

# 2024 PENNSYLVANIA AT RISK

preservation  
PENNSYLVANIA

Pennsylvania At Risk puts statewide focus on a building's plight, promotes local action, and rallies statewide support for historic preservation.

[www.preservationpa.org](http://www.preservationpa.org)



# 2024 PENNSYLVANIA AT RISK



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## Staff

**MINDY CRAWFORD**  
Executive Director  
[mcrawford@preservationpa.org](mailto:mcrawford@preservationpa.org)

**SABRA SMITH**  
Communications Director  
[ssmith@preservationpa.org](mailto:ssmith@preservationpa.org)

Newsletter design by Sue Harper,  
Sharper Creative  
[sharpernet.com](http://sharpernet.com)

**On the cover:** The old Montgomery  
County Prison in Norristown, Pa.  
(Carol M. Highsmith, May 2, 2019.  
Library of Congress, <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019689916>.)

NOTE: Photographs were provided as part  
of *Pennsylvania At Risk* nominations, unless  
otherwise indicated. *At Risk* profiles are based  
on information from nominations. While we have  
attempted to verify the information provided,  
Preservation Pennsylvania does not assume  
liability for errors.

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## MISSION STATEMENT

Preservation Pennsylvania, through creative partnerships, targeted educational and advocacy programs, advisory assistance, and special projects, assists Pennsylvania communities to protect and utilize the historic resources they want to preserve for the future.

## ABOUT US

Preservation Pennsylvania is the commonwealth's only statewide, private, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the protection of historically and architecturally significant properties. The organization was created in 1982 as the Preservation Fund of Pennsylvania to operate a revolving fund that would assist in the acquisition and rehabilitation of historic properties. Since its incorporation, the organization has evolved and now serves as a source of information and expertise, hosts the Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Awards, and publishes an annual list of endangered properties in *Pennsylvania At Risk*. Preservation Pennsylvania also participates in educational programs and advocacy initiatives, conducts special projects, and offers technical assistance to people throughout the commonwealth.

# From the Executive Director

Dear Preservation Friend,

Preservation Pennsylvania launched “*Pennsylvania At Risk*” in 1992 with two primary goals. The first was to bring attention to specific imperiled historic places across the commonwealth and offer our support, which has taken the shape of meeting with local officials, attending public hearings, hiring structural engineers to evaluate conditions, writing letters of support for grant applications, serving as a fiscal manager for fundraising efforts, and activating the power of our membership to advocate for preservation.

The second goal was to call attention to the larger issues taking place across the state and, sometimes, across the nation. For example, in 1998, we championed Pennsylvania’s historic schools and dedicated that year’s *Pennsylvania At Risk* to the subject. We testified before the legislature and championed a bill that was passed, making the case for restoring older school buildings. This resulted in changes to the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s policies on ordinary construction and reimbursement. Since our success, we have been delighted to present awards to several school rehabilitation projects. Those neighborhood-centered, character-contributing school buildings would have been torn down without our intervention.

In recent years we have seen a rise in submissions related to distressed church properties. In fact, the only property submitted for 2023 that qualified for *Pennsylvania At Risk* was a church property that was demolished before we were able to weigh in.

We are working with Partners for Sacred Places to devise an assistance program to roll out across Pennsylvania in the future.

We have also received numerous submissions of parks and properties owned by local governments for which there has been no planning and insufficient investment in preventive maintenance, amounting to demolition by neglect. In other cases, the building sits unused with no apparent way forward.

## **This year’s *Pennsylvania At Risk***

The 2024 *Pennsylvania At Risk* includes two “white elephant” buildings seeking a new use to carry them into the future and a turn-of-the-20th-century former residence owned by the Catholic Church, which wants to tear it down to expand church parking or green space.

As a member of our statewide preservation community, we hope you’ll read on and support our efforts to provide assistance. To donate, please visit our website, use your phone to scan the QR code or fill out and mail in the form at the end of this publication.

We appreciate your ongoing support of preservation and the work of Preservation Pennsylvania.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mindy Gulden Crawford".

Mindy Gulden Crawford  
Executive Director

Preservation Pennsylvania supports the protection and preservation of historic places through educational outreach, workshops and events, legislative advocacy, advisory and technical assistance in the field, and other special initiatives.



## **QUESTIONS?**

Email [info@preservationpa.org](mailto:info@preservationpa.org)



## **DONATE**

Donate online at [www.preservationpa.org/give-join](http://www.preservationpa.org/give-join) or use your phone’s camera to scan the code.

# About the Pennsylvania At Risk Program

For nearly 30 years, Preservation Pennsylvania's annual listing of endangered historic properties has raised awareness about preservation issues and rallied statewide support. In this time, several key factors have emerged as consistent threats.

For instance, in areas where real estate markets are strong, **DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE** often threatens to compromise the setting or result in the demolition of important historic properties. Conversely, a **WEAK LOCAL ECONOMY**, vacancy and/or abandonment often lead to deferred maintenance, which can result in physical deterioration or demolition.

Even in cases where buildings aren't vacant, if their owner does not have the **FINANCIAL CAPACITY** to maintain the building, physical deterioration or demolition may occur.

Another common threat is **CONTROL CONCERNS**. Where there is a **LACK OF LOCAL TOOLS** to encourage or require maintenance and/or preservation, or where zoning or other ordinances do not support preservation goals, there is often little that can be done to address these control concerns.

**FUNCTIONAL OBSOLESCENCE** can also put historic properties at risk. When their original intended function is no longer needed in the community, a new way of doing business exists, or users prefer a different type or style of space, buildings can be threatened with inappropriate alterations, physical deterioration, or demolition.

The action(s) needed to protect historic properties from the threats of inappropriate alterations, compromised setting, physical deterioration or demolition will vary, depending on the contributing factors. The criteria for selecting places for *At Risk* include the existence of a local group of advocates and Preservation Pennsylvania's ability to make a difference. As you read this, Preservation Pennsylvania is in the process of working with the property owners and other interested parties to try to formulate an agreement or action plan to protect each of the historic buildings included in this 2024 *Pennsylvania At Risk* list.

## At Risk Sites - 2024

### ALLEGHENY COUNTY

#### D. C. Herbst House

Threat: Demolition

### MONTGOMERY COUNTY

#### Old Montgomery County Prison, aka Airy Street Prison

Threat: Demolition

### ALLEGHENY COUNTY

#### Warden's House, Western Penitentiary aka State Correctional Institution at Pittsburgh (SCI-P)

Threat: Demolition

We'd like to thank the members of the public for answering the call for submissions and sharing with us the stories of the places they love and are working to preserve. Our review panel this year discussed each site at length, evaluating which might benefit from technical assistance and which were truly threatened and could benefit from *Pennsylvania At Risk* listing.

Each year, the nominations remind us of a preservation reality: the importance and necessity of a preservation plan. Owners – whether municipal governments, organizations, or private owners – need to inventory the historic properties in their care and ensure that there is a master plan for their care and ongoing maintenance. Too often, we have seen entities acquire historic properties, but when those structures begin to require upkeep, financial concerns are cited and the preservation inertia leads to demolition by neglect or outright razing of the buildings.

Here is an important truth: Maintenance IS preservation. Roofing, painting, glazing, security and other such seemingly mundane matters are critical to the condition and survival of an old building. Deferred maintenance is a building-killer and no excuse for demolition.

Each of the buildings on this year's *At Risk* share a common theme: they are perceived as no longer useful to their owners. Yet each is ripe with potential for reuse. Saving the craftsmanship, saving the materials from a landfill, saving the distinctive architectural contribution to the streetscape, and capturing the embodied potential of an already-built structure are all good reasons to preserve. Imagine pointing to any of these revived buildings 50 years from now and saying "I remember when they wanted to tear that down."

We hope that you'll support us in our efforts to change the trajectory of each of these special places.

# Pennsylvania At Risk UPDATES

2024

For the resources listed this year, as well as those still “*At Risk*” from previous years, the work moves forward. You can be a part of these success stories. You have the power to make a difference. *At Risk* places don’t get saved just because we include them on the list, although many of our past listings credit us with helping to push forward the efforts. The momentum to find a new use or a positive outcome happens at the local level with your attendance at municipal meetings, and your volunteer work with local historical societies, historic review commissions, and local historic sites. We are here to encourage and aid your passion and enthusiasm, and together we can achieve great things.

The *Pennsylvania At Risk* list makes a difference in changing the fate of endangered historic places. Once a place is on the list, it remains on the list and Preservation Pennsylvania continues to offer assistance as necessary. We’d like to share some updates about previously listed sites.

## ALLEGHENY COUNTY

### Coraopolis Train Station

The Coraopolis Train Station (*PA At Risk* 2013) is being rehabilitated and will become the Coach Fred Milanovich Center for Community Connection. The work includes masonry restoration and exterior accessibility updates planned for the spring and summer of 2024. Future work will include window and door replacement. The project is being funded by a HUD grant and donations from the Milanovich family. The Coraopolis Station Project is seeking additional grants to complete the project.

## BEAVER COUNTY

### Old Economy Bachelor House

Old Economy Bachelor House (*PA At Risk* 2015) was acquired by the Ambridge Historic District Economic Development Corp., with the intent to restore it for Old Economy Village's bicentennial celebration in 2024/2025. A 2022 Keystone Grant from the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission funded restoration planning for the house, and work is planned to begin in 2024.

## BEDFORD COUNTY

### Lincoln Motor Court

The last remaining motor court on the Lincoln Highway has a new owner! The Altizers, who were stewards of the Lincoln Motor Court (*PA At Risk* 2014) for almost four decades, sold the property in 2022 to Lucas Steinbrunner, who has already made improvements, including an outdoor stage, while committing to maintaining the motor court's historic character. Plan a weekend getaway to Manns Choice and enjoy this blast from the past!

## BLAIR COUNTY

### Leap the Dips

Still *At Risk*! The Leap the Dips coaster at Lakemont Park near Altoona (*PA At Risk* 1995) will be closed this summer. The owners point to “declining attendance, increased costs of two wooden roller coasters and rides, and other financial challenges.” This raises concern about the future of the roller coaster. (The rest of the park will be open.) The National Historic Landmark coaster is believed to be the last surviving side friction roller coaster of the figure-eight variety and is the oldest operating roller coaster in the world.

# Updates continued ...

## BUCKS COUNTY

### Patterson Farm

The agricultural pursuits at Patterson Farm (and Satterthwaite House, PA *At Risk* 2021) have sustained the local community for more than 340 years, but the farm was purchased by Lower Makefield Township in 1998 with no plan for its use or maintenance. After more than two decades of deferred maintenance, a combination of factors (including listing on PA *At Risk*) led to the creation of an ad hoc committee to review options for the future of the farm and its historic buildings. A consultant was hired to create a master plan, and phase one is now underway. It will include listing the property on the National Register of Historic Places, carpentry work and painting to correct long overdue maintenance and more. Lower Makefield Township's Master Plan Implementation Committee is currently soliciting proposals for a nonprofit organization to manage the historic Patterson Farm property according to the vision for the property as a community benefit.

In May, Preservation Pennsylvania met with members of the new Implementation Committee to provide assistance and suggest potential funding sources.



*Mount Tabor AME Church before and after*

## CUMBERLAND COUNTY

### Mount Tabor AME Church

In June 2023, Preservation Pennsylvania Executive Director Mindy Crawford participated in an event celebrating the phenomenal progress of restoring the Mount Tabor AME Church (Mount Holly Springs, PA *At Risk* 2018) and the outpouring of community support that has been instrumental in saving this historic place. The church has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and interpretative panels have been installed at the church and cemetery. The church foundation has been repointed and the roof and flooring repaired. Mount Tabor AME Church was founded by Elias Parker, once an enslaved person in Hagerstown, Maryland, who moved to Mount Holly Springs after serving with the U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War.

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY

### Abolition Hall and the Hovenden Homestead

The important Underground Railroad and Abolition history found in Pennsylvania's first National Register historic district, which includes Abolition Hall and the Hovenden homestead (PA *At Risk* 2017), will be preserved, now that a townhouse development has been defeated and a private donor has come forward to assist with the purchase. The property will be held jointly by Whitemarsh Township and the Whitemarsh Art Center, an independent nonprofit organization. Visitors may walk the mown paths that circle the structures and wetlands on the 10.45-acre site. The buildings are still closed. Under the terms of the Grant Agreement, the Art Center is to occupy Hovenden House, while the stone barn and Abolition Hall will have other uses, as yet to be determined. In March 2024, the Whitemarsh Township Board of Supervisors passed a motion to create a steering committee for the Abolition Hall/Corson Tract property.



Mifflin House Farmstead

## PHILADELPHIA COUNTY

### John Coltrane House

In 2021, the Strawberry Mansion Community Development Corporation (SMCDC) announced its plan to restore Philadelphia’s National Historic Landmark John Coltrane House (PA *At Risk* 2020) as a museum. A lawsuit filed in April 2022 by John Coltrane’s sons, Ravi and Oran, disrupted that plan. In March 2024, it was reported that the Coltrane brothers and the Gadson family had reached a financial settlement. The National Trust for Historic Preservation’s new Descendant Stewardship and Leadership Initiative, in cooperation with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, will jointly fund the settlement as a part of a wider effort to protect buildings important to Black history and culture.



John Coltrane House

## YORK COUNTY

### Hanover Theater

The Hanover Economic Development Corporation (HEDC) has purchased the 1928 Hanover Theater (PA *At Risk* 2011) and seeks creative proposals for redevelopment of the historic building.

### Mifflin House Farmstead

Preservation Pennsylvania helped organize fundraisers and public meetings, attended township hearings and paid for legal counsel to challenge the efforts to demolish the c. 1800 Mifflin House farmstead (Wrightsville, PA *At Risk* 2017) in eastern York County to make way for a warehouse facility. We knew that the community valued this beautiful property, open space and Underground Railroad history.

As an alternative to demolition and development, Preservation Pennsylvania, The Conservation Fund, and the Susquehanna National Heritage Area (SNHA) proposed adaptive reuse of the buildings and site as a regional heritage center and visitor attraction, with a historic park, a nature preserve, and interpretive trails connected to a river park. The plan includes over 80 acres of Blessing/Kinsley property and adjacent public and semi-public lands, including riverfront parcels owned by SNHA. In April 2022, the property was officially transferred, and it is now in the process of being preserved and interpreted. Learn more at the SNHA website: [susqnha.org](https://susqnha.org)

# D. C. Herbst House



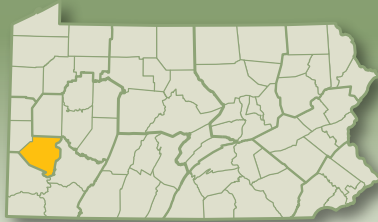
This mansion's location in a National Register District can't save it from potential demolition. Preservationists and community advocates encourage adaptive reuse; will the owner negotiate?

Sewickley was recently named by USA Today as one of the top five most “enchanted towns” in the northeast United States, noting its “leafy streets” and “well-preserved architecture.” The write-up says the town “seamlessly blends historic charm with modern sophistication” and touts a thriving cultural scene. How could it be possible that a local landmark Victorian building in a historic district is at threat of being demolished instead of reused?

Construction of the David Calhoun Herbst mansion was completed sometime between 1876 and 1886. An 1888 volume of character sketches [The Social Mirror: A Character Sketch of the Women of Pittsburgh and Vicinity, by Adelaide Mellier Nevin, (Pittsburgh, T. W. Nevin, Publisher, 1888)], notes Mrs. Herbst’s “big diamonds” and shares a glimpse of the Herbst residence, likely recently completed: “The handsome mansion in Sewickley is fully and splendidly furnished, a lovely conservatory opening out from the dining room. Nowhere is to be found more lavish hospitality or more perfect housekeeping and finer table appointments of china, glass and silver. Mrs. Herbst and her daughters drive a spanking team of



231 BROAD STREET, SEWICKLEY  
ALLEGHENY COUNTY



spirited black horses, a drag in summer and a close carriage in winter. Mr. Herbst is said to be quite wealthy. Mrs. Percy Rider, one of the married daughters, and Miss Stella Herbst, with their parents and Mr. Rider, comprise the home circle.”

The building was sold and opened as St. James Parish’s first school in 1913. It later served as a convent, but has been vacant since the 1990s. Located in the primary gateway to Sewickley Village, the west side of Broad Street features schools, parking lots and churches, while the east side retains its historic character with the Old Sewickley Post Office, Sewickley Public Library, and old residential buildings that span a variety of styles from Greek Revival to Queen Ann. The building is located in the largest of the Borough’s historic districts and has been featured for years in brochures and walking tours.

The Herbst house is situated on the Saint James campus, which includes the church, parish house and administrative offices, rectory, elementary school and gymnasium. The campus hosts the very popular Sewickley Farmers Market. The parish considers the market their “Mission to the Community” and wants to expand it.

The Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh filed for a demolition permit in July 2022. While the Sewickley Borough Council and Historic Review Commission voted to uphold the historic district ordinances, the diocese appealed their decision. In December 2023, the appellate court remanded the case back to the borough and diocese with the aim of mediation towards an agreed resolution.

The site is in excellent condition overall, with manicured lawns, neat gardens, mature trees and parking for the parish and school. Since the demolition permit was filed, a temporary construction fence was placed around the Herbst House. That portion of the site has not received landscaping maintenance and is overgrown. Maintenance of the exterior building envelope ceased 10 years ago, and the building has been vacant for more

than 30 years. The structure is engulfed in vines, and the sidewalks and driveway are in poor condition.

Supporters in favor of preserving the building would like to see it sold as a private residence or restored by a public/private/nonprofit partnership as a community asset. The Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation (PHLF) estimates a cost of \$3.7 million to fully restore the Herbst House, while a partial restoration, consisting of the facade and first floor, would be \$2.5 million. PHLF has already earmarked some funding for the possible project.

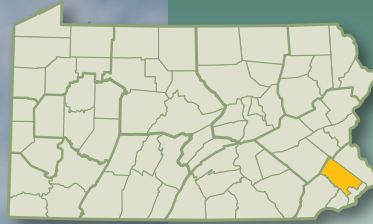
**Opposite top left:** Herbst House in the mid-1890s: Photo likely taken by the across-the-street neighbor, Frank Gifford Tallman, with his personal camera. Gift of Jonathan West to the Sewickley Valley Historical Society. Reprinted with permission.

**Opposite bottom left:** Herbst House c. 1990: Photo by William J. Penberthy in *Historic Houses of the Sewickley Valley* (Stephen Neal Dennis, Edgeworth, PA, Edgeworth Preservation, 1996), p. 48, plate 35. Image courtesy of the Sewickley Valley Historical Society.

**Top left:** Detail of the Herbst House in the mid-1890s: Photo likely taken by the across-the-street neighbor, Frank Gifford Tallman, with his personal camera. Gift of Jonathan West to the Sewickley Valley Historical Society. Reprinted with permission.

**Top right:** Interior view of the Herbst House, 2019: Courtesy of Mark Izydore.

# Old Montgomery County Prison aka the Airy Street Prison



35 EAST AIRY STREET,  
NORRISTOWN  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

## Old Montgomery County Prison

The Old Montgomery County Prison, built in 1851, was designed by architect Napoleon LeBrun, whose portfolio of work includes the nearby Montgomery County Courthouse (built in 1854) as well as the Academy of Music in Philadelphia (1857). The prison building is noted as “a masterpiece” in the National Register of Historic Places documentation for the Central Norristown Historic District. The Gothic Revival Warden’s House in the front has the appearance of a castle.

The building closed in 1986 and has been vacant and deteriorating. In July 2023, Montgomery County commissioners approved a demolition contract and sought a permit from Norristown’s municipal government. Thankfully, due to an outpouring of citizen support for the iconic building’s preservation, the commissioners have withdrawn the demolition permit application and expressed the intention to issue a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) this summer.

According to reporting by Hidden City Philadelphia, Megan Alt, the county’s communications director, stated that the county is “investing over \$90 million to architecturally restore the historic Montgomery County Courthouse” designed by LeBrun.

Architect and advocate Doug Seiler AIA, LEED AP notes the loss over time of many of Norristown’s distinctive buildings, including an Art Deco theater that was razed to make way for a fast food restaurant. Historic preservation is a tool for managing change, saving the places that give a community character and preventing heartbreaking losses that make a town feel like anywhere else.

Local advocates and groups supporting preservation of the building think the building holds great potential, and cite its prominence in Norristown’s skyline, the building’s historic and architectural significance, especially as an

Two prison buildings, on opposite sides of the commonwealth, have the potential to be unique assets to neighborhood revitalization. The distinctive architecture of these purpose-built structures that have been in place for more than 150 years makes them character-defining landmarks within their communities. Can they be saved from demolition?

Pennsylvania has a long history of innovation in penal systems, dating back to the days of William Penn, whose penal code suggested productive labor in place of torture and mutilation as punishment for crimes. Over the centuries, reformers sought to understand the roots of crime and attempted to fashion rehabilitative solutions that included education, labor, solitary reflection, and religious instruction.

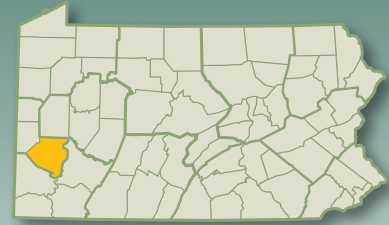
This year two prison buildings were nominated for *Pennsylvania At Risk*. While some might regard them as outmoded sites with a troubled history, others see them as unique, solidly built icons with great potential for reuse. (See our brief survey of some outstanding projects that transformed former prison buildings into new uses, such as hotel, arts center, and movie studio.)

# Warden's House, Western Penitentiary

aka State Correctional Institution at Pittsburgh (SCI-P)



3001 BEAVER AVENUE,  
PITTSBURGH  
[40°28'13.7"N 80°02'32.6"W]  
ALLEGHENY COUNTY



irreplaceable feature of the historic district, and the possibility it offers for redevelopment and economic revitalization of the heart of the county seat.

More information and a survey are available at <https://engage.montgomerycountypa.gov/en>

## Warden's House, Western Penitentiary

Nineteenth-century humanitarians had many ideas about prison rehabilitation, and these were put into practice in the 1800s with the construction in Pennsylvania of two penitentiaries designed to rehabilitate prisoners with a focus on inmate employment. In 1829 the Eastern State Penitentiary was built outside Philadelphia, and between 1878 and 1893, the Western State Penitentiary was built in Allegheny County.

Today, the Eastern State Penitentiary is a National Historic Landmark and an internationally recognized cultural site that receives more than 250,000 visitors a year. It serves as a place to see where Al Capone served time and to learn about and reflect on the American prison system then and now.

The Western State Penitentiary, closed in 2017, is targeted for demolition. The 22-acre site includes the historic Warden's House outside and, behind the 25-foot-high and three-foot-thick walls, an auditorium, a power plant, industrial shop buildings, a dining hall, a library/chapel, a health services building, an administration building and inmate housing. The property has hosted six major film productions, including "The Mayor of Kingstown." The Pennsylvania Department of General Services (PA-DGS) intends to sell or demolish the site and has prepared a feasibility analysis exploring various options.

Local advocates seek to preserve the Warden's House, built in 1885. The

4.5-story late Victorian building is located along the Ohio River and next to the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, a 33-mile path used by pedestrians, cyclists and commuters. A land use feasibility study from PA-DGS suggests a 5.2 acre waterfront park that could incorporate the Warden's House, ripe for adaptive reuse that would benefit the Marshall-Shadeland community.

**Opposite:** Carol M. Highsmith. (2019) *The old Montgomery County Prison, built in Norristown, Pennsylvania, closed in 1987.* 2019-05-02. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2019689916/>

**Top:** Matthew Christopher, *Abandoned America, from Western State Penitentiary PA SHPO Historic Survey Resource Form, May 2018*

# Adaptive Reuse of Prisons and Jails

We wanted to provide a brief sampling demonstrating examples of successful reuse of historic jail and prison buildings to illustrate what is possible.

According to a 2022 report, “Repurposing Correctional Facilities to Strengthen Communities” by The Sentencing Project, the “key to successful prison closure efforts has been the reuse of former correctional facilities for purposes beneficial to communities,” namely directing resources to reinvest in local communities. The report notes that “prison reuse planning is an emerging practice, including ... the budgeting of public funding towards prison repurposing projects and related economic development” and provides examples of successful new uses, including community meeting space, mixed use real estate development, business parks, a whisky distillery and private event venue, and a movie studio.

For the most part, the prisons cited here have inherent value due to their historically significant architecture, yet also because their reuse demonstrates a sustainable approach, keeping material out of landfills. Given a new use that benefits the community, it’s possible to overcome the negative associations of incarceration.

## Cultural Center/ Mixed Use

### Arthur Kill Correctional Facility ► Movie and TV Studio

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*Staten Island, New York*

Guided by New York State’s Empire State Development, the vision was to transform the prison into soundstages and a full-service production facility. Broadway Stages committed to an investment of \$20 million, and the film and television production studio space is expected to support creation of 1,311 permanent jobs and a projected 367 construction jobs. The redevelopment project also involved the adaptive reuse of existing buildings on the site, transforming many of them into film studios, and using the remaining buildings for equipment storage, cafeterias, and production offices. The CEO

said of the project, “The prison brings much-needed authenticity to so many TV shows and films, and we’re happy to be able to provide the backdrop for those scenes.” The facility has hosted productions including “Orange Is the New Black,” “The Blacklist,” and “Ocean’s 8.”

### Bucks County Prison ► Michener Art Museum

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*Doylestown, Bucks County*

The Bucks County Prison in Doylestown opened in 1884 and was in service for just over a century before the county decided to build a new facility and demolition began on the old one. County commissioners agreed to preserve the building and lease the land and buildings to house a new museum. Today, the arched gateway, a portion of the massive stone walls and the warden’s house (now the museums’ administrative headquarters) make up the core of the Michener Art Museum, which opened to the public in 1988.

### Lorton Reformatory ► The Workhouse Arts Center

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*Lorton, Virginia*

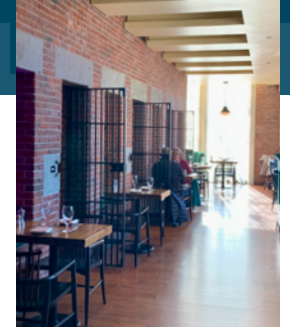
Established just outside Washington, D.C., during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, the Lorton Reformatory began holding inmates in 1910. The site has housed inmates ranging from celebrated suffragist Lucy Burns to G. Gordon Liddy, a key figure in the Watergate scandal. In 2002, the 55-acre site, a D.C. Department of Corrections property, was transferred to Virginia’s Fairfax County. Prior to that transfer, the county’s board of supervisors appointed a citizens’ task force to develop recommendations for the property. The recommendations were approved in 1999 following the Revitalization Act. The historic buildings, which were successfully preserved and reused, included dormitories, cell blocks, guard towers, prison walls, guards’ quarters, a chapel, and the on-site power plant. One phase of the prison’s adaptive reuse will include redeveloping a dining hall and six two-story cell blocks as retail and office space. The adaptive reuse plan also includes new construction of commercial and retail space and new construction of a townhome development. The site includes the Workhouse Arts Center, which features galleries, artist and dance studios, theater space, music rooms, event spaces, and administrative offices. The Workhouse offers continuing education classes, supports more than 65 professional and emerging visual artists by providing affordable studio and gallery spaces, and hosts special events that benefit the entire community.



Old Salem Jail



Charles Street Jail exterior



Charles Street Jail interior

# Housing

## Old Salem Jail

*50 St. Peter Street, Salem, Massachusetts*

One of the longest-operating jails in the country, the Old Salem Jail opened in 1813 and closed in 1991 when, due to a lack of electricity and running water, it was declared unfit for human habitation. The City of Salem’s goals were to find a reuse for the property, revitalize the site, and provide housing in the downtown district. After failing to find a developer in 2001, the city transferred the property to the Salem Redevelopment Authority. It engaged The Cecil Group, a planning and design firm, to create a feasibility analysis for the redevelopment of the site, including community feedback. Ultimately, the \$10.5 million project, using federal and state preservation rehabilitation credits, transformed the prison site to offer 24 residential units, one unit of affordable housing, and a commercial space. The team of partners included the Salem Redevelopment Authority, Historic Salem, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, New Boston Ventures and Finegold Alexander Architects.

# Hospitality

## Charles Street Jail ► The Liberty Hotel

*Boston, Massachusetts*

The signage in the corner of the hotel lobby reads “From jail to gracious hotel.” Interpretive panels and a video screen explain the history of the prison, which opened in 1851, and its transformation into a hotel, including a ceremonial blessing by Tibetan monks to clear its energy. Now a National Historic Landmark, the property was purchased by Massachusetts General Hospital in 1990. One portion of the land was redeveloped to accommodate an ambulatory care center, and the jail was turned into a hotel with a modern addition for guest rooms. The historic building’s preservation and rehabilitation became a project involving the Boston Landmarks Commission; the Massachusetts Historical Commission; the National Park Service; federal, state and local governments; and developer Carpenter and Company. Architects Cambridge Seven Associates and Ann Beha Architects maintained the historic, character-defining features while adapting the building to its new hospitality use.

# Interpretive Sites

## Eastern State Penitentiary

*Philadelphia, Philadelphia County*

This National Historic Landmark was nearly torn down after it closed in 1971, but has been transformed into an internationally recognized cultural attraction that uses the power of its historic setting to deepen the conversation about incarceration and the U.S. justice system.

## Old Jail Museum

*Jim Thorpe, Carbon County*

This fortress-like structure was the Carbon County Jail until 1995, when it was purchased by a local family and transformed into a museum. It may be most widely known as the site of the hanging of seven Irish coal miners known as Molly Maguires in the late 1800s.



Eastern State marker



Eastern State Penitentiary



Jim Thorpe

# Adaptive Reuse of Prisons and Jails, continued ...

## The Old Jail

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*Chambersburg, Franklin County*

Built in 1818, this is one of the oldest buildings in Chambersburg, and it survived the Confederate burning of the town in 1864. The Franklin County Historical Society now operates the National Register-listed building as a museum, sharing local history and connections to the Underground Railroad.

## Old Jail Museum

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*Smethport, McKean County*

Built in 1872, the jail was renovated and, in 2004, became a museum and home to the McKean County Historical Society, presenting the history of the railroad in McKean County through displays of artifacts, memorabilia, photos, maps, and books.

## Offices

### Old Cumberland County Prison

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*Carlisle, Cumberland County*

Located in downtown Carlisle, the old county prison operated from 1854 to 1984. The castle-like structure was designed by Philadelphia architect Edward Haviland, son of John Haviland (whose built projects included Eastern State Penitentiary, the Walnut Street Theater, and new cell-block designs to relieve overcrowding at Western Penitentiary from 1833 to 1836.) The building now houses the offices of several Cumberland County departments.



*Old Cumberland County Prison*

## How you can help

As these situations develop, we'll share updates on our website, our e-news and social media. We'll let you know how you can become involved and take action for the preservation of these places and all the others listed on *Pennsylvania At Risk!*

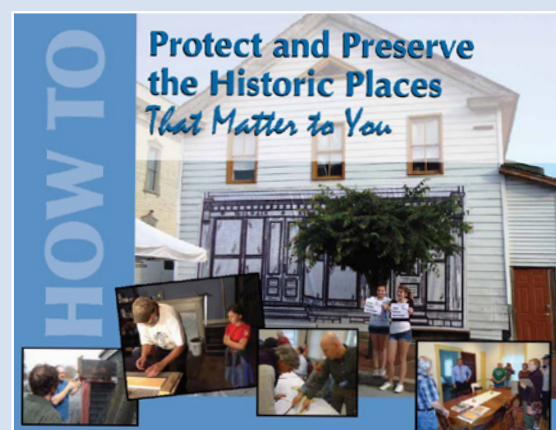
♥ Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for updates, advocacy alerts, and preservation events.

♥ Sign up for our monthly e-news at our website, [preservationpa.org](http://preservationpa.org), and receive information about grant funding, advocacy alerts and upcoming events. Each year we put out a call for nominations to *Pennsylvania At Risk* and the Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Awards.

♥ Donate to Preservation Pennsylvania or become a member to benefit our 2024 work with these *At Risk* sites.

♥ Be a good citizen. Participate in your government. Attend local municipal meetings. Research electoral candidates and vote.

If you're working to save a historic building in your community, visit our website [preservationpa.org](http://preservationpa.org) (under the RESOURCES tab) and download our guide, "How to Protect and Preserve the Historic Places That Matter to You."



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