



The Most Endangered Historic Sites in Trenton 2011

Petty's Run, West State Street: Added 2011!

Petty's Run is a nationally significant archeological site. Discovered in 1996 during site preparation work for an expansion of Thomas Edison State College, the dig, which is adjacent to the New Jersey State House, includes the remains of the 18th century Trenton Steel Works. This was one of only five steel furnaces that existed in the colonies and the only one whose archaeological remains have been located and excavated. It also contained a plating mill where steel was fashioned into household utensils as well as armaments for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. From about 1812 to 1820, a cotton mill was in production at the site and from 1827 to 1876, a paper mill. Excavations at Petty's Run have also uncovered Native American objects. Interpretation of the dig was to have been part of the larger development of Capital State Park, plans for which have now been placed on hold indefinitely, for economic reasons.



Current Status: In Danger! On November 29th, 2010, the State Capitol Joint Management Commission, the entity responsible for overseeing the State Capitol Complex, unexpectedly announced plans to fill in the archeological site, with the intention of uncovering it sometime in the future. The decision was made without an adequate alternatives analysis. The potential for physical damage to this site as a result of filling it in and later removing the fill is real and would be an incalculable loss. In addition, there is logical concern as to whether the site, once covered, would eventually be re-excavated at all.

Trenton Central High School, 400 Chambers Street

Upon its dedication on January 18, 1932, Trenton Central High School (TCHS) was hailed as “an ornament to the city” and 79 years later this is still true. Designed by Ernest K. Sibley, the architect of Dunn Middle School and Holland Middle School, TCHS is a grand Georgian Revival school. The Chambers Street façade is nearly as long as the Empire State building is tall and wisely, the building was constructed to be easily expanded as enrollment grew. Adding to the sturdy construction and fine design, local firms were involved in the construction and decoration of the school. John A. Roebling & Sons provided wire lath for fireproofing, and light fixtures in the auditorium included Lenox china. This impressive building is still functioning as a high school but is in need of updating to meet today’s educational standards. The building is structurally sound, but has suffered from deferred maintenance and neglect.



Current Status: In Danger! In July 2008, the Trenton Board of Education abandoned a modernization plan, completed in 2000, in favor of a plan for demolition and new construction. This decision was made in response to claims by the state’s newly organized Schools Development Authority (SDA) that available funds for TCHS would not cover the planned rehabilitation, although a feasibility study for the project would not be completed until August 2009. Since the release of this study, a volunteer group of community advocates, TCHS alumni and parents, and professionals, known as “A Better High School Plan for Trenton,” has produced a modernization plan for TCHS and continues to advocate for a modernization approach.

In December 2009 the SDA postponed a vote on a move toward new construction following testimony from “A Better High School Plan for Trenton.” However, in the wake of 2010 changes in gubernatorial and Mayoral administrations, discussions have stalled.

TCHS hopes to work with all involved to balance the needs of the students with the continued use of this great building.

Mercer County Courthouse, 209 South Broad Street

Soon after the formation of Mercer County in 1838, steps were taken for the erection of a courthouse. Built at the corner of Broad and Market Streets, the original Greek Revival structure served the public until 1903. Trenton and Mercer County had grown enormously over the course of the 19th century, and the current grand, classical Beaux Arts structure was built to accommodate this growth. This impressive sandstone building, with its pediments, columns and arches, occupies an important downtown gateway. Not only a Trenton Landmark, the Courthouse is perhaps one of the best known buildings in Mercer County. Still in daily use, the building is in dire need of rehabilitation. Talk of renovation coupled with whispers of demolition have won this building inclusion on the Endangered Historic Sites list.



Current status: In Danger! Still suffering from lack of regular maintenance, this grand building remains in need of rehabilitation. As a new courthouse rises immediately adjacent to the historic one on Market Street (construction began in 2010), the fate of the 1903 building remains in question. Mercer County has previously indicated an intention to rehabilitate after completion of the new building.

Higbee Street School, 20 Bellevue Avenue

The Higbee Street School is a brick, Greek Revival building constructed in 1857. This building was the first school built specifically for the free public education of African American children in the City of Trenton. The building itself was a departure from previous schools. It followed design concepts of 19th century education reformers and is probably one of the first African American schools



to embody those innovations. By 1872 the student population had already outgrown the Higbee Street building and the students were moved to a temporary building while a new

one was constructed. This building is an important representative of African-American history in Trenton. It is also listed in the NJ and National Registers of Historic Places.

Current Status: In Danger! The building is currently vacant and boarded up. Years of neglect are taking a toll on the building, as deterioration continues.

Horsman Doll Factory, 350 Grand Street

The Horsman Doll factory complex was the main manufacturing location of the very popular Horsman family of dolls. Built in the early 1930s, it was once considered the largest doll factory in the United States. The one-block square complex, which at its peak had more than 800 employees, consists of two connected, three-story, brick mill buildings, plus several one-story brick additions. Because this site is the dominant feature in an otherwise residential neighborhood, it provides an important reminder of a time when workers still walked to their jobs from homes clustered around places of employment. Doll manufacturing at the site ceased in the 1960s, though sections of the complex housed various enterprises for some time thereafter. The complex has been completely vacant for approximately 10 years, leaving a substantial vacuum in the neighborhood. But these handsome buildings are structurally sound and offer enormous redevelopment potential. This is a great site for loft apartments or condominiums!



Current status: In Danger! The building is still vacant and continues to deteriorate due to neglect and vandalism. Although there are no current plans to demolish the building, there are also no current development plans, leaving the building's future uncertain.

Trenton Psychiatric Hospital, 7717 Stuyvesant Avenue

The Trenton Psychiatric Hospital Historic District occupies much of the Hospital's approximately 100-acre campus in Trenton and Ewing Township. The hospital was founded in 1848 at the urging of Dorothea Dix and was known as the "New Jersey Lunatic Asylum." It was the first institution established in New Jersey for the mentally ill. The hospital today includes an extensive campus with large, primarily stone buildings constructed from the mid-19th throughout the 20th centuries amid beautifully landscaped grounds. Noted Philadelphia architect John Notman and nationally significant landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing were responsible for the property's original plan. The historic district buildings include the main hospital, a cafeteria, a laundry, a firehouse, a shop, a laboratory, a powerhouse, the gatehouse and several residences for the Superintendent, the Commissioner, 12 doctors and a nurse's dormitory. The New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office has determined that the site is eligible for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The primary threat to the complex is demolition, although neglect is also taking its toll on this wonderful group of buildings.



Current status: In Danger! The hospital complex is still an unacknowledged and underused resource of incredible value; many buildings suffer from lack of maintenance and neglect. The combination of open space and historic buildings makes this property a particularly valuable asset.

Trenton Saving Fund Society, 125 East State Street

The Trenton Saving Fund Society was incorporated in 1844 and began business on July 20, 1847, in an office in the original Trenton City Hall. After moving several times, the managers decided to build a new banking house at the current location on East State Street, which was completed in April 1901. The white granite, steel structure building, designed by New York architects Mowbray and



Affinger in the Beaux Arts style, is one of Trenton's most beautiful buildings. An equally distinguished classical vocabulary was used on the building's interior, intended to give all who did business there a sense of pride and security. The central banking room's stained glass ceiling was covered over with acoustic tiles as part of an ill-advised modernization. Now vacant for several years, the building shows definite signs of deterioration, neglect and vandalism.

Current status: In Danger! The building is still vacant and continues to rapidly deteriorate from neglect.

Douglass House, Front Street at Mill Hill Park: PROGRESS!

Listed in the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places, the Douglass house is a significant piece of Trenton's history. It is representative of late 18th/ early 19th century rowhouses found in Trenton. The long history of the Douglass house is interwoven with the Revolutionary War, the development of Trenton and the resurgence of interest in US history that occurred in the early 20th century. While the Douglass house has been moved three times, the significance of the house has not diminished.



Current Status: Progress! While the Douglass House remains in need of a long-term use, it has benefited from significant exterior renovation and site work over the past three years. More work is scheduled and interior restoration is included in the Mill Hill Park Master Plan. The building is regularly maintained, and the first floor is open to the public for special events.

General Philemon Dickenson house, 46 Colonial Avenue

This stone house was originally built and occupied by the Rutherford family. It was purchased in 1776, shortly before the Battle of Trenton, by General Philemon Dickinson, commander in chief of the New Jersey Militia during the Revolutionary War. The house was occupied for many years by the Dickinson family, which entertained many famous people within its walls including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Witherspoon, Generals Greene and Knox and Joseph Bonaparte.

The exterior of the house was considerably remodeled in the mid-19th century and its interior was altered for use as an apartment house in 1905. Listed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places, this important piece of Trenton's history is a prime candidate for rehabilitation.

Current status: In Danger! The house is used for apartments but suffers from a lack of regular maintenance and continued deterioration.

The Delaware Inn/Champale Office, Lamberton St.: PROGRESS!

Eligible to be listed in the NJ and National Registers of Historic places, the Delaware Inn was built during the late 1700s and early 1800s when it was common for timber to be moved by raft down the Delaware River from upstate New York to Philadelphia. The raftmen invariably made an over-night stop in Lamberton (now part of Trenton's South Ward), where several inns were established to accommodate this traffic. Of these, the Red Tavern, later know as the Delaware Inn, was among the most popular. With deforestation and the increased popularity of railroad



transportation, the river was used less for transporting logs and the inns suffered. In 1891, the Trenton Brewing Company, owned by the Kuser family, was built on the adjacent property and the Delaware Inn was taken over for the brewery offices. During World War II, Champale was manufactured at the plant and the site prospered until December 31, 1986, when it closed. The brewery was demolished in 1998 but the Delaware Inn was spared. Vacant and neglected, this riverfront structure is an ideal candidate for re-use.

Current status: Progress! While the building currently remains vacant, it has benefited from significant stabilization work by the City of Trenton, listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places and the attention of a group of community advocates. The city has signed a long-term lease with the Port of Trenton Museum Foundation, a non-profit organization working to establish an educational and cultural facility in the Delaware Inn. The group received a New Jersey Historic Trust Grant in

2008 to complete a preservation plan for the building, and has applied for a second New Jersey Historic Trust grant to continue rehabilitation.

Delaware & Raritan Canal Houses: PROGRESS!

The Delaware and Raritan Canal opened for business on June 25, 1834. Trenton, at 56 feet above sea level, was the summit with seven locks lifting boats between Bordentown and Trenton and seven more locks lowering them from Trenton to New Brunswick. Trenton was also the hub of a transportation network that connected the city to major markets in Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore, and to raw materials (primarily coal) from



Pennsylvania. At the blast of a coal boat or the whistle of a yacht, bridge tenders swung Trenton's bridges aside to make way for canal traffic. Each lock tender and bridge tender was provided with a home as a benefit of his employment. In December 1932, the canal closed to commercial traffic. The D&R Canal, along with the houses, was entered on the State and National Registers of Historic Places in 1973 and the following year Gov. Brendan Byrne signed a bill creating the D&R Canal State Park. The three canal houses in Trenton, located on Hanover Street, Calhoun Street, and Prospect Street, have had tenants over the years, but when listed, two of the three were vacant and in disrepair.

Current status: Progress! The Calhoun Street canal house has been renovated and the state is seeking a tenant for the property, while the Hanover Street canal house has been stabilized. Additionally, the Prospect Street canal house remains occupied and the front porch was recently repaired.