

Lower Makefield Township Historical Commission 2023 Accomplishments

In January, 2023, the Lower Makefield Township Historical Commission established a set of goals and objectives to support its founding resolution.

RESOLUTION NO. 323 (1977) - RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD, BUCKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, CREATING A HISTORICAL COMMISSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF SURVEYING THE TOWNSHIP TO DESIGNATE STRUCTURES AND BUILDINGS WHICH MAY BE OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND TO RECOMMEND TO THE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS THE CREATION OF A ZONING DISTRICT FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL STRUCTURES AND BUILDINGS.

A major accomplishment for 2023 was recruiting and engaging 5 new members to the Historical Commission. Special thanks to Tom Agentieri from the Commission for the use of Facebook to promote awareness of the openings, and scheduling virtual introductions with interested residents to explain our goals and objectives. John Lewis (Board liaison) was instrumental in finding a structure that allowed us to engage new members beyond our 2 openings. The new members are:

1. Jeffrey Bedser
2. Cathy Hanville
3. Mitch Palin
4. Lisa Pelligrino
5. Jim Sachs

Monica Hinden also joined us as a volunteer and took the lead on our efforts to preserve Slate Hill Cemetery.

In order to educate new (and existing) members and volunteers on approaches and tools for historic preservation, we worked with the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO) to provide on-site training on the following topics:

- The Certified Local Government Program & Local Preservation
- Historic Resource Surveys & Local Preservation

The following report lists our 2023 goals and objectives and the activities that were performed in support of their achievement.

1. Advocate for preservation of township historic resources

- Support Ad Hoc Property Committee in development of Master Plan for Patterson Farm.

Joe Camaratta served as the Historical Commission representative to the Lower Makefield Township Ad Hoc Property Committee, and helped shape the development of the master plan with regards to appropriate uses of historical buildings, and funding opportunities for preservation efforts. In addition, Joe interviewed four non-profits and the PA SHPO on effective management of preservation efforts at historic farms, and developed key learnings for a Patterson Farm Management Model that is included as an appendix to the master plan.

Helen Heinz met with the lead architect and historic preservationist from Seiler + Drury Architects and walked them through the history of Patterson Farm and its buildings. She researched historical deeds, mortgage descriptions, Sheriff sales, Probate and Orphan's Court records, census data, agricultural surveys, tax records, license records, road docket, criminal court documents, and newspaper records to develop a narrative detailing the ownership of the farm and construction of its buildings. This narrative forms the foundation for a National Register submission for Patterson Farm.

- Create a plan with funding requirements for resubmission of Patterson Farm to the National Register of Historic Places.

The Historical Commission held two meetings with the PA SHPO to discuss approaches to listing Patterson Farm on the National Register of Historic Places. SHPO noted that the farm's "determination of eligibility" for the register had expired, and outlined the documentation required to update the determination. They also offered to review existing documentation for a listing on the register, and offer feedback on what additional work is needed.

At the Board of Supervisors meeting on November 1, the Supervisors authorized the Historical Commission to perform the following tasks to prepare for a submission of Patterson Farm to the National Register of Historic Places:

1. Update the "determination of eligibility" so that it is current (i.e. issued within the last 5 years).
2. Engage the PA SHPO to explore possible strategies for listing the farm on the National Register

Helen Heinz and Joe Camaratta are leveraging information used in the preparation of the master plan for submission to PA SHPO.

- Create a plan for preservation and maintenance of Slate Hill Cemetery.

Monica Hinden approached the Commission with an interest in preservation of Slate Hill Cemetery. She prepared a condition assessment of the cemetery and developed a multi-year master plan for its preservation. Tom Argentieri and Joe Camaratta submitted an application to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) for a Keystone Preservation Construction Grant to repair the broken and toppled over grave markers, but it was not funded.

Monica and Tom organized 2 Community Clean Up Days to rake leaves, pick up trash, and trim bushes at the cemetery. LMT Public Works contributed by removing multiple diseased trees and handling large tree trimming.

LMT Police donated their time and equipment to perform ground penetrating radar to confirmed unmarked graves in the oldest “Quaker” section of the cemetery, burials outside the cemetery walls and graves whose markers have been lost or misplaced.

Tom and Monica also researched appropriate methods for cleaning historic grave markers, and cleaned approximately 50 of the cemetery’s markers.

2. Curate resources on township history

- Catalog township-owned materials on township history and historic resources to augment Lower Makefield Township Historical Society listing on [Philadelphia Area Archives Research Portal \(PAARP\)](#). Develop plan for digitization of resources.

Chris Greeley defined a project to survey and index documents and audio and video tapes of historic value, and digitize those materials to share with researchers and the community. Chris and Lisa Pellegrino prepared a submission with a \$5,000 budget that was submitted for a PA Historical & Archival Records Care (HARC) grant, but the program was canceled due to a lack of funding from the state. Materials needed to carry out the project were included in the 2024 budget.

3. Educate on township history and importance of preservation

- Ghost Walk at Slate Hill Cemetery



On October 15, 2023, the Historical Commission hosted a Ghost Tour at Slate Hill Cemetery. The tour highlighted 12 of our most interesting and historical residents at the historic cemetery. Some of them included Yardley’s namesake William Yardley, Navy Vet: The “Unsinkable” William Hill, and the boundary pushing elementary school teacher, Martha White Jerauld. Portrayed by members of our community, visitors were taken back in time and regaled with stories of our shared past. With over 200 people in attendance, the Commission raised \$3,480

through business sponsors and free will donations. The money will pay for continued preservation efforts including marker cleaning, and a new, more visible sign along Yardley-Morrisville Rd and educational programs for local schools. Monica Hinden, Victor Fiori, Helen Heinz, Cathy Hanville, Mitch Palin and Jim Sachs organized and promoted the walk to

LMT residents and businesses. The Ghost Walk and work at Slate Hill Cemetery has been submitted as a Success Story Project for a Community Initiative Award from PA SHPO.

- Slate Hill Cemetery Interpretation Project

A project to make information on Slate Hill Cemetery and residents interred there more readily available to LMT residents and visitors to the cemetery was defined, and budgeted for implementation in 2024.

- Additional activities

Additional activities under this goal include:

- Hosting a table at Lower Makefield Township Community Day
- Presentation of History of LMT to Seniors at Regency Club House
- Presentation to Troop 30 G at Woodside Presbyterian Church
- Tour of notable Slack family sites for a group of Slack family & friends
- Meeting with Shirley Corsey of Gather Place

There was 1 planned objective that the Commission deferred to 2024:

- Collaborate with the Parks & Recreation Department on events that highlight the history of the township for America 250 celebration in 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Camaratta, Chair

Helen Heinz, Vice Chair

Tom Argentieri, Treasurer

Chris Greeley, Secretary

Jeffrey Bedser, Member

Victor Fiori, Member

Cathy Hanville, Member

Monica Hinden, Volunteer

Mitch Palin, Member

Lisa Pelligrino, Member

Jim Sachs, Member