

Kennett Township Historical Commission property research files

01

**Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Sarah
Leu through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden
Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.**

Last updated on December 11, 2014.

Kennett Township Historical Commission

Table of Contents

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	4
Administrative Information.....	5
Controlled Access Headings.....	6

Summary Information

Repository	Kennett Township Historical Commission
Creator	Kennett Township Historical Commission
Title	Kennett Township Historical Commission property research files
Call number	01
Date [inclusive]	1994-2011
Extent	7 linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The first recorded mention of "Kennett Township" in Chester County, Pennsylvania is from 1705. An abolitionist stronghold, Kennett was popular with freedom-seekers escaping slavery prior to the Civil War due to the presence of progressive Quakers and a community of free blacks that was established as early as 1830. Later, the Kennett area became known for producing more than half of the mushrooms consumed in the United States. The Kennett Township Historical Commission property research files, 1994-2011, consist of two surveys of historic sites in Kennett Township completed in 1994-1996 and 2009-2011, covering approximately 350 properties.</p>

Biography/History

The area that is now Kennett Township in Chester County, Pennsylvania was inhabited by the Lenni-Lenape people when the land was acquired by William Penn in 1681. The first recorded mention of the name "Kennett Township" was in 1705. The Borough of Kennett Square, which is surrounded on all sides by Kennett Township, but has its own separate governing body, was incorporated in 1855.

Kennett Township has a strong Quaker heritage, since many early settlers were members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The area was a popular stop along the "Underground Railroad" for freedom-seekers escaping slavery prior to the Civil War, due to the presence of abolitionist Quakers such as John and Hannah Cox, Dinah and Isaac Mendenhall, and Dr. Bartholomew Fussell, as well as a community of free blacks that was established as early as 1830. The Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends, an activist Quaker off-shoot dedicated to progressive issues including abolitionism, women's rights, and temperance, was formed in the township prior to 1850.

The Kennett area was primarily agricultural for most of its history, but over the course of the 20th century it came to specialize in one particular food: mushrooms. William Swayne, a florist from Kennett Square, imported mushroom spores from England about 1885 and built the first mushroom house in the area. The venture was successful, and with the expansion of Swayne's and similar operations, the Kennett area became world renowned for its mushrooms. As of 2014, over 65 percent of the mushrooms consumed in the United States are grown in Southern Chester County.

Many properties in Kennett Township are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including: Old Kennett Meetinghouse, built in 1710 by members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers); Harlan Log House, an English-style log cabin built about 1715; and the Hamorton Historic District, laid out in 1830s and developed by Pierre S. du Pont into a company town in the early 20th century. Also on the National Register of Historic Places is Longwood Gardens, one of the most popular attractions in Southern Chester County (Pennsylvania) with over 1,000 acres of landscaped gardens, greenhouses, and plant collections. About one-third of the property is located in Kennett Township.

Bibliography:

Kennett Township. "History of Kennett Township." Condensed from 1971 comprehensive plan. Accessed July 9, 2014. <http://kennett.pa.us/visitors/history-of-kennett-township/>.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of two surveys of historic sites in Kennett Township completed in 1994-1996 and 2009-2011 for the Kennett Township Historical Commission by Amerine Environmental & Design Associates and Wise Preservation Planning, LLC, respectively. The collection is organized into two

series: I. Amerine Survey, and II. Wise Survey. An index cross-referencing the Amerine and Wise surveys by survey code, tax parcel, Amerine map ID, and state ID is available on-site, as are maps showing the locations of each property.

The Amerine Survey covers 323 properties, all over 50 years old at the time of surveying in 1994-1996. The series is organized into folders by property number; it also includes an index and map. Each file contains a survey sheet with basic data about each property, including location, site plan, photograph (black and white), and owner as of 1994-1996. A few files have additional information, such as photocopies of primary-source documents and/or print-outs of relevant sections of the Wise survey. There is also a volume of negatives of the Amerine survey pictures, and a binder of photocopies of all the survey sheets.

The Wise Survey covers 350 properties, all over 50 years old at the time of surveying in 2009-2011. It consists of computer print-outs in binders with project methodology, map, ordinances, inventory (sorted by address and number), and survey forms. The survey forms are more detailed than the Amerine Survey, with identification and location information, historic and current functions, physical description, historical information, evaluation and threats, site plan, and sometimes photographs (singular or multiple). There are three print-out copies in binders, as well as a digital copy on CDs. Also on the CDs are 316 Class III properties, properties that are over 50 years old, but have little or no significant historic value. The information on these properties is limited to a photograph, survey number, and location map.

Administrative Information

Kennett Township Historical Commission

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Sponsor

This preliminary finding aid was created as part of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories. The HCI-PSAR project was made possible by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Access Restrictions

Contact Kennett Township Historical Commission for information about accessing this collection.

Immediate Source of Acquisition Note

Files created by contractors working for the Kennett Township Historical Commission, 1994-1996 and 2009-2011.

Processing Information Note

Summary descriptive information on this collection was compiled in 2012-2014 as part of a project conducted by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania to make better known and more accessible the largely hidden collections of small, primarily volunteer run repositories in the Philadelphia area. The Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR) was funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This is a preliminary finding aid. No physical processing, rehousing, reorganizing, or folder listing was accomplished during the HCI-PSAR project.

In some cases, more detailed inventories or finding aids may be available on-site at the repository where this collection is held; please contact Kennett Township Historical Commission directly for more information.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Amerine Environmental & Design Associates
- Wise Preservation Planning, LLC

Geographic Name(s)

- Chester County (Pa.)
- Kennett (Pa. : Township)

Subject(s)

- Historic buildings
- Historic districts
- Historic sites