



THE KENNETT PIKE ASSOCIATION

Newsletter



FEBRUARY 2015

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“SIGN, SIGN, EVERYWHERE A SIGN, BLOCKIN’ OUT THE SCENERY” (Five Man Electric Band)

Drive along the Kennett Pike from the north end of Centreville to Christiana Care at the Route 100 intersection --- a total of 4.3 miles. How many signs do you think you pass? 50? 100? 200? Unfortunately, you will pass by 474 signs (both directions), excluding street name signs. If you travel this route at an average of 40 mph, you will pass by a different sign on your side of the road every 2 seconds! And for the 1.1 mile stretch through the shopping district of Greenville you will pass more than 1 sign every second on your side of the road! The very signs that are intended to inform us, and make us safe, have become a dangerous distraction if we try to read them all. There are so many signs now that they have lost their effect and people tune them out.

Signs are intended to be good things. They inform us about the rules of the road, and they maintain order. They direct us to where we wanted to go. They warn us of dangers ahead, and tell us how much further we have to go. They tell us where we are and where we are going. But finding the sign you need today in the mix of hundreds of other signs is very difficult if you are going to keep your eyes safely on the road. How did this happen? Why do we have so many signs?

The Kennett Pike is a state road. Roads are bounded by a right-of-way, or stretch of land beyond the road surface owned by the state and controlled by the state. Since many state roads are part of the National Highway System, state regulations on signage largely mirror federal regulations which stipulate a myriad of safety and information signs in their Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices which sets standards for roadway signs and markings. Beyond the right-of-way land is mostly privately owned and controlled by county regulations. For signage on private property, the New Castle County Unified Development Code (UDC) regulates sign types, sizes, numbers, areas, illumination, etc. The proliferation of signs starts with good intentions. "Road Narrows", "Turn Ahead", "Bicycle Path", "Bend in Road", "Deer Area", "This Way to Winterthur", "Children at Play", "50 MPH", "Wilmington 3 Miles Ahead", "Vote for Alex Trebek for County Council", etc. etc. Some signs even tell you that another sign is ahead!

Too many signs are a blight on an otherwise attractive neighborhood or roadway, and undermine the pride people have in where they live. They sap civic pride, and clutter our roadways. In short, too many signs are unsightly and ineffective. So what can we do? There are 3 things we can do.

1. Consider new sign regulations permitting fewer and smaller signs, and limiting bright colors, especially along scenic byways and in historic and cultural areas. Another article in this Newsletter reports on the work of a new group who are tackling this very issue : the National Scenic Byway Committee on Design Guidelines. This group is chaired by the President of the KPA and includes many other civic group representatives.
2. Appeal to property owners and store operators to design and erect signs which are context-sensitive and comport with the character of the surrounding area. Unlit or externally lit signs , and smaller signs can be just as effective as large bright signs, and they better preserve the character of the area.
3. Enforce the sign regulations we already have. The County and State do not always enforce the existing regulations. Election campaign signs often remain many months after the election is over. Sometimes signs are erected that are clearly not in compliance with regulations.

A recent example is a case in point about sign regulation enforcement. A new store in Greenville Center erected a number of large signs on the building they occupy close to Kennett Pike. Members of the public and several other store owners contacted the KPA and registered their displeasure with these new signs. It turns out that the signs violate several New Castle County regulations regarding their size and placement. The KPA tried to contact the store owners but did not make any progress. A member of the KPA Board filed a complaint with the County but no action was taken. KPA met with Tom Gordon, the New Castle County Executive, and members of the Land Use Department. It was explained how a number of Civic groups and members of the public were unhappy with the signs and that they violated the County code. To his great credit, Tom Gordon decided that the signs must be brought into compliance with the code and instructed the Land Use Department to take action, which is now underway. The community is grateful for this support by the County, and it is hoped that the new signs comport with the culture and character of the scenic byway, and do not push the signing limitations to their limits. Most stores and property owners erect signs which are sensitive to the area and the wishes of the public, but some choose to push the limits on signage to the detriment of the beauty of our area. Work will continue by KPA and other civic groups to address signage regulations and enforcement. If you have ideas to share, please let us know!



Courtesy of Hagley Museum & Library

MONTCHANIN VILLAGE AND JACOB BROOM

The historic village of Montchanin, located along Route 100 near the intersections of Kirk Road and West Rockland Road has a rich history dating back to the 1700's. Known today by such landmarks as The Inn at Montchanin and Crazy Kats restaurant, the village was once part of the Winterthur estate. It was named for Anne Alexandrine de Montchanin, mother of Pierre Samuel du Pont and grandmother of the founder of the DuPont Company, Eleuthere Irenee du Pont. The hamlet, as it was then, was built to house laborers who worked at the nearby DuPont powder mills. The settlement consisted of 11 buildings intertwined with beautiful gardens. Historically, the buildings functioned as a working hamlet including a schoolhouse, post office, residences, a train station, and even a blacksmith shop, now the restaurant Crazy Kats. Today the village is listed on the National Historic Register and a number of buildings there are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Another such building to the SE of Montchanin is the Jacob Broom house, seen above right. Jacob Broom was born in 1752 the son of a blacksmith and farmer named James Broom and his wife Esther Willis, a Quaker. Broom attended school at Wilmington's Old Academy, then tried his hand at farming, surveying and also became a businessman. He married Rachel Pierce in 1773 and they had 8 children together. Broom went into politics and became the vice-Mayor of Wilmington in 1776, a position to which he was re-elected six times. He also served as Mayor a total of 4 times, never losing an election.

A pacifist, Jacob Broom never fought in the Revolution. He was, however, a Patriot and made significant contributions to our country's independence. In 1776 he was elected Second Burgess of Wilmington, and is credited with drawing the maps George Washington used in 1777 at the Battle of the Brandywine. From 1784-1788 he was chosen and sent by the community to the legislature as a representative of New Castle County. When George Washington visited Wilmington in 1783 Jacob expressed his strong support for a central government. He signed a petition to abolish slavery in 1777 although a later census shows him to have a household slave.

In his mid-twenties Jacob Broom was one of the youngest delegates at the Constitutional Convention and documents show he played a key role to ensure that the "little" states were not bereft of their voice. He went on to sign the Constitution. In 1795 Jacob Broom built a home above his cotton mill on the Brandywine; the cotton mill was destroyed by fire, and in 1802 he sold the property to E. I. du Pont. Over the years the house endured several additions and subtractions, and remains a private residence.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Greater Wilmington is within a three-hour drive of one-third of the nation's population.
- Greenville Delaware is just 2.8 square miles with a modest population of about 2,300 residents.
- Centreville Delaware is some 14 square miles with a similar population.
- The Village of Centreville was founded in 1750 and is a National Historic district. It has 15 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Delaware has the fewest counties of any state --- 3. All started with different names: New Castle was New Amstel, Kent was St. Jones, and Sussex was Deale.
- Sussex County has the largest population of chickens of any county in the country --- twice as many as #2, Cullman County, Alabama.



KPA VOLUNTEER DIRECTORS

KPA relies on a group of dedicated volunteers to carry out it's Mission : to preserve, protect and beautify Delaware's only National Scenic Byway --- the Kennett Pike and Route 100 corridors. We are also grateful for our partners --- 250 household members, several dozen neighborhood associations, and many small businesses. Here are our volunteer Directors:

Glenn Barnhill	Joanne Bahr Cushman	Christine Homer
Glenn Barnhill, Jr.	Deborah Barnhill Diver	Ellie Maroney
Richard Beck	Kate du Pont	Nancy Martz
Joe Carbonnel	Mark Fortunato	Bill Rowe
Robert Crandell	Patty Hobbs	Tom Scott
	John Danzeisen, President	

Two of our long serving Directors --- Joanne Bahr-Cushman and Glenn Barnhill --- are retiring from the Board, but will continue to work with KPA to serve the community.

THANK YOU Joanne and Glenn!



PRIORITY THREATS TO OUR NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

Delaware has but one National Scenic Byway --- the Brandywine Valley National Scenic Byway (the Byway) --- comprised of the Kennett Pike and Route 100 corridors. This Byway was chosen in 2005 as one of 120 distinctive roads in the country with special intrinsic qualities --- scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational aspects which are treasured by residents and visitors alike. Other roads in the country designated as National Scenic Byways include the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina, Hell's Canyon in Oregon and the Skyline Drive in Virginia.

The Kennett Pike Association has been working hard for more than 55 years to preserve, protect and beautify the corridors. In the 10 years since its selection, much has been done to catalog the intrinsic qualities of the Brandywine National Scenic Byway, and a great deal of planning has been done in the form of a Corridor Management Plan. A new organization was established --- the Brandywine Valley National Scenic Byway Partnership (the Partnership) --- to oversee the protection and preservation efforts. This group is a coalition of civic and area organizations including the Kennett Pike Association, Delaware Greenways, Delaware Nature Society, Brandywine Conservancy, Centreville Civic Association, and others.

In December 2014 the Partnership launched a new effort to further protect and preserve the Byway. A new working group was formed known as the Committee on Design Guidelines to develop proposed new standards which are sensitive to, and preserve the intrinsic qualities of the Byway. The Committee is Chaired by KPA President John Danzeisen, and includes Sarah Willoughby (Greater Wilmington Convention and Visitors Bureau), Ginger North (Delaware Nature Society), Irv Hollingsworth and Gretchen Mercer (Centreville Civic Association), and Ellie Maroney, Joe Carbonnel, Bill Rowe and Patty Hobbs (KPA).

The Committee on Design Guidelines will develop proposed new standards for buildings, signage, setbacks, and construction materials to be used along the Byway which are context sensitive and protective of the intrinsic qualities of the Byway. Once the guidelines and standards are developed, they will be presented to the Partnership for their adoption. Subsequently, the new standards will be proposed to the State of Delaware and to New Castle County for adoption into their building, signage and development codes as a special overlay for the Byway.

At public meetings in the second half of 2014 for another study --- the Greenville Village study --- launched by Delaware Greenways and New Castle County ---- several concerns were raised time and again as immediate threats to the Byway. The recurring themes were in regard to 5 issues:

1. **Signage Dimensions** – size limitations in the County code vary by zoning. Some zonings along the Byway allow wall or free standing signs up to several hundred square feet which distracts greatly from the scenic and vista view qualities.

2. **Signage Illumination** --- businesses and institutions have always been encouraged by civic groups like KPA to avoid internally lit signs, and changing electronic signs. Many have complied with the wishes of the community, but some have not.
3. **Building Heights** --- several zonings along the Byway allow buildings up to 180-feet tall, the height of the Rollins Building on Concord Pike. Such heights are inappropriate for the Byway and destroy the scenic and historic qualities of the area.
4. **Building Setbacks** --- some zonings along the Byway allow for buildings to be constructed as close as 15-feet from the roadway, eliminating the vista views and character of the area.
5. **Number and Color of Signs** --- as reported earlier in this newsletter, there are close to 500 signs along the Kennett Pike from the PA border to the southern part of Greenville. Too many signs can be a serious distraction, not just from the scenic views but also from a safety standpoint.

The Committee has chosen to tackle these 5 priority threats to the Byway first. We will keep you up to date on the efforts to establish new standards for the Byway, but in the meantime we are very interested in hearing your thoughts and ideas about these issues, and other standards you would like to see



KPA MEMBERSHIP AND SUPPORT

The KPA has been protecting and beautifying the Kennett Pike and Route 100 corridors for more than 55 years. We are blessed to have an all-volunteer leadership team, but the plantings, landscaping and maintenance cost a lot of money each year. We could not do our work without our family members, our median sponsors, and our company and neighborhood association supporters. On behalf of the entire community, "THANK YOU" for making our surroundings more beautiful!

Please support the KPA in its work, and become a member, with a tax deductible payment

Name

Street

City and State Zip Code

Amount Enclosed\$60 Family\$150 Company, Civic or Neighborhood Association

Send To: The Kennett Pike Association P. O. Box 3592 Greenville, DE 19807



PLEASE THANK OUR LANDSCAPED MEDIAN SPONSORS

Delaware’s Department of Transportation (DelDOT) grants the Kennett Pike Association a Right-of-Way Use agreement to landscape and maintain the medians on the Kennett Pike and along Route 141 in Greenville. Residents, visitors and commuters all enjoy the beauty of Mother Nature on the gateway to the Brandywine National Scenic Byway and its many attractions. It is expensive to maintain these wonderful plantings and we could not do it without our terrific member support. In particular we cannot do this work without the generosity of our 11 Median Sponsors who contribute significantly to the landscape maintenance. Please thank these sponsors who make our lives more pleasant and our travels more rewarding every day.

BDO USA

BRANDYWINE FINE PROPERTIES, SOTHEBY’S

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THANK YOU ALL FOR MAKING OUR LIVES BETTER!

ODYSSEY SCHOOL AT BARLEY MILL PLAZA

Last fall the Odyssey Charter School gave an open house presentation to the community about their plans to develop an expanded Charter School at Barley Mill Plaza. They have contracted to purchase 35 acres and several buildings for their plans to evolve from today’s K – 4 to an eventual K – 12, adding one grade level each year. Four buildings in total are planned for the school: Elementary School building, Middle School building, High School building, Arts & Science Center. Odyssey now has 640 students, and will grow to 1,200. They plan a maximum of 132 children per grade divided into 6 classes (22 students per class). All access to the new campus will be from Lancaster Pike, not from Route 141.

The school has an open random lottery enrollment system, and at present there is a waiting list. The leadership of the school is proud of the great diversity of students, with a large population of students from the City of Wilmington.



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Odyssey is also proud of their student achievements --- their test scores are in the top 10% of the state. They even offer a special subject to second grade students --- Greek!

The Odyssey School expansion appears to be a good use for this property. The school will be situated at the back of the Barley Mill Plaza site, away from Route 141. The future uses of the remaining 60+ acres of Barley Mill Plaza --- now office buildings ---- is still unknown. The community can be pleased, however, that at least the back 35 acres will be a growing and successful Charter School.

The Kennett Pike Association
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