St. Peter’s Church in the Great Valley is a historic Episcopal church. It began in 1704 as a missionary parish of the Church of England in the colonial Province of Pennsylvania. The current stone church building was constructed sporadically between 1728-1744 to replace an earlier wooden building built by 1710. During the American Revolution, the church was used as a hospital by both British and American forces. By local tradition, after the nearby Battle of Paoli in 1777 the British Army, recognizing St. Peter’s as part of the Church of England, oversaw the burial of a British officer (believed to be Captain William Wolfe, commander of the Light Company of the British 40th Regiment of Foot), at least two other unidentified British soldiers, and at least five unidentified American soldiers killed in the battle. The British and American troops are buried side by side along the old west wall of the churchyard. Early in the 21st century the growing congregation built a timber-framed parish center and modern worship space designed in a style reminiscent of the original Welsh barns in the area. The original church building, and the adjacent burial ground, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. St. Peter’s Church is located at 2475 St. Peters Road. Learn more about St. Peters at: www.stpetersgv.org
The American Revolutionary War’s Battle of the Clouds was destined to be a major battle, but it never happened. Rather, it ended up being a series of small skirmishes and retreats, thanks to a major outbreak of rain. The battle gets its name from the fact that fierce thunderstorms bringing torrential rains headed off what was to be a major confrontation between George Washington and British General William Howe. After all was said and done, about 100 men were killed and wounded on both sides. The Battle of the Clouds is considered “inconclusive” by military historians. The Battle of the Clouds took place on September 16, 1777, in an area surrounding present-day Malvern, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia. It was shortly after a major defeat for the Americans at the Battle of Brandywine. Washington’s troops had withdrawn from Brandywine, but Howe was determined to press his advantage and attack the Continental Army where it was encamped about 10 miles away. In the meantime, Washington needed to resupply his dwindling stocks of ammunition and just about everything else his army needed. But he also wanted to protect Philadelphia from being overrun by the enemy. Washington had 10,000 soldiers at his command, while British forces numbered about 18,000. As both armies moved to position themselves for battle, a tremendous rain moved into the area, bringing extremely heavy downpours that lasted more than a day. The result was that British troops became bogged down in mud, and could not advance on Washington’s army as they had planned. Before the rain started, Washington was planning to take the offensive. He ordered his army to cross the Schuylkill River and move toward the position of Howe’s troops, which had moved little since the meeting at Brandywine. A series of maneuvering for advantage ensued on both sides. Washington sent Anthony Wayne ahead to slow British progress while Washington could fortify his position.

Wayne’s troops fought skirmishes with British forces mostly made up of Hessian mercenaries, resulting in some 100 casualties on both sides. Washington eventually retreated back across the Schuylkill River, but left General Wayne behind to keep the British in check. The British then ambushed the Americans in Malvern at what is now known as the Paoli Massacre.
Croce was born January 10, 1943, in South Philadelphia, PA. Croce grew up in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia, and attended Upper Darby High School. Graduating in 1960, he studied at Malvern Preparatory School for a year before enrolling at Villanova University. The day before his ABC single “I Got a Name” was released, Croce and all five others on board were killed when their plane crashed into a tree during takeoff from the Natchitoches Regional Airport in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Croce was 30 years old. Croce was buried at Haym Salomon Memorial Park in Frazer, Pennsylvania. Jim Croce the Italian Catholic, is buried in a Jewish cemetery? Well, it seems he converted to Judaism when he married his wife, Ingrid Jacobson.

During the colonial and revolutionary eras in American history, inland travel was slow, difficult, and expensive. The “King’s Highways” established by Pennsylvania’s colonial governments followed and improved ancient Indian paths, but hardly allowed for freight wagons or anything beyond single-file trains of pack-horses. Three types of new roads appeared during what historians now call the “turnpike era.” Opened in 1794, the marker Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike was the first extended example of these new paved roads. It was also the nation’s first major toll road. Stretching more than sixty miles between two communities, the pike became a major artery for commercial travel within the Commonwealth and a gateway for travel westward.

This simple granite milestone once stood at the edge of the Lincoln Highway on the old Brackbill/ Haldeman/ Malin farm, which is now the Deerfield Corporate Center. Marking 21 miles to/from Philadelphia, it was placed along the road soon after the Lancaster to Philadelphia Turnpike opened in 1794, the first hard-surfaced road in America. There were once 64 of these stones, one per mile, but no more than a third of them remain.

Singer/songwriter Jim Croce and Frazer, PA

Croce was born January 10, 1943, in South Philadelphia, PA. Croce grew up in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia, and attended Upper Darby High School. Graduating in 1960, he studied at Malvern Preparatory School for a year before enrolling at Villanova University. The day before his ABC single “I Got a Name” was released, Croce and all five others on board were killed when their plane crashed into a tree during takeoff from the Natchitoches Regional Airport in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Croce was 30 years old. Croce was buried at Haym Salomon Memorial Park in Frazer, Pennsylvania. Jim Croce the Italian Catholic, is buried in a Jewish cemetery? Well, it seems he converted to Judaism when he married his wife, Ingrid Jacobson.
Gunkle’s Mill Photo Essay

Clockwise: Interior office, early wheat sifting machine, 19th century wagon, artifacts recovered from current exterior wheel reconstruction. Photos by: Mark Keilbaugh, EWTHC.

About the East Whiteland Historical Commission

The goal of the East Whiteland Township Historical Commission is to raise awareness of our township’s history and to encourage the preservation of our cultural character and the physical evidence of that history.

The Historical Commission has been instrumental in identifying historic properties and in spearheading efforts to protect the Township’s historic resources. Although many of these resources are located in developed areas, future development and change could continue to threaten the historical sites.

Integration of these structures into the community’s changing landscape is the key to preserving the historic resources.

Commission Members
Jeffrey Dore, Chair
Theresa Schatz, Secretary
Sylvia Baker
Nancy Dore
Nicholas Groch
Mark Keilbaugh
Peter Spengeman

Contact the Commission
We encourage public participation in our efforts. You may contact the Historical Commission through the township website at: www.eastwhiteland.org