

THE FAIRVIEW AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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June 7, 2021

Shawn Wheeler
Senior Civil Engineer
PA Fish & Boat Commission
595 E. Rolling Ridge Drive
Bellefonte, PA 16823

ER Project #2021PRO1430.004 (formerly ER #2021-0001-049): Fish & Boat Commission, Fairview Hatchery Manager & Fish Management Building Demolitions, Fairview Township, Erie County, receipt of identification survey.

Dear Mr. Wheeler:

The Fairview Area Historical Society was organized in 1977 following local activities for the nation's Bicentennial. One of our first projects was to tour the township and take note of interesting architecture. Unfortunately, by that time many of Fairview's historically important homes, such as the Swan Tavern, were gone, or soon gone.

Much of the township was in agriculture; local waterways fueled mills; and the lake made fishing companies possible. All these activities can be found in the area where the Thornton house is located. As a mostly rural township we relished those homes that reflect a family who owned a successful enterprise and had made substantial wealth. Again, the Thornton house fell into that category.

We are sentimental about our old houses, some, such as "Mayside," were neglected to the point where they were hazardous. The Thornton house was fortunate to have included three successful owners: Joshua C. Thornton, mill owner and farmer; John Thomas Raine, son of a successful lumber man and entrepreneur in his own right; and the PA Fish & Boat Commission. While Mr. Thornton's accomplishments are fairly well known, Tom Raine, as he was known, was an entrepreneur. He owned an independent water company. He raised cattle, but when they contracted a disease he did not fight the necessity of killing his herd, recognizing the need to do so. The cows were kept in a large barn across Route 5 from the house. After they were gone he acquired an apple orchard and before too many years stored apples in his big barn, selling them under the name of *Eriez Apples*. As a benefactor, he supported

his church to an extreme, as well as young people who were attempting to get ahead. In many cases the recipient did not know the source of his or her good fortune.

I hope to convey the fact that it is not just the building, its age or architecture that are important, but also the people who lived in it and contributed to our community. In fact, it is all these things. When the PA Fish & Boat Commission purchased the house from the Raine descendants we in the historical community were relieved, believing it would be safe from demolition, kept in good repair... preserved.

We have learned through experience that we cannot save every building. But those with special significance, in reasonably fair condition that are possibly eligible for the National Register, should be exempt from demolition.

Sincerely,

Joyce Getz, Secretary,
Fairview Area Historical Society