

Schneck House

The "original" Schneck House is an authentically restored, two-story log house located in the northern part of the village of Schnecksville, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. It is considered to be the oldest building in the Schnecksville area. Now located on the east side of Pennsylvania Route 873 (Main Street), the house was formerly situated just across that road (approximately on the grass-covered area at the western edge of the deceleration lane used for entering the shopping mall today).

When the shopping center was proposed in 1989, a persistent group of Schneck family members worked diligently to save their namesake house from destruction and for its restoration. (This group included, among **many** others, Roy & Ann (Schneck) Kern, owners of the house and land, and Curtis E. Schneck and Henry R. Schneck, Jr., the President and the Historian, respectively, of the Schneck Family Reunion). The result of their efforts was a monetary fund the shopping mall developer had to establish for the relocation and restoration of the Schneck House.

On July 15, 1994 the house was jacked-up from its former fieldstone foundation, transported across the road, and temporarily supported so that a new concrete block foundation could be constructed. Then restoration work (see below) began under the auspices of the Upper Lehigh Historical Society, established by **many** history-minded community residents (including its first President, Timothy J. Wotring) for the initial purpose of overseeing the restoration and future maintenance of the house and grounds. The Upper Lehigh Historical Society is the current owner of the Schneck House.

The Schneck House was originally constructed, and is still located, on a tract of land (called "Snake's Hole") containing 22 acres & 127 perches. This tract, situated (until 1811) in Whitehall Township, Northampton County, was warranted on July 27, 1772, surveyed on October 10, 1772, and patented on November 3, 1773 to Adam Schneck ("Shneck" and "Sneck"), the immigrant ancestor and progenitor of the Schneck family in this area.

Adam Schneck had previously acquired four adjacent tracts of land to the south, southeast, and east of "Snake's Hole". The surveys for these tracts were performed on: October 21, 1757; October 25, 1765; October 14, 1766; and January 12, 1768. Therefore, the Schneck House could not have been the first or "original house built by Adam Schneck when he first settled in this vicinity.

In 1798, the United States Direct House Tax schedule for Whitehall Township includes "Peter Shneck" as the owner (and Christian Acker as the occupant) of "1 small one-story log Dwelling House" worth \$105, on the list of houses worth more than \$100. The list of houses worth less than \$100 includes "Peter Shneck" as the owner (and Christian Acker as the occupant) of "1 log Barn" with no value listed, plus 27 acres of land worth \$195. In this second list "Peter Shneck" is included separately as the owner **and** occupant of "2 old Houses" worth \$75, "1 log Barn" with no value listed, plus 100 acres of land worth \$530. Thus, Peter Schneck probably rented the Schneck House and the approximate "Snake's Hole" tract (27 acres vs. 22 A 127P) to Christian Acker.

On December 28, 1807, within days of his death, Peter Schneck and his wife Magdalena conveyed the "Snake's Hole" tract "...Together also with all and singular the buildings, ..." to their son Johannes/John for 50 pounds currency.

When Johannes/John Schneck dictated his own Last Will & Testament on December 4, 1845, he declared that his farmland (located in North Whitehall Township, Lehigh County since March 6, 1812) should be divided into 3 parts. One part should be "...approximately 18 or 20 acres of land **with the log house on the road...**", i.e., the Schneck House along PA Route 873). On February 3, 1846, this land (16 acres, 61 perches) **and** the log house were conveyed to Johannes/John's son Samuel Schneck.

On March 31, 1860 Samuel Schneck and his wife Fianna conveyed the land and log house to his brother Thomas Schneck. On April 1, 1869 Thomas Schneck and his wife Mary Ann conveyed them to William Kennel and his wife Mary, the first non-Schneck family to own the Schneck House. The chain of conveyances continued to William Gackenbach and his wife Lillie on April 7, 1907 and to Roy J. Kern (a Schneck family descendant) and his wife Mildred M. on August 6, 1954.

At unknown times during these conveyances, the one-story log house had been expanded to two-story (probably very early in the 1800's) and the original exterior of the logs had been covered with clapboards to protect the logs from weathering and rot (possibly at the same time as the expansion). Much later (probably in the 1950's) asbestos-cement siding had been installed over the clapboard. The original wooden roofing material had also been replaced with slate shingles. A two-story, lumber-framed addition (containing a large kitchen on the first floor and a large bedroom on the second) had been added to the rear of the house, making the house plan L-shaped. And a one-story roofed concrete porch had also been added along the former north side of the log house and the rear addition. Both of these additions were removed just prior to relocating the original log house across the road.

After relocation, the layers of asbestos-cement siding and clapboards were removed. The deteriorated "chinking" that filled the spaces between the logs was removed and replaced with new cementitious material. Modern preservative coatings were applied to the exterior of the logs and the chinking to waterproof and prevent weathering and rot. The slate roof shingles were replaced with cedar-shakes over the original roof rafters. (Some of these roof rafters are still marked by Roman numerals designating their position in the roof framing). The interior "horsehair" plaster on the walls and the ceilings was removed, exposing the interior sides of the logs and the floor joists. Fieldstones from the original foundation, supplemented by new fieldstones, were used to face the aboveground concrete block foundation, build "stoops" at the front and rear entrances and to construct a Colonial Period replica kitchen fireplace on the rear wall. The existing, later period exterior doors and windows were replaced with older, more authentic Colonial Period types.

Today, thanks to **many** history-minded individuals who donated their time and effort, the restored Schneck House exists as a tribute to all of our Pennsylvania German (Pennsilfaanische Deitsch) pioneer family ancestors, especially Adam Schneck. Our ancestors left their homes and relatives in the many principalities of the German-speaking areas of old Europe in the 1700's to suffer hardships building new lives in the wilderness of a new land so that their descendants would have better lives than they had experienced. May their descendants always be grateful for their efforts!

(The text "The Schneck House" was written by Henry R. Schneck, Jr. for inscription on the Memory Medallion furnished by Laurine Schneck Williams, August 2005).