

Kennett Township Supervisors
801 Burrows Run Road
Chadds Ford, PA 19317

RE: The Fussell House (formerly “The Pines”) located at 723 East Baltimore Pike in Kennett Square.

Dear Kennett Township Supervisors,

Steeped in history, the Fussell House holds secrets to life on the Underground Railroad. Now this nearly two hundred year old home is facing ruin.

During the 1800s, the house was owned by a prominent Quaker physician named Dr. Bartholomew Fussell. Two thousand slaves are documented to have escaped to freedom via Dr. Fussell’s home. Those who assisted fugitives faced financial, legal, and social ramifications. Often, their neighbors ostracized them, and many were arrested for their involvement and charged expensive fines. While we celebrate such important figures as Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, we cannot overlook the heroic actions of Dr. Fussell.

Developers have built around the property and appear to be allowing it to deteriorate in order for it to be condemned. While they now have a tremendous opportunity to preserve history, as yet they have been unwilling to entertain ideas which may even be profitable to them. For instance, as the Marriott has a hotel adjacent to the Fussell House, one can easily imagine a marketing campaign that would bring in hotel guests and allow them to take a tour of this pivotal stop on the Underground Railroad. The National Park Service is one of many government departments and non-profit organizations that promote these stops and help to make them more than pay for themselves.

It is important to focus on restoring the Fussell House and providing public access to the inside so as to enhance its contribution in telling the story of Kennett Square’s heritage, the Underground Railroad and Dr. Fussell.

I am writing, therefore, to urge you to 1) protect the structure from further deterioration by encouraging the current owner to make much needed repairs, 2) adopt a historic preservation overlay zoning ordinance to protect the structure against demolition and destruction by neglect, and 3) engage the private and public sectors in creating a plan for the appropriate adaptive reuse of the structure.

Sincerely,