

WILLISTOWN TOWNSHIP

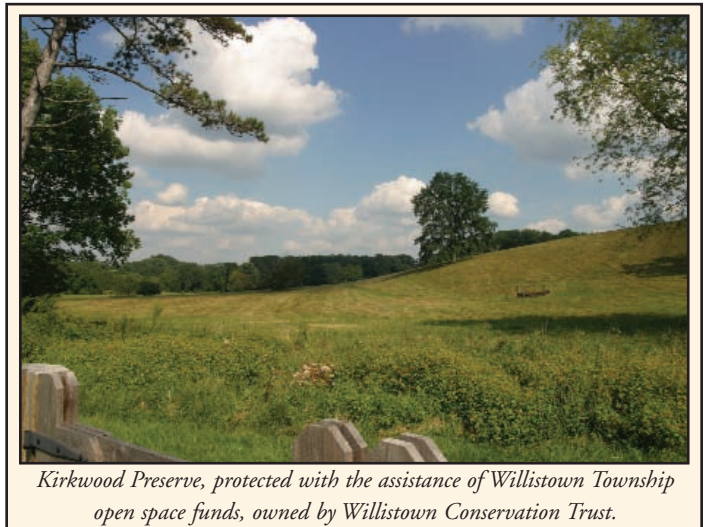


Willistown Township is unique in that it boasts thousands of acres of protected open space just 14 miles west of Philadelphia. Willistown Township remains in large part an oasis of green space thanks to the combined support of our citizens and organizations within our community. The conservation ethic of Willistowners was evidenced in 1999 by the overwhelming passage (79%) of a 1/8th of 1% earned income tax increase to fund an open space protection program. The open space program has since protected over 361 acres in Willistown, 192 owned by Willistown and 169 owned by preservation partners.

The conservation movement in Willistown began with the Brandywine Conservancy over 25 years ago and is now under the guidance of the Willistown Conservation Trust. The cooperation between Willistown landowners and these land trusts has protected 28% of our Township with conservation easements which limit the properties to little or no development.

Willistown, situated in southeastern Chester County, was organized as a township in 1704 and contains some of the most beautiful land in the Delaware Valley. The rolling hills and open fields of green that slope into the steep valley of Ridley Creek or to the winding banks of Crum Creek include fine examples of 18th and 19th century vernacular architecture. The old mill seats that line these streams were important to the early development of the area, and the remains of their former grandeur create a harmony with the natural forests and fields along the way.

The villages, with their general stores, taverns and shops, mostly residential now, serve as reminders of their importance to the agricultural community that flourished in the Township during the 1800's. Agriculture continued to be a very important industry in this rural township until the 1950's. By the mid 19th century, a journal of Nathan Evans, a Quaker farmer, provided a detailed picture of the Underground Railroad operating in Willistown. Many Quakers actively supported the freeing of slaves at that time. By the late 19th century, wealthy Philadelphians purchased lands in Willistown for summer retreats or farming endeavors that were treated more as a hobby than conducted out of economic necessity.



Kirkwood Preserve, protected with the assistance of Willistown Township open space funds, owned by Willistown Conservation Trust.

Willistown has three districts on the National Historic Register within its borders: Sugartown Historic District, White Horse Historic District, and Okehocking Historic District.

The Okehocking Historic District exemplifies William Penn's respect and protection of the native Indian population in Willistown its 500 acres constituting the first American land grant issued in the colonies by Penn in 1702. Willistown's Okehocking Preserve, 170 acres of the Okehocking Historic District, was acquired by the Township through the open space program with the assistance of Chester County's 21st century Landscapes Fund and Preservation Partnership Program and the Pennsylvania State Department of Conservation and Natural Resource's Community Conservation and Preservation Partnerships program. Okehocking Preserve is protected in perpetuity for open space, natural resource protection and recreation, and is open to the public. The preserve was named after the Okehocking band of the Unamis tribe, known as the Down River People, of the Lenni Lenape Indians who made this land their home.



Historic Sugartown Crossroads Village

The Sugartown Historic District, located in Malvern, includes a restored crossroads village of eight buildings which illustrates 18th and early 19th century lifestyles in Willistown. It is open for tours and by appointment. Historic Sugartown would not exist today without the passion and leadership of Willistown resident John Nagy. A debt of gratitude is owed to the late John Nagy, our local historian, who for more than 40 years researched all of the structures in Willistown located on the Breou Farm Atlas of 1883. His work is included in *Acres of Quakers* (2006), the 300th anniversary history of Willistown Township, written and compiled by John Nagy and Penny Goulding, the Township's Historic Commission Chair, and underwritten by the Township.

The White Horse Historic District, also a crossroads village, includes a blacksmith shop featured by many artists including Peter Sculthorpe.