

What Lies Beneath?

An Update on Archaeology at the Huey House

by Ray Sarnacki and Paul Mullin, former Historical Commission members

In the spring 2019 issue of the Westtown Gazette, former Historical Commissioner Ray Sarnacki described the history of the ruins at the corner of South New Street and General Howe. A partial recap of the article stated: "The ruins are on a ½-acre parcel now owned by Westtown Township, that was once part of a 125-acre farm owned by William and Gemet (a.k.a. Jane) Huey, who purchased the land from Mordecai Maddock according to a deed dated April 22, 1730."

The ruins of what we believe to be the original farmhouse are all that remain. Constructed of fieldstone and wood, it looks to have been two stories high. The cellar contains a spring, likely used for cold storage of milk and dairy products produced on the farm. Historic maps show that another farm building of framed construction stood on this property, which may have been a barn.

The Westtown Township Historical Commission hopes to learn more about the property and the lives of the Huey family through continuing historical research and an archaeological survey of the site, conducted by Dr. Heather Wholey and students at West Chester University (WCU). What follows is a summary of the work that has been accomplished between members of the Historical Commission and Dr. Wholey and her students.



Ceramic sherds found in the foundation trenches

In April of 2019, Rick Brown of Friends of Oakbourne volunteered his time and his metal detector to attempt to locate the foundation of what may have been the barn shown on the historical map. Some cut nails from as early as the 19th century and a pottery sherd were found. The sherd appeared to be more modern, but it had not been dated by a pottery expert. Location flags were placed wherever the metal detector indicated something below the surface.

In May of 2019, work continued at the Huey Property site with Professor Wholey and a group of eight students. Several test pits were dug revealing several pieces of glass, pottery, and minerals, along with several pieces of slate (quarter of an inch thick). The items will be taken to the lab at WCU for further analysis to determine their age. Also, a projectile point was found, indicating that Native Americans were using the site approximately 5,000 years ago, most likely taking advantage of the spring currently running through the ruins.

George Csete, Principal Engineer and founder of Stream Bend, LLC, supported the project by capturing the dimensions and detail of the restored structure. George, through the use of a laser scanner, digitally recorded the entire stone building and surrounding site in 3-D. The scan took a total of six hours to complete. There were 34 scans in total. The images provided the ability to measure distances and give an idea of potential height of the building.

Digging at the site continued in October where an 8' by 12' stone section that may be a fairly intact collapsed wall was found along with more glass, nails, and other artifacts. In November, the Board of Supervisors approved a two-phase plan to stabilize the ruins. Bann Valley Construction was contracted to do the stone masonry work in two phases. Phase 1 involved partially rebuilding the gable wall in order to stabilize it and prevent further deterioration. Phase 2 involved pointing all exposed surfaces of the existing stone walls and parging the top of the walls to prevent any water penetration. Both phases of the stabilization work were completed by December of 2020.

In 2020, Covid hit and work at the site was suspended. By October work at the site was restarted with everyone following COVID-19 protocols. The work included mapping of the flags that were placed in April 2019 using a total station and ground penetrating radar (GPR) and following up with test pits in the area where we believed there was a separate wooden structure. A total station (TS) is an electronic/optical instrument used for surveying and building construction. It is an electronic transit

theodolite integrated with electronic distance measurement (EDM) to measure both vertical and horizontal angles and the slope distance from the instrument to a particular point, and an on-board computer to collect data and perform triangulation calculations. Thanks to Westtown East Goshen Police Department for their help mapping the flags with their TS and to Dr. Wholey and her students for their work with the GPR.

In the spring of 2021, an analysis of the GPR results indicated a possible foundation in the area where we thought the previously mentioned structure may have been. In May, test pits were dug and a stone foundation was found measuring approximately

20x15 feet. Further excavations turned up a spoon, three keys, locks, slate, nails, ceramics, unidentified iron work, bottles, and other artifacts. The artifacts are currently in possession of WCU team for lab analysis.

In the fall, the team dug another test pit at the north wall of the house. No artifacts have yet been excavated in this pit, but a 20-to-24-inch rock was found on the surface, with what appears to be the number "4" etched in to the surface. Future work in 2022 will include further excavation of the foundation, as well as the stone structure of the house, hopefully to determine what the etched rock represents.



One of the trenches showing a corner of the excavated foundation. Photos for this article were provided by Taria Montes-Rivera.

Township Receives AED



The Township recently received an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) from Aidan's Heart Foundation (AHF). The mission of AHF is to create heart-safe communities for youth through prevention and response to Sudden Cardiac Arrest. The AED will be housed temporarily at the Township building until it can be installed at Oakbourne Park.

To find out more about Aidan's Heart Foundation, or to become an AHF volunteer, visit <https://aidansheart.org/>.



Township Manager, Jon Altshul, accepts AED.