in Hunting Park appears to have been acquired by George Logan in 1794. George was a founder of the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and a member of the Philosophical Society. He actively farmed Stenton and bought and sold parcels of its acreage. The house may have been constructed prior to George's purchase of the property by a yeoman George Nice, or his father Anthony who transferred the property to his sons by will in 1761. In 1798 George Logan sold the property to James Hart, who used the house as an inn. The house appears to have remained in use as an inn



*The 18th century Logan House is considered one of Fairmount Park's most endangered properties.*

*The Hunting Park Community Development Corporation is seeking support to reuse the building to house a YouthBuild program, which would provide educational and job training opportunities to high school dropouts.*

until the City of Philadelphia acquired the property in 1854 as part of the Land Consolidation Act, at which point it was improved as a public park for the health and enjoyment of citizens. The Fairmount Park Commission, established in 1867, used the house as a Park Guard house until the early 1970s when the Guard was merged with the Philadelphia Police Department.

## Threat

The Logan House is severely deteriorated after years of neglect since its closing as a Park Guard House. It was proposed for demolition by the City and the Fairmount Park Commission in 1993. The local community development corporation, recognizing the importance of the house and the potential for adaptive reuse, is actively pursuing options to preserve the property. With funding from Preservation Pennsylvania's Philadelphia Intervention Fund, the Hunting Park Community Development Corporation has produced a comprehensive plan for reusing the property as the home of an educational and job training program for youth in the community. The challenge now is to secure the needed resources to make the project a reality.

## 1997 Keystone Grant Applications

Deadline: August 18, 1997

Contact: Bureau for Historic Preservation  
717-783-8946

# Roger Hunt Mill & Miller's House Downingtown, Chester County

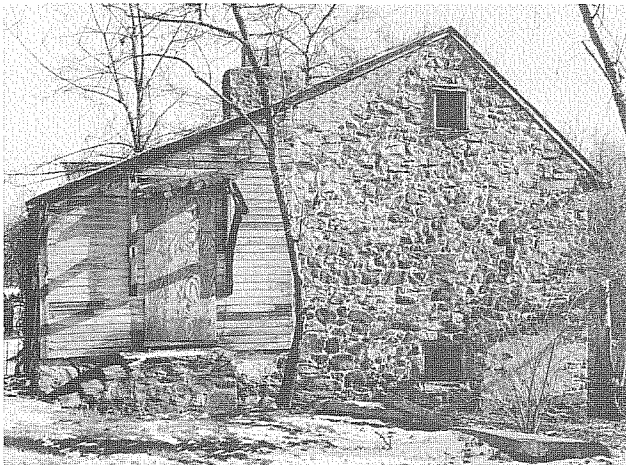
## Significance

The Roger Hunt Mill, constructed in the mid-18th century, was in continuous use as a grist mill into the twentieth century. Once one of many mills in the area, it is today the only surviving structure of its type in the Downingtown Valley and is also significant for its association with the French and Indian War. Roger Hunt, who built the mill and who coordinated supplies from a section of Chester County during the French and Indian War, was also elected to the Pennsylvania Province Assembly seven times between 1749 and 1761. The mill complex, which consists of the mill, a main house, carriage house, tenant house, and the miller's house, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

*Ruins of the 18th century grist mill constructed by Roger Hunt are undergoing stabilization by the Borough of Downingtown. The mill complex is viewed as the hub of future cultural tourism development for the six heritage regions of Chester County.*



Photos: Jim LeDrew



*The one and a half story stone miller's house, with one story frame addition, is privately owned and is reported to be for sale.*

## Threat

Both the mill and the miller's house are severely deteriorated from long-standing lack of maintenance. The mill ruins are currently undergoing stabilization efforts by the Borough of Downingtown; and the future of the miller's house, which is under private ownership, is uncertain. Recently Chester County was divided into six heritage regions for research and development of cultural tourism, with the mill complex identified as the hub for this system. According to Jane Davidson, heritage preservation coordinator for the county, the site, with its intact head and tail races and circa 1730 road, contains the potential to interpret an early industrial enterprise.

# Church Street Station, Market-Frankford Elevated, Philadelphia

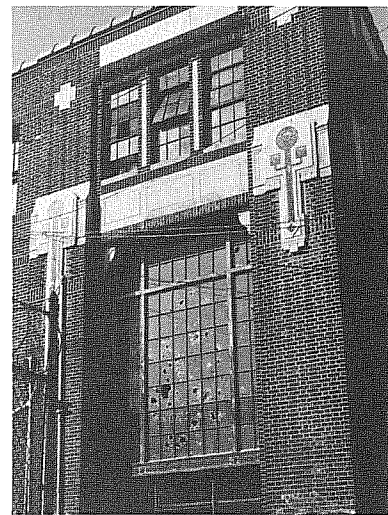
## Significance

One of the oldest streets in Pennsylvania, Frankford Avenue was laid out by royal warrant in 1686. It was and remains a major transportation route in Philadelphia and the main commercial corridor for the community. In 1922, the completion of the Frankford Elevated rail line, which runs down the middle of Frankford Avenue for approximately five miles, extended rapid transportation into Northeast Philadelphia. The Frankford line was linked to the Market Street rail line, completed fifteen years earlier, and which travels through West Philadelphia to Upper Darby. The Frankford-Market Elevated line, which is just under thirteen miles long, is the most heavily used transit line in Philadelphia.

The Church Street Station, which opened as the Ruan-Church Station on November 5, 1922, was one of eleven similar stations along the Frankford Line. Each original station consisted of two brick stair towers on either side of Frankford Avenue leading to the elevated platforms. Decorative motifs on each station varied. At Church Street, each tower has insets of white marble inlaid with floral mosaics flanking the monumental entrance portals. The stations are compatible in materials, design, and setback with the commercial buildings along Frankford Avenue.

## Threat

In plans made public in November 1996, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) which operates the rail line, announced its intention to demolish the Church Street station stair towers



*Entrance to the Church Street Station of the Frankford-Market Elevated rail line from China Lane on the west side of Frankford Avenue. Community opposition has rallied to try to stop plans to demolish the 1922 brick towers and replace them with chain link and metal-sided structures.*

and replace them with a new station of chain link and metal siding. Demolition of other similar stations along the line is also planned. Community opposition to the demolition of the Church Street Station is supported by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which recently began the development of a Main Street Program for Frankford Avenue. According to Diane Sadler, who serves as co-chair of the Frankford Elevated Redevelopment Advisory Council (FERAC) and is also curator of the Historical Society of Frankford, "The Main Street Program encourages a continuous facade line along commercial corridors and the retention and restoration of existing buildings. SEPTA's design for the new station would create a gap along the corridor and the resulting void would be dark and unfriendly. The materials would clash with the brick and stone facades of the existing buildings." The community intends to pursue the preservation of the Church Street Station and its distinctive brick towers, as significant and compatible components of the historic commercial character of Frankford Avenue.

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*Pennsylvania Heritage Club members contribute \$1,000 annually to Preservation Pennsylvania*

*For information on becoming a member of the Pennsylvania Heritage Club or the Keystone Society, contact Preservation Pennsylvania*

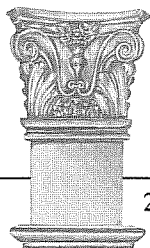
## You are invited to join Preservation Pennsylvania

If you are not currently a member of Preservation Pennsylvania and would like to receive future quarterly issues of *Preserving Pennsylvania*, we invite you to join Pennsylvania's statewide voice for historic preservation.

In addition to receiving *Preserving Pennsylvania*, you will receive notices of upcoming workshops, conferences, and special events; discounts on selected programs; advocacy alerts; and other information on preservation initiatives across the Commonwealth.

To join, simply complete the above membership form and return it **TODAY**.

## ... Coming ... In the next issue of *Preserving Pennsylvania* Rehabilitation of Wilkes-Barre's Stegmaier Brewery



# Preservation Pennsylvania

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Harrisburg, PA

## Pennsylvania's Endangered Heritage

The following properties have been included in past listings of *Pennsylvania At Risk*.

Those with \* have had a positive preservation outcome; those with \*\* have been lost. The other listed properties remain at risk.

### 1992

Astor Theater, Reading  
Bedford Springs Hotel, Bedford  
Brith Shalom Synagogue, Easton  
Carrie Furnaces, Swissvale, Allegheny Co.  
Danville West Market Street Historic District, Danville  
Deshong Estate, Chester  
East Broadtop Railroad, Rockhill Furnace, Huntingdon Co.  
Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia  
Highway Routes 23 & 30 expansion projects, Lancaster Co.  
Lackawanna Avenue Historic District\*\*  
Legionville Campground, Harmony Township, Beaver Co.  
Lynnewood Hall, Cheltenham Township, Montgomery Co.  
Meason House, Dunbar Township, Fayette Co.  
Native American Ossuary, North East, Erie Co.\*  
Park Home, Williamsport  
Selma, Norristown, Montgomery Co.  
Star Barn, Lower Swatara Township, Dauphin Co.  
Stegmaier Brewery, Wilkes-Barre\*  
United States Naval Home, Philadelphia

### 1993

Borg Warner Complex, York\*  
Church of St. Michael the Archangel, Pittsburgh  
Colonial Theater, Lebanon  
Delaware Canal

Erie City and County Library  
Glassworks and Greensboro, Greene Co., and New Geneva, Fayette Co.  
King of Prussia Inn, Montgomery Co.  
Knowlton, Philadelphia  
Memorial Park, Lock Haven  
Mountain Springs Hotel, Ephrata, Lancaster Co.  
Palace Hotel, Windber, Somerset Co.\*\*  
Path Valley Turnpike Rest Stop, Franklin Co.\*\*  
S.S. Grand View Point Hotel, Bedford Co.  
St. Severin Church, Drifting, Clearfield Co.  
Searights Tollhouse, Fayette Co.  
Victory Building, Philadelphia

### 1994

Armstrong Cork Company Complex, Pittsburgh  
Bomberger's Distillery, Heidelberg Township, Lebanon Co.  
Brandywine Battlefield, Chester & Delaware Counties  
Glosser Brothers Department Store, Johnstown  
Huber Breaker, Ashley, Luzerne Co.  
Keller's Covered Bridge, Ephrata Township, Lancaster Co.  
Lancaster County (entire county)  
Motor Vessel/Steamship Niagara, Erie  
Philadelphia Savings Fund Society (PSFS) Building, Philadelphia  
Shoe House, Hellam, York Co.\*  
Vera Cruz Jasper Quarry, Upper Milford Township, Lehigh Co.

### 1995

Allegheny River Boulevard, Allegheny Co.  
Allentown National Bank, Allentown  
George Carroll House, Erie\*  
Leap the Dips, Lakemont Park, Altoona  
Lock and Dam 7, Monongahela River, Greene and Fayette Counties  
John McCullough House, West Pennsboro Township, Cumberland Co.  
Moland House, Warwick Township, Bucks Co.  
Oley Township Historic District, Berks Co.  
Penn Square, Callowhill Historic District, Reading  
Plymouth Flats Archeological Sites, Plymouth Township, Luzerne Co.  
Siegmond Lubin Studio, Philadelphia\*\*

### 1996

Auto & Aeroplane Mechanical School, Harrisburg\*\*  
Bangor Swimming Pool, Bangor, Northampton Co.\*\*  
Enola Low Grade Railroad Line, Lancaster Co.  
Howe-Childs Gateway House, Pittsburgh  
Knox Building (Cascade Theater), New Castle, Lawrence Co.  
Morss Mansion, Simpson, Lackawanna Co.\*\*  
Naval Hospital, Philadelphia  
Phoenix Iron & Steel Company Foundry Building, Phoenixville, Chester Co.  
Walnut Street Bridge, Dauphin & Cumberland Co.



# Preserving Pennsylvania

Special Supplement

Spring 1997



*Rehabilitation of the Carroll House (Pennsylvania at Risk 1995) was accomplished through the efforts of Anna and Charles Iverson and Brian and Paula Laughlin, with assistance from the Erie County Historical Society and the Preservation Fund of Pennsylvania.*

*Built in 1872 by lumber dealer George Carroll, the prominent downtown Queen Anne style residence is now a bed and breakfast inn.*

## Rebirth of an Erie Landmark

by Anna Iverson

We are often asked why we stepped in to save the George Carroll house. The Carroll House was constantly within our view all of our lives in Erie. My childhood was spent on West Fourth Street several blocks to the west of the house. As adults, our first home was further west on West Fourth Street. Finally, my husband's office had a bird's eye view of the Carroll House for ten years. It was inconceivable that it would vanish from our lives. We knew it had been vacant for years, but thought surely someone would save it. Then, one December afternoon, Chuck called to ask if I'd like to see the interior. As with so many ventures of ours, I knew this simple visit could lead elsewhere. As terrible as the interior appeared with boarded windows and only the light of a flashlight to reveal the crumbling interior, we knew there was such potential in this once magnificent building. We looked at each other over the beam and said nothing.

Knowing we could not even attempt this project alone, we shelved the idea. Then, two

weeks before the house was to be demolished, a telephone call to the Erie County Historical Society revealed that another person was interested in the building. When Don Muller, executive director of the society checked on the name for me, I laughed out loud. The Laughlin's and the Iverson's had been neighbors for over twenty years. Their son Matt, who attended college with me at Pitt, was a member of our wedding party. Now their oldest son, Brian, a professional in building restoration, shared our interest in saving the Carroll House. It must have been destiny.

After many months of negotiating, the building became the property of the Carroll Inn Partnership, comprised of Brian and Paula Laughlin and Chuck and myself on August 10, 1995.

Not everyone thought our venture was a sensible one. My mother's initial reaction to the interior - strewn with plaster, holes through floors, boarded windows and no electricity except hanging work lights - was naturally a

From a proud beginning in 1872 as the elegant Queen Anne style residence of a prominent lumber dealer, the George Carroll House at the corner of Fourth and Peach Streets in downtown Erie faced an uncertain future when it was placed on the *Pennsylvania at Risk* list in 1995. At the time, owners of the building had slated it for demolition.

The building had been on the market for a number of years. With its peeling paint and boarded-up windows, the house needed a buyer with a discerning eye for architectural quality and a vision for what the building could become. The fine exterior period detailing, including 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, had fallen into disrepair after years of neglect. Inside, the house had been subdivided into nine apartments and had sustained water damage, but much of the original window and door moldings, baseboards, floors and railings remained. Mantels and a newel post had been removed from their original locations but were still in the building.

As the house continued to deteriorate, local preservationists, including Preservation Pennsylvania advisor Craig Pepper and Erie County Historical Society executive director Don Muller, actively searched for a buyer and a plan to return the Carroll House to its former glory and a place of prominence in the neighborhood.

Enter Anna and Chuck Iverson, and Paula and Brian Laughlin. These two couples' love for the building and their refusal to let it be bulldozed for yet another parking lot, is the kind of example that has made historic preservation the cornerstone of successful urban revitalization efforts across the nation.

tearful plea to rethink this idea as she fled back into the sunlight outdoors. Undaunted and with a master restorer leading the way, we ventured onward. We focused only on one task at a time in order to survive the insurmountable obstacles. My closest friend gave me a journal at the outset and I found solace in recording the adventure.

*August 20, 1995...The boards have come off many windows letting the first fresh air and sunlight inside in over ten years. In the light of day the amassed trash is even more offensive to this once beautiful structure. The local newscasters film the historic event for the six o'clock news. We still have a vision of a warm, lovely home full of life as we begin to haul away literally tons of radiators, stoves, refrigerators and debris from past tenants.*

*January 30, 1996...The moist, musty smell of steamed wallpaper is somehow pleasant as I peel back the layers of time. Each layer represents an era to me and I find it amusing that I am trying to reverse the passage of time.*



November 1996...  
The parlor of the Carroll Inn is decorated and ready to welcome visitors during the holiday season.



February 1996...  
Stripping away years of accumulated changes to the house involved months of hard work by the Iversons and the Laughlins.

*February 25, 1996...Each layer of wallpaper today is sealed with paint and age. It is a sunny Sunday afternoon and there are so many places we would rather be with our young son, Michael. Discouraged, we silently work on. Then letters begin to emerge on the original plaster. We make out the signatures "Edwin Carroll" and "George Carroll Bros." We both touch them gently as if we fear losing this connection to the past. We continue our task with renewed energy knowing we are doing the right thing in saving the home of these children of the past.*

Later in the process, after months of schedules, deadlines and requests, I was lovingly deemed "Leona", of the notorious Helmsley family. Finally, ten months after the building permit was secured, the house emerged from decades of slumber. The light now reflects beautifully off the original cherry and maple parquet floors and embossed wallpaper of the library. The Chippendale chairs await the next breakfast guests while the clock's pendulum ticks softly.

Our son Michael, now four years old, and I visit the Erie Public Library one final time before it closes its doors and makes way for the new library. The library had become a refuge for us since the issuance of Michael's card before his first birthday. Weekly visits and a romp in the park were sometimes our only break from the work on the inn. Ever-questioning, Michael asks why the library must close. I explain that it needs repairs and is no longer large enough for all the books. His reply, without missing a beat, "Why don't we buy it and fix it up like the Carroll House?" A preservationist is born.

*Anna and Charles Iverson are innkeepers of the recently opened Carroll Inn on Erie's historic bayfront. For information contact: The Carroll Inn, 401 Peach Street, Erie, PA 16507; phone: 814-455-2022; fax: 814-455-3373.*

*Rehabilitation of the Carroll House was assisted through Preservation Pennsylvania's revolving loan fund, which made a loan to the Erie County Historical Society for the project. For more information on loans from the Preservation Fund of Pennsylvania, please contact Preservation Pennsylvania.*