

Chapter 12

Historic and Cultural Resources Plan

Presence of the Past

- *Local history helps explain why communities look and function the way they do today. Bernville's role as an important commercial village along the Union Canal was the strongest influence on the Penn-Jefferson-Bernville area's formative growth and development.*

The Borough of Bernville and Jefferson Township share a long and interesting history. The earliest known inhabitants were the Delaware Indians who moved to the Region after selling their eastern lands. The Delaware were a docile tribe whose ancient symbol was the turtle. The Delaware named the area "Tulpehocken" meaning Land of the Turtles to help stake their claim to the land. However, European land speculators began visiting the area as early as 1718.

In 1722, Laetitia Penn (daughter of William Penn) sold off the rights to 10,000 acres in the area. The Delawares protested and sought protection from a new wave of settlers. However, the tribe was unable to receive assurances from the colonial government and most moved westward by the end of 1724.

German Palatine immigrants were among the first permanent settlers in the area. This group originally settled along the Hudson River in New York and later resettled in the Tulpehocken valley. Known as the Tulpehocken Settlement, they arrived in three successful waves beginning with 15 families in 1723 and followed by an additional 18 families in 1725. A third group arrived in 1729.

The years 1755 to 1758 brought Indian raids to the frontier lands of the colonies, including the Tulpehocken valley. Two massacre sites are located within Jefferson Township.

As early as 1690, William Penn had the idea of a grand canal to connect the people of his lands with its resources and goods. In 1791, work on the Union Canal was initiated to connect the Schuylkill River and Schuylkill Canal with the Susquehanna River. Work continued until the canal was completed in 1828. The canal proved to be a strong boost to the area's industrial and commercial growth. Bernville had become a thriving community by 1852 and was even considered for the County Seat. Railroads led to the demise of the Canal during the 1850's and the Canal ceased operations in 1884. Today the Tulpehocken Creek Historic District protects the canal and other historic architecture along the canal.

Both Bernville and Jefferson Township were originally part of Tulpehocken Township. Stephanus Umbenhauer founded Bernville in 1819 and named it after Bern, Switzerland. Bernville and Jefferson Township were each incorporated separately in 1851. Joseph Conrad, a local mill owner and Bernville resident, served in the state legislature during the 1870's. His 1840's circa home can still be found along Main Street in the Borough.

Penn Township was first settled by German farmers in the late 1700s. It was originally part of Bern Township, then Upper Bern Township. The village of Mt. Pleasant was first settled in 1812 and consisted of residences, several factories, an inn and a tavern. In 1828, the Union Canal was completed, connecting the Susquehanna and Schuylkill Rivers. The Bernville Locks became one of the main ports along the Canal, and a community developed around this port.

In 1838, residents of the area petitioned the Berks County Court of Quarter Sessions to create a new township from parts of Bern, Heidelberg, Upper Bern, and Upper Tulpehocken Townships. These existing townships were seen as too large to be conveniently accessible to residents of this area or to be effective in keeping roads in good repair. In May of that year, the Court rejected the petition, but in November 1840, the Court approved a second petition, thus erecting a new township from parts of Bern and Upper Bern Township and including an area that is now Penn Township and Bernville Borough.

The recommended name for the new Township was "Northkill", but the Court suggested "Penn", in honor of the founder of Pennsylvania, and on November 5, 1841, Penn Township was created. In 1851, the village of Bernville, discontented with the Township's inability to properly maintain roads and provide adequate community services, was incorporated as a borough. The village of Mt. Pleasant then became Penn Township's largest settlement. The Township continued to prosper because of the Canal until after the Civil War. Railroads began to replace waterways as the primary means of transporting goods, and in 1884, the Canal ceased operation. As the result of the abandonment of the Canal and railroads bypassing the Township, Penn Township's economy faltered, with factories closing and its population decreasing. This decline lasted into the early 1900s.

With the introduction of the automobile, Penn Township experienced a new vitality, and by 1930, the automobile was the major influence in the Township's growth and development. The Township was the location of hundreds of summer bungalows, with a large colony of them situated along the Tulpehocken Creek between Mt. Pleasant and Bernville. The Mt. Pleasant Fire Company was formed in 1921, with a charter granted in 1924. In 1931, the Penn-Bernville Consolidated School was dedicated. The post-war boom and migration from urban areas in the 1950s brought additional persons into the Township. Between 1960 and 1980, Penn Township experienced a dramatic change in its land use composition. The projects which were directly responsible for this change

were the development of the Blue Marsh Project and the expansion of the Pennsylvania State Game Lands. Approximately 3,220 acres or 26.1 percent of the land area within Penn Township is consumed by the Blue Marsh Project and Pennsylvania State Game Lands.

The development and construction of the Blue Marsh Project was authorized as part of the Flood Control Act of 1962 (Public Law 87-874). Blue Marsh Lake is located along the Tulpehocken Creek in the Delaware River Basin, six (6) miles northwest of the City of Reading. A significant portion of the Blue Marsh Project is located within the southern part of Penn Township. Construction of the Blue Marsh Dam and Reservoir commenced in March of 1974 and concluded in September of 1979. The Blue Marsh Project was designed as a multi-purpose project for flood control, water supply, low flow augmentation, recreation and water quality control. The reservoir is designed to contain up to 11 billion gallons of flood water above the normal winter pool, providing flood protection for events up to and including the 100-year flood. Approximately 540 acres or 4.4 percent of the land area within Penn Township is consumed by the Blue Marsh Project.

Through the development of the Blue Marsh Project, the Pennsylvania State Game Lands were expanded to serve as a natural and physical buffer to the Blue Marsh Lake. The Pennsylvania State Game Lands were expanded in Penn Township through separate acts of either acquisition or condemnation by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Approximately 2,280 acres or 21.7 percent of the land area within Penn Township is consumed by the Pennsylvania State Game Lands.

Between 1980 and 1990, Penn Township had the greatest percentage increase in population among all municipalities within Berks County. This growth rate was the result of a number of factors, including a desirable location, improvements to the transportation network, development pressures, the availability of reasonably priced land, and the expansion of public utilities.

Table 12.1: Historic Sites Borough of Bernville

Map ID	Feature Name
1	Filberts Tavern & Union House
2	Arthur Harms Property
3	Barr Property
4	Mildred Balthaser Property
5	Edith Kirkhoff Property
6	Alan Speicher Property
7	Marvin Luckenbill Property
8	Stanley Klopp Property
9	Frank Speaker Property
10	Stanley Klopp Property
11	Stanley Klopp Property
12	Walter Krause Property
13	Lester Leshner Property
14	Paul Sheetz Property
15	Walter Berger Property
16	Clarence Reber Property
17	Brights Store
18	Margaret Burkey Property
19	Lutheran Parsonage
20	St Thomas Church
21	Umberhauer Homestead
22	Bernville Borough
23	Penn Township School
24	Runkle Inn
25	White Horse Hotel
26	Joseph B. Conrad Home
27	Frieden's Church
28	Burkhart Tin Smith Shop
29	1st National Bank
30	Shock's Store
31	Blatt's Photo Gallery
32	Bernville Bakery
33	Northkill Church and Cemetery
34	American House Hotel
35	Bennethum Tannery hide house
36	Mennonite Church
37	First Fire Hall
38	Umberhauer Park Sign
39	Greering Home

Source: Berks County Planning Department

Table 12.2: Historic Sites Penn and Jefferson Townships

MAP ID	Feature Name	MAP ID	Feature Name
1	N/A - log structure	45	N/A - brick structure
2	Tannery Monument	46	New Schaefferstown
3	Adam Potteiger Homestead	47	New schaefferstown School
4	Batdorf Farm	48	Peter Fox Homestead
5	Beaver Tree Farm	49	Potteiger Farm
6	Christ Church Farmhouse	50	Samuel Miller Farm
7	Christ Little Tulpehocken Church	51	Schaeffer Homestead
8	Christmas Village	52	Scharff Farm
9	Cross Keys Inn	53	St Paul's Evangelical Lutheran
10	Daniel Wagner Homestead	54	Staley Property
11	Derr House	55	Stupp Homestead
12	Derr House	56	Tulpehocken Hotel
13	Ditzler Homestead	57	Tulpehocken Lodge Hall
14	Dundore	58	Union Canal Lock 29
15	E. Schaeffer House	59	Union Canal Lock 30
16	Fox Shoe Shop	60	Union Canal Lock 31
17	Groff House	61	Union Canal Lock 32
18	Groff Road School House	62	Union Canal Lock 33
19	Gruber Homestead	63	Union Canal Lock 34
20	Haag Gristmill	64	Union Canal Lock 35
21	Harry Derr House Property	65	Union Canal Lockhouse
22	Henne School	66	Wagners's School "Lash"
23	Hilltop or Weaver's School	67	Wilhelm Homestead
24	Holtzman Property	68	William Reed Homestead
25	J.A. Wagner House	69	Yeakley-Schaeffer-Strause
26	Jacob Gerhart Mill	70	Yost Mill
27	Jeremiah Weaver Farm	71	Yost School
28	John Nicholas & Elizabeth Moyer	72	Zerbe Property
29	Joseph Derr Farm	73	Bright Homestead
30	Kissling Farm	74	Bright School
31	Klee Tilt-hammer	75	David Bond House
32	Klein Family Cemetery	76	Davis School
33	Klein Homestead	77	Fisher Grist Mill
34	Kline Farm	78	George Jacob Haak
35	Knoll Blacksmith Shop	79	George Kauffman House
36	Lash Homestead	80	Haag Grist Mill
37	Lengel House	81	Hass Tavern
38	Leshers Store	82	Heister Farm
39	Liese Farm	83	Kalbach Farms
40	Liese Homestead	84	Kissling Farm
41	Michael Fox House	85	Kline Sawmill
42	Miles Schock Homestead	86	Obold Mount Pleasant
43	Mogel's School House	87	Obold Store
44	Moyer Farm	88	Scull Hill Post Office

Source: Berks County Planning Department

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES PLAN

The Region's history is reflected in its architecture, people, and character. Historic resources connect us to the past, emphasize our sense of community, and often provide aesthetic value. In addition, historic resources can provide tourism benefits which often lead to economic development opportunities. Planning for the protection of historic resources is especially important because historical resources are not renewable.

Many of the buildings found along the Region's highways, country roads, and village streets are examples of vernacular architecture. Although they may feature some of the elements commonly found in a particular style, mainly Germanic, vernacular architecture incorporates an individual builder's ideas into an overall design. The mixture of the vernacular and German examples enhances the overall character of the Region.

Historic Districts

Local historic districts are areas in which historic buildings and their settings are protected by public review. Historic district ordinances are local laws adopted by communities using powers granted by the state. Historic districts consist of the Region's significant historic and architectural resources. Inclusion in a historic district signifies that a property contributes to a group of structures that is worth protecting because of its historic importance or architectural quality.

Potential areas where official 'Historic District' status can be pursued in the Region include the following:

- Main Street in Bernville;
- Portions of the Village of New Schaefferstown

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture.

Currently, there is only one site in the Region that is listed on the National Register – the John Nicolas and Elizabeth Moyer House, located in Jefferson Township. There are many other historic sites (see Tables 12.1 & 12.2) that while not on the National Register, are significant on a local scale, and add to the distinct character and cultural heritage of the Region.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are the special characteristics that make a community unique. A community that takes pride in and respects its traditions is typically a community with a well-defined character. The Region contains a rich, diverse heritage with significant cultural resources that should be embraced and preserved. Much of the rich culture in the Region is derived from the influences of the early German settlers who arrived in the Townships in the mid 1700s. Many examples of the architecture and customs of these people still remain, reflected in the historic farmhouses, churches, grist mills, and canal locks that enhance the Region's heritage.

Historic, Architectural and Cultural Resources

Goal: Protect, preserve, and enhance the remaining historic, architectural, and cultural resources and their surroundings.

Objectives:

- Discourage inappropriate development in historic areas of the Region, require impact studies for development near historic resources, and require mitigation of any potential adverse impacts on historic resources.
- Maintain and initiate partnerships with the Berks County Conservancy and other organizations to protect the Region's built treasures.
- Provide for adaptive re-use of historic structures where appropriate.
- Encourage the identification, marking, and interpretation of historic resources in the Region, and foster increased public awareness of the history of the Region.
- Determine the role which the municipalities should play in historic preservation through land use ordinance incentives and regulations and efforts to create historic overlay zoning.
- Require new development to consider the history, architecture and development patterns of the municipalities in order to preserve the important historic and architectural resources of the Region.
- Discourage demolition by neglect and deterioration of historic resources.

- Identify existing contemporary sites which could be considered part of the historical or cultural heritage of future generations and work to preserve these sites for future generations.
- Support cultural events which celebrate the historic and cultural heritage of the Region.
- Consider historic overlay zoning which provides special protection for historic sites including farm houses, barns, mills, old schoolhouses, and churches.
- Maintain the regional survey of historic resources contained within the *Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan..*

Historic and Cultural Resource Actions:

- A. Update zoning ordinances as necessary to protect historic resources and community character. Options include:
1. Adopt Historic Resource Overlay Zoning. Concentrate on the Historic Overlay District, as depicted on the Future Land Use Map.
 - a. Create historical commissions and / or committees where they do not exist or a joint historical commission
 - b. Identify historic resources
 - c. Require developers to analyze:
 - Nature of historic resources on and near property
 - Impact of proposals on historic resources, and
 - Mitigation measures
 - d. Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings
 - e. Establish use, coverage, density, intensity, and yard bonuses for architectural treatments, building design, amenities, and open spaces/buffers compatible with existing resources, appropriate reuse of existing resources and donation of façade easements
 - f. Encourage architecture, materials, and development patterns characteristic to the area

2. Adopt Demolition by Neglect Provisions:
 - a. Require property owners to protect and maintain historic properties to avoid demolition by vandalism or the elements by requiring unoccupied structures to be sealed or secured by fencing
3. Identify provisions to protect the character of villages, and have streets, buildings, and public spaces integrated to create a sense of place with pedestrian scale. Consideration can be given to adopting the following as standards or promoting them through incentives:
 - a. Allow only appropriate uses in scale with, and compatible with, existing appropriate uses, discouraging uses that would transform the character of the areas.
 - b. Establish coverage, density, intensity, and yard bonuses for architectural treatments, building design, amenities, street furniture, open spaces, and parking designs consistent with the character of the area.
 - c. Require pedestrian amenities as necessary improvements to be made by land developers.
 - d. Construct parking areas to the rear and side of buildings and establish standards for design, buffering, and landscaping of new parking facilities.
 - e. Require signage appropriate to the area.
 - f. Establish appropriate standards for driveway design and access to streets to provide for appropriate access management.
 - g. Minimize use of drive-through facilities.
 - h. Encourage new development to be compatible with, and integrated into, existing streetscapes when appropriate, with consideration of:
 - Appropriate siting patterns, such as setbacks of buildings on lots
 - Materials of similar appearance and texture to those on existing buildings

- Similar architectural details as other buildings in the neighborhood
- The scale and proportion of buildings near new structures. Scale deals with the relationship of each building to other buildings in the area; and, proportion deals with the relationship of the height to the width of a building and with the relationship of each part to the whole
- Similar roof shapes
- Similar footprints of buildings and rooflines (matching façade masses with existing buildings)
- Similar building heights

4. Regulate conversions of buildings, addressing:

- Locations where permitted
- The procedural treatment of the use
- The type of building that can be converted
- Density of converted units
- Lot size for converted building
- Impervious surface/open space requirements
- Units allowed per structure
- Structure size requirements
- Minimum size of dwelling units
- Neighborhood compatibility standards
- Adequate parking requirements
- Screening of parking and common areas
- Limits on the structural revisions for buildings

B. Appoint a regional or municipal historical commission or committee if none exist, which is actively involved in historic preservation. The commission would be instrumental in administration of any historic resource overlay zoning that is adopted. The commission would also continue to:

1. Identify, evaluate, mark and foster awareness of historic resources
2. Investigate participation in Certified Local Government Program
3. Encourage retention, restoration, enhancement and appropriate adaptive re-use of historic resources and discourage removal of historic structures

4. Develop programs, events and interpretive signage and exhibits that emphasize the history of the Region
 5. Evaluate the potential for historic districts and support their creation if warranted. If created, support the adoption of voluntary or mandatory Design Guidelines and Sign Controls for the Historic District.
- C. Support the activities of individuals and groups that identify, document, evaluate, and protect historical resources and increase public awareness of the area's history and historic resources.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL

Establishing a local Historic District requires an assessment of the present status of the community's historic resources, knowledge of past historic preservation efforts, and a list of goals and objectives. Taking such an assessment enables the designating community to take advantage of historic preservation incentives available at the national, state, and local governmental levels, such as grants, income tax credits for historic rehabilitation, low-interest loans, and local tax abatements. A requirement of establishing a local district, provided it was created pursuant to Act 167, the Historic District Act, is the establishment of a Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB). The HARB reviews all proposed erection, reconstruction, alteration, restoration, or demolition of buildings within the district before the issuance of any municipal permits pursuant to these actions. HARB reviews and recommendations must be consistent with the design guidelines established at the enactment of the Historic District. The Township Supervisors or Borough Council have the right to incorporate any of the HARB's recommendations into the permit requirements, but they may also override those recommendations. Municipalities whose districts are not created under Act 167 are not required to have a HARB, but instead may appoint a Historic District Commission or Committee.

The Region contains two potential Historic Districts, Main Street in Bernville, and portions of the New Schaefferstown Village.

Two Pennsylvania laws provide the legal foundation for municipalities to adopt historic ordinances and regulatory measures.

Act 247 – The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC)

Acts 67 and 68 of 2001 amended the MPC, strengthening the ability of local governments to protect historic resources through their Comprehensive Plans, Zoning Ordinances and

Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances. The following passages and paraphrases from the MPC are the most critical sections regarding this power.

- §603(C)(7) – Zoning ordinances may promote and preserve prime agricultural land, environmentally sensitive areas, and areas of historic significance.
- §603(G)(2) - Zoning ordinances are required to protect natural and historic resources.
- §702(1)(ii) – The governing body of each municipality may enact, amend and repeal provisions of a zoning ordinance in order to fix standards and conditions for traditional neighborhood development. In the case of either an outgrowth or extension of existing development or urban infill, a traditional neighborhood development designation may be either in the form of an overlay zone, or as an outright designation, whichever the municipality decides. Outgrowths or extensions of existing development may include development of a contiguous municipality.
- §1106(a)(6) – Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plans shall consider the conservation and enhancement of natural, scenic, historic, and aesthetic resources in their municipalities.

A Historic Overlay Zoning District, unlike the protection offered through the establishment of an Act 167 Historic District (discussed below), can include individual sites as well as clusters, as long as the resources are documented and identified on a historic resources map. A historic overlay district could require new buildings to be similar in type and scale to those already existing. Setbacks should be consistent with the common building setback. Requirements to replicate the existing building line, building height, and bulk could help to preserve the character of the neighborhood.

Act 167 - The Historic District Act (1961)

Municipalities may create historic districts within their borders to protect the historic character through regulation of the erection, reconstruction, alteration, restoration, demolition, or razing of buildings in the district. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission must certify districts, including a *determination of eligibility* for the National Register of Historic Places. In this way, historic districts established pursuant to Act 167 have the same protection from federal projects as do National Register properties. Act 167 also requires appointment of a HARB.

Penn and Jefferson Historic Resources map key

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