



*August 2014*

## ***The Demolition of the William Penn Inn is Another Wake Up Call for Lower Merion***

In 1988, the demolition of the 1851 Victorian Mansion called Analawn, once the Ott Estate, located on Bryn Mawr Avenue and West Rock Hill Road in Bala Cynwyd highlighted the need for historic preservation that eventually led to the adoption, in 2000, of Lower Merion Township's *Historic Preservation Ordinance*. Today, the Township is working on updating their 1979 *Comprehensive Plan*, and the *Land Use Element Committee*, and their *Historic Preservation Subcommittee* is debating on what can be done to protect "exceptional historic resources."

Like Analawn, the pending demolition of the **William Penn Inn** should be a call to action. The inn was built by Joseph Price in 1799 and was inhabited by Joseph Price. Today it serves as a 5-unit apartment building. It is located at 527-533 Lancaster Avenue, at the corner of Clover Hill Road, in Wynnewood.



Joseph Price was the fourth generation of that Quaker family to live in Lower Merion. His great grandfather, Edward ap Rees emigrated from Wales in 1682. The Price holdings by 1780 included

what are now Narberth and a large part of Wynnewood. Joseph Price was a true *Renaissance Man*: Quaker Farmer, Innkeeper, Undertaker, Militiaman, Diarist, Saw Mill Operator, Milestone Installer, Carpenter, Turnpike Supervisor, and Patriot, to name a few.

Here is more information about [Joseph Price](#) (1753-1828) and a [transcription of his diary](#) that Joseph kept from 1789-1828.

The **William Penn Inn** is a Class 2 historic structure. The property has been purchased by Rayer Builders LLC of Media, PA who intend to tear down the structure and build 5 single-family homes on the site. On July 9th a Subdivision Plan, Application No. 3728 was filed with the Township.



On July 16th there was a discussion of this [Subdivision Plan at the Township's Board of Commissioners meeting](#), and again on [July 28th at the Township's Historical Commission](#).

This application is on the agenda of the Planning Commission's September 8th meeting. The future of the **William Penn Inn** will be debated in the coming months. After our experience with La Ronda in Bryn Mawr, which was razed in 2009, we are not hopeful that the 18th century **William Penn Inn** will avoid the wrecking ball.

The bigger issue facing the Township today is to exactly how the Township will develop a cohesive and comprehensive policy and preserving our few remaining important historic structures. **Talk to your Township Commissioner** and explain that Historic Preservation must be a priority in Lower Merion's new and improved Comprehensive Plan, and, just as importantly, then commit to follow that Plan, including adequately funding the new Historic Preservation initiatives. Now is the time that the

Township should consider creating a “*Lower Merion Preservation Trust*” or a “*Lower Merion Preservation Foundation*” to protect our exceptional historic resources.

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### ***MISSION STATEMENT OF THE LOWER MERION HISTORICAL SOCIETY***

The Lower Merion Historical Society is an organization dedicated to *Preserving Our Past For The Future*. This is accomplished by stewardship of local history, education of the community, preservation of historic resources and outreach to promote awareness of the cultural heritage of the Township of Lower Merion and the Borough of Narberth.

