

CHAPTER 23

HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

The history of an area is important. The history of the Townships and the Borough has influenced their current characteristics and historic resources add to the charm of the area and can be learning tools for residents to learn of the history of this area. The following discussion of the history of Southwestern Berks County was based upon the Tulpehocken Creek Scenic River Study, Lower Heidelberg Township, Pennsylvania Now and Then by Kathy M. Scogna, South Heidelberg Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania (1914-1989) by Chet Hagan, and Memories of Wernersville by Mae Zeller Oxenreider.

Early History of the Area

The first modern settlers of the Southwestern Berks County area were likely the Leni-Lenape Indians, who settled the Tulpehocken region which extended from near the source of the Tulpehocken Creek in present day Lebanon County to the Cacoosing Creek. The Leni-Lenape Indians were not migratory and settled a village, apparently near Womelsdorf.

In the early 1700s, German immigrants, mostly from the Palatinate Region in southern Germany, an area of much political and religious prosecution. By 1712, a number of the German immigrants reached the Schoharie Valley about 160 miles north of New York City and 40 miles west of Albany, NY. Not being able to get title to the lands they worked, 15 families traveled 300 miles south by raft and canoe down the Susquehanna River to Penns Colony to the mouth of Swatara Creek just south of present day Harrisburg. They drove their cattle south along the Susquehanna River where possible. The settlers then followed the East Swatara eastward to the source of the Tulpehocken Creek. In a few years, more Germans moved from the Schoharie region. Families dispersed throughout the Tulpehocken region, living along the Tulpehocken, Cacoosing, Little Cacoosing and Spring Creeks, staking out claims wherever possible among the native Indians.

By 1723, the pioneers had built log homes and were farming the Tulpehocken area. In 1729, Conrad Weiser moved from New York to the Tulpehocken area. Scogna notes that “the Indians protested the continuing encroachment on the lands by these German farmers who continued to pour into their region. Conrad Weiser...was indispensable in negotiating a treaty with the Tulpehockens for the Proprietaries in 1732...the Penns became owners of the land west of the Schuylkill to the Susquehanna River, north to the Blue Mountains, and south to adjoin Lancaster County which had already been purchased.”

Lancaster County had been formed in 1729. In 1734, because of pressure from settlers and the influence of Conrad Weiser, Lancaster County officials recognized the need for local

government in the area and in 1734 established Heidelberg Township. The Township was named after the town of Heidelberg, Germany from where many of the immigrants had come.

Berks County was formed from parts of Lancaster, Chester and Philadelphia Counties in 1752. Travel to administrative centers in Lancaster and Philadelphia was very difficult for the people living in the area. In 1842, a petition to divide Heidelberg Township, because the Township was too large to carry on business transactions, was granted and Lower Heidelberg Township was formed. Lower Heidelberg at that time included South Heidelberg Township and Wernersville Borough.

Development of the Tulpehocken region was influenced by the presence of the creeks within the area. Creeks were a source of power, and grist mills, saw mills, and paper mills were located along the banks of the creeks. Furnaces to produce pig iron and other forges were built in the South Mountain on tributaries of the Tulpehocken.

Settlement and commerce were spurred when the Tulpehocken Road (now U.S. Route 422) was laid out in 1727. The road ran between Reading and Womelsdorf. In the early 1800's, the Tulpehocken Road was replaced with the Berks and Dauphin Turnpike, and trade along the road continued to flourish.

The Lebanon Valley Railroad was incorporated in 1836, and ran between Harrisburg, Lebanon and Reading in 1858.

The South Mountain Resorts, in what is now South Heidelberg Township, were conceived in the late 1840s. These were health resorts, surrounded with woodlands, walks and drives. Platforms and gazebos were constructed to enable distant views. People arrived at the Wernersville train depot and then traveled to these resorts for the views and healing waters.

Because of the influence of the Berks and Dauphin Turnpike and the Lebanon Valley Railroad, which brought travelers to Wernersville before they went to the resorts, Wernersville became a successful town. In 1914, South Heidelberg and Wernersville petitioned for separation from Lower Heidelberg. The people in Wernersville wanted improvements such as sidewalks, street lamps, electricity and better roads. The Lower Heidelberg Township tax base was not able to pay for these improvements, and the farmers did not want to pay for improvements within Wernersville. With the creation of Wernersville, it made sense to some people to formalize the division of the land to the north and south of the Borough.

St. John's (Hains) Church

In 1735, George Hain donated land for what has been known as Hain's Church on the hilltop along what is now called Church Road. The first church building was a log building, and in 1766, a larger stone building was constructed. In 1768, a school was established at the church. The church and the school were the early center of social life for the community. An addition was made to the church in 1878.

Log Dwellings

When the area was initially settled, it was forested. Clearing the land to farm it provided materials for construction of homes. The initial log dwellings typically were one story high with one or two rooms. After the initial settlement, more substantial log homes were built with one or two stories. Scogna writes that many Revolutionary War soldiers received a log home and 40 acres as wartime pay and that by 1800, log cabins abounded. In her book she maps out the substantial number of log houses still existing in the Township and discusses several in detail. The houses now are typically covered with siding and no longer have the appearance of log houses.

Historic Houses and Homesteads

Lower Heidelberg Township, Pennsylvania Now and Then also contains a discussion of the history of many of the existing historic houses and family homesteads in Lower Heidelberg Township. Scogna notes that, “with more time on their hands to quarry and cut stone, and the accumulated wealth to pay stone masons, the second, third and fourth generations of the original settlers built many beautiful stone homes from material readily available – limestone, ironstone and sandstone.” The Hain’s Mill House, near Spring Creek, and the Knorr/Bare Farm, located along the Little Cacoosing Creek along Penn Avenue, are on the National Registry of Historic Places. Also listed on the National Registry of Historic Places is the Grand View Dairy Farm, located in South Heidelberg Township at the base of South Mountain. There are a number of homes standing that were built in the 1700s and the 1800s.

Schoolhouses

Hain’s Church School, started in 1768, was the only school in Lower Heidelberg Township for many years. In 1849, Lower Heidelberg Township adopted the public school system and began building one room schoolhouses. The church schoolhouse was used until 1870. Scogna details the history of the one room schoolhouses in Lower Heidelberg Township, including Highland, Oak Hill, which is now a private home, Fausts, which is now an apartment house, Blue Marsh, Gerhart, which still exists, Fidler’s, Freibergers, Brownsville, which exists as a residence, and Ruths School, which stands along Brownsville Road. Six of the eight one room schoolhouses still stand.

In 1931, Lower Heidelberg Township consolidated and construction of the Lower Heidelberg Consolidated Schoolhouse, now Lower Heidelberg Elementary School, was started. Students attended the consolidated school through the eighth grade.

Villages

In Lower Heidelberg Township, the narrow streams were suitable for smaller mills, and grist mills were an important industry. Grist mills were located along Spring Creek near Wooldtown and Brownsville, and along Cacoosing Creek. Industries which needed power could be found at the mills. Villages formed around the industries, and the various occupations necessary to residents, such as blacksmiths, wheelwrights, carpenters, builders, coopers and weavers, were

located in the villages. The demise of the mills began about 1875 when railroads brought in goods from the West, especially a better grade of flour and smooth planed lumber.

Wooltown, named for a wool mill of which the remains still exist, is located just west of the intersection of Wooltown and Ruth Roads.

The village of Cacoosing is located along the Cacoosing Creek and State Hill Road. In addition to the mill and related businesses, the Cacoosing Hotel was constructed. The hotel is now a private residence. The first home of the Cacoosing Dairy was in Cacoosing.

Brownsville was centered around a grist mill and saw mill near Spring Creek along present day Brownsville Road. Michael Brown built the first house before 1800, and Brownsville was an active town for over 100 years, declining through the first 30 years of the 20th Century.

State Hill was laid out in the mid 1800s. The village was located halfway between Blue Marsh and the farms and towns in the valley to the south, at the present day intersection of State Hill and Brownsville Roads. A tavern stood for many years at the site of the current day Ganly's Restaurant. A stage ran from Reading to Bernville via State Hill Road.

The village of Blue Marsh, in the vicinity of the Tulpehocken Creek, was one of the first areas settled because of the fertile land and abundant wildlife and fish. It was an agricultural community until the Blue Marsh project resulted in its demise. Two farms in Lower Heidelberg Township were considered too important historically, and were saved in the Blue Marsh area. The Staudt farm, known as Old Dry Road Farm, has been placed on the National Registry. Essig farmland was also preserved. Buildings from the Hottenstein farm in Penn Township were moved to the Essig and Staudt farms in Lower Heidelberg. The farm complex is a living-learning history center where the rural folk culture of Berks County is conserved and preserved.

Establishment of Wernersville

In the article, "Memories of Wernersville" by Mae Zeller Oxenreider, she writes that Wernersville is named for William Werner who in 1855 laid out the plan for Wernersville. At the time it extended from just north of the Berks and Dauphin Turnpike Road (at the time called Market Street and now Penn Avenue) to south of William Street and from east of South Werner Street to just west of Walnut Street. As was noted above, the village expanded and in the early 1900s, residents wanted improvements such as sidewalks, street lamps and better roads. The Township Supervisors offered few municipal services because the tax base was low. The petition for incorporation of the Borough was submitted to Berks County court in 1907, but opponents concerned about regulations and higher taxes objected. The court battle went on until 1914, when the Borough of Wernersville was incorporated.

Two stone houses from the 1700s remain in Wernersville, the house at 176 West Penn Avenue and the Lerch Tavern, which is the home of the Heidelberg Heritage Society. The Lerch Tavern accommodated stage coach and other travelers. The tavern is on the National Register of Historic Places.

A number of buildings were built during the 1800s, such as the Lebanon Valley House, which was built by Dr. James W. Deppen, who built a number of houses along Penn Avenue west of Elm Street. Built in 1871, the Lebanon Valley House accommodated stage coach travelers and included a store and office.

Quarries were operated within the Borough as well as lime kilns. Remains of quarries are still found in the Borough.

George Wertz in the 1800s erected a large grist mill and home south of the railroad tracks along Werner Street. That mill is now the location of Wertz Lawn and Garden Shed. The Wertz Mill is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Wernersville National Bank opened for business in 1906 at a property along Penn Avenue originally developed by William Werner in 1849. Over the years, the bank changed ownership and recently the building was bought and re-opened as a landscaping business.

In 1875, Dr. Deppen built a brick warehouse near the railroad along present South Elm Street. The warehouse saw different uses over the years and is now part of a building materials business.

Wernersville has not had large manufacturing operations, but did have small factories over the years. In 1894, the Hain Brothers built a hosiery mill on Furnace Road, which became a warehouse.

The South Mountain Resorts were a major factor in the development of Wernersville. William Werner arranged with the railroad that the station should be marked "Wernersville," and that all passenger trains should stop at the new station which was being built. Oxenreider indicates that at the turn of the century, as many as 13 passenger trains came into Wernersville daily. Each South Mountain Resort had its own stall where carriages waited to pick up guests. Hotels, barber shops, restaurants and other businesses were constructed around the hub of activity at the railroad station.

Deppen's Restaurant was initially constructed next to the railroad station, but in 1925 the restaurant building was moved to Werner Street. The building is now occupied by a sports equipment shop.

The Lamm & Witman Funeral Home had as its predecessor the undertaking business of Wollfensberger and Feather, originally located on Furnace Road. Clarence Lamm moved the business to West Penn Avenue and formed a partnership with Jerre Witman.

Until 1858, the school at Hain's Church was the only school available to residents of the Wernersville area. The first grade school in Wernersville was built in 1858. In the 1860s, another school was erected in the west portion of Wernersville. In 1893 a two story building, serving as both an elementary and a high school, was erected at the site of the school along Penn Avenue. The school district of Wernersville was incorporated in 1914 when the Borough became a municipality. The Wernersville School Board constructed the Wernersville High School in 1932, and the school was a social center of the community until 1955. In 1956, with

the creation of the Conrad Weiser Joint School District, the high school building along North Pine Street no longer functioned as a high school. It became an elementary school and eventually was converted to apartments.

Town Hall, at the southeast corner of Penn Avenue and Laurel Street, was erected in 1900 to provide a place for community social affairs. The Veterans of Foreign Wars purchased the building in 1947.

The Wernersville Public Library began in the third floor of the Town Hall in 1906. In 1923 when the Borough took ownership of the Hunsicker building, the library was moved to this location. Benjamin Hunsicker in his will of 1917 indicated that the residence at Penn Avenue and South Elm Street would be conveyed to the Borough for uses of Borough Council and library purposes. Hunsicker's widow lived in the home until 1923. When the Borough and Library built the new facility at North Reber Street and Washington Avenue the Hunsicker building was sold and renovated back into a private residence.

The Berkshire Furnace

The ironmasters of Pennsylvania played an important role in the development of the state. Chet Hagan writes that they established no less than 168 furnaces, forges and other iron works before 1800, 42 of which were in Berks County. The Berkshire Furnace on South Mountain was the fourth in the County. Ironmaster William Bird erected the first building in 1750 along Spring Creek, which has since been called Mill Creek, Manor Creek and Furnace Creek. Bird erected the Hopewell Forge and New Pine Forge in 1744. The Berkshire Furnace was started to supply pig iron to the other forges. During the Revolutionary War, the furnace was leased to George Ege, who owned the Charming Forge, and the furnace produced cannonballs, shells, shrapnel and shot. The furnace ceased operation in 1793 when George Ege began operation of another furnace south of Robesonia, where there was a stronger stream and a larger supply of wood for charcoal to smelt the iron ore. South Heidelberg Township has erected an historical marker on the general site of the Berkshire Furnace. A house circa 1750 that was very likely the residence of a foreman at the Berkshire Furnace, stands at the elbow of Preston Road between Furnace Road and Galen Hall Road North.

Glen Tilt

George Pomeroy, partner in the Dives, Pomeroy and Stewart Department Store in Reading, purchased land in 1885 upon which he constructed his Glen Tilt mansion along Galen Hall Road. The railroad, which was boarded at the Wernersville railroad station, was used to commute to Reading. Eventually, Glen Tilt Manor was converted into an apartment building.

South Heidelberg's One Room Schoolhouses

When South Heidelberg Township was formed in 1914, it became owner of eight one room elementary schools, Bucks, Deppens, McCallum's, Gaul's, Shearers, Huntzinger's, Green Terrace and Five Points. These schools were closed in 1931 when the Township built a consolidated elementary school at the corner of Galen Hall Road and Preston Road, which is

now the Township Building. Seven of the eight one room schools still stand today. Bucks School, which was located at the corner of Hill Road and Belle Alto Road, is the only school not standing.

Deppens School was located on Route 422 at the intersection with today's Sportsmen's Road. Hagan describes it as the only school building in South Heidelberg Township which has been restored to its original specifications of 1914.

McCallum's School, now a private home, is located at the intersection of Galen Hall Road East and Cushion Peak Road.

Green Terrace School, constructed of mountain stone along Galen Hall Road near Grandview Boulevard, became a tavern, a private home, and now houses apartments.

Huntzinger's School, along Huntzinger Road near the Lancaster County line, is a private home.

Gaul School, on Mountain Home Road opposite the intersection with Belle Alto Road, is also a private home.

Shearers School, a red sandstone building along Fritztown Road near the intersection with Shearers Road, is a private home.

Five Points School, along Five Points Road near the intersection with Texter Mountain Road, is also a private home.

The Mountain Resorts

Hagan writes, "abundant, pure spring water was apparently what attracted them first. Then was a sweet, clean air. Then the green, silven beauty of South Mountain. Before the 19th Century was done, there were on the mountains of what today is South Heidelberg Township no less than eight compelling resorts drawing patrons from all corners of the nation and from some foreign climbs as well." The resorts were Grandview, Walter's Park, Mountain Sunset, Preston's Sunnyside, Bynden Wood, Highland House, the Hillside and Belle Alto. The resorts attracted wealthy people from unhealthy cities, and there were a number of doctors among the initial resort owners. The growth of the South Mountain resorts was possible because of the Philadelphia and Reading Railways Lebanon Valley Division. The railroad advertised the resorts as "The Wernersville Resorts for Pleasure and Health." (Hagan)

According to Hagan, two major factors lead to the decline of the South Mountain Resorts: the automobile (around 1913 the public started to buy cars and became more mobile) and the Great Depression of the 1930s. Most of the resorts did not survive the Depression and only Galen Hall, originally Preston's Sunnyside, lasted past World War II. Galen Hall was destroyed by fire in 1963.

Grandview

Grandview had its beginnings in 1847 when Dr. Frederick Leisenring found a site which he believed had an adequate water supply to carry on extensive treatments for his patients. A subsequent owner named the site the Mountain Home and expanded the site. Subsequent owners were Drs. Deppen and Wenrich of Wernersville who enlarged the main building substantially in 1889 and erected the stone chapel in 1890. The resort was called the Grandview House, then Grandview Sanatorium, and finally Grandview. The resort closed shortly after Dr. Wenrich's death in 1926, and the property was broken up into parcels and sold. Two hundred fifty acres of the Grandview site later became a part of the YMCA camp. Adam Schaeffer purchased 100 acres that included the Grandview dairy operation. The Grandview Dairy Farm is still owned by the Schaeffer family today and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The coach house has been remodeled into a home, the walls of the power house were used in a private home, and the chapel was converted into a home. The main hotel building deteriorated through neglect and vandalism and eventually the materials were used to construct eight homes. What was left was destroyed in a controlled burning in 1967, and only the elevator shaft survived the fire. Those ruins stand today. Boulder Lake was an ice dam for Grandview, and is still located along Galen Hall Road.

Walter's Park

Dr. Robert Walter began construction of his castle-like hotel in 1876 on land that had once been property of the ironmasters who had operated the Berkshire Furnace. Eventually, Walter expanded his holdings to 500 acres. The Grandview and Walter's Park Resorts, along with the other resorts in the South Mountain area, influenced the economy of Lower Heidelberg Township and Wernersville, as they employed a number of local people and spent substantial amounts for supplies and services from local businesses. Walter was concerned with medical treatment of the sick and infirmed. After Walter's death in 1921, the property was sold to a hotel corporation and became South Mountain Manor. With the coming of the automobile and changing habits of Americans, few people stayed for an entire summer season but South Mountain Manor was a site for conventions and dinner dances. Eventually, South Mountain Manor was virtually abandoned because there were no buyers for what had become a money losing proposition. The buildings were vandalized. In 1962, the Borough of Wernersville acquired South Mountain Manor as a watershed and source of water supply. The buildings were razed and all that remains are two crumbling stone pillars that mark the entrance to the Manor.

Mountain Sunset House

Mountain Sunset House was built in 1876 as a summer resort hotel. It was renamed Sunset Hall in 1914. Hotel operations ceased by 1943. The property was eventually sold to the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the hotel was renovated and changed to the Villa Maria Infirmary. In 1962, the nuns sold the property to the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales and the building became a retreat center and the name was shortened to Villa Maria. Finally, the Caron Foundation purchased the property because it needed expanded facilities for its alcohol and drug abuse programs.

Preston's Sunnyside

Preston's Sunnyside was the only South Mountain resort built on the south side or "sunny" side of the mountain. The first building was erected in 1880 by James Skirrow Preston who had been born in Canada but came to the United States to find a more favorable climate. Originally the building was known as Stone House because it was built of gray mountain stone from the mountain behind the building. Guests first arrived at the railroad station in Stitzlerville (now called Vinemont) but eventually in Wernersville where better train service was offered. The observatory on the mountain was a large attraction because of the outstanding view. The Preston family ran the resort until 1911 when an Atlantic City corporation, the Galen Hall Company, purchased the resort. The resort was renamed and expanded and the golf course constructed. In the 1930s, Emanuel Burack, a hotel man from New York City, purchased Galen Hall and turned it into a modern, first class hotel with a modern swimming pool. The hotel burned in 1963. After the destruction of the hotel, efforts were concentrated on the golf course, restaurant and cocktail lounge. Eventually, the golf course was sold, building lots were created, and the cottages sold.

Bynden Wood

Bynden Wood was a mansion that no longer exists, but the name was subsequently used for outdoor summer musical concerts held on South Mountain. Bynden Wood was constructed in 1888 by Adolph Tafel of Philadelphia who initially was a summer visitor to South Mountain. He was especially enthralled with the views of the Lebanon Valley which were available from his gray mountain stone home. There were also views to the south of the Lancaster Valley. Eventually, the mansion became a sanitarium and then a summer hotel. Eventually, the Wyomissing Foundation purchased the building and operated it as a resort, but after World War II, mountain resorts were no longer fashionable. Ferdinand Thun was active in YMCA affairs and eventually the site was given to the YMCA. For a time, the YMCA operated Bynden Wood as a vacation resort but did not make money and eventually tore down the mansion contending it was too expensive to maintain.

Highland House

Highland House, along Galen Hall Road, was a five story gray stone structure constructed in 1890 by James Schaeffer. It was a popular resort because of its magnificent view, especially from the rear of the property, and the cool, dry air and lovely scenery of South Mountain. The resort had a mixed history and eventually in 1959, the Caron Foundation purchased the Highland House for its operations.

Belle Alto

Belle Alto was constructed in 1894. It was never much of a success as a resort, but the name was associated with one of the largest dairy farming operations within the Township. The historic Belle Alto farm still exists in the Township.

Belle Alto was built in 1894 by Eben Yenney as a resort. It was sold as a private summer residence. Eventually, an owner began to acquire other land in the area north of Belle Alto and east of Hill Road. The dairy operation was transferred to Belle Alto Farms, Inc. in 1925. Milk was sold on a route around Wernersville and to the St. Lawrence and Ziegler's dairies. The Belle Alto mansion is currently in private ownership and leased out. Eventually the dairy operation was sold to the owner of Laurel Locks Farms. In 1946, the milk routes were sold to Penn Dairies and the Belle Alto farmland was divided.

The Hillside

The Hillside was built in 1895-1896 between the Green Terrace Hotel and the road leading to Grandview. Initially intended as a private residence, eventually it became a small resort. Later the building was used as a home for the aged and is now an apartment house.

Wernersville State Hospital

In the 1890s and early 1900s, farmland and woodland to protect the water supply were purchased for what has become Wernersville State Hospital. Governor Pattison of Pennsylvania was delighted with the location, writing "a more beautiful and salubrious location could not be found. South Mountain, Wernersville is one of the most celebrated health resorts in Pennsylvania. This garden-spot provided a soil most fertile, encircled by forest covered mountains, with numerous springs to water the earth and make it productive. Surrounded by a thrifty, intelligent agricultural people, railroad communication to all parts of the state." Actual work on the hospital was begun in 1892. None of the original 1894 buildings are occupied by patients, however, numerous, very attractive brick buildings still remain on the site. A number of the older buildings were demolished in 2010 due to poor condition and cost of renovations to bring the buildings up to current codes. The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections is using some of the buildings for a community corrections center.

Fritztown

The village of Fritztown was begun 184 years ago on the road between Sinking Spring and Denver. Fritztown is dominated by Cushion Peak, a 1,100 ft. high peak in the South Mountains. John Fritz was a weaver who built the first home about 1811. A paper mill apparently was constructed as early as 1770. Over the years Fritztown has had a General Store (built 1849), a distillery, saw mill, cigar making shops, a diner, and 5 & 10 cent store. The Farmers Hotel was a stagecoach stop. The hotel is now the site of Tyson's Forge. The Union Hotel (now known as Gray Fox Inn) was also a stagecoach stop. The Fritztown Hotel was located on the site of what is now the Fritztown Fire Company's club house.

Shearer's Farm was located along Fritztown Road at the southern end of the Township. In 1887, Solomon Shearer came to the area, built a home along Fritztown Road, and began a poultry farm which was one of the largest duck farms in the United States. He also had a large orchard and a vineyard. Vinemont was named because of the proximity to the Shearer Vineyards. The farm eventually was passed onto Solomon's son, Walter. Mildred Riegel writes that by the early 1950s, each of Walter's three sons had bought their own farms and gradually the operation of the

original Shearer's Farm was phased out. Between 1887 and the early 50s, it was a major economic factor in the Fritztown area.

Berks County Planning Commission Records

The Berks County Planning Commission maintains files on historic structures in Lower Heidelberg and South Heidelberg Townships and Wernersville Borough. The Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey forms contain pictures and descriptions of the site as well as the significance. Within South Heidelberg and Lower Heidelberg, structures are scattered throughout the Townships. In Wernersville, the historic structures are generally concentrated along Penn Avenue, between Werner Street and Pearl Street. Thirty-five significant sites are listed in Wernersville, forty-four sites are listed in South Heidelberg and thirty-six sites are identified in Lower Heidelberg Township.

Some of the identified properties have been discussed in this chapter on the history of Southwestern Berks County, but not all. A list and map of the identified properties are contained in Appendix 3.

Implications for Planning

Substantial research has been devoted to the history of Southwestern Berks County and substantial space in this Comprehensive Plan to describing that history. This chapter on history is one of the most important in the background studies portion of the Plan. It is important to understand the history of an area, the influential factors in its development, and why it is the way it is today. Southwestern Berks County has a long and very interesting history, which goes beyond the fact that there are a number of beautiful old buildings remaining within the municipalities. It is important that these historic structures be identified, maintained and hopefully either preserved or re-used in a manner that will maintain their historic qualities.

The information on history can be used a number of ways. It can be used as a basis for efforts to create historic districts where concentrations of resources occur. It is also possible to have trail systems link historic sites and erect informal displays near historic sites. Efforts could be made to encourage developers to preserve historic resources and their context and mitigate impacts on historic resources. Efforts can be made to protect individual historic properties or sites.

In addition, when we talk about agricultural preservation activities, we don't just have to point to a map showing prime agricultural soils, agricultural security areas, and ACE properties. We see that agricultural operations are part of the heritage of this area. As written in the Tulpehocken Creek Scenic River Study, "The major economic activity in the study area is agriculture and agribusiness, despite pressures from regional development and the increasing urbanization of southeastern Pennsylvania. Farming and other agricultural pursuits have been intensively practiced for the past 250 years. A combination of (1) geologic formations which produce dolomite and limestone soils; (2) precipitation averaging 42 inches per year; and, (3) a humid continental climate with an average growing season of some 176 days, have resulted in well drained and fertile soils and growing conditions which, with excellent stewardship, have

sustained agricultural production over the years. The economic and social importance of agriculture cannot be overestimated.”

When we look at Wernersville, we see how its history has been intertwined with the Berks and Dauphin Turnpike (now Route 422), the railroad (as symbolized by the railroad station and the area surrounding it), the South Mountain resorts and Lower Heidelberg and South Heidelberg Townships. Wernersville has historically been the business center of Southwestern Berks County, and efforts to retain that position would continue a tradition of the past 150 years.

If we talk about preserving the steep slopes, woodlands, watersheds, streams, clean air and scenic vistas of the South Mountain area, it’s not just on the basis of looking at topographical maps, but understanding the role that these have played in the history of South Heidelberg Township. One hundred fifty years ago people started coming from around the country and Europe to enjoy these resources. The assets cited by Governor Pattison in the 1890s still exist, including “this garden-spot provided a soil most fertile, encircled by forest covered mountains, with numerous springs to water the earth and make it productive. Surrounded by a thrifty, intelligent agricultural people...”

The area is at a crossroads where it must be determined whether these resources will continue to be protected, or whether they, and the heritage of this area, will be lost.

CHAPTER 24

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

INTRODUCTION

The circulation system within a community is an important influence on the type and location of development which occurs. The location of residential, commercial, and industrial uses is influenced by the function or classification of roads, the design of the roads and their condition. In addition to influencing the character of a community by influencing land uses, the character of a community is influenced by the circulation system itself. A Township with relatively narrow winding roads abutting agricultural and wooded areas will often be perceived as having a rural character. A municipality with a circulation system of three and four lane highways abutting intensive development will be perceived as having an urban or suburban character. In areas where development has occurred which does not respect the limitations of the circulation system, the perception can be one of poor planning and frustration.

It must be made clear at the onset that transportation is about more than just cars. A series of connecting, related networks interact with each other to form the transportation system. Roadways transport vehicles and freight; sidewalks and paths transport pedestrians and bicyclists; rail moves large quantities of long-distance freight at much greater efficiencies than truck; pipelines move petroleum products; and air travel moves people and goods in a timely manner.

Linking Land Use and Transportation

Land use and circulation are closely linked. Every land use decision made has an effect on the transportation system and, conversely, every transportation decision made ultimately affects current and future land uses. It is necessary to maintain a road system that can accommodate traffic volumes generated from within the area and from external sources. When programming road improvements, existing and proposed development areas and their impacts on the travel networks must be considered. In turn, future development should not result in patterns which adversely affect the transportation system. It is necessary to follow appropriate design standards, maintain and improve existing roads, bridges, and bicycle/pedestrian networks and manage access so those networks will be capable of performing their intended function. Township and individual land use decisions are strongly influenced by existing or proposed circulation systems, while at the same time these same land use decisions affect the circulation system and the functions which it is expected to perform.

What is now Route 422 has had a major influence on the development of Southwestern Berks County since the 18th Century. It has always been the major traffic route into and through the area, and the route along which most of the commercial development and much residential development has taken place. As the Route 422 Corridor continues to develop, it becomes more congested and irritating to travel. As drivers seek alternative routes to 422 and development

occurs outside the 422 Corridor, other roads in the area receive increasing traffic volumes. Roads which once wound through agricultural areas, woodlands, and areas of open space have become lined with residential subdivisions and experience increased traffic volumes from those subdivisions. It will be necessary to balance maintaining the rural nature of the circulation system where possible with the need to insure that the system evolves which is safe, well maintained and capable of meeting the demands placed on it.

A separate chapter has been provided on pedestrian circulation, and the focus of this background chapter will be on vehicular traffic. In the plan for circulation, though, it will be necessary to address multi-modal facilities such as bicycle-pedestrian, transit-pedestrian, and bicycle-transit.

In the chapter on Regional Influences, some of the factors affecting circulation in the area have been discussed, including the Park Road Corridor, which results in increased land use pressure and traffic volumes in eastern Lower Heidelberg Township; the Route 222 project in Cumru and Spring Townships which has some effect on traffic volumes in eastern South Heidelberg Township; and the use of side roads within the area to carry thru traffic trying to avoid Route 422, which has increased volumes on roads which were once local access roads.

Traffic has increased in the area because of development locating within the three municipalities and will further increase as Heidelberg Run East and West, Green Valley Estates and other developments in the area are built. South Heidelberg Township has prepared a Land Use Assumptions Report, Roadway Sufficiency Analysis and Transportation Capital Improvements Plan to enable it to receive traffic impact fees from developers. The Transportation Capital Improvements Plan proposed improvements along Krick Lane, Mountain Home Road, Lincoln Drive, and Wernersville Road and at the intersection of Route 422 and Sportsman Road. Some of those improvements have been completed.

Access Management

Access management problems are situations where conflicts between mobility and access are, or will be, intense and result in congestion and safety problems. Access management problems typically occur on roads serving high volumes, high speed traffic, and abutting intense trip generating uses, such as Route 422. An example of an access management problem would be where commercial development occurs on a road and the mobility of traffic is adversely affected by the increase in driveways from adjacent land to the road on which the land fronts. As the number of driveways increases, the safety and efficiency of the road can decrease. Access management will be an increasing concern on the roads in the area in the future.

Route 422 Issues

Commercial development continues along Route 422. The latest major development is the Sinking Spring Marketplace. As development continues along 422, less open land remains between Sinking Spring and Wernersville and between Wernersville and Robesonia. The open area helps to provide visual relief, maintain rural character, and signal a transition from the developed urban core to the more rural Southwestern and Western Berks County areas.

If continued commercial development occurs along Route 422 and businesses leave the center of Wernersville to locate along 422, this can adversely affect having a viable community center in the Borough. Such competition, large amounts of truck traffic through the Borough on 422, and lack of attention to aesthetics and streetscape improvements along 422 can adversely affect the small town character of Wernersville.

The Route 422-Railroad Tracks Issue

When trains pass through Wernersville and South Heidelberg, one point of access exists to 422 from south of the tracks, Furnace Road. This is of concern to both municipalities, and South Heidelberg is pursuing having a bridge constructed at Krick Lane.

Emergency access is a concern as well as access to the elementary school along Lincoln Drive. There is not a good, direct access to the elementary school from western South Heidelberg Township and points further west in the school district, and it would be desirable to provide an alternative route to 422 south of the railroad tracks. Such alternative route would improve access to the school as well as provide improved access from the Robesonia area to Fritztown Road area. This would provide a southern “bypass” of Route 422.

Installation of the traffic light at Sportsman Road and consideration of a light at Furnace Road will facilitate access from the Robesonia area to the Fritztown area via Sportsman and Furnace Roads, to Belle Alto Road, to Wernersville, Mountain Home and Montello Roads, to Fritztown Road, and then on to Old Fritztown and Chapel Hill Roads. It is hoped this will limit through traffic in the Fritztown and mountain areas of South Heidelberg Township.

Transit Service

BARTA provides bus service along Route 422 between Reading and a Park and Ride lot in Womelsdorf. BARTA recently expanded that service with more frequent runs. Though BARTA recently raised fares, elderly persons still ride free all day and handicapped patrons ride for half-fare. Capitol Trailways provides daily and weekend service between Reading, Lebanon and Harrisburg, with a scheduled stop in Wernersville. Capitol Trailways uses the inter-city bus terminal at 3rd and Penn Streets in Reading. Paratransit services for the elderly and handicapped are also provided by BARTA countywide on an as-needed basis.

Rail Service

Freight service is provided on the Norfolk-Southern line paralleling Route 422. Since this is a main line between Reading and Harrisburg and points west, there is frequent travel along this line. East Penn Railroad LLC provides infrequent freight service along the short segment of line in the southeast corner of South Heidelberg Township between Sinking Spring and Lancaster County. There are no rail-served industries in South Heidelberg or Wernersville.

Roadway-railroad interfaces pose a particular concern in Wernersville and South Heidelberg Township. The railroad serves as a barrier between areas south of the tracks and Route 422. There are three crossings in the township (grade-separated at Sportsman, and Point roads and at-

grade on Krick Lane), and three in the borough (grade-separated on Furnace Road and at-grade on Werner Street and Church Road). Though there are six total crossings in the area, three of them are at-grade, meaning a long train or a stopped train causes traffic to stop as well. This is frequently the case in Wernersville when stopped traffic backs-up onto Route 422. South Heidelberg Township has been trying for years to obtain funding for a bridge over the tracks. That process is still underway.

Aviation Service

Scheduled passenger aviation service is no longer provided at the Reading Regional Airport and will not be for the foreseeable future. At present, scheduled passenger flights are available at surrounding airports including Harrisburg International, Philadelphia International, and Lehigh Valley International. Reading Regional Airport supports air charter services, private and corporate air operations, and instructional services. Smaller private airports that serve Berks County include Grimes Airfield (Bethel Township), Morgantown Airport (Caernarvon Township), Butter Valley Golf Port (Montgomery County near Boyertown), and Pottstown Municipal Airport (Montgomery County). Kutztown Airport recently closed and has been sold for development.

Scenic Roads

Scenic roads have been discussed in the chapter on Scenic Resources. As a part of the overall transportation network, however, their role in that network and subsequent maintenance needs cannot be overlooked.

Roadway Classification

The definitions of the road classifications are as follows, developed from the classification in the Berks County Comprehensive Plan Revision:

Arterial Street – Arterials provide for the movement of large volumes of traffic over longer distances; however, these highways generally operate at lower speeds than arterial expressways due to the presence of traffic control devices and access points.

Collector Street – Collector streets serve moderate traffic volumes and act to move traffic from local areas to the arterials. Collectors, too, can be subdivided into subcategories. Major Collectors provide for a higher level of movement between neighborhoods within a larger area. Minor Collectors serve to collect traffic within an identifiable area and serve primarily short distance travel.

Local Street – Local streets are, by far, the most numerous of the various highway types. These streets provide access to individual properties and serve short distance, low speed trips.

The Berks County Comprehensive Plan Revision also contains the following recommended design features for the various highway functional classifications:

**HIGHWAY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS AND
RECOMMENDED DESIGN FEATURES**

<u>Classification</u>	<u>General Provisions</u>	<u>Right-of-Way Width (ft.)</u>	<u>Cartway Width</u>
Expressway	55+ MPH Limited Access No Parking Noise Barrier/Buffer (where required)	Minimum 120; however, may be wider based on local conditions and design	Minimum four 12' wide travel lanes with 10' wide shoulders capable of supporting heavy vehicles
Arterial	35-55 MPH Some access controls to and from adjacent development. Encourage use of reverse and side street frontage and parallel access road. No Parking	80	48-52 feet; 12' wide travel lanes with shoulders in rural area and curbing in urban areas
Collector	25-35 MPH Some access controls to and from adjacent development. Parking permitted on one or both sides.	60	34-40 feet; 12' wide travel lanes with stabilized shoulders or curbing; 8' wide lanes provided for parking.
Local	15-35 MPH No access control to and from adjacent development. Parking permitted on one or both sides.	53	28-34 feet with stabilized shoulders or curbing; cartway widths can be reduced based on interior traffic patterns.

Roads are classified on the existing Traffic Circulation Conditions map. The following is the list of each type of functional road:

Arterials include: U.S. Route 422

Major Collectors include: Brownsville/Reber's Bridge Roads, Paper Mill Road, Sweitzer Road, State Hill Road, Green Valley Road, Faust Road, Gaul/Steely Road, Church Road, Fairmont Avenue/Elm Street, Wooltown Road, Point Road, Lincoln Drive, Werner Street, Krick Lane, Mountain Home Road, Wernersville Road, Fritztown Road, Hill Road, and the Galen Hall Road system.

Minor Collectors include: Gaul Road, Ruth Avenue, Sportsmen's Road, Big Spring Road, Huntzinger Road, Furnace Road, Walters Avenue, South Church Road, Belle Alto Road, Hill Road, Preston Road.

Local Access Roads include: all other roads.

As development occurs, traffic increases and road improvements are made, these classifications may change. Maintenance responsibilities are determined by roadway ownership. PennDOT has responsibility for Fritztown Rd. in S. Heidelberg; Lincoln Dr. N. Church Rd. and Elm St. in Wernersville; Brownsville, Church, Heffner, Green Valley, State Hill and Rebers Bridge roads and Fairmont Ave. in L. Heidelberg; and U.S. 422 throughout the planning area. Municipal governments are responsible for all other roads in the area. Planning implications are significant in that all new development that adds roadway also adds to the municipal burden of snow plowing, paving, pothole repair and other maintenance needs. State Liquid Fuels funding given to each municipality covers a small part of the annual maintenance needs.

Traffic Counts

The latest information from PennDOT sources detail selected traffic counts along some of the more significant roadways in the planning area. These counts are shown as Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), or an average number of cars on a typical day counted in both directions. U.S. 422 varies from a low of 16,061 AADT (in Wernersville) to a high of 22,758 AADT east of Green Valley Rd. Fritztown Rd. has approximately 8,700 AADT while State Hill Rd. has 7,859 AADT. Most of Rebers Bridge Rd./Brownsville Rd. sees 3,654 AADT while Green Valley Rd. sees 4,427 AADT. It should be noted that the Green Valley Rd. count was taken in 2008, so the full impact of the new school complex is not fully reflected in that figure. As development continues, traffic on U.S. 422, parallel roads and their connectors will also grow. Access Management and trip reduction strategies will all play a part in mitigating some of those increases.

Truck Traffic

Roadways are not used exclusively by passenger automobiles. Trucks make up a percentage of that traffic as well. Trucks affect traffic and the roadway in a number of ways. Their larger weight has an impact on the road structure increasing wear and maintenance needs. Since they take longer to accelerate from a stop, they add to congestion around traffic signals. For example, recent counts on U.S. 422 show that the highest concentration of truck traffic is located in the section between Green Valley Rd. and N. Church St., where approximately 1000 trucks per day make up six percent of the total AADT. Compared to other roadways in Berks that may not seem like a lot; however, those trucks encounter traffic signals on each end of that segment that add to congestion, noise and pollution. Trucks do, however, carry significant tonnages of freight, parcels, and service providers that we all use in our daily lives. They will continue to have a large role in local, regional and national economies, so they must be accommodated.

Bridges

Once typically neglected in local transportation planning, awareness of bridges has taken on an increased role in how roadway projects are prioritized and funding is spent. Bridges are an integral part of the roadway system that also require maintenance, repairs and eventual replacement just like pavement. Bridge records are kept by PennDOT according to ownership: Bridges owned by municipalities over 20 feet in length (local bridges), and bridges owned by PennDOT over 8 feet in length (state bridges).

In light of recent bridge failures across the nation, Pennsylvania has begun making significant investments in bridges. Those investments are split between rehabilitating and replacing structurally deficient structures and preserving the rest. Structurally deficient (SD) indicates that the bridge has deterioration to one or more of its major components. Functionally obsolete (FO) indicates that the bridge has older features (for example, road widths and weight limits) compared to more recently built bridges. A posted bridge is open but signs have been placed stating a weight limit that can travel across the structure. There are no closed state or local bridges in the planning area. According to PennDOT records (September, 2010) the following is a brief synopsis of bridges in the planning area:

State Bridges

Lower Heidelberg

--U.S. 422 over Trib. To Spring Creek

South Heidelberg

--U.S. 422 over Trib. To Spring Creek; (SD)

--U.S. 422 over Trib. To Spring Creek;

--U.S. 422 over Little Cacoosing Creek;

--SR 3012 (Mountain Home Rd.) over Cacoosing Creek;

--SR 3016 (Fritztown Rd.) over Cacoosing Creek; (FO)

--SR 3016 (Fritztown Rd.) over Little Cacoosing Creek; (FO)

--SR 3036 (Sportsman Rd.) over Norfolk Southern R.R.; (FO)

Wernersville

--SR. 3029 (Furnace Rd.) over Norfolk Southern R.R.

Local Bridges

Lower Heidelberg

--Gaul Rd. over Little Cacoosing Creek; (Posted, SD, FO)

--Palm Rd. over Spring Creek; (SD, FO)

--Heidelberg Rd. over Spring Creek; (SD, FO)

--Wooltown Rd. over Hospital Creek; (Posted)

--Wooltown Rd. over Spring Creek;

--Paper Mill Rd. over Cacoosing Creek; (Posted)

--Sweitzer Rd. over Cacoosing Creek; (FO)

--Point Rd. over Manor Creek;

--Heidelberg Rd. over Spring Creek;

South Heidelberg

--Walters Ave. over Manor Creek; (Posted, FO)

--Lincoln Dr. over Little Cacoosing Creek; (FO)

--Sportsman Rd. over Hospital Creek;

Wernersville

--None

PennDOT has an aggressive bridge inspection program that regularly inspects all of Pennsylvania's bridges at least once every two years. Structurally deficient bridges are inspected more frequently if their condition warrants. PennDOT does not hesitate to impose weight restrictions and close bridges if deterioration causes safety concerns. Municipal officials need to pay particular attention to the bridges that they own and plan ahead for maintenance, repair and replacement costs. Capital improvements planning for bridges is a necessity that should not be overlooked and is to be considered by the three municipalities.

Traffic Signals

Another transportation asset not to be overlooked is traffic signals. Although PennDOT ultimately controls their timing and coordination (on state roads), municipalities are responsible for their maintenance and the electricity to power them. According to PennDOT records there are eight signals in the planning area, all on U.S. 422. In 2008-2009, a multi-municipal supported project to coordinate signals along the 8-mile corridor from Sinking Spring to Robesonia was completed. The results show improved travel times along Route 422 though some added delay is observed along the intersecting streets. There has been discussion of adding another signal along Penn Ave. at Furnace Rd. in Wernersville. Appropriate studies will have to be completed that show the intersection meets PennDOT standards prior to signal installation. As development occurs the municipalities should be working with developers to install and coordinate signals where appropriate. Increasing the Transportation Impact Fee district into Lower Heidelberg Township will assist with the planning and financial aspects of new signals.

Areas of Concern

The Existing Traffic Circulation Conditions Map also shows some roadway concerns, including poor alignment, sight distance problems, areas of poor road condition, one lane bridges and underpasses, narrow streets, lack of turnaround, at grade crossings, vertical curvature, and grade approaching intersection.

CHAPTER 25

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

Community facilities provide necessary and important services to residents of the area. The community facilities which have been mapped include the Lower Heidelberg Township Building along Brownsville Road, the Wernersville Borough Hall along North Reber Street and the South Heidelberg Township Building along Galen Hall Road. The Wernersville Library is located in the same building as the Borough Hall.

Lower Heidelberg Township completed significant renovations and expansion of its municipal building. Wernersville Borough constructed a new Borough Hall and Library on land acquired from the fire company along Washington Avenue.

School District built the Green Valley Elementary Center and the West Middle School next to each other along Faust Road, in Lower Heidelberg Township. The Conrad Weiser East Elementary School is located within Wernersville Borough and South Heidelberg Townships along Lincoln Drive. The Conrad Weiser educational complex, containing the Junior and Senior High Schools, is located in Heidelberg Township along Route 422 and Big Spring Road.

The South Heidelberg Township garage is located along Galen Hall Road in the central portion of the Township.

The Lower Heidelberg Township Volunteer Fire Company is located in State Hill along Brownsville Road. The Community Fire Company of Fritztown is located along Fritztown Road in Fritztown. The Citizen's Hose Fire Company is located along North Stitzer Avenue in Wernersville. There is also a fire station at Wernersville State Hospital. The fire buildings remain individually owned and the fire equipment is owned by the Western Berks Fire Department.

Wernersville State Hospital is located within South Heidelberg Township, though the hospital owns land in both South Heidelberg and Lower Heidelberg Townships. Typically, hospital facilities are not open to the general public, though non-profit organizations have been allowed to make use of hospital land. The Berks County Intermediate Unit, Berks County Senior Citizens Center, Rainbow House, South Mountain Workshop and Conewago Wernersville are located on hospital grounds.

Religious resources available in the municipalities include the Calvary Bible Fellowship Church, Maranatha Baptist Church, Hain's Church and the Jesuit Center and Novitiate in Lower Heidelberg Township, Trinity Lutheran Church and First United Church of Christ in Wernersville, Hillside Church of Christ and Green Terrace Mennonite Church in South

Heidelberg, and the Vinemont Community Lutheran Church in Spring Township just east of South Heidelberg Township.

The Caron Foundation, which treats patients with addiction problems, is located along Galen Hall Road.

The Heidelberg Heritage Society is located opposite the existing Borough Hall in Wernersville.

The post office is located along North Stitzer Avenue in Wernersville. The post office will be expanded or relocated.

Educational Facilities

Lower Heidelberg Elementary School was closed by the Wilson School District several years ago. The school is being leased to an education facility. Some concerns of the school district include the age of the building and projected building maintenance and improvement projects, limitations on expansion because of the relatively small size of the school site, and the lack of public sanitary sewer facilities.

The school district acquired land for a new elementary school and middle school, along Faust Road in Lower Heidelberg Township. Green Valley Elementary School opened up in 2005 and West Middle School opened up in 2010. Wilson School District has a total of one early learning center, seven elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school. Wilson's total enrollment as of November 2010 is 5,847.

South Heidelberg Township and Wernersville Borough are in the Conrad Weiser Area School District. The district completed a new high school building at the educational complex in Heidelberg Township. The new high school serves grades 9 through 12. Grades 5 through 8 in the district attend the old high school building, which is now called the Middle School. The two elementary schools in the district, Conrad Weiser East Elementary School in Wernersville and Conrad Weiser West Elementary School in Womelsdorf, will accommodate grades K through 4. Conrad Weiser West is in the process of preparing for some major renovations to its facilities.

The continued growth in the school district, particularly in South Heidelberg Township, has made increased construction necessary. For instance, the Conrad Weiser East Elementary School, designed to accommodate 600-650 students, currently serves over 800. Right now, students from Wernersville Borough, South Heidelberg Township and the northern portion of Robesonia attend East Elementary. It might also be possible in the future to have all children from Robesonia attend West Elementary in Womelsdorf, rather than have a split of Robesonia students. Conrad Weiser's total enrollment as of November 2010 is 2,871.

Police Protection

Lower Heidelberg Township, South Heidelberg Township have their own police forces, headquartered in the respective municipal buildings. Wernersville and Robesonia Boroughs have merged their police force, now called the Western Berks Police Department, to provide

better service for the two municipalities. The new police department will consider additional municipal members on a case by case basis.

Ambulance Service

Ambulance service to the Townships and the Borough is provided by Western Berks Ambulance Association, which has a station in West Lawn and a station in Robesonia.

Library Service

The only library in Southwestern Berks County is the Wernersville Library, which is open to people with a Berks County library card.

Fire Protection

The fire companies of this region have combined to form the Western Berks Fire Department. A fire company building is located in each municipality, the Lower Heidelberg Township Volunteer Company, the Citizen's Hose Company in Wernersville, and the Community Fire Company of Fritztown. Also included in the regional fire protection is Sinking Spring Borough. These fire companies are volunteer companies, and a concern of volunteer companies is continuing to have a sufficient number of volunteers to allow them to provide adequate fire protection. Fire companies provide mutual assistance to each other in fire emergencies, but it may be necessary for the fire companies and municipalities to work more closely together in the future to assure continued adequate fire protection. Since the merging of the fire companies from the four municipalities occurred the number of volunteers per event have been sufficient that the municipalities have not needed to hire paid drivers. In the future, it may become necessary for the municipalities to hire paid drives, but at this time it is not necessary. The only paid personnel within the Western Berks Fire Department is the Fire Commissioner.