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KING OF PRUSSIA NEWS

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KING OF PRUSSIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



*Preserving Upper Merion's Past
To Enlighten Its Future*

MOORE IRWIN ESTATE

Located at 700 Moore Road, deep within Moore Park, there is a plot of wooded land with a historic past. On these 4.8 acres, located just south of East 8th Avenue, sits a vacant building known by many names: Muhlenberg's Headquarters, Moore Irwin Lee house, Irwin Estate and the Winters Quarters Farm.

Our story begins with the farmhouse of John and Jane Moore located on the 400 acres John acquired around 1709. The main structure was probably built mid-century. Since it was sitting at the eastern edge of the Valley Forge encampment in December of 1777, when the Continental Army moved into winter quarters, the farmhouse was requisitioned to house Brigadier-general Peter Muhlenberg, a native of Montgomery County. General George Washington also recorded in his diary that he stayed in the house during a respite from the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

The farm eventually passed out of the hands of the Moore family in 1903. It then became summer residences for three wealthy families - Poths, Binns, and finally, Irwins. Over the years the property was upgraded and expanded.



It was Alexander Irwin who engaged the services of noted Philadelphia architect, Richardson Brognard Okie, for the latest additions. Okie's architecture is recognized for its expression of the American way of life and his love for the flavor and atmosphere of early Pennsylvania farm houses.

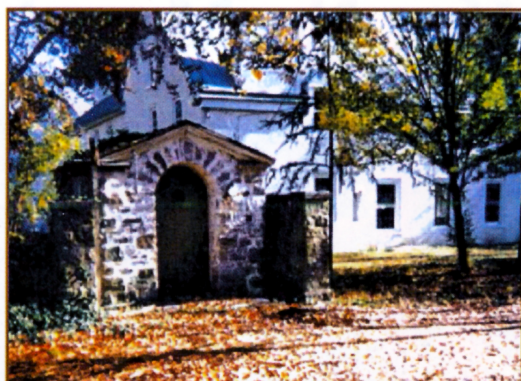
In the late 1950s most of the land was sold and developed into the King of Prussia Industrial Park. Fortunately, the house plot was left alone. The Upper Merion Cultural Center began to lease the building in 1968 and the township purchased the property in 1972. The township allowed independent artisans to give painting, music, and pottery lessons along with poetry readings. The second floor was used as a dance studio. The township held community fairs on the property as well as other events. It also served as the location of the Township Parks and Recreation Department administrative offices.



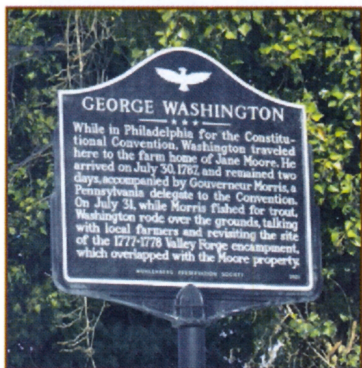
Trees from different parts of the world were planted during the time Irwin owned the property. Due to the considerable value of the land as an oasis for wildlife and the value of the plantings, the township designated the plot as an arboretum. In 1985 it was named for and dedicated to King of Prussia Woodsman, Silas T. Burgess, for his years with the Upper Merion Shade Tree Commission.

In 1979, the township was successful in getting the Muhlenberg Headquarters site added to the Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places.

To highlight George Washington's fishing visit, the Muhlenberg Preservation Society erected a marker along Moore Road in 2001.



Although the house has been vacant since 1991 and multiple surveys and studies have been conducted, its future is still in question. Perhaps the two 2020 Upper Merion Township Board of Community Assistance grants (\$5,000 for the arboretum and \$3,800 for another inspection of the Moore Irwin house), will lead to the kind of preservation this historic parcel deserves.



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