



Old Morlatton Village MESSENGER

The Historic Preservation Trust of Berks County

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ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TEA



On Wednesday, December 8, 2010 members of the Historic Preservation Trust of Berks County and guests are invited to attend the annual Christmas Tea at the home of Laura Cooper and Peter Stanish on Geigertown Road in Birdsboro.

This lovingly restored circa 1800 Georgian red sandstone farmhouse graces over eight peaceful acres featuring a detached summer kitchen with stone floor and walk-in fireplace, stone walled spring

house, a spring fed pond, pergolas, barn and a small orchard.

The home's many original features have been carefully maintained including chair rails, beamed ceilings, built-in cupboards, Dutch elbow locks, pine, oak and hickory floors, original strap hinges on the front door, and 5 fireplaces. The farmhouse was part of one of the local farms owned by the Geiger family who immigrated from Berwangen, Northern Kraichgau, Germany to central Pennsylvania in 1749.



Volunteers are needed the day before the tea to help make tea sandwiches and the day of the tea to help with a myriad of tasks. **Please call** the Trust office (610-385-4762) if you are willing to help in either capacity. Helping on the day of the tea is not an all day commitment so you will be able to enjoy participating in the tea itself.

Dedicated to maintaining and preserving historically and architecturally significant properties

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Recently we turned the clocks back. As historians, we sometimes feel we'd like to turn them back more than one hour, perhaps decades or even centuries. But having concluded a number of major undertakings, the Trust is looking forward.

Our Fair was a rousing success thanks to Anne Coldren and Bev Stevens. We saw old friends and made new ones. We hosted crafters, antique dealers and demonstrators who have been stalwart supporters. We also recruited some new fans we hope will become regulars as well. Our first year with wine tasting was a modest success thanks to Blair Vineyards. Our first annual 5K run (History's Saving Race) was also successful thanks to Becky Gottschall, Matt Bieber and Amity Township Police Chief Shuebrook.

We recently completed stabilization work on the Deturk house and began work on the Bridge Keeper's House. We negotiated a palatable solution with a neighbor to provide access through her property and ours to a parcel upstream from Mouns Jones' woods and the Thun Trail. A parking plan has been developed with Amity Township and is proceeding toward completion.

Membership has expanded somewhat and we encourage each of you to refer us to anyone who may be interested in what we do. I would also encourage every one to consider becoming involved with one of the Trust's standing committees. The Events Committee's and Property Committee's work is described above. We also have ways for you to work on behalf of the Trust in Membership, Marketing, Education, Fund Raising and Finance. Advocacy is also one of our stated goals and we recently took a prominent position in support of historic preservation with a long article in the Reading Eagle.

We have programs in each of these areas. Each of these efforts relates to the others in one or more ways, i.e. marketing leads to membership which leads to fund raising which supports the properties which attract participation in events which can be educational. We would like membership participation in committees and welcome any ideas

you may have for improving our programs or implementing new ones. Several new ideas under consideration include a self guided tour this Spring opening all of our properties to the public. Another plan will entail signage at Morlatton to create an educational opportunity open to the public 24/7.

If you would like to be a bigger part of the Trust, check the website for the time & location of committee meetings we will convene before the end of the year. If you have ideas or comments on what we are or should be doing, call or send us a note.

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MORLATTON DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

In our last newsletter we reported that an adjacent tract of land up-river from Morlatton Village was under development.

After this first driveway location was turned down by another landowner, the developer requested us of "Swedes Lane", the historic lane from the George Douglass Mansion site past Mouns Jones Hose to the covered bridge and across a portion of the Mouns Jones meadow, as the course of the proposed right-of-way to the lot being developed.

After many meetings between multiple landowners, Amity Township, attorneys, A Board of View, and the Trust committee, we have reached a settlement that is best for everyone. The access drive for the parcel is going to be where it was originally proposed, between our cottage and the "creamery" building, a more remote location further from the Trust's historic buildings on the river. While a few details need to be worked out, things look as favorable for us as possible.

Our volunteer group worked as a real team to get this resolved with a positive outcome!

IN RESTORATION WE TRUST

Stabilization and restoration of the Bridge Keeper’s House is in progress. Excavations to the base of the foundation walls made it clear that the entire foundation had become de-stabilized and required restoration and protection from persistent hydrostatic thrust from saturated soils. Very little functioning mortar remained in the core of the wall or the masonry joints.

Hidden hazard eliminated:



North gable foundation below grade showing mortar erosion from over 2 centuries of saturation. That hole is NOT a window –missing stones fell into the cellar!



The same foundation reconstructed, parged (application of a rough mortar type plaster or cement coating commonly used in the 19th c.) and ready for waterproofing.



Same area coated with liquid rubber waterproofing and protected with moisture barrier. Ready for back filling.

Progressive failure stabilized:



Temporarily shored portion of interior cellar foundation which had collapsed in stages over several years.



Same foundation after restoration.

Work-in-progress



Dismantled portion of separated east wall, to be re-laid plumb, fully bed-mortared and repointed.



Lower wall partly re-laid. Fireplace lintel bearing in wall will be treated with termiticide, fungicide, and wood preservative before wall is closed up. Interior of fireplace and shored lintel are seen through opening.



19 century bottles, glass and pottery salt shakers from riverside excavation. Mortar samples at lower right.