

79th Tour Tours

Story and photos by Matt Freeman

PEOPLE IN CHESTER COUNTY CERTAINLY ARE GLAD enough to see fall arrive for the usual reasons. But for the many people here and beyond who enjoy visiting notable private homes, there's a special benefit: Chester County Day.

This year is the 79th time ticketholders get to visit private homes, public structures and historic sites in the County. Saturday, October 5 is the date (it's always the first Saturday in October) and this year focuses on the southeastern part of the County, including Westtown, Glen Mills, Willistown, Malvern and Berwyn.

Our corner of the world has seen more than its share of early American history, and has inspired artists as well. Here's a preview of five representative homes drawn from the many more that will be open to view next month.

Here's hoping you enjoy The Day!



Westtown Bank Barn

MARIA McCOOL AND NICK GIANOULIS LIVE IN ONE HOUSE AND two worlds. Their restored 1867 bank barn in the Westtown area is on a typical cul-de-sac with gracious modern homes a short stroll away. But on the other side is an expanse of countryside, with the peace and privacy of centuries past when the barn was originally a part of the Plumly Dairy Farm.

And although the stone walls and still-standing silos evoke that same pastoral history, the expansive interior of the home is full of contemporary furnishings. Don't let the word "barn" fool you—far from seeming empty, the interior space is divided with structural elements in ways that lend it unending visual interest.

McCool says she grew up in the area, played in barns as a child, and "thought it would be cool to renovate one." Twenty-one years ago she saw and bought this barn, and the family lived in the nearby carriage house for seven years while architect John Rosecrans helped them realize what they'd envisioned, complete with patio, pool, waterfall and pond.

People thought they should tear the barn down and build new, McCool says, but if you enjoy seeing historic buildings put to new purposes, you'll be glad they didn't.





Old Thorn Farm

“I’VE ALWAYS BEEN AN OLD HOUSE PERSON,” says Lori Caranfa. And so the early-19th-century home she found on Shippen Lane in Westtown was ideal—she and her husband, Justin, wanted other homes around so their children would have neighborhood friends to play with.

The house has some interesting political history, with links to a 1930s state senator and reaching back to a connection to Benedict Arnold.

Fortunately the house was in good shape, Lori says, needing only cosmetic updating. The Caranfas added a mud room and a patio well equipped for outdoor relaxing and socializing. With plenty of room for the kids to run around and a

comfortable outdoor area for the adults to unwind in, a simple get-together with friends can “feel like we’re sort of on vacation,” Lori says.

Even with some houses nearby, there’s a sense of peace and quiet here. But there’s also a contemporary feel to the furnishings—Lori is a designer, and the home is full of eye-catching pieces that seem to hover comfortably between the worlds of yesteryear and right-this-minute.

Be sure to make your way to the barn. The Caranfas converted it into a party space with furniture and bar that Lori made herself from reclaimed shutters, doors, old tin and wooden pallets.



Okie-Inspired New Home

PEOPLE SOMETIMES ASK IF JOANNE HOPKINS AND HER HUSBAND, Dave, restored their house. They didn't—they built it new in 2017 on Providence Road near Radnor Hunt and moved in a year ago—but it's a compliment to the builder, Dave Hopkins himself, and architect Richard Buchanan.

The house was inspired by the work of famous local Colonial Revival architect R. Brognard Okie, and incorporates the subtle touches—vintage-style hardware and furnishings—that makes such homes not just look but feel like they're steeped in history.

With the help of her mother, Hopkins furnished it with a kind of eclectic elegance that offers lots of color and a sense of welcoming comfort that's no accident. The kitchen is open to a den that opens—literally, with disappearing glass doors—on an outdoor patio, all of it designed for socializing with family and friends.

"I wanted our home to be inviting," Hopkins says, and on Chester County Day that invitation extends to everyone on the tour.





Serenity on Oakbourne Road

GROWING UP IN CHESTER COUNTY, MARY Harlyvetch always liked historic homes. And so when it came time to buy one with her husband, Craig, everything fell in place for them to own a 1781 Colonial stone house, originally owned by Abraham Darlington, on Oakbourne Road south of West Chester.

Yes, some renovation was involved—they took out a tile floor in the kitchen, which now has 200-year-old remilled oak floors that glow like amber. The owners' traditional furnishings are in perfect harmony with the home, and there are interesting historic touches like pay drawers in the wall that farmers would use to pay their workers, and a number of artifacts found in the house and grounds enclosed in a display case.

Like most Chester County historic homes, this one is old yet still a place full of life and activity. The house is shaded by tall trees, and Mary is an active gardener, so the entire surroundings are vibrant with living things and color.

The Harlyvetches added a mud room and garage in 2011, and they've done a fair bit of upkeep all over, but no worries—"I would do it again in a heartbeat," Mary says.





Clock Tower Farm

This Year's VIP House

THE NAME “CLOCK TOWER FARM” IS NOT a fanciful one—there’s actually a hard-to-miss 65-foot clock tower standing on one end of the property on East Boot Road in East Goshen. According to current owner Beth Knauer, the tower, originally called the “Peace Tower,” was built in the early 20th century, during World War I, by the owner at the time, Algernon Sydney Logan, a Quaker. It seems Logan became interested in clockmaking, and, evidently driven by his enthusiasms, set up a machine shop and ended by building a clock-tower-sized clock and the tower to put it in as well. There is, of course, a house on the property to match—a large and impressive Greek Revival mansion of a house, built in 1830, and saved from developers

by current owners, Chris and Beth Knauer, on the eve of an auction. With the help of local firm Archer and Buchanan Architects, the Knauers recently completed a 15-month extensive restoration of the house and added a large addition that’s completely in character, using materials from a 1700s building on the property. The grounds feature gardens, designed by Paoli firm Glackin Thomas Panzak, a pool and pool house, tennis courts, large porch and stone barn. Beth says Chris had been wary of buying a historic house because the ceilings were often low, but they saw this one on a previous Chester County Day and loved it. The ceilings, being 11 feet high, were not an issue. VIP ticketholders can see the house themselves this year and take a private tour.



A background image of purple petunias with green foliage. A semi-transparent purple box contains white text. The box is divided into two columns by a vertical dashed line.

IF YOU GO:

The 2019 Chester County Day House Tour celebrates the traditional, distinctive architecture of the Southeastern Quadrant of Chester County. Visit homes and public landmarks in Westtown, Glen Mills, Willistown, Malvern and Berwyn. This is a self-driving tour.

When: Saturday, October 5, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Hunt: Start “The Day” with the beauty and pageantry of a Chester County fox hunt at Radnor Hunt in Malvern. Have your car parked by 8:30 a.m. because the hunt begins promptly at 9. Enjoy hot coffee and tea, yogurt, fresh fruit and homemade pastries before the Hunt.

Tour Tickets: \$50 per person. Boxed lunch from Arianna’s Gourmet Café can be ordered online for \$12. VIP tickets, \$100 per person.

Benefits: The Women’s Auxiliary to Chester County Hospital’s Heart to Heart Pledge.

Information & Tour Previews: ChesterCountyDay.com

VIP TICKETS HOLDERS WILL ...

Enjoy a Preview Party at Oakbourne Mansion in Westtown, where they will savor fine cuisine and wine and be treated to a preview of this year’s tour.

Tour the spectacular VIP house, a Greek Revival manor house built in 1830 and known for its prominent clock tower, built in 1912. The property recently underwent an extensive renovation and features intricate tiled floors, plaster crown moldings, beautiful chandeliers and wallpaper. Gourmet Boxed Lunch provided by Montesano Bros. Italian Market & Catering is included.

Tickets cost \$100, with 100% of your contribution benefiting The Chester County Hospital.

For more information, call 610-431-5301.