The Woman's Club of Oley

— presents —

A Day In The Oley Valley

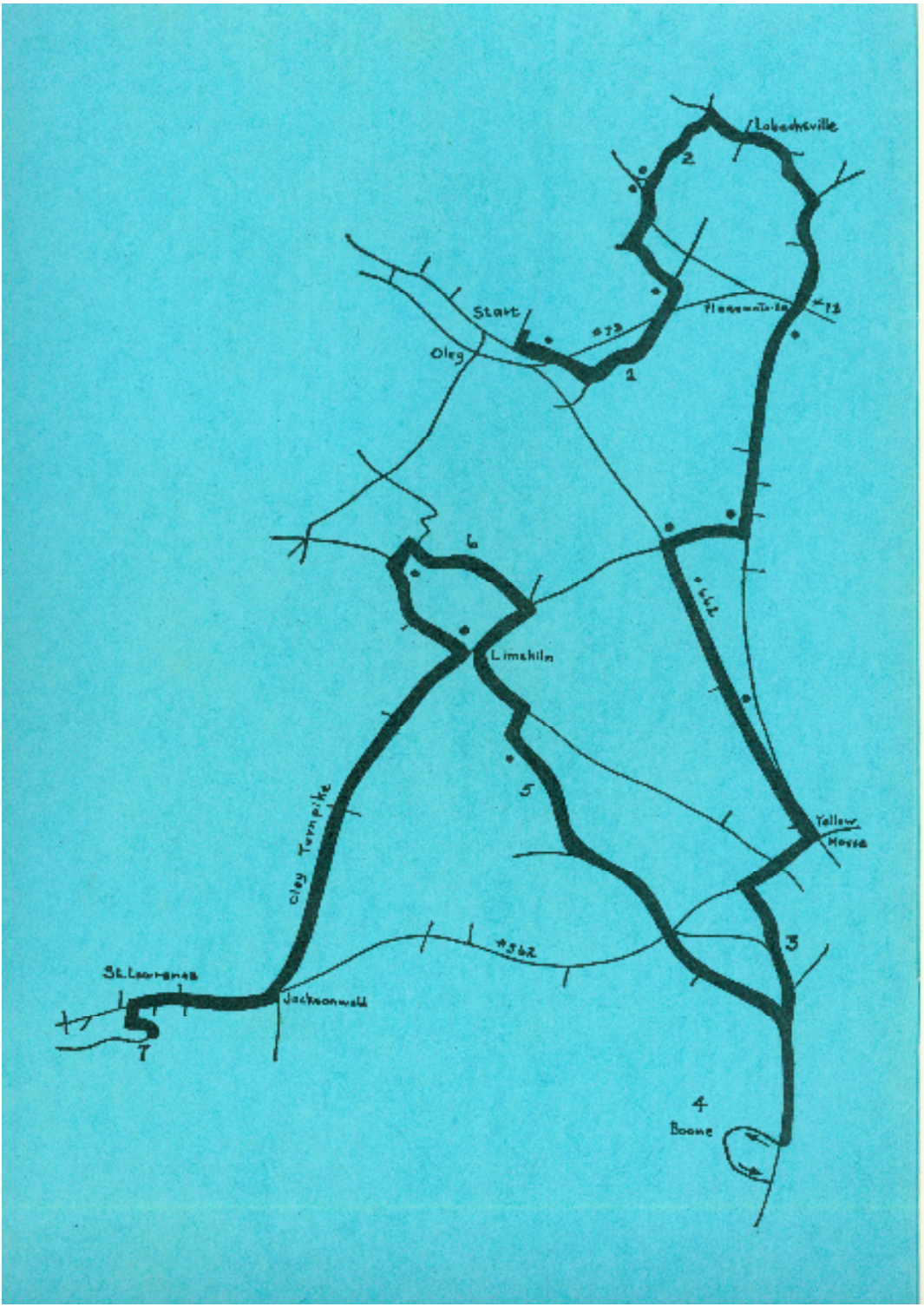
1968



THE KEIM HOMESTEAD

FEATURING OLEY VALLEY ARCHITECTURE

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



A DAY IN THE OLEY VALLEY 1968

History lives in the Oley Valley. The families, the traditions, and the way of life first established here in the early eighteenth century have strikingly influenced the development of this area — its culture and its architecture.

Because Oley has remained a farming community it has been slow to change and has held onto a great many of the good things of the past. Its sturdy buildings, built to last, have been adapted to changes in farming methods and living styles and have endured for generation after generation. There is no other section of the Pennsylvania Dutch country that can claim so great a concentration of characteristic eighteenth century stone farm houses, barns, and out-buildings with so many outstanding original features.

"A Day in the Oley Valley 1968" invites you to explore Oley's architectural heritage — the tile-roofed stone cabin, the plain Germanic farm house, the simple Quaker house and meeting house, the stately Georgian mansion, the grist mill, bake house, smoke house, limekiln, bridge, and barn. Follow the route outlined on the map on the opposite page and described in the text of this booklet. "Pauses" in the route, places of architectural interest to be noted in passing, are indicated on the map by black dots. The "Stops", places that are open for the tour, are marked by numbers.

TOUR SCHEDULE

10:00 A.M. to 12:00 Noon

Start — Oley Fair Grounds

No. 1 — Abraham Bertolet House

No. 2 — The Keim Homestead

No. 3 — The Exeter Friends Meeting House

12:00 Noon to 2:00 P.M.

Lunch — Daniel Boone Homestead

No. 4 — Bertolet Log House

2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.

No. 5 — George Boone House

No. 6 — John Knabb Mill

No. 7 — "Miller's House"

From the Oley Fair Grounds entrance, opposite the Oley Elementary School, drive to Main Street, Oley, and turn left. Continue .2 mile. Pause briefly for an exterior view of the stone house on the left.

THE GEORGE AND SUSANNA MELLOT HOUSE, built in 1813, is an excellent example of a Georgian style farmhouse. This style features a balanced facade with chimney placement at either end of the house and a central doorway leading to a center stair hall. The windows of nine over six panes are flanked by white panelled shutters on the first floor and green louvered shutters on the second floor. The flat arch above the window is fashioned of wood with a central keystone block. Classical trim can be seen in the molding along the cornice under the eaves of the house. Note the attractive decorated datestone.

Continue across Route 73 at the blinker and drive .5 mile past the Bertolet Meeting House to Bertolet Mill Road. Turn left and drive .3 mile to the first farm on the right. First stop.

No. 1. ABRAHAM BERTOLET HOUSE 1736 Owned by Mrs. Lena Bertolet Brumbarh

The first stone houses in Oley were built, it is believed, in the 1730's. Prior to that, temporary structures were built of logs, and some of half-timbering as was the Moravian Schoolhouse. This small stone house, or stone cabin, was built in 1736 by Abraham Bertolet the year following his marriage to Esther DeTurk. It is an exceptionally well preserved end-chimney stone cabin.

There is a medieval aura about this house which characterises the "Germanic" architecture of the Oley Valley - austere stone walls, tiny windows, a steep-pitched roof of red clay tiles flared into a "kick" at the eaves to carry the rain and snow away from the walls of the house. Through a plain batten door hung on hand wrought strip hinges, you step down into the ground floor kitchen, paved in brick, containing a large walk-in fireplace complete with crane. A "ladder stairway" leads to the second floor living quarters where a small arched fireplace heats the room. Notice the attractive panelled door on the small built-in cupboard to the right of the fireplace. Another ladder stairway leads to the attic where the sturdy roof framing necessary to support the tile roof and the method of hanging roof tiles can be observed.

The large stone farmhouse, not open today, is also Germanic in style and was built in two sections, the first with a center chimney floor plan. The date stone in the gable of the later section reads 1772. Interior alterations have been made, a stair hall replacing the original kitchen fireplace. Excellent original pent roofs can be seen at the northern gable end facing the road

The old barn has a rarely seen carved inscription in the wooden lintel above the doors to the threshing floor. A steep-roofed early barn, it was built by Daniel and Maria Bertolet in 1787. It is a typical bank or "Sweitzer" barn with a cantilevered forebay, or overhang, and slit type ventilators.

The up-and-down sawmill from this farm has been moved, for preservation, to the Daniel Boone Homestead, and is to be set up this year.

Continue east on Bertolet Mill Road. Cross Route 73 and drive .2 mile. Pause to look at the large stone house on the left.

The most impressive of Oley's Germanic style houses were built in the 1750's. None is more imposing than the ABRAHAM LEVAN HOUSE. The scale of this house, its massive gray limestone walls and steep center-chimney roof line, impart its medieval character. The original house, the end closest to the road, reveals brick segmented arches over windows and doors and the drip course and beam ends of an encircling pent roof.

After making the first turn at the corner of the Levan House continue straight ahead on the narrow macadam road. Pass the Lesher burial ground on the left and the Johannes Deisher House, 1799, on the right. .1 mile beyond the Deisher House at the old stone school house, turn right and continue to the end of Jefferson Street. Now turn left and drive .2 mile to the first road to the right, Keim Road. Turn right, drive .1 mile, and pause to look at the buildings on this property.

On the left is the CASPAR MAUL BARN, built 1791, a rather rare type of all stone ground level barn with a slightly raised threshing floor that can be entered from front or back, and stables on either side. Of special architectural interest is the remaining pent roof over the stable doors.

Across the road is the HOCH-PETER'S MILL-HOUSE. This constituted the living quarters for a gristmill formerly attached to the northern end of this building. The two date stones that can be seen near the second story windows tells us that the earlier part of the house was built in 1761 and the later part in 1850. Notice the brick arches over the windows on the older part.

Cross the stone arch bridge (1860), and approach the Keim meadow. An old "snake" fence on the right sets off the boundary. A great stand of virgin timber existed on this property until 1911 when the last member of the Keim family to live here passed away. Along this road, on the right, is the old homestead, our second stop.

No. 2. THE KEIM HOMESTEAD. Owned by Mr. and Mrs. M. Richard Boyer.

The two ancient dwellings on the Keim Homestead are certainly among the most fascinating examples of Oley's Germanic houses. Well preserved, along with the attractive and unique early barn built with forebays on both sides and a tackle hood at the gable, these buildings stand in silent testimony to the family that had lived here so self-sufficiently for nearly 200 years.

The earlier house is the large center-chimney stone cabin, probably built in the 1730's by Johannes Hoch, who was the first owner of this farm. As you enter the lower floor through its brick arched doorway you will notice a huge stone fireplace facing the door. Water from a spring is channeled along the left side of the room. Look at the construction of this house- the amazingly large closely placed joists and the tremendous summer beam. At the back of the fireplace can be seen the great stone arch which supports the fireplace above. An early method of insulation, using narrow strips of wood fitted into the notched beams and filled with mud plaster, is visible in this room. From the upper level at the side of the house, enter the first floor living area. The large walk-in fireplace has been plastered shut to construct a smoke chamber within the chimney. Originally a five-plate stove was used at the back of the fireplace to heat the room behind. Notice the wide floor boards, the pegged window and door frames, the early hardware on the panelled door, and the Germanic ladder stairway to the attic.

The large farm house was built by Jacob Keim shortly after his marriage to Magdalena Hoch in 1753. A son of Johannes Keim, Oley's first settler, Jacob founded here a kind of family dynasty, ruling this one property, each generation living exactly as the one before with very little notice or regard for the rest of the world. The last to inherit this birthright were John M. Keim and his five maiden sisters who lived in the last decades of the nineteenth century, tilling the soil with primitive implements, protecting their giant virgin forest, and supplying all their needs from this one farm. Enter the old kitchen where Magdalena Keim cooked in the large fireplace. The arched opening in the back wall of the fireplace led to a German five-plate stove which provided heat for the living room or "great room". A small downstairs bedroom or "Kammer" completes the original first floor room plan. The early stairways in this house offer an interesting comparison. An extremely narrow ladder stairs leads from the great room to the smaller upstairs bedroom, while a grand winding corner stairway spirals around a single post leading upstairs from the kitchen.

A third stairway is found in the newer section of the house. Outstanding features of this house are the wide floor boards, the panelled bedroom partition, the original hardware, the solid construction. Exterior features include the brick segmental arches over the openings and a lovely peat roof at the front of the house.

Members of the Keim family who lived their lives on this farm are buried in the two walled cemeteries on the property, one in a field on the hillside, the other in the orchard behind the large barn.

Continue to the first intersection and turn right on Lobachsville Road. Drive through the quaint village of Lobachsville, crossing the bridge. At the foot of the hill, near Pikeville, turn right toward Pleasantville. Continue on Covered Bridge Road to the village of Pleasantville. Cross Route 73 at the light. Drive .5 mile to the PLEASANTVILLE COVERED BRIDGE. This bridge was built in 1852. An inscribed stone set into the wall to the right of the bridge ramp about a foot from the portal would seem to indicate that Levi Marks was the mason. The bridge is of a Burr Arch-truss construction patented in 1817 by Theodore Burr, employing great timber arches in its structure. It is one of five remaining covered bridges in Berks County.

Continue along Covered Bridge Road, .7 mile beyond the Oley Churches on the right is the HUNTER HOUSE, thought to have been built for Henry Van Reed Hunter in 1803. Pause to look at the magnificant doorway of this lovely Georgian farm house. Unusually elaborate in design, this doorway is framed by fluted rounded columns at the side and a richly carved triangular pediment at the top. A semi-circular fanlight of delicate pattern fills the arch of the pediment.

At the Hunter House, turn right on the Oley Turnpike. Drive past the large brick Griesemersville Hotel, built in 1860, to the intersection of Route 662. Notice the elaborate iron fence and the iron porch railings and trim of a grape vine motif on the PETER GRIESEMER HOUSE (1782) on the right.

At Route 622, turn left. Notice the double limekiln on the left just beyond the intersection. Proceed along Route 662 for 1 mile. Pause briefly to view the exterior of the Fisher House.

THE FISHER HOUSE is deservedly the most renowned Georgian House in the Oley Valley and the best preserved. Having been built for Henry and Susanna Fisher in the years 1798 - 1801 by master carpenter Gottlieb Drexel, the Fisher family has taken pride in maintaining its original beauty. It is a large house, a mansion, containing six fireplaces. Its outstanding feature is its intricately carved woodwork and panelling, interior

and exterior, work of superb craftsmanship. Notice the exterior carving. The pedimented dormers exhibit the same design as the lovely doorway. Here too can be seen the original window panes set in twelve over twelve sash.

Proceed along Route 662 to the village of Yellow House, named for the large yellow-painted hotel built here in the early nineteenth century. Turn right on Route 562 and continue 1.5 miles. Turn left at the macadam road near the top of the hill. Drive .5 mile to the next stop, the Exeter Friends Meeting House.

No. 3. THE EXETER FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE 1756

This early stone meeting house was built about 1756 by the Quaker settlers of this area. It was their third meeting house, the first having been built of logs in 1726, and the second one also of logs, in 1737 when the "monthly" meeting was established. Originally called Oley Meeting, its name was changed to Exeter when Exeter Township was erected in 1741. A small, one-story stone structure this building remains as it was originally built except for a porch at the east end, added in the nineteenth century. The building is in excellent condition and is carefully maintained by the congregation. There are four doors, two on the South, one on the east, and one on the north. The principal door, on the south side, is a wide double door with three panels in each leaf, protected by an unsupported hood. The interior is one large room, which can be divided by vertical sliding wood panels into two rooms. The woodwork of the panelling and benches is very simple but finely joined.

The burying ground next to the meeting house is enclosed with a substantial stone wall with an iron gate. This ground was included in the original acre tract donated by George Boone, Jr. In 1818 the burying ground was filled and a terrace, built over the top of existing graves, provided for later interments. No tombstones have been used here.

Continue to the foot of the hill. Turn right, crossing Monocacy Creek. Bear to the left across the bridge and continue 1 mile to the Daniel Boone Homestead, where lunch will be served.

LUNCH

No. 4. BERTOLET LOG HOUSE 1740 (circa)

The first Oley Valley houses were built of logs. After stone houses succeeded them, most log buildings were no longer used and were allowed to deteriorate. Because this log house was consecutively occupied by the Bertolets, the Herbeins, and the Snyders, it was kept in repair and now constitutes the outstanding remaining example of an early eighteenth

century center-chimney Germanic log house. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission considered this to be so worthy a structure that it has spent some $30,000 in moving it from the brink of a quarry to this historical park where it will be preserved and appreciated.

This log house has a typical Germanic center chimney floor plan, with kitchen, great room, and bedroom on the first floor and a large attic above. A noticeable kick can be seen at the eaves of the steep split shingle roof. Notice the original doors, panelling, ladder stairs, and wooden fireplace crane, as well as the "soul window" or "seelenfenster" in the bedroom. Beneath this opening was placed the bed of a dying person so that the soul might pass through it when leaving the body.

A tile roofed bake oven-smoke house building was moved here along with the log house. The use of this bake oven will be demonstrated during the tour.

At the exit of the Boone Homestead, turn left and drive 1.1 miles. Turn left, crossing the creek. Cross Route 562 at the Pet Cemetery and continue on Oley Line Road. After .8 mile turn right (still Oley Line Road) and proceed .5 mile to the George Boone House, the next stop.

No. 5. THE GEORGE BOONE HOUSE, 1733, owned by Mr. and Mrs. John A. Beard

Built in 1733 by the grandfather of Daniel Boone, this attractive stone home is an excellent example of an early Quaker or English style stone farm house. A plain building of limestone walls with sandstone quoins, it has chimneys at both ends and a central hooded doorway flanked by four small windows. Originally of a "salt box" shape, the roof at the rear was later lifted to give a complete second floor. Inside there are huge chestnut beams braced in the center, and open oak beam ceilings. There are four fireplaces, two on each floor. Floors are of oak.

This house is beautifully furnished with antiques. The first floor is open to the tour.

Drive for .3 mile beyond the George Boone House to see the site of the log cabin built by George Boone in 1720. This was a center chimney cabin with two rooms on the first floor, a loft above, and a cellar under one end. Only the chimney remains.

Continue .3 mile and turn left to Limekiln. Turn right on the Oley Turnpike and drive .4 mile to the double schoolhouse on the left. Turn left here and left again at the stop sign on Bieber Mill Road. Pass the Eastern Lime Co. Quarry. The former site of the Bertolet Log House can be seen to the right, just beyond the quarry, where the other farm buildings still stand. Drive .3 mile past the quarry to the next stop, Bieber's Mill.

No. 6. THE JOHN KNABB MILL 1809, owned by Effinger K. Bieber

More than any other Oley grist mill, the Knabb-Bieber Mill shows the influence of Georgian Architecture. Built on a sloping site, it is a typical two and one-half story stone mill with a hooded tackle beam at the peak of the gable containing the pulleys for hoisting bags of grain to the doors at the end of each floor. Exceptional are the two side doorways, one on the southeast leading to the ground floor, the other on the northeast, the entrance to the first floor. Here are fine Georgian doorways displaying arched openings framed by fluted pilasters and a classical pediment. The doors are "dutch doors" with Cross and Bible panelling. Large quoins at the corners, pent eaves across the gable ends, and six over six double hung windows are other architectural features. The first floor interior is finished with chair rails and a panelled fireplace in the mill office. Note the massive timbering. The mill machinery is present and is in working order. Due to the danger of a large group using the stairways, only the first floor of the mill is open for this tour. The owner, Effinger K. Bieber, who operates a feed business here, and Nate Reimert, owner of another Knabb Mill in Oley, will be on hand to answer your questions.

Other interesting buildings on this property include an ice house, a square stone smoke house, a summer kitchen, the farm house (not open), and a large bank barn.

Proceed along Bieber Mill Road to the stop sign. Turn left onto Wiest School house Road .2 mile to the stop sign. Turn left on Oley Line Road. The large barn on the corner is the PETER KNABB BARN, a bank barn with two threshing floors and slit type ventilators. An early barn, it was extended to the front and side in 1855 by Willard Knabb. The PETER KNABB HOUSE next to the barn is a log house that has a stone extension to the back and side. The stone cabin next to the farm house contains kitchen, bake oven, smokehouse, and two rooms upstairs.

Continue on Oley Line Road for 1.1 miles. To the left is the HANS SCHNEIDER HOMESTEAD. It is the site of the Susanna Cox tragedy. Here poor young Susanna killed and concealed her new-born infant, but was later discovered, sentenced, and hung on Gallows Hill at the head of Penn Street in the year 1809. The house here is a very large eighteenth century farmhouse with its original peat roofs across the back and at the gable ends.

Proceed .7 mile to the Oley Turnpike. Turn right and drive to Jacksonwald. At the light, turn right and travel .8 mile to Brumbach Road at the brick schoolhouse in St. Lawrence. At Brumbach Road turn left. The last stop on this tour is the Miller's House at the foot of the hill.

No. 7. "MILLER'S HOUSE" owned by Dr. and Mrs. John E. German

The "Miller's House" has been chosen to exemplify our fine local Georgian Architecture. It was probably built in about 1796 by Peter Reish, miller, who owned the property during the years 1793 to 1811. The tract had been warranted to Isaac Levan, a brother of Abraham Levan of Oley, in 1734. It passed to Isaac's son, Abraham, and Abraham's daughter, Susanna, wife of Michael Hartman, before being purchased by Reish. The Levans constructed a stone grist mill on the site in 1762. After burying the mill property, Reish built his mansion.

Because of the quality and style of the carving it is believed this house was built by the same master carpenter who built the Fisher mansion, Gottlieb Drexel. The architectural style is Georgian, deriving its name from the English kings who reigned during the eighteenth century, George I, II, and III. It is based on symmetry in design and the use of classical forms in ornamentation. Philadelphia builders adopted this English style in the first half of the eighteenth century. In the late eighteenth century its influence had spread to Oley. A proud style, expressing the vigor and confidence of a prosperous era, it was ideally suited for the elegant home of a wealthy businessman.

Dr. S. K. Stevens, Director of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, has written about this house: "This house is an excellent example of late 18th century or early 19th century architecture in the area. The architectural features of this house, especially its interior and exterior woodwork, are superb. It ranks with the finest Philadelphia houses of the period and, along with a few other houses in the area, is an outstanding example of the occasional sophistication that is found in rural structures of the period."

Built on a sloping site, this house is a full three and one-half stories high, with no basement. The typical symmetry of Georgian design is exhibited in both front and rear elevations and in the interior room arrangement as well. From the exterior, notice the great stone quoins, the intricately carved cornice with its Wall of Troy design, and the large double hung windows of twelve over twelve panes with molded sills and large wood keystone lintels. The original shutters were burned by a former tenant. The arched doorway was originally more elaborate and its classical pediment and molding will be restored. The stone lean-to on the north side is a later addition.

The interior room plan contains a center hall with a handsome stairway rising a full three flights to the attic. On each floor there is one large room on either side of the hall. The original kitchen was located to the north of the hall on the first floor. The most elaborate room is the second floor formal parlor, on the south side of the house. In addition to the panelling and carved moldings, found in the other rooms, this room contains classical pilasters and pediments which frame and cap the doorways (one a false doorway for balance), windows, and fireplace. The gougework and delicate wood applique found in this room is of incredible detail.

In the year 1854 this property was acquired by the Brumbach family who established the St. Lawrence Woolen Mills on the site of the old grist mill. This operation continued until 1969 when the plant was sold to the Wolfe Bleaching and Carbonizing Co. Dr. and Mrs. German purchased the old Miller's house in 1964 and at present are in the process of restoring it to its former glory.



KEMP'S RUN THE BERUBA HOUSE OLEY VALLEY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Woman's Club of Oley wishes to express its sincere thanks to the following persons who so graciously opened their properties for this tour:

Mrs. Lena Bertolet Brumbach
Mr. and Mrs. M. Richard Boyer
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Penna. Historical and Museum Commission
Dr. Lawrence Thurman
Mr. and Mrs. John A. Beard
Mr. Effinger K. Bieber
Dr. and Mrs. John E. German

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