

PRESS RELEASE

(For immediate release)

The Oxford Historic Commission is sponsoring a house plaque program to recognize the creation of the Oxford Historic District. The 5" by 7" plaques are crafted of solid bronze and are suitable for display on the exterior of qualifying houses in the Historic District. The plaques feature an image of the old Oxford Train Station, and have an oval in which the original date of the house is routed.

The train station was chosen as the symbol because it was the arrival of the train in the late 1860's that was responsible for the growth of Oxford. In the decades after the beginning of train service, Oxford's population doubled again and again as the town became the center of trade between Philadelphia and Baltimore. In addition to the increase in population, many businesses were begun and thrived during the period after the Civil War. This period of significance continued until the late 1930's when the appearance of the automobile began to diminish the importance of the train.

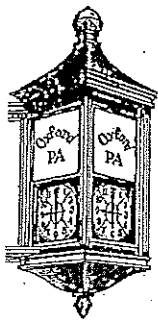
The plaque program has been highly successful so far. The initial order of plaques has been sold out, and the Historic Commission had to place a second order. If a homeowner would like to see the plaques, a stroll down Penn Avenue will reveal several homes with the plaques in place. In addition to Penn Avenue the other main streets of Oxford that are in the Historic District include: Pine Street, Third Street, Market Street, Hodgson Street, Fifth Street, and Mt. Vernon Street. The many smaller streets connecting these main streets are also in the Historic District.

In order to qualify for a house plaque, the house must be contained within the Oxford Historic District and must have been built before 1939. The cost of the plaque is \$85.00. Anyone interested in obtaining a plaque, may send his contact information, along with a check payable to the Oxford Historic Commission, to: Oxford Historic Commission, 401 Market Street, Oxford, PA 19363.

Historic Oxford

The Oxford Historic Commission Over the Past 18 Years

By Dr. Faye Doyle



Oxford Historic Commission was established in October of 1989 by Borough Ordinance #610. Its 7 members, appointed by Borough Council, and funded by the Borough, were to meet monthly to record Oxford history, gather documentary, photographic, and other evidence to identify historical resources worthy of preservation; to prepare reports of historical resources;

to educate Oxford citizens about historic preservation; obtain grants and raise funds for preservation; and to create an Oxford Historic District. Jane Davidson, the founder of Chester County Preservation efforts, did the preliminary mapping of a possible Oxford Historic District.

At first, efforts of OHC went toward trying to preserve the old "Hopewell" school building, and encouraging repair and adaptive reuse. A grant was obtained [in 1993] from the National Historical Trust for Historic Preservation to study the possibilities.

In 1991, over 1000 properties were photographed in black and white for possible inclusion in the district by M. Peyre Ferry. At this time OHC found it necessary to oppose the demolition of Weigel's flour mill, stressing its historical significance to the area. However, preservation of this structure, except for the silos, and a few sheds was not feasible.

In 1992 historical preservation and local history educational meetings were held. The services of an historical preservation interne were obtained, and over 200 properties were researched. A computer listing of address, owner, tax parcel number and other details for most Oxford properties in the proposed district was prepared. In 1993 OHC approved adaptive reuse of Oxford Hotel for low income elderly apts., and Oxford Hotel was placed on the National register in 1994.

Oxford Historic Preservation was again challenged in 1994 by the demolition of the Hutchinson House on Locust St. Another challenge was the beginning of the restoration of the rediscovered Oxford Town Clock. The gradual process of clock restoration was finished

finally in 2001, with its installation on the Peoples Bank. This restoration was supported by a grant obtained by OHC from the PA Museum and Historic Preservation Commission through Rep. Hershey.

Historical walking tours of Oxford introduced in 1992 were repeated in 1995, 1998, 2003, and 2009, but the 2003 and 2009 walks were operated by the newly created OAHA.

By 1995 PA had given preliminary approval of the HD boundaries, and placed OHD on its eligible list, pending formal application and final approval. Much research remained to be done on the individual property folders, and other functions of the OHC. In 1996, railroad fan Mr. Thomas Devon contributed an official red and gold PA Railroad "Oxford" sign reproduced from the original specifications, for the Oxford "Station" Borough Hall.



During 1997-98 OHC continued restoration work on the town clock, participated in Industrial Heritage Day at Nottingham Park, presented a town historical walking tour, created widow displays and historical educational opportunities. However Hopewell school was demolished in June of 1998 to the dismay of dedicated local preservationists. The cupola and bell were rescued and stored for the creation of a memorial monument on the school campus.

By 1999 OHC realized that to participate in public displays and historical informational activities was taking time away from its primary objective

of creating a historic district. In conjunction with Oxford Main Street, Inc. [OMI], F. Doyle and J. Sheikholeslami initiated an Oxford Area Historical Association to present local historical education, to archive Oxford area information and artifacts, sponsor displays, undertake preservation projects other than the clock, and to recognize the efforts of local citizens to preserve and present the local area history. In 2000, OAHA began these functions. Also, OHC sponsored a sale of old Oxford street signs, which was patronized with considerable interest, allowing the commission to suspend its annual request for funding from the Borough for that year. Other fund raising efforts of the commission over the years have included the sale of Oxford T shirts, 2 editions of Oxford Town Clock mugs, the sale of building materials from the demolition of the Hutchinson house, and historic post card reprint sets .

2001, in May, OHC member Donald Pierce supervised the remounting of the Town Clock and its commemorative plaque - a landmark rescued and restored! What a satisfaction for us to complete the 7 year project, much of it accomplished by local volunteers. Microfilming of the early Oxford town records was accomplished in 2003. A yearlong

celebration of the founding of Oxford was planned for 2004. A special committee [The Oxford 250th Anniversary Committee] was formed for this with local organizations and individuals contributing ideas, funding, and projects for the celebration.

With our birthday celebration over, OHC put full attention on completing the historic district. Property folders were reviewed, organized and filed. Realizing the demanding complexity of completing the application, we interviewed several preservation organizations to achieve the final paperwork. Wise Preservation Planning, Chester Springs, PA, best suited our needs. The final photographing, identifying and describing the various historical resources of our large district took Robert and Seth about 2 years. After the final review, revision, and resubmission of our application, it was approved as of Feb 1, 2007.

Is the long process is over? No! Not yet! We have to provide a way to make use of the District, and preserve and care for it. We are just beginning! There have been 27 volunteer Oxford resident members of OHC so far, and we hope there will be many more. There are currently vacancies on the commission. Please join us in helping to preserve our local historical heritage.
