

WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP'S RECORDS STORED IN A PRIVATE HOME'S DESK!

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In 1682 William Penn started his “Penn’s Woods” with three counties: Philadelphia, Bucks, and Chester. They paralleled the old “shires” of England, becoming the state’s administrative units.

As citizens from Philadelphia moved west, they wanted government offices closer to where they lived. As a result, Philadelphia County gave up land which became Berks County in 1752 and Montgomery County in 1784. Within the counties, townships were responsible for building roads, taking care of the poor, prosecuting offenders, and impounding stray animals.

Whitpain Township began in 1701 as a large tract (mostly to oversee the roads), and then in 1733, some of its land became Worcester Township. *Whitpain Township: A Tricentennial Reflection* (2002) states that the township’s first written records still in existence date from 1917. In the first half of the twentieth century, “the board of supervisors

[which sets township policy] held its meetings ... in the upstairs meeting room of the Centre Square Fire House [now demolished], and it stored township records in a desk in the home of the secretary-treasurer.”

In 1958, the township supervisors leased the second floor of the 1895 School on Skippack Pike; and six years later, the township purchased 7.6 acres of property along Wentz Road to build an administration building, opened in 1967. An addition was completed in 1976. Today the structure houses township offices: code enforcement; police, fire, and EMS; engineering; fire marshal; information services; finances; public works; and parks and recreation.

Carol Kalos is president of the Wissahickon Valley Historical Society. Its museum at the 1895 School, mentioned above, is open by appointment: info@WValleyHS.org. The building appears on the National Register of Historic Places.

