

Wrightstown Township Historical Commission

Minutes

7 August 2025

Call to Order: Chair Betty Davis called the meeting order at 1:10 p.m.

Present: Chair Betty Davis, Mary Lee Johnson, Jane DelBianco, Beverly Wilson, and Karl Niederer. Guests: Jane Magne, Township Supervisor, and Nancy Terry, resident of Newtown Borough, with genealogical roots in Wrightstown.

Agenda: Additions and Changes - None.

Approval of Minutes: 10 July 2025 meeting, APPROVED.

Treasurer's Report: Supervisor Jane Magne announced that the Township had restored the Commission's supplies and equipment funding to \$1,000.00 by charging the cost of new storm windows on the Octagonal School to a different account. She also stated for the record that \$1,310.00 from the memorial fund of the late George Donat, a former township supervisor, in an account for the Commission to be used for special purposes such as an antique item or item relevant to the history of Wrightstown. Current balance in the Commission's savings account is \$9,703.45. Report APPROVED. (See ATTACHMENT A.)

Old Business:

1. **Quaker History Exhibit** — Karl reported on the formal opening of the Quaker exhibit on 21 July, attended by all three township supervisors, Betty and Karl for the Commission, and eight members of Wrightstown Monthly Meeting. The *Bucks County Herald* covered the event in its 31 July edition, page A6 (see ATTACHMENT B). Karl announced that he plans to work with township volunteer IT consultant David Dutko to post an expanded version of the Quaker exhibit in the township web site.
2. **Octagonal School** —
 - **Open Houses** —
 - 20 July Open House set a one-day record of 84 visitors; parking congestion in the Second Street lot was a problem with 12 or more cars at various times (see below).
 - Assignments update:
 - Sunday, 17 August—Karl and Mary Lee (1:00-3:00); Jane D. and Betty (3:00-5:00)
 - Sunday, 21 September—Karl and Mary Lee (1:00-3:00); Betty and Izzy (3:00-5:00); featured will be Bucks County Recorder of Deeds exhibit and a presentation by County Recorder Dan McPhillips
 - Sunday 19 October—To be determined; featured will be an early 19th century live music encore performance by Marti and Bob Stevens and Nancy and Forest Deal
 - **Franklinia tree** — Bart Wilson will work with Gasper Landscapes to select and plant a replacement tree.
 - **Parking solution** — Increased turnout for Open Houses will necessitate sending overflow parking to the field accessed via Swamp Road entrance, guided by directional signage. Jane Magne will speak to Engineer Cindy Van Hise re options.
3. **Commission Report to Township Supervisors** —

- Karl summarized his remarks to the Supervisors on 21 July. He highlighted the opening of the Quaker Exhibit and expected press coverage in the *Bucks County Herald*; the record visitor turnout at the Octagonal School on 20 July and related parking issues; and gave a progress update on the Commission's scanning project, including recruitment of a local volunteer to perform the work. After discussion about the scanning project's equipment needs, the Supervisors voted to authorize an amount not to exceed \$3,000.00 from the Township's technology budget pay for necessary equipment.
 - Jane Magne indicated that no report to the Supervisors was necessary in August.
4. **Prints in Township Building** — Karl will prepare captions for the framed maps and prints in the public meeting room. Mary Lee reported she will change some of the framed prints and photos in the office area.
 5. **Mega Way Development History** — Jane Magne indicated that work on this project will be delayed until October.
 6. **Wrightstown Historical Information Scanning Project** —
 - Karl reported that the Supervisors had authorized funding to pay for specialized scanning equipment for the project. Township volunteer IT consultant David Dutko will order and install the equipment in a dedicated workstation in the accounting office before the end of the month.
 - Project volunteer Lisa (Loeffler) Fee will begin work on the project as soon as the equipment is set up and functional. Karl will advise Lisa's work.
 7. **Gaine House Documents** — Betty and Mary Lee will resume inventorying the Gaine Documents donated by William Osler on 21 August.

New Business:

- **Request to Perform Metal-Detecting at Octagonal School** — Dan Warner of Duboistown, PA emailed the Township on 22 July requesting permission to perform metal-detecting on the Octagonal School grounds. Jane Magne forwarded the request to the Historical Commission for response. Karl reported having contacted Mr. Warner by telephone to ask about his purpose, methods, intentions for any findings, documentation, protection of the site, injury liability waiver, and expected date frame to visit the site. Mr. Warner answered all questions. After discussion, however, the Commission voted unanimously to deny the request because the Octagonal School and grounds—listed on the National Register of Historic Places (2007) and documented by the Historic American Building Survey (c1933)—are a site that should remain protected except for supervised professional archaeological research and excavation. Karl will communicate the denial to Mr. Warner by letter. (See ATTACHMENT C.)

Next Meeting: Thursday, 4 September 2025

Adjournment: 2:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



—Karl J. Niederer, Secretary

Wrightstown Twp Historical Commission
August 2025
August 7,, 2025

Supply Account Balance:

~~\$0.00~~ 1,000.00

(Octagonal Schoolhouse window repair used the budget.)

New Supply Account Balance

~~\$0.00~~ 1,000.00

\$1300 George Donat

Savings account:

Current Balance:

\$9,463.65

Deposits:

25.00

Interest:

.80

Ending balance:

9,489.45

Deposit \$ 7/22

Zwycembe books

pic of school in snow,

214.00

Wrightstown hails its Quaker heritage with new exhibit

Chris Ruvo

They came seeking religious freedom. They ended up influencing the founding of a nation.

Such is a fundamental theme of the Quaker story in the United States. Few places are richer in stateside Quaker history than Wrightstown. That's a key reason the township's official historical commission has organized a new exhibit: *Quakers in Wrightstown*.

Debuted July 21, the exhibit at the Wrightstown Municipal Building runs for approximately one year, through the summer of 2026. Officials plan to create an online virtual display — possibly by later this summer — that will live on the township website (wrightstownpa.org) indefinitely.

The exhibit features objects, photographs, pamphlets and reproduced manuscripts that help tell the tale of the Quakers in Wrightstown, a history that stretches back more than 340 years.

"The story of Quakers in Wrightstown informs Americans today of why our society has taken shape," said Karl J. Niederer, a member of the Wrightstown Historical Commission.

Quakers predominated among the initial European settlers of Wrightstown. John Chapman and his wife Jane arrived in the Pennsylvania colony with fellow Quaker William Penn in 1682 and received the first grant of land in Wrightstown in 1684, according to the historical commission.

Like Penn, the Chapmans and hundreds of other Quaker colonists came to America to escape bitter faith-based persecution in England, Niederer said.

"Pennsylvania's heritage as a colony to provide a safe place for people to worship according to their conscience was grounded in the Quaker beliefs of its founder, William Penn, and fellow colonists," Niederer said. "Wrightstown, a township in one of the original three counties of Pennsylvania (Bucks, Philadelphia and Chester), shared in that heritage and preserved it well down through the centuries. The United States Constitution and Bill of Rights reflect that heritage and form the basis for our society today."

Quaker land ownership, and influence on Wrightstown's society, economy, education and governance, remained significant well into the 20th century, according to the commission.

"Most of the early schools in Wrightstown, including the historic Octagonal School (1802-1850), were established by groups of individual Quakers or by the Wrightstown Meeting itself," Niederer noted.

The exhibit spotlights Quaker history through items that include:

- A high-resolution reproduction of John Chapman's original 1722 deed to part of the property that now comprises Wrightstown Monthly Meeting on Durham Road
- A reproduction of an 1816 trust deed whereby retiring



COURTESY OF WRIGHTSTOWN TOWNSHIP

Wrightstown officials — members of the municipality's board of supervisors and its historical commission — gather at the township building on July 21 to open the Quakers in Wrightstown exhibit.

trustees of the unincorporated Meeting transferred their ownership-in-trust of the Meeting's property and buildings to a new group of elected trustees. Quakers repeated the process for more than 250 years.

• An original "Living Quakers" quilt, one of several produced by the Meeting's First Day (Sunday) School children from 2000 to 2008. This was an intergenerational project in which youth of the Meeting wrote letters to living adult Quakers both locally and nationally — including some very

prominent ones such as Joan Baez — asking questions about their lives and experiences with Quakerism. "Each person interviewed signed a fabric heart later sewn in the quilt, and each unique design in the quilt represents one of the participating children," Niederer said.

People who visit the physical or virtual exhibits are encouraged to share their Wrightstown Quaker stories with the township historical commission by sending an email to history@wrightstownpa.org.

TOGETHER, WE ARE WINNING THE FIGHT
TO KEEP LOCAL JOURNALISM ALIVE.

JOIN US.

BUCKS COUNTY
HERALD
FOUNDATION



From: [Jane Magne](#)
To: davisbetty53@yahoo.com; [johnsonfinefurniture](#); [Karl J. Niederer](#); [Jane DelBianco](#); bbwilson56@gmail.com
Subject: Fw: Octagonal Schoolhouse
Date: Thursday, August 7, 2025 9:08:45 AM

This is for the Historical Commission to consider. My concern is that he does not mention whether items found are the property of the landowner.

Jane

From: Dan Warner <dan.warner@outlook.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 22, 2025 9:43 AM
To: Stacy Crandell <scrandell@wrightstownpa.org>
Subject: Octagonal Schoolhouse

Hello Stacy,

My name is Dan Warner. I live in Duboistown, PA. I visit my son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren every few months in Bucks County. They live on Twinbrook Circle in Doylestown.

My hobby is metal detecting. I am always looking for a new location and my son gives me ideas for locations when visiting Doylestown. He sent me a link to the school house in Wrightstown Township yesterday.

Would it be possible to get permission to metal detect around the "Octagonal Schoolhouse"? I am very respectful of property, do not do any intrusive or sloppy digs and return property cosmetically to as was condition. I follow all conditions outlined by property owner and waive all personal liability while detecting on the property.

Before you reply no, please review my YouTube channel where I document my adventures. I have it linked below my contact information. I never reveal my actual location to keep the privacy of the site or home owner. The hunts will showcase my respect for property.

Looking forward to hearing back from you.

Dan Warne
123 Shaffer Street
Duboistown, PA 17702
(570) 447-5507
<https://www.youtube.com/@patreasurehunters>

From: [Karl J. Niederer](#)
To: [Jane Magne](#); davisbetty53@yahoo.com; [johnsonfinefurniture](#); [Jane DelBianco](#); bbwilson56@gmail.com
Cc: [Historical Commission](#)
Subject: RE: Octagonal Schoolhouse
Date: Thursday, August 7, 2025 12:22:36 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Jane Magne (and all),

I telephoned Dan Warner this morning to ask the following questions on behalf of the WTHC. These should be reviewed as part of our discussion of his request.

1. What is your purpose for doing metal-detecting on the Octagonal School site?
 - A. I am a hobbyist. I look for metal objects on or near the surface (no deeper than about 3"), such as coins, nails, etc.
2. What how do you dig for things below the surface?
 - A. I have a cylindrical device the diameter of a coffee can which I press into the ground no more than 3". I lift the soil "plug" out of the ground and place it on a small cloth blanket to examine it for metal. If anything is there, I retrieve it and replace the soil "plug" cleanly in the ground. No residue of soil or sod is left.
3. What do you intend do with what you find?
 - A. If I find modern coins (post-1964) I would like to keep them. If I find pre-1964 silver coins or very historic coins (early 20th or 19th century coins), I suggest splitting the value of them between the Township and myself. If I find historic objects or artifacts, I would donate them to the Township.
4. Do you document your findings or reveal the property location?
 - A. I do video record my my finds and post them on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/@patreasurehunters>. However, I never disclose the precise location of my metal-detecting. For example, the Octagonal School would not be in the background of my video recordings, and the site would not be identified.
5. What happens if you injure yourself while doing metal-detecting on the site?
 - A. I hold the property owner harmless and do not consider them liable for any injury or damages. I will sign a waiver of liability if requested.
6. Will you permit a member of the Township Historical Commission to accompany you while you perform your metal detecting on the site?

A. Absolutely.

7. When would you expect to visit the site to do this, if granted permission by the Township?

A. Probably in September, the next time I visit family in the area. I will notify you in advance of my precise date and time.

--Karl

—
KARL J. NIEDERER
154 GROUSE CIRCLE
VILLAGE OF BUCKINGHAM SPRINGS
NEW HOPE, PA 18938-1550 USA
(609) 468-4953
karl@niederer.us



From: Jane Magne <janem@wrightstownpa.org>
Sent: Thursday, August 7, 2025 9:09 AM
To: davisbetty53@yahoo.com; johnsonfinefurniture <johnsonfinefurniture@comcast.net>; Karl J. Niederer <karl@niederer.us>; Jane DelBianco <janedelbianco@yahoo.com>; bbwilson56@gmail.com
Subject: Fw: Octagonal Schoolhouse

This is for the Historical Commission to consider. My concern is that he does not mention whether items found are the property of the landowner.

Jane

From: Dan Warner <dan.warner@outlook.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 22, 2025 9:43 AM
To: Stacy Crandell <scrandell@wrightstownpa.org>
Subject: Octagonal Schoolhouse

Hello Stacy,

My name is Dan Warner. I live in Duboistown, PA. I visit my son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren every few months in Bucks County. They live on Twinbrook Circle in Doylestown.

My hobby is metal detecting. I am always looking for a new location and my son gives me ideas for locations when visiting Doylestown. He sent me a link to the school house in Wrightstown Township yesterday.

Would it be possible to get permission to metal detect around the "Octagonal Schoolhouse"? I am very respectful of property, do not do any intrusive or sloppy digs and return property cosmetically to as was condition. I follow all conditions outlined by property owner and waive all personal liability while detecting on the property.

Before you reply no, please review my YouTube channel where I document my adventures. I have it linked below my contact information. I never reveal my actual location to keep the privacy of the site or home owner. The hunts will showcase my respect for property.

Looking forward to hearing back from you.

Dan Warne

123 Shaffer Street

Duboistown, PA 17702

(570) 447-5507

<https://www.youtube.com/@patreasurehunters>



WRIGHTSTOWN TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL COMMISSION

2203 SECOND STREET PIKE, WRIGHTSTOWN, PA 18940

8 August 2025

Mr. Dan Warner
123 Shaffer Street
Duboisstown, PA 17702

**Re: Request to Metal-Detect on
Octagonal School Property**

Dear Mr. Warner:

Thank you for your email of 22 July to Township Manager Stacy Crandell requesting permission to metal detect on the grounds of the Wrightstown Octagonal School. Your request was forwarded to the Historical Commission for review, since the Octagonal School is a historic site and museum operated by the Commission. Thank you also for taking my telephone call yesterday to discuss details of your request.

The Historical Commission reviewed your request yesterday at its regular monthly meeting, and decided to deny the request. The Commission considers the Octagonal School and grounds—listed on the National Register of Historic Places (2007) and documented by the Historic American Building Survey (c.1933)—a site that should remain protected except for supervised professional archaeological research and excavation.

The Commission certainly appreciates your interest in the Octagonal School site, as well as your considerate approach to metal detecting. Your original request and your responses to my telephone questions yesterday demonstrate that you are mindful of the sensitivity of such activity. However, the Commission believes that the Octagonal School and grounds warrant professional historical and archaeological inquiry, research, and examination only. The Commission trusts that you will understand the reason for denying your request.

If you have further questions concerning this matter or about the Octagonal School, please reply by email to history@wrightstownpa.org.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

A blue ink signature of Karl J. Niederer, written in a cursive style.

Karl J. Niederer
Secretary

cc: J. B. Magne, Township Supervisor