



Chesterfield Township Historical Society
To Preserve and Share Our Community's Heritage

HEADQUARTERS: 2 Front Street, PO Box 86, Crosswicks, NJ 08515
CTHS MUSEUM: 530 Ward Ave, Crosswicks, NJ 08515
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October 16, 2020

Chesterfield Township Committee
295 Bordentown Chesterfield Road
Chesterfield, NJ 08515

Dear Chesterfield Township Committee Members,

This letter is written on behalf of the Chesterfield Township Historical Society to express concern regarding the fate of the William and Christine Black House which sits on the grounds of the Old York Country Club.

The William and Christine Black House, which is locally referred to as the Decker House, is named after the Decker family who purchased the farm in 1946 and spent the next twenty years completely restoring the interior and exterior of the home. A cow barn, a horse barn, a machinery shed, and a garage were also built in this timeframe. Hedl Decker Brick, a lifelong Chesterfield Township resident, has written a letter to the historical society regarding her family home and its history. Some information in our letter is based upon her firsthand knowledge of the home and farm.

The house was originally built in 1740 by William Black III and his wife Christine Page Black. William Black III was the grandson of William Black I, who came to Chesterfield Township from Derbyshire England in 1677. The house has tremendous historical significance because of its age, and because it represents a rare type of construction known as "patterned brickwork", in which a mason used darkened "vitrified" bricks to make geometric designs, dates, and initials against a background of ordinary red brick of a building. New Jersey, with close to 400 existing examples, is home to most of the patterned brickwork buildings in the United States, and South Jersey hosts approximately 95% of the examples. It is believed the superior clay found in Southern New Jersey was ideal for brickmaking and thus, is why these houses are not found in other areas. Patterned brickwork houses are found in areas that were settled by Quakers. Salem County has the greatest number of patterned brickwork houses still standing, followed by Burlington County with approximately 170 examples still standing. We are extremely fortunate to have other examples of these rare patterned brickwork buildings in Chesterfield Township, including the Crosswicks Friends Meetinghouse, the William and Susannah Newbold House (also known as "The Locusts" or the Black Farm), the Thomas and Charlotte Taylor House (also known as Brookdale Farm) and the Michael Newbold House (also known as Brightview Farm). Patterned Brickwork houses were listed in 2018 by Preservation New Jersey as an endangered building type in New Jersey because of the lack of knowledge and appreciation of this rare building. This home's exterior is Flemish Bond in style, and visible in the home's gable are the original owners' initials, along with the year of construction. The last row bricks before the foundation is corbeled in addition to just beneath the initials and date.



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The Decker house has remained intact since 1740 despite many changes to the property. The Old York Country Club, once called the Arrowbrook Country Club, was initially opened in the 1960s. The property became the Historic Old York Country Club in the late 1980s. The Chesterfield Environmental Commission is copied on this letter as the property is known to be an archaeological encampment area which warrants professional investigation.

In closing, as decisions are being made on the fate of Old York Country Club, this house and property, truly deserve attention, with the goal of protection. Many residents express that Chesterfield Township is desirable because of its historical buildings, strong agricultural history, and the desire to maintain the integrity of the community. With the number of *Patterned Brickwork* houses quickly disappearing, we are fortunate in Chesterfield to still have one of these treasures still standing.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate DiMemmo, on behalf of the Chesterfield Township Historical Society

c: Chesterfield Township Planning Board
Chesterfield Township Historic Preservation Commission
Chesterfield Township Environmental Commission