



# Chester County Ledger

The Newsletter of the Chester County Historic Preservation Network

Volume 18, Number 3

October 2014



## Schuylkill River Heritage Center to host CCHPN's 2014 Meet & Greet

Barbara Cohen, SRHC  
Susan Marshall, CCHPN

CCHPN's annual Meet & Greet will be hosted by the Schuylkill River Heritage Museum in Phoenixville on **Sunday afternoon, November 2nd, from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm**. The event will include a film about Schuylkill River Iron & Steel and the Heritage Center as well as a discussion about the preservation and repurposing of the foundry building. Autumn refreshments will fuel those choosing to take the optional walking tour of Bridge Street. After the event, attendees can relax over Sunday dinner at one of Phoenixville's outstanding dining establishments.

### The Heritage Center

Built in 1882 along the French Creek, the foundry of Phoenix Iron & Steel Company poured iron castings well into the 1970's and is considered Phoenixville's and Northern Chester County's most important symbol of the town's illustrious industrial past.

Abandoned after the decline of the steel industry, the foundry was marked as the centerpiece of Phoenixville's economic regeneration. In 1998 the Phoenixville Area Economic Development Corporation (PAEDCO) took ownership of the building. A non-profit organization, PAEDCO raised the necessary funds to restore the shell of the historic icon and construct a visitor's center.

Under the guidance of the National Park Service, PAEDCO undertook exterior renovations, bringing the building into the 20th Century while retaining the industrial and dramatic character of the building. In 2005 the Hankin Group acquired the Phoenix Foundry property from PAEDCO, combining the industrial character of the building with modern elements to add an elegant sophistication to the interior spaces.

Blending old and new, a unique band of clerestory windows remain, dividing the double-tiered roof structure and allowing light to pour into the column-free open space. Inside, there is a huge wooden cantilever crane still in its original location and thought to be the last and largest of its kind in the entire United States.



## Reflections From The Previous Editor

Matthew Roberson  
CCHPN



Dear Readers, the time has come for me to step down as the Contributing Editor for The Ledger. Normally, a change in editorship of a publication goes unnoticed. The quality

of the articles and the look of the pages does not change, and in this instance, that will be the case. What is different is that I have been asked, on this occasion, to reflect on my time with The Ledger, and when I look back I am surprised to find that that time was 13 years.

CCHPN has undergone a number of changes in this time, but in other respects, it has not changed, and this stability is one of its core strengths. I was asked to layout the newsletter when the earlier editor/graphic designer, Jane Dorchester, had the temerity to leave CCHPN and go back to school, enabling her to become the our county's renowned architectural historian. The editor was Baylen Kasky, and the Board of Directors was then called the Steering Committee with co-chairs Jane Davidson and Peter Benton (can I call them Captain and First Mate?) plus Baylen, Don Hannum, Bob Layman, Linda Saunders, Diane Snyder, and Bob Wise. I joined the Board, and we soon become official, gaining our nonprofit 501(c)(3) status. Baylen then left the Board, and I became the newsletter's editor.

Working with a handful of historical commissions and against a tide of historic building-threatening development proposals, we soldiered on, extending the efficacy of Jane's position as Chester County Heritage Preservation Officer. There have been changes in the board's membership over the years, changes in leadership, and we are still evolving, especially in the wake of Jane's passing.

Our Board is now twice as large as that Steering Committee. In addition to a great breadth of expertise, we also represent the

county geographically, with members coming from every corner down to the West Chester offices of John Milner Associates, Inc. for our monthly board meetings. We started out meeting in the little conference room on the second floor, but we have been meeting in the big, first-floor room for years now. We owe a great debt to that company for their ongoing support of us.

The things that have not changed, though, are more significant. We still work to enhance the capabilities of our county's wonderful preservationists; working to build connections between communities and between the public and private sectors. We still put on our Spring Workshop, June Picnic (now called the Volunteer Recognition Celebration), and the Fall Program, and we still put out three issues of The Ledger every year. We still serve you and together we do our best to protect and preserve our historic resources and landscapes through education, facilitation, and public and private advocacy.

It's been a great and rewarding 13 years. I want to thank you all and ask you to welcome and send your comments to Sali Cosford Parker, the new editor.

ledger.editor@comcast.net

## Hey! What Happened to the Preservation Fair?

Thanks to everyone asking about the Preservation Fair. Going forward, the Fair will replace CCHPN's annual Fall Workshop. Re-organization and prior resource commitments push the next Preservation Fair to Autumn, 2016, a bit later than we hoped. We regret the delay, but it's nice to know the Fair is missed!



### Chester County Ledger

Editor Sali Cosford Parker  
Circulation Director Robert Layman

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Direct all queries to: The Editor,  
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**The Chester County Historic Preservation Network** is an affiliation of local organizations and individuals dedicated to promoting, protecting, and preserving Chester County's historic resources and landscapes through education, facilitation, and public and private advocacy.

## Views of Chester County's Architectural Heritage: the Half Barn

Seth Hinshaw  
Wise Preservation Planning LLC  
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**This is the first article in a series providing information on understudied elements of the architectural heritage of Chester County. The series should provide important reference information for historical commissions and HARBs that will be of use in the future as you help to document and plan for the future of historic buildings in Chester County**



*Half Barn near Birchrunville, facing northeast.*



*South elevation of Half Barn near Birchrunville.*

The “Half Barn” is a historic barn type found in southeastern Pennsylvania. Wise Preservation Planning LLC has surveyed hundreds of barns throughout southeastern Pennsylvania, including several half barns. Little is known about half barns, and in fact they were only identified as a barn type four years ago. Books about barns do not mention Half Barns.

### **Purpose**

Northern Chester County did not produce the high crop yields due to its topography, and thus the half barn was well suited for this area. Half barns are more likely to be found in villages such as Birchrunville, which has two. The expansion capability made them a desirable initial barn for a given farm. In the half barn above, for example, the frame end wall could be removed to accommodate the addition of cribs to form a three-crib bank barn or a four-crib double threshing floor barn. These ways of enlarging barns usually eradicate the telltale signs of the building's original appearance.

### **Spatial Distribution**

Most half barns identified thus far are located in northern Chester County. Only a handful of examples have been identified elsewhere, including one in Concord Township, Delaware County.

### **Definition**

The Half Barn is a two-level, two-crib bank barn. One half (usually frame) is the location of the bank and main entrance, with threshing floor within. The other half (often stone) is the location of an interior hay mow. As was common in all barn types prior to 1900, the lower level was the location of stalls for livestock.

### **Chronological Distribution**

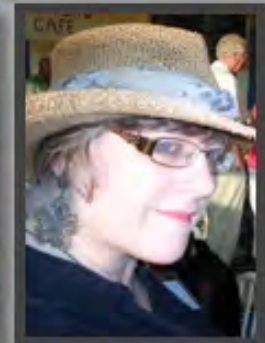
Because half barns were identified so recently, an understanding of the range of years in which they were constructed has not come into focus yet. The only half barn with a documented date that I am aware of was constructed by James Bradley in West Pikeland Township between 1850 and 1854.

*Printed on recycled paper.*

# 2014 Volunteer Recognition Celebration



# 2014 Volunteer Recognition Celebration



## Thoughts from FORUM 2014

Sali Cosford Parker  
CCHPN

On July 16-20, the City of Brotherly Love hosted FORUM 2014. The forum was sponsored by the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, Preservation Pennsylvania, PennDOT, and PHMC. Nearly 800 preservation professionals and volunteers from throughout the United States attended - twice as many as anticipated!

The CCHPN sponsored two events that summarized Chester County's unique approach to preservation planning. One event was a full-day bus tour attended by twenty-two forum participants from as far away as Alaska and as close as Maryland.



FORUM 2014 tour group at the General Store at Frick's Lock

The most important FORUM 2014 take-aways?

*There were two things that I enjoyed about the Forum. First was the opportunity to see so many young preservationists who will be coming into the field in the upcoming years to help in the preservation of our cultural heritage. The other was the sharing of the expertise of scholars and professionals. It seems that one thing that we don't do a good job at in historic preservation is granting people opportunities to share their new insights and findings, so Forum was an opportunity to find out what else is happening in the preservation field. -- Seth Hinshaw*

*In addition to the sessions I attended, the major benefit of a national convention is that you have a captive audience of experts from all over the country all in one place. You can "pick their brains" on any subject*

*to get a new perspective in that area. And it's much easier to talk to them in person than over the phone or through an email. One of the sessions I attended was on introducing a "youth factor" into the mix. We aren't getting any younger and our first job is to replace ourselves with a younger volunteer or, at least, get youth involved in some way so as to plant the seeds of preservation. Get the youth involved, give them a job to do and let them do it. Don't "dumb down" the assignment. You'll be surprised at what they come up with and what they can do. -- Kathryn Yahraes*

*I really enjoyed the Forum. First, it was great to be an exhibitor. We were able to meet a lot of people that way and catch up with clients we have not seen in a while. It has already helped us to get new business, as well. We also got to see several of the state officials that we work with on various plan review and National Register projects. I think the schedule was packed with a lot of very good talks so that there was very little wasted time (which can be very expensive!). Speakers seemed to be well prepared and knowledgeable (which is not always the case). Attendees appeared to be professional and/or ready to learn about how to better serve their communities. -- Bob Wise*

*After talking to folks from throughout the US, it is clear that Chester County is home to grassroots historic preservation at its very best where we not only document and interpret our common heritage but we are remarkably successful at preserving our built landscape while building friendships along the way! --Karen Marshall*



## Preservation Happenings Outside Chester County

Sali Cosford Parker  
CCHPN

The Atlanta, Georgia City Council is considering a change to the City's Subdivision Ordinance that would eliminate an important level of protection currently provided for many of Atlanta's historic neighborhoods. The existing ordinance defines historic neighborhoods as districts already listed on the National Register of Historic Places *and* those that are eligible to be listed. The proposed change limits ordinance applicability only to "any neighborhood which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places."

This could have a major impact on the character of Atlanta neighborhoods. Atlanta currently has 13 locally designated historic districts and 20 National Register historic districts. Many more neighborhoods are eligible. The required commitment of time by volunteers to complete the research and nomination (or funding for consultant work) is an obstacle for many eligible neighborhoods. The proposed legislation effectively discounts the historic significance of the neighborhoods that lack these resources by reducing the protections provided by the current ordinance.

By removing National Register-eligible districts from the Subdivision Ordinance, property owners looking to aggregate or subdivide land in ways that do not conform to the historic lot patterns will no longer be required to determine whether or not the district is eligible for listing on the National Register.

Not surprisingly, Atlanta city planners are having trouble identifying any benefits the proposed ordinance changes will have for neighborhoods that value their historic character.

(from a "fresh loaf" post by Patrick Berry and Kristin Halloran. The entire post may be viewed at <http://clatl.com/freshloaf/archives/2014/09/15/proposed-ordinance-could-hurt-historic-preservation-efforts>)

**Got something to say?**

**A concern to voice or story to share?**

**We're listening . . . drop us a line!**

**[ledger.editor@comcast.net](mailto:ledger.editor@comcast.net)**

## In Memoriam

Susan Marshall  
CCHPN

**Bob Patry** (1933 - 2013) Bob was active in Elverson as chairperson of the Historical Commission. He led community projects such as the historical plaque program, creation of historical calendars, and introduction of the Chester County Town tours to Elverson. As part of his legacy, he authored a book Elverson: The History of our Community. He was author of a play "The Captain and the Blacksmith" about the region's involvement in the American iron industry.

**Florence Kathleen Helfrech Williams** (1941 - 2014)

Flo was well known in Chester County for her enthusiastic embrace of history. She particularly enjoyed dressing in period clothing to reenact historic events, sharing a living history aspect with others. Among other events, she participated in the Hay Creek Fall Festival, the Civil War 150 Roadshow, the reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg, and numerous Chester County Historical Society events. She was a popular speaker who immersed herself in the role of women in the Civil War.

**H. Harold Barnett** (1918 - 2014) Harold concentrated his time after retirement on one of his greatest passions: the history of the Battle of the Brandywine. In 1997, Harold was awarded the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Volunteer of the Year Award for his then 10 year service to the Brandywine Battlefield Park where he devoted thousands of hours of time. There he created and conducted driving tours of the battlefield, lectured on the battle to many civic and fraternal organizations, created and performed a puppet show for younger children, and created class programs for Chester County schools. Harold also dressed in Colonial costume and performed in many re-enactments. The highlight of his time at the park was escorting the descendants of both the Generals Lafayette and Rochambeau around the Brandywine Battlefield while speaking fluent French. In 1998, he was profiled in the Philadelphia Inquirer's Sunday magazine in a full page article about his expertise in the history of the Battle.

We are inspired by the spirit these three people and the many others who left their mark here in Chester County. We honor them as motivators as we to continue to fight for the goals they worked so vigorously to meet.



**Chester County Historic Preservation Network**  
21 North Village Avenue  
Exton, PA 19341

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PLEASE FORWARD

*Please join us for our*

**2014 Meet & Greet**

Sunday, November 2  
3:00 - 5:00 pm

Schuylkill River Heritage Center  
Phoenixville, PA

*details on page 1*

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**Matthew E. Roberson, President**  
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If you would like to get more involved with the Chester County Historic Preservation Network, please contact a board member through the website, [www.cchpn.org](http://www.cchpn.org), or at one of our events.

We are always looking for more volunteers!