

# A Pennsylvanian Farming Legacy

## Springton Manor Farm, an original William Penn Estate



GLENMOORE, PENNSYLVANIA

CASE STUDY: August 2012

### A Proud History

Chester County, Pennsylvania is home to expansive **Springton Manor Farm**, a 300-acre working facility open to the public. American history is deeply rooted in its rich earth, in fact, all the way back to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1681, England's King Charles the Second granted William Penn, Jr. a New World Colony. Admiral William Penn, William Penn, Jr.'s father, was a staunch Royalist who supported King Charles the First in earlier sea campaigns. King Charles the Second rewarded the Penn family with the new land, insisting that it be called Pennsylvania or "Penn's Woods". William Penn was granted a total of eight manor estates, one of which was Springton Manor Farm. The maiden name of William Penn, Jr.'s wife was Guielma Springett and this served as the basis for Springton Manor Farm's name.

Fast forward to 1776 and the American Revolution. George Washington's victory over the British ensured some serious changes to land ownership. The Americans' victory voided William Penn, Jr.'s British claim to all his manor lands. In 1788, after years of indecision, clear title to Springton Manor Farm was finally granted to the McConaghy Family. The McConaghys were owners until 1797. A series of only three families would subsequently own Springton Manor Farm between 1818 and 1971, serving as proof of how treasured this land really is.

### A Presidential Connection

James Mcllvaine owned the land from 1818-1830 and intended it for a Merino sheep farm. His son, Abraham Mcllvaine, a US Congressman, owned it from 1830-1863. The Mcllvaine family merits special attention, as it has strong ties to President Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Mcllvaine served in Congress with fellow Congressman Abraham Lincoln. The men formed a lasting friendship, which continued through Lincoln's Presidency. Although the historical records are scant, there is a likely reason President Lincoln's funeral train made a certain stop on April 22, 1865. Local historians firmly believe that the funeral procession stopped near Downingtown, PA, so that the Mcllvaine family could personally pay their respects to their fallen colleague and his widow.

In 1865, the Mcllvaine family sold Springton Manor Farm to a surgeon from Philadelphia, Dr. Washington Atlee. In the 19th Century, it was considered fashionable to have a farm near Philadelphia. The family came to Springton Manor Farm by train from Philadelphia to Downingtown, and then by train to Glenmore. Atlee only used the property as a summer retreat and disposed of it in 1886 to George Bartol, a businessman hailing from Philadelphia. The Bartol family held the farm for the longest period of time in the property's history, 1886-1971. George Bartol was responsible for developing the numerous



buildings seen today, including the Great Barn and the Tenant house. Bartol was quite interested in architecture and certainly left his legacy on the property.



*Great Barn reroof project*

### County of Chester's New Demonstration Farm

In the early 1970s, County of Chester, PA, officials recognized the need to preserve the area's farming heritage. A search for a suitable manor farm or estate was undertaken. In 1971, the County of Chester assumed title from the most recent Bartol family owner. The County would manage Springton Manor Farm with the intent to preserve its heritage, continue its farming traditions whilst allowing the public access to the grounds and facilities. It is wonderful to see that this mission has been accomplished. Placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, Springton Manor Farm showcases everything bright and beautiful about farming life. **Jack Stewart, County of Chester Department of Facilities and Parks Project Manager I**, kindly accompanied **Cedar Shake and Shingle Bureau ("CSSB")** representatives on their site visit and provided valuable background information on the reroofing project decision.



*A lovely country setting*

### The Great Barn Reroofing Project

The CSSB was delighted to learn that Springton Manor Farm's Great Barn was being reroofed with **Certi-Sawn® Premium Grade 24" x 5/8" tapersawn shakes** at 7" exposure. Manufactured by **Best Shingle Sales Inc.**, Hoquiam, WA, this current project is massive, so large that it is visible from the road leading to the job site. The project requires 147 squares of roofing material and has six people on the installation crew at most times.



*Great Barn architectural detail*

**John Miller**, Park Technician and Historian, refers to the Great Barn as "... predominantly an Extended Pennsylvania Barn." There is quite a bit of debate amongst historical architects when it comes to determining architectural style for old barns. There are three main types of "Bank Barns" found in Pennsylvania; Sweitzer (Swiss) Barn (1730-1850), Standard Pennsylvania Barn (1790-1890) and Extended Pennsylvania Barn (1790-1920). **Miller** did also state, however, that "The [Great] Barn has characteristics of all three types of Bank Barns".



Extended Pennsylvania Barns are known for their larger forebays, extended ramp sides, and a heavier look. A fancy cupola crowns the structure's apex, a distinct nod to Victorian times. Inside the barn, one notes its unique three threshing floors with two mows. An intriguing set of ropes, pulleys, tracks and trapdoors were used to move and store harvested crops, much targeted for winter livestock feed. Another fascinating addition was a new method to distribute water via the barn's gravity fed ram system, designed by former owner and architecture enthusiast, Congressman McIlvaine, in about 1843.



*Inside the Great Barn*



*Water cistern beside the Great Barn*

**Bill Gillespie**, President of **Gillespie Contracting Inc.**, a CSSB member **Approved Installer**, his foreman, **Robert Gillespie**, and estimator, **Ken Anderson**, were also on site. This roofing company is involved in many upscale projects, including elaborate equestrian facilities and grand estate homes. The firm's commitment to quality is evident with the tidiness of



*Reroof work in progress*

the jobsite and the care that its crew takes with product installation around this historical building and its artifacts. **Bill Gillespie** expressed his sincere appreciation to the Department of Facilities and Parks for being so accommodating to his crew during the project. As of the interview date, his crew had been on site for a month; the only reported disruption to date was alternating the visitor traffic flow around different barn entrances to accommodate the reroofing work as it progressed. **Bill Gillespie** also noted that the CSSB's 'Green from the Start' brochure, product data, member manufacturer lifetime limited warranty and other association publications were very helpful right from specification through installation project phases.



*Roof edge detail*

### **Certi-label™ Cedar: A Wise Choice**

Pennsylvania's climate includes hot and humid summers plus cold winters. **Certi-Sawn® tapersawn cedar shakes** were selected for this project as **Certi-label™ cedar products** are known to handle multiple types of weather conditions. In addition, cedar is traditional to the area and was a perfect fit for an historic working farm that showcases the past to both present and future generations. Imagine CSSB representatives' delight when mention of another **Certi-label™ roof** on the property was made...





*The Manor House*

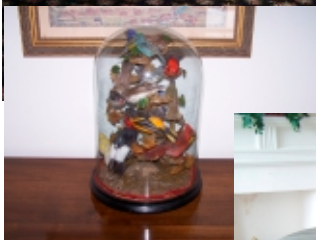
### The Manor House Reroof: Certi-Sawn® Shakes

Another famous building on site is Springton Manor House. Built in 1833, it was recently reroofed by Gillespie Contracting Inc. with 72 squares of Premium Grade 24" X 5/8" Certi-Sawn® tapersawn shakes at 7" exposure, manufactured by Waldun Forest Products Partnership. Today the Manor House is used for tours, meetings and weddings, 29 events this season alone! Ironically, it was George Bartol, former owner, who nearly had The Manor House torn down; luckily he decided against this drastic plan and remodeled parts of it instead.

The elegant Victorian décor is a reminder of glory days past. Most of the house has been carefully



restored to its original state including appropriate Victorian period furnishings. It's the many details that make a tour through the Manor House so interesting. Every corner, every picture, every artifact shares a moment of the past. A few key pieces stand out: the McIlvaine family table is the same one used by the former owners. A family descendent living in Iowa donated it for the Manor House. Another item to note is an exquisite array of songbirds under glass, a prized Victorian era collection that sits on a side table.

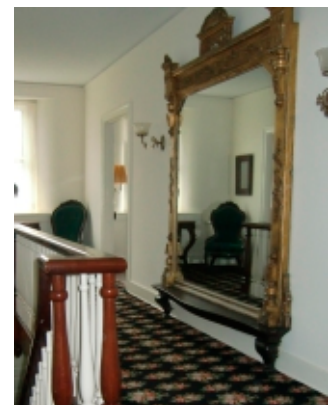


*Interior Design Elements*



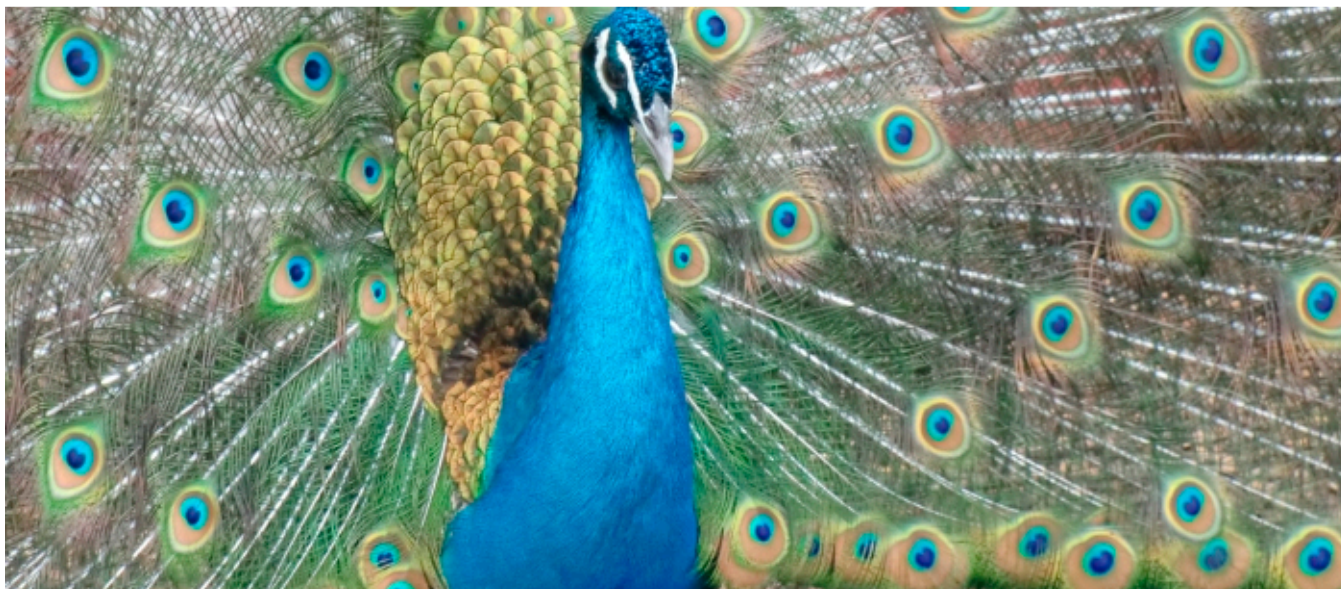
### The Haunted Mirror

At the top of the elegant wood staircase is the famous Haunted Mirror. As the story goes, a budding author of a local ghost book visited Springton Manor and asked for details on site hauntings. While on site, the author purportedly 'saw' an apparition in the mirror. Much to the younger crowd's delight, a legend was born and continues to be a prime attraction. Who knows, perhaps one day President Lincoln himself might make an appearance!



*The Haunted Mirror*





*A proud resident*

## Conclusion

The site caretaker enthusiastically replies that the public's reaction to the new, historically accurate **Certi-Sawn®** roof has been overwhelmingly positive. Over the centuries, Springton Manor Farm residents left their mark on farming practices, economic development and good stewardship. They also created wonderful homes for their families. Today Springton Manor Farm serves as a testament to the Americans who farmed her land and respected this masterpiece.

This property is located in an area teeming with fascinating American history. Gettysburg and the Valley Forge encampment sites are nearby, and the property is situated close to the former (and daring) underground railway. Pennsylvania continues its Presidential connection as the grandchildren of Presidents Nixon and Eisenhower reside there.

Springton Manor Farm is a place to bring the entire family for the day to partake in a multitude of activities. Children of all ages are sure to enjoy the



*Gazebo in the tranquil garden*

farm animals which include highland cattle, horses, a donkey, chickens, rabbits plus a male peacock eager to show off his gorgeous plumage. One thing is certain: an hour's visit will easily extend into many more once the full extent of this wonderful property is seen.

As this interview was being conducted, two mothers with their small children in tow entered the historical farming tool display room; everyone smiled at the children's audible gasps of admiration at how much harder life used to be. In a world where the internet, texting, tweeting and instant gratification abound, it's nice to see a slower, better, pace of life, one where family, good governance, long term investment and helping one's neighbor are all second nature.



*Content residents grazing*





Hay barn

Round straw bales in storage

Springton Manor Farm is open to the public year round; check the website for opening and closing times. Admission is free with a nominal charge for special events or pre-arranged guided tours.

#### More information:

#### Springton Manor Farm

860 Springton Road, Glenmoore, PA 19343

Located 5 miles west of Downingtown off Route 322

[www.chesco.org/ccparks](http://www.chesco.org/ccparks)

Tours are generally scheduled M – F, 10am-2pm.

Call Springton Manor Farm at **610-942-2450 x221** for specific seasonal information.

\*\*Special thanks to **John R. Miller**, Park Technician and Historian extraordinaire, for his extensive interview time, site tour and architectural research data.\*\*



#### Written by:

Lynne Christensen is the CSSB's Director of Operations. She has worked for the CSSB since 1998 and is involved in a variety of departments with a focus on marketing. Christensen holds a Master of Business Administration degree as well as the Certified Association Executive credential. She resides in British Columbia.



#### Photos by:

Tony Bonura is the CSSB's District Manager, Northeast. He has over 40 years sales and marketing experience in the forest products industry and shares his immense knowledge with a wide range of marketplace participants. Bonura is the current Chairman of the Joint Forest Products/Coatings Committee, headquartered at the Forest Product Laboratory in Madison, WI. He resides in New York State.



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