



BETHEL PRESERVATION SOCIETY JOURNAL

**NEWSLETTER OF THE BETHEL TOWNSHIP
PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

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NEXT MEETING: MARCH 27

The next meeting of the Preservation Society is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 27, at the John L. Myers, Jr. Memorial Township Building, 1082 Bethel Road.

THE CHARTER OF PRIVILEGES OF 1701

In honor of its 300th anniversary, Pennsylvania's Charter of Privileges has been loaned to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission by the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia. Written in 1701 and signed by William Penn, it has been called a "forerunner of the Bill of Rights" and was Pennsylvania's constitution for 75 years. This rare document guaranteed each Pennsylvanian's freedom of conscience and religion. It gave the representatives of the people, not the governor, the right to make laws. This charter was at that time the most democratic document in the world.

The Great Seal

Along with the Charters, an authentic reproduction of the Great Seal of Charles II, attached to the Charter of 1681 as the monarch's "seal of approval" is on display in Harrisburg. The original now lost, a replica seal was made for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1998 by the British Public Record Office, using the same 1681 mould that created the original seal.

The Laws of the 1701 Assembly

In addition to the Charters, on display are the original acts approved during the 1701 session of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. This packet of 10 laws represents the entire body of activity for the September 15 - October 28, 1701 session. They are significant because they are the last laws enacted and presented for approval to Proprietor William Penn in Pennsylvania on October 28, the same day he approved the Charter of Privileges. Just days later, he left the colony for the last time. The laws are badly in need of conservation and the Pennsylvania Heritage Society is undertaking a fundraising effort for their care.

EARLY PENNSYLVANIA LAND PURCHASES

by Clint Searl

45000 square miles of land in America, now the State of Pennsylvania, was granted to William Penn on March 4, 1680/1 by King Charles of England. This was to pay a debt owed to Penn's deceased father, Admiral Sir William Penn who died in 1670. Penn laid plans to provide his Quaker friends a refuge from persecution and also to provide himself with income from sale of tracts of this property to all comers. Penn's title was "Proprietary and Governor of the Province of Pennsylvania and Counties Annexed." Penn first arrived in America at Philadelphia October 28, 1682 to personally plan and govern the sale of property.

His aim was to sell tracts of land to future settlers and thereby create organized environments for the well being of the inhabitants and also to promote sales to turn his grant into cash income. Penn's idea was to attract three categories of settlers to occupy the land: purchasers, renters, and servants.

"First" purchasers would pay 100 English Pounds for 5000 acre shares and subdivide by resale smaller tracts to "under" purchasers and to rent out 200 acre plots to those unable to afford purchase. "Servants" would be allotted 50 acre plots at the completion of their term of indenture. Later "joint" purchasing by as many as 10 people could together purchase 5000 acre tracts. Some of the earliest arrivals lived in caves in banks of the Delaware River at Philadelphia when settling on the land trees were removed sparingly with white oaks to be used for construction material only, not firewood.

Living trees and rocks were commonly used as survey markers and plots, where possible, were to have 90 degree corners so as to lay out squares or rectangles.

The sequence of events to purchase property was as follows: First, a "warrant" requesting to purchase a particular number of acres at a particular site was issued. Second, the warrant was given to the surveyor general to "survey" the tract. Third, the survey, when finished, would go to the Board of Property where a "patent" was issued after payment was made.

The first three counties organized were Philadelphia, Bucks and Chester.

Penn returned to England in 1684, returning again to America in 1699 thru 1701. He even had mortgaged the Province of Pennsylvania in 1708 until 1730.

FOULK ROAD UPDATE

On March 6, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) representatives met with township residents to explain their upcoming project to improve Foulk Road. Many concerns were raised which were not limited to issues affecting historic homes. We urged (and will continue to urge) PennDOT to exercise flexibility in their planning. While we understand their need to construct roads which meet their ideal design standards, and thereby limit their legal liability, we stressed our concerns over the impact that their project will have on the quality of life and property values for many of our homeowners.

One issue raised at the meeting was the joint determination by PennDOT and the Pa. Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) that no properties along Foulk Road, including Siloam Church, were deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. While this is, in itself, is an unsettling fact, the sad reality is that even if a property is listed on the National Register, it is not absolutely protected from state or federal projects. PennDOT's assertion that no structure will be altered by this project is small consolation to those residents who will be losing valuable space between the highway and their front doors, or historic trees and stone walls.

If you would like to address comments or concerns to PennDOT, PHMC, or our local legislators:

PennDOT: (610-205-6857)

- Project Manager: Joseph L. Capella
- Engineer: Matthew Marquardt
- Environmental Engineer: Robert Keller
- Historic Research: Monica Harrower

Pa. Historic and Museum Commission (PHMC):

- Susan Zacher: 717-783-9920

State Representative Steve Barrar: 610-874-1358

State Senator Clarence Bell: 717-787-4712

ZEBLEY'S CORNER

As part of PennDOT's planning for the Foulk Rd. project, a study was done by their Bureau of Environmental Quality, and then reviewed by PHMC, to determine which, if any, properties were considered "historically or architecturally significant." The following information is from the final report generated by PHMC regarding Zebley's Corner's eligibility for placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

"Zebley's Corner is a crossroads settlement at the intersection of Zebley and Foulk Roads near the Delaware state line in southern Bethel Township, Delaware County. Zebley's Corner began to develop when Owen Zebley, Sr. purchased a 22-acre parcel of land in 1813 and sold lots to his three sons, Thomas, Robert, and Owen, Jr. Robert Zebley owned and operated a store at the southeast corner that has since been razed. The Thomas Zebley House, at the southwest corner, still stands, as does the Owen Zebley, Jr. House. Besides Owen Zebley, Sr., two other landowners held property at the intersection of these two roads. Stephen Cloud owned land at the northwest corner of Zebley and Foulk Roads in Zebley's Corner. Mr. Cloud's house was built very close to the intersection. Samuel Hance owned land at the northeast corner of the intersection, with his house situated halfway between Booth Corner and Zebley's Corner.

"The Zebley's Corner area is rural in character, but unfortunately has been infiltrated in recent years by several large modern housing developments. In addition, the lands of the original owners have been divided and subdivided throughout the years, with some of these lands containing the newer developments. The Owen Zebley, Sr. house, now part of a modern residential development, is found to the east on Zebley Road. The Franklin Zebley House is also a part of a modern subdivision to the west on Zebley Road. Near the intersection of Zebley and Foulk Roads, once used as a pool hall, Howard Zebley's house is situated.

"The Zebley's Corner Historic District has not retained its historic integrity. Compromised by the eradication of the setting and the design of the houses, the character of the district has not remained intact. The intrusion of new housing developments has changed the overall landscape and resulted in the loss of the historic value of the area. In addition, the use of updated materials, incompatible additions and neglect have all contributed to the decline of the district's historic quality.

"The Zebley's Corner Historic District does not have National Register potential. Owen Zebley, Sr., who purchased 22 acres of land in 1813, began the settlement

known today as Zebley's Corner (Author Unknown, 1943). Thomas Zebley received his lot in 1835, Robert in 1843 and Owen, Jr. in 1848. Robert's house, located across the street from Thomas', also served as a store which was the focal point of this crossroads community. Unfortunately, the loss of the store, which lent to the cohesiveness of the community, reduces the historic integrity of the historic district. The farm house of the original Owen Zebley who purchased the land in 1813, is now part of a modern development on Zebley Road to the east. Nearby modern development also reduces the possibility of a historic district.

"In addition to the lack of cohesiveness, and the developmental intrusions, the houses do not maintain integrity of design, style, materials, or workmanship. Modern additions, updated materials, and generally unsympathetic alterations have resulted in the loss of integrity of feeling and association. The Zebley's Corner Historic District is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places."

Anyone interested in a complete copy of the PHMC/PennDOT report should attend an upcoming Society meeting, or call Rick Nicholson at 610-558-2996.

Despite the fact that Zebley's Corner has been declared "not eligible" for listing as an Historic District on the National Register, several individual properties in this area have been recognized as "historic resources" by the Delaware County Planning Department and Bethel Township. In next month's Journal we'll give you some more specific information about these significant properties.

HISTORIC HOMEOWNERSHIP BILL

As a follow-up to last month's article on this important state legislation, here's some additional information from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's website (www.nthp.org):

With one visit, phone call or letter, you can help rehabilitate 70,000 "historic homes" in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania House Bill 90 and House Bill 91 provide tax incentives for owner-occupants of historic residential properties. The House has passed HB 90 by unanimous vote and it is now in the Senate Finance Committee. HB 91 is expected to be voted on and passed by the House soon.

With your help, we can make these bills law. Please urge your Senator [Pa. State Senator Bell: 717-787-4712] to support HB90 and HB91 and ask to have the legislation

included as part of the Budget Tax Bill. The most effective way to convey your message is a personal visit, but you can also call, write a letter, or send E-mail requesting a vote in favor of HB90 and HB91.

- State your purpose -- support for HB 90 and 91-- at the beginning.

- Be courteous and concise, and include key information such as examples.

- Use this contact only for this issue; if you're interested in other legislation, make that part of a separate contact.

For more information, assistance in contacting your Senator, and to provide feedback on your contact, call Preservation Pennsylvania (717-234-2310), or visit Preservation Pennsylvania's website at www.preservationpa.org.

Make a call. Make a difference. Protect Pennsylvania's historic homes.

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Please call Fran and Rick Nicholson (610)558-2996 for Journal information or to make address corrections.

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Visit the Preservation Society on the Internet at: www.delcohistory.org/bethel for Society information, as well as extensive information about Bethel's history!

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IMPORTANT DATES

Preservation Society Monthly Meeting

3/27, 4/24 7:30 p.m.

(Board meets at 7 p.m.)

Township Planning Commission

4/4, 7 p.m.

Township Board of Supervisors

4/10, 8 p.m.

Society Research Committee

4/12, 7:30 p.m.