

# Warrington

Historical Society



## NEWSLETTER

### FALL 2011

#### The Mission of the Society:

- Locate, acquire, preserve and exhibit any and all articles, documents, photographs, papers, artifacts and other items of historic, cultural, educational value, which pertain to Warrington Township.
- Develop educational materials for use with schools/public and promote recognition of the history and development of Warrington Township.
- Restore and maintain 10 Folly Road/County Line Road School House for use as headquarters/museum/storage of Society.

The Warrington Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) qualified entity under the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions may be deducted for Federal Income Tax purposes.

P.O. BOX 706  
Warrington PA, 18976  
WarringtonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

#### 2011 Officers:

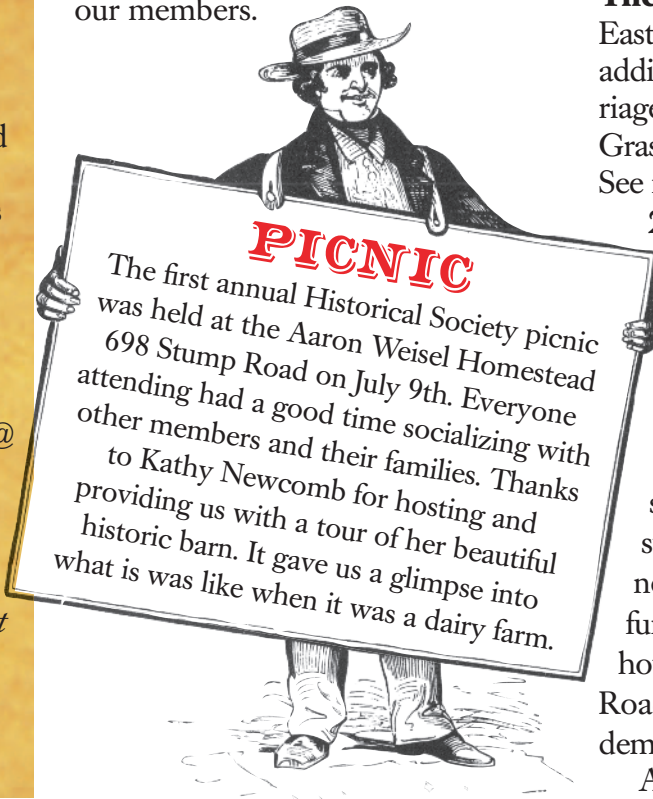
Mary Doyle Roth, *President*  
Kenneth Samen, *Vice-President*  
Scott Yates, *Treasurer*  
Kathy Newcomb,  
*Communications*

### Next Meeting— December 12, 2011

Historic Commission and Historical Society meetings will be held on the SECOND Monday of the month. The Commission business is conducted from 7:30 till about 8:00 and is immediately followed by the Society meeting. Meetings are held at the Township building at 852 Easton Road, Warrington.

### Help

Newsletter article ideas are needed. Please let us know if you are able to help us in any area. We are open to any suggestions and help with anything that may interest you. The society can't grow without help from our members.



### 2011 Membership Dues

For annual members, please send the payment for your 2011 membership dues to PO Box 706, Warrington, PA 18976.

#### Annual rates are:

Individual \$20.00, Individual Senior (60+) \$15.00, or Student \$15.00, Family \$35.00, Organizations \$50.00 and Businesses \$100.00. Lifetime memberships available for Individuals \$100 and Families \$150

### Facebook

Type Warrington (Township) Historical in the search box.

### Lost Historic Warrington Houses

**The Penrose/Paul House** at 213 Easton Road (circa 1749 with an 1847 addition) along with the barn and carriage house was demolished by the Grasso organization on May 20, 2011. See related article on page 3.

**2552 County Line Road** circa 1882. This stone farmhouse was turned over to the township by the Bluestone Creek developers. It has fallen into disrepair and is one of the township owned properties they tried to sell a couple of years ago. It caused such a controversy that they did not sell it but they do not have the funds to keep it maintained. The house is very close to County Line Road and would probably be condemned as part of the road expansion. A demolition permit has been re-

quested for **Neshaminy Hotel**. We've reported on this in the past but things are starting to move with the plans for redeveloping this property.

## Contributions

We would like to thank Carol Di-Joseph, a relative of the Penrose family for her \$50 contribution and Warrington memorabilia.

Thanks also to Prudential Life Insurance for the \$250 grant we received for the volunteer efforts of their employee Ken Samen.

## Schoolhouse at 10 Folly Road

*Lots of activity...*

Warrington Township reserved part of their June 14th Board of Supervisors meeting to receive public comment on the request to turn over this property to the Schlechter family. There were a lot of comments from the public, most in

favor of any move towards the preservation of the building. The Schlechter family was requested to set up a non profit organization. They submitted an application to form the Schlechter family foundation as a 501(c) (2).

This form of non-profit is set up to own property but not to receive tax exempt contributions. Their plan is that this foundation will own the property and sign a 99 year lease with \$1 or \$2 month rent to our Historical Society in exchange for our help in fundraising for the restoration since we are a 501(c)

(3). At the September 13th BOS meeting the Supervisors voted in favor of turning the property over to the Schlechter family and are in the process of putting together an agreement of sale.

Ken Samen, after over a month's worth of work on the application and consultation with David Kimmerly, Field Representative for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Pennsylvania, completed the application to submit this property consisting of the school house, privy and Penn Oak to the National Register of Historic Places. It was rejected the same day of the submission. Ken has not given up. He is planning on re-submitting/appealing.

Nathan Tschepik formed a team of fellow scouts to



Work in progress on October 22 at 10 Folly Road.

work on the removal of the plaster and drywall from the first floor of 10 Folly Road. This will be his Eagle Scout project and we are very excited to get this volunteer help. The project was completed on Saturday Oct 22. A big Thank You to all who helped out!



# Feature Histories

*The below is printed with permission from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.*

**Lost: Prized 18th-Century House:** On May 20, a historic house in Warrington Township, Pa., was torn down with only six weeks notice.<sup>(1)</sup> The Penrose House, which sat on 67 acres of land, was one of the oldest in the township and was held by one family from 1727 until 2009, when it was sold to developer Michael Grasso. “We weren’t very worried about the house when it was [first] sold,” says Ken Samen, vice president of the nonprofit Warrington Historical Society and former vice chair of the Warrington Township Historic Commission. “It was written into the sales agreement that the house would be used as part of the development plan, meaning the house would be saved.”<sup>(2)</sup> But in mid-March 2011, Grasso introduced a new plan that did not include the house, claiming that the building was deteriorating and not worth saving.” After that, everything was fast-tracked for demolition,” Samen says. Though the Township has an ordinance authorizing officials to hold demolition permits for one month so that preservationists can document historic structures, “they held the Penrose House [permit] for 15 days at most,” Samen says, “and we weren’t allowed on the property.”<sup>(3)</sup> Parts of the Federal Greek Revival house dated to 1749 and were rebuilt a century later. “It was a great example of 18th-century architecture ... from the outside,” says Jeff Marshall, chief preservation officer at Heritage Conservancy. Warrington Township’s Historic Commission is comprised of seven members who are appointed by the board of supervisors. On the day of demolition Samen, along with commission chair Mary Roth and two other members, resigned out of frustration. “It’s such a shame it all happened,” says Roth, who’s also the president of the Historical Society. “We just figured it was going to be saved until it was too late to save it. I just heard today that they’re putting in more stores, offices, some expensive new townhouses, and a hotel in its space.” Preservation Pennsylvania’s Dave Kimmerly, a field representative for the National Trust, was contacted just a few days before the demolition. Despite the loss of the Penrose House, Kimmerly and others are determined to protect the fate of similar sites. To that end, Kimmerly has reached out to the township’s manager and supervisors, he says, “to get a historic preservation ordinance that has some teeth.”

—Sarah Marloff, *National Trust for Historic Preservation*, June 8, 2011.

<sup>(1)</sup> This action was due to (per a letter written by prop-



The Penrose House, as it stood for over 260 years.

erty developer Micheal Grosso to Mr. John Paul, Chairman Board of Supervisors, dated April 13, 2011) the fact that “the buildings have fallen into significant greater disrepair than originally determined and significant vandalism has taken place in both buildings. There really in no way to consider rehabbing the buildings...” This deterioration was due to the developer’s (Michael Grasso) neglect of the house during his point of ownership beginning in July 2009.

<sup>(2)</sup> “Buyer shall preserve the architecture integrity of the property’s principal residence by incorporating the principal residence into the Project. The use of the principal

*continued on page 5*



The Penrose House, end of day, May 20, 2011.

# Feature Histories

## The Historic Infrastructure of Warrington Township



Per PennDOT documentation, the following is known about this neat bridge.

**Road:** BRISTOL ROAD

**Road crossing:** BRANCH MILL CREEK

**Location:** .1 Mile East of Lower State Rd

**City/County:** DOYLESTOWN/Bucks

**Type, year built:** Stone, Arch deck, 1900

**Length:** 15.00 feet



Per PennDOT documentation, the following is known about this neat bridge.

**Road:** COUNTY LINE ROAD

**Road crossing:** BRANCH NESHAMINY CREEK

**Location:** .1 Mile Southwest Of Fairmount Rd

**City/County:** DOYLESTOWN/Bucks

**Type, year built:** Stone, Arch deck -1890-1900

**Length:** 12.00 feet

residence into the Project may be for office use, retail use, or for such other use as Warrington Township may authorize.”

<sup>(3)</sup> [Ord. 85-2, 3/5/1985; as added by Ord. 98-5, 3/10/1998, § I] 4. Issuance of Demolition Permit. **A.** “The Township Zoning Officer may hold any application for a permit to demolish a building for a period not to exceed 30 days from the date of the application. During the thirty-day period, the applicant shall permit the Township and/or its duly authorized historical commission and/or such consultants as are experts in the fields of architectural restoration, structural engineering, and like fields as the Township or the historical commission sees fit, to enter upon and inspect the structure to be demolished to assess its historical significance. If the application is for a property which is found to be on the National Register of Historical Places or is found to be eligible for registration on the National Register of Historical Places, the application shall be held for an additional 60 days to permit time to investigate how the property may be preserved. **B.** If historically significant features are discovered, e.g., stairways, decorative trim paneling, beams, etc., during the period the application is held, the applicant shall cooperate in permitting these features to be removed for preservation before the building is demolished.”

## Survivor of the Original Forest of Penn

A “Penn Tree” is one found in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and the Eastern Shore of Maryland that has been living ever since William Penn first visited Pennsylvania over three hundred years ago. Today there are but few of these primeval remnants. One of the trees located at 10 Folly Road on the school house property is in itself historic due to its age and significance. The following is taken from “1682-1932 Penn’s Woods” by Edward E. Wildman (The Story of our Penn Trees): “Every tree that is included in this list of Penn’s Woods should be suitably marked, showing that it is one of the “1932” memorial trees.” “To be listed as a survivor of the original forest of Penn, a tree must not only be of large size, but must be growing in soil that is well drained, and be estimated to have been present while William Penn was on these soils.” The size of a tree is indicated by its girth at breast height; four and a half to five feet from the ground. Page 60 - “About three-quarters of a mile south of Eureka on the county line road there is a great white oak with a breast high girth of 13 feet three inches, and a branch spread of one hundred and 114 feet . This may be a Penn tree.” page 170 - “Clymer, Mrs. Howard



The Penn Tree on the 10 Folly Road property.

A. White Oak 13' 3" 3/4 mile south of Eureka." (documentation of nomination). In addition there is mention to the “Penn” certification “Time Turned Back... (Form a local newspaper (probably published 1982) A large oak tree on the former County Line school property, corner of Folly and County Line Roads, Eureka was nominated and accepted as one of the Penn trees. Its limb spread is 114 feet. The people of this section are proud of this tree as many generations of children have played under it.” The white oak located at 10 Folly Road was again measured on July 2, 2011 with a breast high (4 feet - 10 inches) girth of 16 feet - 10 inches, and a branch spread of one hundred and 115 feet.

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*Any member of the Warrington Historical Society can submit work to be published in the Newsletter. Personal stories, pictures, or history of the township should be submitted to our email address at: warringtonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com, or mailed to the society at P.O. BOX 706, Warrington PA, 18976. It is the society's goal to produce this newsletter quarterly. But we can only do this with everyone's input.*

*This issue's publisher is Kathy Newcomb.*