



East Whiteland HISTORICAL COMMISSION

NEWSLETTER VOL. 1 WINTER 2021

Welcome Message

Welcome to the first edition of the East Whiteland Township Historical Commission Newsletter. Our goal is to raise awareness of our township's history and to encourage the preservation of our cultural character and the physical evidence of that history.

About the Commission

The Historical Commission has been instrumental in identifying historic properties and in spearheading efforts to protect the Township's historic resources. Although many of these resources are located in developed areas, future development and change could continue to threaten the historical sites.

Integration of these structures into the community's changing landscape is the key to preserving the historic resources.

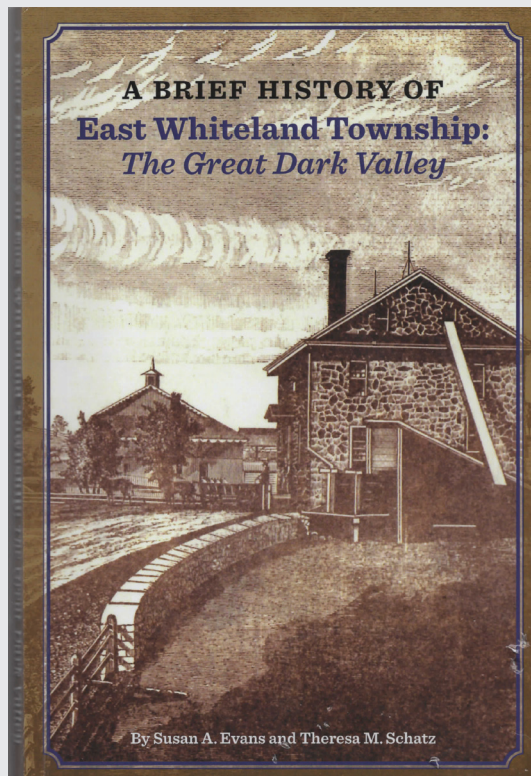
Commission Members

Jeffrey Dore, Chair
Theresa Schatz, Secretary
Sylvia Baker
Nancy Dore
Ian Scott
Mark Keilbaugh
Peter Spengeman

Contact the Commission

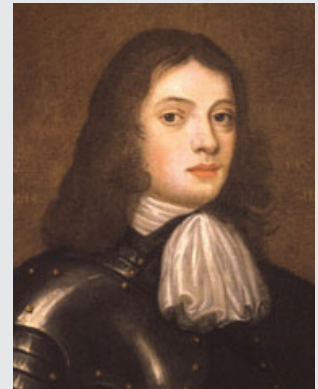
We encourage public participation in our efforts. You may contact the Historical Commission through the township website at:
www.eastwhiteland.org.

New Township History Book



*...the air is
sweet and clear,
the Heavens
serene, like the
South parts of
France...*

William Penn. Letter to the
Committee of the Free Society of
Traders, August, 1683.



Top: The Cover of the History book. Right: Portrait of William Penn, The Atwater Kent Museum.

A new township history book has been published. Researched and written by Susan E. Evans and Theresa M. Schatz, this is a retelling of the facts as well as an historical narrative of the East Whiteland Township community in Chester County, PA. It is the authors' hope that the younger generation will be inspired to continue the important work of preserving historic sites and structures in East Whiteland, many of which trace their origins to the early 1700s before the birth of our nation.

Illustrated with archival photos and illustrations, the book offers a comprehensive study of the history of the township as well as some interesting anecdotes from the people who helped make the township what it is today. The book is available for purchase online from the Masthof Press at: www.masthof.com.

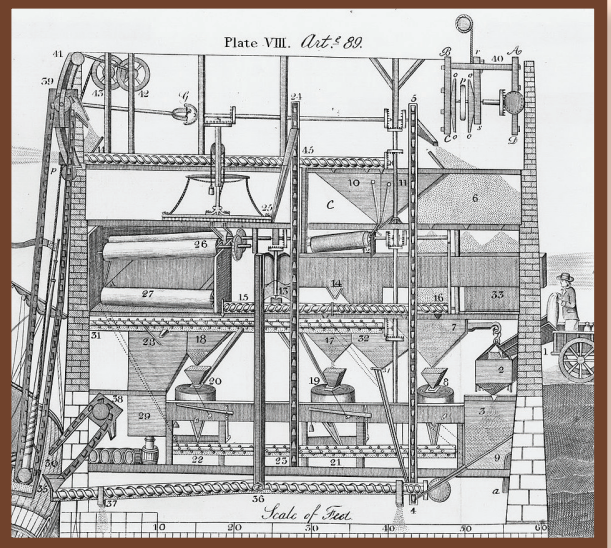


Gunkle's Mill Preservation Effort



Gunkle's Spring Mill is one of the most iconic and historic buildings in East Whiteland Township. The beautiful stone structure sits at the corner of Route 401 and Moores Road. Constructed in 1793 when George Washington was president, it functioned as a grist mill for nearly 150 years. The mill was powered by a water wheel using runoff from a mill pond and tributary to Valley Creek.

In the early years of the country, Chester County and East Whiteland were the country's bread basket with most locals engaged in farming. Local farmers would bring their wheat and corn crops to the mill to be ground into flour in exchange for a share of the crop. The mill builder and proprietor, Michael Gunkle, would sell his share of the bartered flour to earn his living.



Top: Gunkle's Mill exterior. Bottom left: Preserving the interior wood. Bottom right: Oliver Evans design for the automated mill, 1790.

The exterior of the 3 ½ story stone building is largely unchanged from these early days. It is built into a bank which allows wagons to load and unload on the 1st and 2nd levels. In 1793, the mill employed state of the art technology. It was an early adopter of the Evans process based on one of the first US patents. This technology used screw feeders and simple bucket elevators to automate important parts of the grist mill process. The stone grinding wheels and all the other equipment were driven by the water power.

We are fortunate that the timber framing and some of the original mill gearing equipment remain intact. This includes an enormous ring gear and drive assembly that remain in place. A project is now underway to restore and build a new water wheel on the outside of the building facing Route 401. This wheel will be 16 feet in diameter and 4 feet wide with connection to the original internal gearing. We expect the new wheel to be complete during 2021.

The mill is owned by the township, supported by the Board of Supervisors and coordinated by the Historical Commission.



General Wayne Tavern/Linden Hall



Located on Lincoln Highway, near the end of Route 352, is the General Wayne Tavern, later known as Linden Hall due to the once beautiful row of Linden trees along its frontage. The inn was considered a “coach and wagon” stop that served the heavy traffic of Conestoga wagons traveling west toward Lancaster and east to Philadelphia along Lancaster Pike. The inn was once thought “to be built to house travelers of expensive taste.” It was eventually proved to be more of a drover’s stop, or “wagon stand,” and described as having whip marks on the eastern front door, this being an indication of the drover’s pastime involving competition with “whip-one-up-manship.”

It is believed that a William Harris built the inn circa 1808. One newspaper article from February 1825 advertised for the “Republican Artillerists” to “assemble at Samuel Ogdens’ *Sign of the General Wayne.*” In the 20th century it was a private residence. Eventually left vacant for a number of years it was purchased by developers. The building was restored as townhouses were built on the property. Currently, Linden Hall is being rented out to private business interests.



Top: Linden Hall as it stands today. Bottom right: Linden Hall pictured with the row of Linden trees on its frontage. Photo: EWT archives.

East Whiteland Township
Historical Commission

**FUN
FACTS**



The Frazer Diner, was built by the Jerry O’Mahony Diner Company and is now the only remaining example of an unaltered mid-1930s streamline modern O’Mahoney diner. Its original features

include the monitor roof, half-moon windows, and porcelain-enameled base. The diner was split lengthwise and originally shipped to Paoli, Pennsylvania and operated as the Paoli Diner.

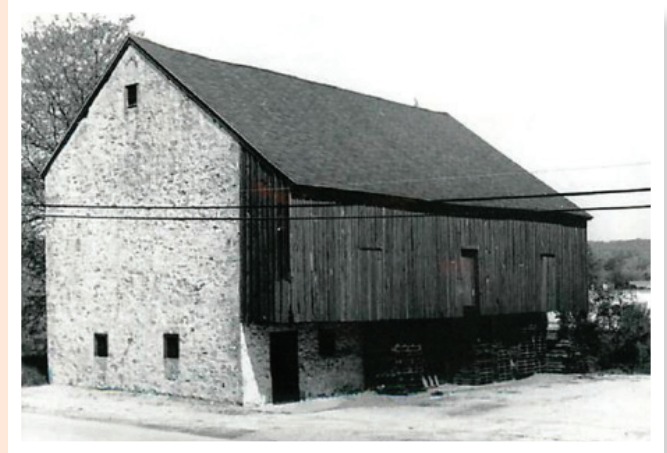


The Daily Drive *by T. Schatz*

Whitehorse and Planebrook Area

How often do we really think about the history of the roads we travel? I know I never did until I began writing a book about the history of our township. After writing said book, I realized that my involvement with history was becoming even more important to me. The most essential element lately has been the reuse and adaptation of historical buildings and landmarks which are so easily visible as we hurry along to our destinations. I chose these two barns of East Whiteland Township as so many of us pass them by on our way to what has become “the back road to Exton”.

Both were built by Adam Reitenbaugh a prominent citizen in the early to mid 1800's. This barn, (right), has a date stone of 1836, over the south gable end. An addition was built in 1985. Windows and skylights were added. Years later this barn was carefully and meticulously adapted for reuse as an office building and well known as the “Stone Bank Barn”.



The original Stone Bank Barn



The newer Stone Bank Barn. Photo: T. Schatz



Above, left: The old silo and barn. Right: The P2 Building, November 2018. Adaptive reuse at its finest. Photo: T. Schatz

Reitenbaugh built another barn with a silo in 1839, (left). This barn was also a bank barn and was used as a drovers barn for a number of years. Both barns and the Reitenbaugh home, which still stand on Swedesford Road, contribute to the historic narrative of the Whitehorse/Planebrook area in 18th and 19th century East Whiteland. Both are excellent examples of adaptive reuse in this historically noteworthy section of our township.