The Woman's Club of Oley

— *presents* —

A Day In The Oley Valley

1967



COMMEMORATING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE DeTURK HOUSE
1767

Benefit of the DeTurk House Restoration Fund
Historic Preservation Trust of Berks County

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*1. THE DE TURK (DE TURCK) HOMESTEAD

In the year 1767 the DeTurk Homestead was a productive 300 acre plantation owned by John DeTurk, the only son of Isaac and Maria DeTurk. John had been born here in 1713, two years after his parents had come to the Oley wilderness from the Kocherthal Colony at Esopus, N. Y. Both his parents were French Huguenots who had fled their homes in the Palatinate to join the Rev. Kocherthal on his journey to America in 1708. Isaac DeTurk, a bachelor, married Maria DeHarcourt Weimer, a young widow, in 1709, and two years later they traveled to Oley with their infant daughter, Esther, and four year old Catherine, Maria's daughter from her first marriage. John DeTurk lost his father in 1727 and his mother in 1761. His sisters had married and were living on farms not far from his own. In 1740 he married Deborah Hoch.

In 1742 John DeTurk invited Count Zinzindorf to use his home for an important religious conference. This was the Third Moravian Synod, one of a series of seven conferences organized by Count Zinzendorf in the hope of uniting the various denominations of the German church in America. Representatives of most of the German churches of Pennsylvania attended. Three Mohican Indians had been brought here by their missionary from the village of Shecomeko in New York. In a ceremony filled with emotion they were baptized as Christians: Shabath, Abraham; Seim, Isaac; and Kiop, Jacob. After the ceremony in the old log barn, the Indians preached and sang for hours. A large gathering of local Indians joined in the celebration.

Shortly after the conference John DeTurk and others helped the Moravians establish a church and boarding school on the land adjoining his own. In about 1745 they erected a magnificent half-timbered building 41 feet square, three stories high, with a large center chimney. Designated by architects one of the most important examples of early Germanic half-timber construction in the country, this building, "The Moravian Schoolhouse", stood until about twenty years ago. Now it is gone.

In 1767 John DeTurk built the little "DeTurk House" along the bank of the creek. The architectural features of this house have often been cited and it is listed in the Historic American Building Survey of the U. S. Dept. of the Interior. It is now being restored by the Historic Preservation Trust of Berks Co. and will eventually be used as a museum and information center for Oley Valley history. The other small house or spring house across the road may have been built during the same period. It is believed that the original section of the large farmhouse, now completely altered, may have been the house used for the Synod.

On display here are materials obtained in DeTurk House Research. Guides are members of the DeTurk House Council.