

December 8, 2020

Maxatawny Board of Supervisors
Maxatawny Planning Commission
Jerilyn Wehr, Secretary/Treasurer
127 Quarry Road
Kutztown, PA 19530

To All Addressed Above,

This letter is written on behalf of Kemp descendants whose ancestors are buried in the Kemp Family Historical Graveyard. The graveyard will be negatively affected, should the Maxatawny Logistics Park be approved. For those unaware of this historical site, we offer the following history.

The people buried in the Kemp Family Graveyard were key figures in the early years of Maxatawny Township. Their life stories form much of the Township's history.

Theobault ("Dewalt") Kemp arrived in America around 1720 and is said to have been the original pioneer settler of Maxatawny. He married, raised a family, and traded with the native Lenape Indians who were his neighbors. When he died in 1762, Dewalt was buried on his farm in what is now the Kemp Family Graveyard.

During the Revolutionary War, Dewalt's son, George Kemp, was appointed Captain and was present at the battle of Germantown. George inherited and expanded the Levan tavern, reportedly a way station for several signers of the Declaration of Independence, including John Adams. He was its "innkeeper" for 52 years. In 1800, George was appointed the Justice of the Peace and was given the title of "Esquire." He died in 1833 and was buried in the Kemp Family Graveyard. George's grandson, John Kemp, Esq., continued to operate the Levan/Kemp Hotel for another 43 years. This historic hotel still stands on Kutztown Road.

The Kemps intermarried with the Levans, Trexlers, and Winks, and a number of their wives, children, and grandchildren are buried in the Kemp Family Graveyard. Lastly, the Graveyard also holds the remains of one of the very few slaves recorded in all of Pennsylvania. Her name was "Hannah," and she was owned by Capt. George Kemp.

The Graveyard is being studied today by historians and genealogists to identify all those interred and their roles in Maxatawny's history. Soon it may be possible to use DNA evidence to assist in this work. It is critical that the Graveyard remain intact, accessible to descendants, and available for study now and in the future.

Unbeknownst to any Kemp descendant, Duke Realty petitioned the Berks County Orphans' Court in June of 2020 "to disinter the remains at Kemp Family Cemetery." The Petition stated that, "As part of its pre-purchase due diligence and inspection, Petitioner hired CHRS... to conduct a Cultural Resources Assessment of the Property.... CHRS discovered 18 headstones on the Property dating from the eighteenth through late nineteenth centuries." The descendants offer the Attachment, "Burials Known and Possible." (Epitaphs by Jackie Nein)

The Petition further states... "After diligent search... Petitioner has not uncovered any known living relatives of the decedents buried at the Kemp Family Cemetery." However, the

undersigned descendants know that Kemp descendants number in excess of 200, with one descendent living within one mile of the cemetery.

When local Kemp descendants became aware of the proposed warehouse project and the impact on the Kemp Cemetery, Duke was contacted in October 2020. It is the wish of the Kemp descendants to have the cemetery remain in its original location. Just last week, the undersigned descendants, speaking on behalf of a larger group, expressed this to Duke Engineer Nick Rakowski and VP Scott Henderson. In the event the warehouse project is approved, we asked Duke to consider developing around the cemetery and to restore it in its original/current location. Alternately, we asked them to consider designing a “pocket park” and walking trails that would encompass the restored cemetery. This could afford their employees and truckers an area for wellness as well as access for the descendants.

Finally, in addition to the less than diligent search for descendants, the Petition to the Court stated that the landowners “have never seen anyone visit, tend to, care for or maintain the Kemp Family Cemetery.” This statement to the Court is untrue. In the past, Kutztown Area High School students cleared weeds during community service days (late 1990’s). Also, on a number of occasions, the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation cleared weeds and cataloged graves and headstones after notifying the landowner of its intention. These maintenance activities clearly contradict what is attested to in the Orphans’ Court Petition.

Kemp Descendants on Behalf of all known,

Meredith Brunt Goldey
Linda Landis-Heffernan
Brenda Winkler
Juli Winkler