



TOWNSHIP OF HOPEWELL

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
201 WASHINGTON CROSSING-PENNINGTON ROAD
TITUSVILLE, NEW JERSEY 08560-1410

609-737-0605

October 31, 2022

Mayor Courtney Peters-Manning
Eric Hatke, Chair Hopewell Township Zoning Board of Adjustment
201 Washington Crossing Pennington Rd.
Titusville, NJ 08560
(via email to Amanda Bregenzer, HT Community Dev. Secretary, for distribution)

Dear Mayor Peters-Manning and Mr. Hatke

Last week, the Hopewell Township Historic Preservation Commission discussed the use and bulk variance application for the historic Hollystone manor (also known as the Titus/Chambers farmstead) to be converted to a 26-room boutique hotel, gym, spa, etc. I am writing to you because HTHPC Chair Max Hayden has recused himself from discussion of the property citing a conflict, but the Commission wants to make its opinion clear.

Hollystone is not an officially designated landmark in Hopewell Township; that is not for lack of importance, rather for lack of interest in designating it by the former owner. In fact, it is one of the most important historic sites in Hopewell Township.

Hollystone was built by the Titus family, who were among the first settlers of Hopewell Township around 1700. The Tituses had come to the new world in 1635 (on the good ship “Hopewell”!) and were the first to be excommunicated from the Plymouth colony – apparently for housing Quakers. They moved to Long Island and were among a number of families who emigrated from Long Island to Hopewell in the early 18th century. With the other families, the Tituses settled in eastern Hopewell Valley. Joseph Titus, who was born in 1721, was one of the first to move from that area down to the river.

By the time Joseph died in 1797, he owned 293 acres around the Hollystone farmstead. The oldest part of the house – now the dining and living rooms - was built circa 1770. The grand manor addition has a plaque on the side that indicates it was built in 1819. The great room addition to the east is circa 1840 and the kitchen and pantry west addition was built in the 20th century. The site also contains a beautiful 19th century stone bank barn. Per the 2003 Hopewell Township Cultural Resource survey funded by NJSHPO, the manor house and barn are eligible for the national register (as well as state and local) under its association with Joseph Titus and the Titus family generally, for the architecture of the house and barn, and noting its high visibility on Fiddlers Creek Road.

MAXIMILLIAN HAYDEN-CHAIR, AMIE RUKENSTEIN-VICE CHAIR,
TRACY VOGLER-SECRETARY, BONITA GRANT, ANITA CRANE, JULIE BLAKE, ROBERT WARZNAK
KEVIN KUCHINSKI, TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE LIASON

It was from this grand estate that the Titus family built the local empire that became Titusville Village. The Tituses were owners of the Sand Gully fishery on the river, several mills, and a brick yard. They intermarried with the Harts, the Phillips, the Wellings, and all the other old families of Hopewell. Joseph's son, Urial, was a member of the Hunterdon militia during the Revolutionary War and, when the war was over, he laid the foundations of his family's legacy. The story of Titusville is much too long for this brief narrative, but suffice to say: from their successful farmstead on Fiddlers Creek Road, Urial and his son, Joseph A. Titus, had the foresight, resources, and acumen to develop Titusville Village and to catalyze the development of both the canal and the railroad along the river, which were integral to the success of Titusville and the Pleasant Valley farming district (which is a nationally-recognized historic district).

All of this is to say that, although the Historic Preservation Commission has no authority to require a Certificate of Appropriateness for Hollystone, we would be very appreciative if the Zoning Board, should it decide to allow the variances, would please make a requirement that the owners agree to the HTHPC's nomination of the property for local, state, and national recognition. We also would appreciate you requiring them to consult with the Commission on any renovations that materially impact the integrity of the structures, particularly with regard to protecting the historic view shed of the property from Fiddlers Creek and the barn, maintaining intrinsic architectural features such as window fenestration, exterior millwork/architectural detailing, chimney and the like on the exterior, and being respectful of historic interior architectural features as well.

If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at amie@rukenstein.com or by phone at 609.203.3237.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AR', enclosed within a circular scribble.

Amie Rukenstein
Vice Chair