

Ingham house has a long history in Solebury

Neighbors got together to prevent massive development

By NED HARRINGTON

Part Two

A state historical marker along Route 202 opposite the Ingham house reads: *Samuel D. Ingham, statesman, industrialist, born here September 16, 1779. Secretary Treasury, 1829-1831, under Jackson and holder of other state and national offices. Active in the early anthracite coal industry; canal advocate.*

Andrew Jackson and Ana Maria Stuckert Beaumont purchased the Ingham property in 1849, when Samuel D. Ingham moved to Trenton. The transaction was between friendly families, since John Beaumont and Samuel had conducted business together, and the Beaumonts owned tracts in both Upper Makefield and nearby in New Hope.

A.J. was the eldest son of John and Elizabeth Skillman Beaumont, and had younger brothers John and William. Andrew and Anna Maria had sons Horatio Nelson, Charles Foulke and George. A.J. had experience with paper milling, and thus was able to take over the mill. William McReady was in charge in 1865, when the mill burned. It was rebuilt in 1870, and then run by Butler and Company; and in 1875 by William Gandy; then by a New York company about 1880, until it failed in 1883 and ceased operations. Only traces of its ruins are visible today.

Andrew Jackson Beaumont built a one-room grammar school along Old York Road, on the section now bypassed by the modern concrete highway, and named Ingham Road. It was incorporated into the township school system. It was never popular with school directors.

Beaumont also originated Deer Park, south of the lake, about 1871. It provided for the propagation of deer, elk and rabbits, and it became a popular picnic site. A circular pavilion was built in 1876 and concerts were held there, and it was used by various literary societies. Yet it did not do well financially and was sheriffed in 1901, when it was acquired by the Eastburn family, and activities continued, until 1921 when it was deeded to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints for \$5,000.

Deer Park has continued in use for youth, boy scout and girl scout meetings, and other non-profit groups. Today the Great Spring and Ingham Lake are controlled jointly by Solebury Township and the state Fish and Boat Commission, and the township expects to purchase some of the facilities, including the spring. The lake was recently lowered in order to preserve the dam, while improvements are being designed.

A.J. made extensive renovations to the original Ingham house in 1873, hiring architect J.A. Bird of Lambertville for the design. It was actually a new house on the site of the old. A wing at the back was demolished, and a new wing added at the end. The large western part represented the original structure, the whole was stuccoed to create harmony. At about age 81, A.J. was not in good health, and sold the property to Timothy T. Eastburn for \$3,500. He died in 1890 and is buried at the by-then-named Thompson Memorial Presbyterian Church. Anna Maria survived until 1893



Architectural Forum printed a story on Alfred Boell's prize-winning remodeling of the Ingham house in 1934. Dr. Milton Del Manzo commissioned the remodeling.

and could have retained ownership after her husband's passing, but chose not to. Their three sons by then had moved elsewhere.

Timothy Eastburn, born in 1840, was a twin of Elias, and they were the third and fourth sons of Jacob and Elizabeth Taylor Eastburn. Jacob descended from immigrant Robert, who arrived with wife, Sarah, in 1713. Thence to Samuel, Robert and Moses. He lived from 1798 to 1860, and was a successful dealer in lime products, living at Limeport, New Hope and Yardley.

Timothy was a lawyer, and engaged in handling the sale of many properties in Solebury and adjacent townships. He married first Rebecca Ely in 1865, and they had a daughter Amy. Rebecca died in 1869 at age only 36. In 1881, Timothy married Elizabeth Kronbargar; no children. He and Elizabeth bought the Ingham property in 1888 from the declining A.J. Beaumont, and added a wrap-around porch in 1890.

Timothy died in 1911, and is buried humbly in the Solebury Friends cemetery, next to his first wife, Rebecca. He left the Ingham property to be sold by his cousin, lawyer Hugh B. Eastburn, who arranged for its sale to Amy for \$3,000. She had married Howard Knight, apparently not of Solebury Friends Meeting, to which the Eastburn family belonged.

They had children Russell, 1899; Clifford, 1891; and Rebecca, 1894. Apparently Amy also had a legal mind, because

Howard is not mentioned in the transaction. The Knights resided there until Amy's death in 1928, when again there was no mention of Howard, or of the grown children. The estate was settled by her lawyer cousin, Arthur M. Eastburn, son of Hugh.

The Ingham-Beaumont-Eastburn-Knight property and house were purchased in 1929 by Dr. Milton DelManzo and his wife, Mildred, of New York City, for an undisclosed amount. Dr. DelManzo was born in Milwaukee in 1889 and climbed the educational ladder until obtaining his Ph.D. in 1924. He married Mildred Dewees in 1916, and they had Donald and Jessie. He was a teacher and school principal in Iowa and Kansas and became a professor of education at Columbia.

Apparently, at age 40, Delmanzo decided to slow down and have a place in the country. He engaged local architect Alfred Boell in 1933 to do a major remodeling of the house. It cost all of \$8,429, and won the remodeling competition of Better Homes and Gardens with an award of \$1,000. The porch was removed and many improvements were completed, outside and inside.

The DelManzos stayed until 1942, when they sold to three women from Philadelphia: Louise M. Dickson, Margery Lee Golder and Elizabeth M. Grabosky, for \$31,000. They lasted until 1947, by which time Ms. Grabosky had married Patrick Dinehart, and the cozy group broke up.

Meanwhile author Budd Schulberg and his wife, actress Geraldine Brooks, had been visiting Moss and Kitty Carlisle Hart at Fairview Farm, around the corner on Aquetong Road, and they decided, customarily, that Bucks County was the place to live. They first bought a home in Upper Makefield, but soon acquired the Ingham house, in 1947, from Ms. Dickson et al, and settled there with kids Vicki, Stevie and Davey.

They remained until 1954, when the writer and theater clique was beginning to move elsewhere, and they sold to the notorious Lowell Birrell, who was one of the social associates and lived at Echo Falls Farm, just across the way on Meeting House Road.

Birrell, in mysterious ways, was buying up properties all around his residence, with God only knows whose ill-gained money. That, indeed, is another story, and it is a fantastic one. Anyway, into the bag went the Ingham house, along with the Moss Hart property, 65 landlocked acres held over by Dr. DelManzo, back of the Ingham house, and other neighboring tracts.

Bob and Elizabeth Montgomery lived farther west on Meeting House Road, and if Birrell sought to buy their property, rejection by Bob would have been accompanied by a choice assortment of expletives.

The octopus continued to expand its reach, until the entire Birrell empire, called at various

times Bucks County Farms Inc., Solebury Farms Inc., and Echo Falls Farms Inc., collapsed, while its erstwhile CEO fled to Cuba and then to Brazil.

Finally, the Ingham property and others were sold by receivers to Lawrence M. Katz, who drew up plans for developing the entire area but met with considerable resistance from the township officials and the neighbors. But then Mr. Katz died in 1983 and the plans were taken over by his widow, Selma, and CoreStates Bank. Solebury Enterprises, a limited partnership formed by Katz was the grantee, which later became Solebury Farm Partners.

In 1988, the plan was for 290 houses on 260 acres, with 1,100 acres of open space. A newly formed Aquetong Valley Association, of neighboring property owners approved—spokespersons Jane Hess, Herbert Myers and David Marshall.

The conserved area would be managed by the Natural Lands Trust. And 700 surrounding acres, owned by neighbors, would remain undeveloped.

This plan also had the approval of other local conservation and historical groups. It was opposed by the Solebury Civic Association.

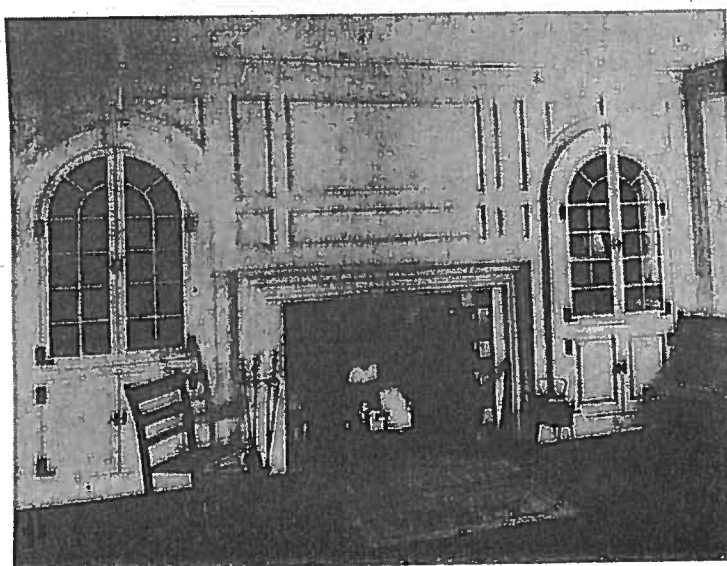
It was agreed that on-site wells would not be practical, because of underlying limestone, and a central water system would be created. Sewage would go to an extension of the 202 pipeline, to the Lambertville treatment plant.

After all those deliberations, Mrs. Katz and Solebury Farm Partners withdrew their application in October 1991.

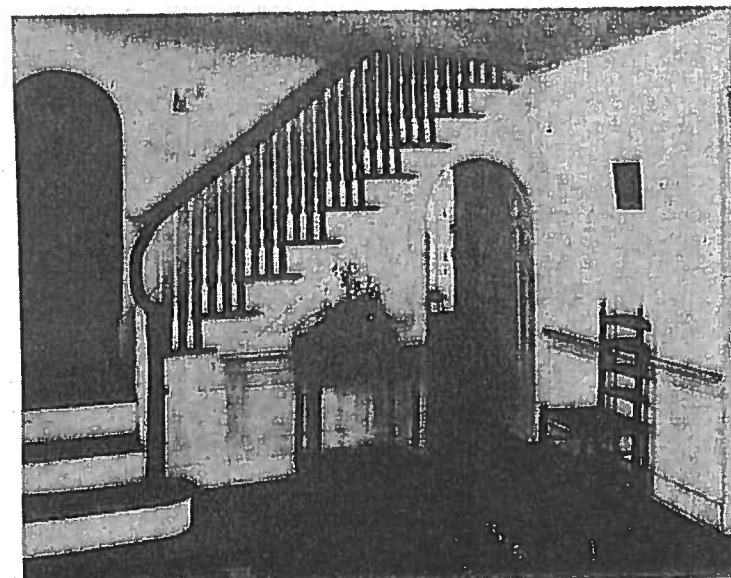
In September 1992, DeLuca Homes Corporate Center of Yardley bought the property, remaining it Solebury Enterprises. Their modest plan for 132 homes and plenty of open space, restricting ownership to age 55 or over, proved generally acceptable by the township and neighbors, as a pleasing compromise, after all the backing and forthing of the Katz era.

During the Birrell years, the Ingham house was occupied by tenants, and then sat idle, slowly going to weeds and leaky roofs. Now DeLuca has given it a complete restoration, seeking to preserve the significant historical features. It might be compared to Abe Lincoln's axe, which had three new blades and four new handles over the years, but still was the same axe.

The house will be a community center for the newly planned and approved Fox Run Preserve.



Washington's Headquarters at Valley Forge was found to have paneling almost identical to the paneling inside the Ingham house.



An elegant staircase cases the Ingham house entry.