

## Lower Makefield Township Historical Commission Meeting

February 9, 2022

### Attendees:

- Joe Camaratta, Historical Commission
  - Helen Heinz, Historical Commission
  - Chris Greeley, Historical Commission
  - James Nycz, Historical Commission
  - Victor Fiori, Historical Commission
  - Thomas Argentieri, Community Guest
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- Introductions for all members
  - Appointed a secretary (Chris Greeley)
  - Discussion on the minutes from the January 2022 meeting
    - Helen still concerned on the by-law issues raised at the last meeting.
    - Discussion in the 90s on having by-laws was tabled.
    - Questions around quorum and membership and voting rights.
    - This is the appointed commission to deal with historical matters. We had a LMT historical society (COVID shut them down) which is a volunteer organization with a bank account of \$100k+. It is on hold.
    - Joe: I will go back and look – quorum should be consistent across all committees. We do have a quorum for this meeting since 5/6 are present.
    - **Minutes from January are not approved at this point pending the quorum question.**
  - Goals
    - We look at how we educate the Board of Supervisors as well as the populous in general. If people aren't involved in the history, it is hard to move forward initiatives to preserve and save buildings:
      - Advocate for preservation of township historic resources
      - Curate resources on township history
      - Educate on preservation and history
    - Slate Hill Cemetery – There are properties already on the National Register – Joe will put together a presentation
      - There is a question on the stone walls – they are falling down and need to be repaired.
      - Mapping of the graves – Helen: the issue has always been there does not seem to be too many graves in the front and intrusions in that space. Oldest part is against the road. They would be buried in trenches in their smocks. The Quakers were adamant about not honoring people with tombstones. William Penn is in an unmarked grave. There are bodies there, but no tombstones.
      - People have put burials in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century on top of that area. There were additions in 1693 and 1720 and another in 1790s. Those later additions – the last addition is the triangular section closest to the power

facility. That was for the public to be buried. Churches that did not have a graveyard buried people there. The African American churches put people in that section and the Methodist and Presbyterian Church also put people there.

- 19<sup>th</sup> Century Burials are marked by tombstones – not Quakers. We have no idea how many Quakers are in the front section. It could be thousands.
- How do we do this? We probe with a long metal stick – they’re under the surface. There is also a 1926 map as well – it says there were a lot of wooden wickets. It didn’t map the public section. One horse is buried there with his owner in the “colored graveyard” or the segregated section. There are 9 Civil War veterans in that section – 11 in the other two sections. There may be a Revolutionary War veteran there as well and there was a tombstone with his name on it, but that has disappeared.
  - He had sons that fought in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. It is an ongoing project to go through old newspapers.
- Discussion on grant application (submission in 2023 – work to be done in 2022)
- Patterson Farm – acquired by the township – center part of Janey grant. He went back to England in 1696 and died there.
  - He left his wife and four sons in Lower Makefield. They ran that farm in 50 years and sold it off to finance their operations in Newtown Township. They built grist and lumber mills in Newtown.
  - By the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was passed to other farmers, but stayed in large parcels. 95 went in in the 90s and the highway bisected it. It was whole before that.
  - By the time the 1990s came around, it was one of the largest intact parcel. The farmer had been on there since 1956 and was in his 90s and they talked him into selling it at a reduced rate in a condemnation action.
  - Township took it – they did that in another parcel which became the gold course. There is a stone house in the middle of that course. The owner sued and won.
  - Patterson didn’t sue.
  - There was no plan for what to do with it. We want to urge them to keep it as a farm. It abuts a historic village. At the crossroads. We want it maintained.
  - We are in a controversy with people who have different views. It is the subject of the ad hoc committee.
- Curate
  - What historic properties do we have – state is doing a baseline survey. You can’t save historic places if you don’t know you have them.
  - Is it historic, is it on or eligible for the National Registry. Three-year baseline survey (Bucks is in that year) – make sure state has complete and accurate information.

- Second piece has to do with information. A couple of years ago the historical society started to catalog historical information.
    - There is stuff in a township building that isn't cataloged at all. That needs to be curated and cataloged. You want to digitize it.
    - We could do it ourself. We could also get a grant and a real archivist.
    - Grants – Chris can take the lead.
    - Paid intern in 2007 is on a disc – that just had photographs – several of those buildings have disappeared.
  - Joe will take the lead on the survey pieces with Helen's help
  - Last goal of education – need help
    - Facebook page
  - Would be nice for someone to put together post topics and schedule so we have a calendar going forward.
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  - Helen has given presentations to elementary schools – why not record Helen doing it and put it up on YouTube.
    - Helen has been putting the materials into 15 minute chunks.
    - Helen wouldn't mind someone narrating for her (or assisting) and we need someone to help record.
    - If anyone wants to work with Helen on this – Victor volunteered to work with Helen
  - Have a look at the goals – talk to Joe if you want to get involved in any particular area.
- Ad Hoc Property Committee (James Update)
  - This committee has been going on since May or Jun e2021.
  - What we were tasked with doing is help the township come up with uses for historic properties it owns
    - Patterson Farm (some buildings on that property)
    - One other historic house – Makefield Highlands Golf Course (Slack House)
  - Have gone through the process of hearing from different parties and getting assessments done from contractors and hearing from people in advocacy or preservation groups.
  - This committee did a review of history and recommended next steps.
  - All of those reports are being compiled to be sent to the board of supervisors. Tentative date is first week of March (3/2).
  - Updating – the township is working on this final report. I think that the Historic Commission's report will be added to the appendix.
  - Just working on that at the moment.
  - Advocacy Groups have also chimed in and the meeting are online.
  - The next meeting is next Thursday (2/17)
  - Joe: Working on financial models of preservation
    - Models on preserving farms and homesteads
    - How were the renovations done, how are the properties used, how are they maintained.



- Was a woodlands (look at Penn Arrow) – 1937, so few trees in LMT. What you see there are scrub trees that have grown up since they stopped farming.
- Structure is the Winder House – Washington may have visited that house for the 2 weeks they were around before the crossing. Three Winder houses in LMT – on the Newtown Road and it was the County Seat. Could be the one near Quarry Hill and there is a third.
- It is on the right on Creamery Road – it empties out on Newtown Road
- The neighbors are irritated.
- Octagonal Schoolhouse
  - Took all of their land and put a 4 lane highway into their cow pasture.
  - They were angry, so they wouldn't sign over the property – it had transferred to them.
  - It is at the intersection of Oxford Valley Road and some other road that goes into Township Line Road – Robert Something Way – across from the CVS
  - Clump of Woods – photograph of the school house on the History Facebook Page – the stones are still there. It is a quarter of an acre and it has a nice group of trees below the road surface. You don't hear the sound of the road
  - Built in 1775 – he put together a plan that is in the library – took a subscription from a group of farmers – co-ed school from farmers kids in 1775. This 19 year old is starting a school while the Revolutionary War is breaking out.
  - Just recently found out that it was where the first abolitionist society meeting was held.
  - Architecturally significant – octagonal with the teacher in the middle and light coming in from 8 directions. First we have to get the property back to the township
- Keystone Grant Proposal
  - Ready made plans that we can spin out?
  - Aecon – Mt. Laurel NJ – they'd be interested in doing a survey or applying for the funding for a survey
  - First step toward Patterson Farm survey
  - She could give us a quote
- Helen Question: Someone sent Helen a note about historic tiles that we were selling 4 years ago – we had them made and were using them as a fundraiser. We had them, but she doesn't know who was in charge – Kenny Martin died (he was in charge) – need to locate them. There were several that didn't sell. They were \$20 and many didn't sell. Someone sent Helen a check.