

## **Lessons of the relocation of the historic King Of Prussia Inn**

*Moving, managing and paying for the relocation of old buildings*

*This interview was conducted with Albert Paschall, president of the King Of Prussia Chamber Of Commerce at Valley Forge. Paschall led a campaign from 1997 to 2001 to relocate and restore the historic King Of Prussia Inn, a building on the National Register of Historic Places. The building had been isolated on an island at the critical junction where Route 202, 422, The Schuylkill Expressway and the Pennsylvania Turnpike converged in southeastern Pennsylvania, a short distance from Philadelphia. Protected by the National Register the building's relocation was forced by a \$300 million highway improvement project. The King Of Prussia Chamber Of Commerce and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation are co-recipients of the American Association of State Highway Officials 2004 National Legacy Award for the successful relocation and restoration of the historic King Of Prussia Inn.*

### **Preliminary stages:**

#### ***Do you receive many calls about relocating buildings?***

In the last 4 years I'd say around a hundred from all over the US and Canada. Canada's Discovery Channel did a special that included the Inn and we can tell when it's been rerun because we'll get a spurt of calls. Internet searches often direct people to us as well.

#### ***What's the first thing you tell somebody who has no experience but wants to move an old building?***

Run in the other direction. But seriously the key to avoiding serious cost over runs are very elementary. There are 3 basic questions. Where is the building going to go? What is its end use going to be? What obstacles, visible and invisible, might be in the path of the relocation or its next use?

Most building relocations today are merely moving the structure back on its current landscape away from things like a highway widening but major cross highway relocations needs to review overhead utilities wires and hanging traffic signals. Going over and under bridges has to be considered from the standpoint of height and weight. Weight limits on some streets could be a factor. Once any site comes under consideration for relocation a good first stop is the local municipal planning or zoning agency. Their cooperation in a major relocation will be critical to the success of its outcome.

#### ***What's the importance of having an end use before you even move the building?***

Infrastructure planning. If a building has historic status its future use may be dictated by the original codicils that placed it on that register, covenants if you will. If the building is what I call a second tier of antiquity, old and perhaps significant to a community but lacking an historic designation then there may be more flexibility in its use. To that end determining what is going to be done with it will dictate how much the overall project will cost. Many people who call me are well intentioned and truly want to save a second tier building with the intention of it being a library, museum or other form of community use.

Generally that kind of public utilization will require a different level of restoration, often using different standards than if the building is going to be used as a residence. Costs will vary significantly. In the case of the King Of Prussia Inn it is a semi-public use and that required us to install a fire suppression (sprinkler) system. It was quite expensive and difficult to install and requires ongoing maintenance.

***You've mentioned "invisible" obstacles, what does that mean?***

Environmental issues and underground utilities. In our case because of changes in the landscape just weeks before the relocation, we were required to install a storm water retention basin. Originally we considered the cost to be outrageous; however it has turned into a blessing in disguise.

Good engineering plays a key role here. There needs to be scientific determinations that utilities, water, electricity, gas and sewer services can be brought to the site cost efficiently. Sometimes underground utilities are moved over the years and the local planning agencies aren't alerted and the maps aren't up to date. If, like us, you are a couple of years behind schedule the surrounding landscape may change. In our case that required extending our sewer lateral from the original plan of roughly 30 yards long to around 170 yards long. Not only was that costly but there was a scary couple of weeks when there was a concern that we might not be able to achieve the necessary fall in the line over that long a distance to have the sewer lateral function correctly. We worked it out but we have to maintain constant maintenance of the line.

Once the underground utilities are factored into the project then a foundation design can be considered.

***Why is foundation design a part of the project so early on?***

There are questions about the height of the building in relation to underground utilities as well as structural support, moving equipment and future maintenance. In our case I had to over rule several contractors who strongly felt the building should be on a concrete pad foundation. However all of the engineers felt that the project required the massive 15 foot deep, twin concrete and steel basements that we have today. It was probably the most expensive decision made but when factored into the later considerations with changes in underground utility access it was worth it. Again this is a question of good, solid experienced engineering.

***Why such an emphasis on engineering?***

Because on almost every call I receive the person on the other end has talked to or met with an architect and has a glowing report on how the building could be restored. In almost every case it's beautiful fluff. The engineers are going to determine what kind of support bracing the building will need to make sure it gets to its new location in one piece, give the actual mover guidelines on how to make that happen and be sure that the path to the new location and the new location are ready for the building. Those are generally going to be the big costs. I've had to disappoint more people who had looked at the restoration first, as I did, and then went to the engineers and found out there wasn't enough funding to get the project accomplished. While we had a magnificent architect for the restoration it was

the equally magnificent engineers who made the project possible.

## **Fundraising:**

### ***About funding, how hard is it to get?***

Very hard to get. People who don't have the funds to relocate and restore and can't develop a compelling case for a community based fund raising effort will fail. Emphasizing relocation and restoration. There's no use in the aggravation of moving the building if its just going to remain useless.

This goes back to the end use. A community wide use might attract a major donor. We were propelled into our project with little or no concern for the historic significance of the building. We were motivated by some of the worst highway congestion in southeastern Pennsylvania. That made a big difference.

We used a lot of modern marketing techniques. We were allowed to get a couple of questions into a focus group for the King Of Prussia Mall when we were planning the campaign. We learned people that were motivated by the history of the King Of Prussia Inn would personally donate \$100. People who didn't want to stay stuck in traffic would donate \$25 but there were a lot more of them. In our case we had a triple hit. We had a business use as the Chamber of Commerce has offices at the Inn, we had a community use with the tavern room being utilized by Rotarians, Optimists, Montgomery County Community College and other similar organizations, we had the historic interests with the museum capacity so those three perspectives brought in more than 1400 donors. We also had a \$200,000 contribution from the owners of the King Of Prussia Mall. \$100,000 came in up front, no strings attached - by that I mean the owners knew we might fail but took the risk anyway.

The key element in our success was in getting broad based participation leveraging those three elements.

### ***Isn't there government money available?***

There generally isn't much available if the building doesn't enjoy the National Historic designation and if it does generally the competition for those dollars is fierce and the government agencies resources are limited. In Pennsylvania there are Keystone Opportunity Grants available through the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission (PHMC). In our case when we began the project the demands on PHMC resources in 1996-97 allowed them to state that they would donate \$100,000 to the restoration. By mid-2001 when we actually went to secure the money they were stretched so thin that they were only able to grant \$26,000 and, under the circumstances, we were very grateful to get it. If the relocation project is propelled by a highway or other process of condemnation then there may be more available. In most cases where other government agencies are participating, like highway departments whoever will own the building will have to demonstrate the financial capability to restore it when it arrives.

### ***What about foundations and other philanthropic organizations?***

Again if the building enjoys the historic designation then often the foundations' doors are open if they have an historic component to their mission statement. We had some success in this area with a professional grant writer. A key element with these organizations is timing. Generally they have very fixed timetables like applications are accepted by August 1 and successful applicants will be notified the following April. So the foundation route needs to have that consideration in place. Additionally today with shrinking government dollars the foundations are besieged with applicants. One lesson I learned was don't get cute. Early on we had a printer donate some very fancy letterhead in full color and at the bottom in tiny letters it even said "stationary courtesy of this printer." I guess I had a half dozen grantors send me letters asking me why I was asking for money if I could afford such expensive stationary. Stick to the foundations' guidelines and do your homework. Research the foundations carefully, look for restoration/historic missions, check with others in your organization to see if they have any acquaintances on the foundation's Board of Directors that might help plead the cause.

***What does it mean when you say: "I want your check but I need your talents?"***

I've been to any number of meetings where people were trying to organize to save an old building. Some were moving it; others needed funds to restore in place. When people give up their time to discuss these kinds of operations they are going to give you what they can, and if they are substantial that's great, but what you really need them to do is see where they can take you.

We called our campaign "A home for the Inn" and we staked out Rotary, Optimists, Lions and Questers clubs, Masonic Lodges, as Masonic history is integral to the Inn's historic designation and, of course, Chambers of Commerce. Personally I spoke to more than 100 of them over 2-1/2 years. In every case when we asked to speak to them we told them we weren't coming to ask for money we were asking for their talent and in almost every one of those presentations we came away with a good contact for good money.

Press your people for what they can do. I'm really proud of a couple of our people who were very creative. In one case a local credit union wanted to help but under credit union rules couldn't make a huge donation but the manager knew that the county association of credit unions held an annual golf outing to raise money for causes like ours and he convinced them to donate 1/3 of their proceeds to us. In another case the manager of a nationally branded hotel got the permission of the hotel's absentee owners to get vendors to donate food and beverages, a local band agreed to donate their talents and we had a Valentine's Day Dance that raised \$4,000.

***Collectibles are often a part of fund raising for property restoration what was your experience?***

Very mixed. We had almost every kind you could think of. T-shirts, pewter mugs and plates as well as portraits. These things need to be analyzed from a number of perspectives. In my view the two main considerations are what is the cost of advertising and inventory. In pewter's case shipping costs are a big consideration because it's so heavy. Our best rate of return was on portraits. We have two. We were fortunate that we found two local artists to work with us and they were far less costly than some nationally

recognized artists who approached us, we had printers who worked with us so that we weren't tying up money on inventory and they were easy to ship. They also offered the advantage of having local framing stores marketing them for us. Our particular portraits are portrayals of how the building looked in the Colonial era however I've talked to others who have been equally as successful with portraits of how the building will look in the future.

### ***What about naming rights for fund raising?***

In a property that has an historic designation it's tough. In an historic structure discreet references to donors are tolerable but if not carefully controlled they can be grotesque and offend other donors. So they have to be worked carefully with full understanding of what the outcome may be.

However in a second tier building they can be very successful. I am close to completing a case now of a building that has been part of a community for about 130 years. It has no historic designation and isn't eligible for any. However a group in the community is working hard to preserve it.

We have a major employer in the community that appears to be interested in funding the restoration if the community funds the relocation. It would be a public use with a museum and small library. Under the formula the building will known as the XYZ Museum at the historic ABC House. The company would donate \$250,000 for permanent recognition. The precise details of how that designation plays out are being negotiated now.

### ***What is a "restoration sale?"***

It's a concept I am developing for the second tier buildings that don't have codified historic status and are located in or near successful business or residential areas or have attractive landscapes.. I find in many cases these older buildings are in the possession of a local government or can easily be condemned or acquired by a local government. They are generally abandoned, have no current user and are often in arrears on taxes. The concept is that once the governmental entity has control of the property they advertise it for sale for \$1. In turn the buyer must demonstrate by directed financial instrument that they are capable of funding the restoration. By a published deadline those that have demonstrated the capability are chosen by design and use or by simple lottery. The buyer then must meet specific timetables for restoration.

If they aren't met the property is let again until the restoration is completed. In Pennsylvania there are a number of legal hurdles that this concept would need to overcome. However, especially in southeastern Pennsylvania, there is increasing demand from independent professionals who would like to own their own buildings as opposed to leasing offices in complexes. If the concept can be refined and codified then many of these older buildings could be magnificently restored and be back on the tax roles.

### **Managing the move:**

#### ***What are the first steps in managing the relocation of a building for a novice?***

If you control a strictly privately funded move on private property then it's merely a

question of choosing the right building relocation specialist. Have your engineers design a Request for Proposal and hold a pre-bid conference. An important function of this conference is for you to tell the movers that are bidding that you would welcome their suggestions on the move and any additional costs involved. For most engineers a building relocation is an abstract notion. They've never actually done it. During the course of the Inn's relocation we received advice from International Chimney's experienced staff that ultimately saved us thousands of dollars. These were practical suggestions based on their years of experience.

If the relocation involves a building with historic status and a collaborative effort with government agencies the first thing that needs to be done is to establish lines of management. The course of the Inn's history was changed when a man who had coordinated the relocation of a historic boat in Washington state came to visit me in 1999. He gave me one piece of advice: "while the building is where it is, the governments will control it, when it moves you will be in control."

It was good advice. At the height of preparation for the King Of Prussia Inn relocation we had 22 government agencies, utilities and collective bargaining units involved in the project. There were no clear lines of control. My failure to create them led to a lot of chaos and 2 years lost in the process.

The first thing that I would have done differently is to establish clearly the role that the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission would play in the process. Under National Register guidelines the state historic preservation organization (SHPO) has the primary authority over a building on the national register. During our early years we had great difficulty managing the agency's demands. Later Dr. Brent Glass, at that time Executive Director of PHMC stepped in and made the project work. Had I been clear on the case management early on all of this could have been avoided. Orchestrating the rest of the process requires flexibility, patience and a sense of humor. The one thing to keep in mind is that the process of government can be infuriating to somebody accustomed to private sector standards of performance and urgency. The job may be to try and change that later, for now your job is getting this relocation accomplished. You will be caught in one primary trap. That is: you are raising and spending other people's money and they are asking where it is going. The governments work their own schedule and know that tomorrow always comes in terms of funding. Always stay in a position where you can walk away from the project forcing the government agencies to start over again. It may be the only leverage that you have to keep things going. Political contacts do not hurt. During the course of our project Senator Richard Tilghman and State Representative Connie Williams were extraordinarily invaluable in its success. They helped keep it moving when the various state and local agencies didn't agree.

Don't hesitate to be the free lance agent in the game. Go where you need to go to get done what needs to be done. A senior government bureaucrat generally can't call the president of a utility union whose strike might delay the time table but you can. A city council member or township commissioner probably has other priorities with the state highway department, so you will be the person who has to go in the faces of the

departments from time to time to get the job done. Collaborative relocations are not successfully managed by shy people.

The last shall be first. Be wary of so-called preservation experts. Be sure that any government RFP's for participation are completely clear on the expert credentials required for participation and any "expert" studies or designs that you have to pay for. Because somebody says they are historically qualified does not mean that they are or that they can make any worthwhile contribution to the process. In most cases local architects and engineers can do the job just as well. If you need some qualified references call your local Chamber of Commerce. Conduct a thorough investigation of any files on the building that are held by the state historic preservation agency, local historic societies, libraries and municipalities. Have an attorney review any claims to the property's deed.

Be sure at the outset there is a clear, written understanding by all parties as to what every party's responsibilities are in the process, especially as it relates to the condition of the building and the new site when the governmental agencies are finished. This was suggested to us by our architect Gregory Philips and confirmed by our engineers Greg Nave and Steve Newel. The government representatives agreed to it and it was an invaluable instrument in avoiding any disputes in a process of conclusion that could have been a disastrous dispute.

***In 1999 you requested and received a unanimous resolution of the Upper Merion Township Board of Supervisors for a phased relocation of the Inn, what did that mean?***

That instrument was actually a political bluff to bring matters to a head and it worked. When we talk about phased relocation it meant taking the building apart and putting it back together. In the Inn's case it was quite possible and very cost effective.

People talk about numbering the stones and putting them back in place like some giant jigsaw puzzle. I couldn't find a case where that had been done. But we commissioned an estimate from a veteran stone mason and his formula was simple. Each section of a wall would be taken apart and segregated and that section would be numbered. I think at the time there were 12 sections of wall considered. All four directions as well upstairs, downstairs, in ½ sections. Then a new frame was to be constructed. A stone mason will have a unique signature to his work. The idea was when the stone was to be replaced on the new frame the crew would work on sections and be rotated every couple of hours. The variances in the individual mason's signature would create the same affect as the Colonial era when there weren't advanced tools and adhesives to work with. It was quite feasible though impossible on the Inn because we would have lost historic status forcing the state to re-open the bidding however for a second tier building I would certainly suggest that this idea be evaluated.

**Managing the restoration:**

***For the novice relocation project manager what is your best advice about the restoration?***

Kick back and enjoy. If the building has been successfully relocated let the restoration plan take over. Try and let the process work on its own and only force a decision if the circumstances dictate that otherwise you'll be at an impasse if any dispute isn't resolved. Remember the best craft's people are proud of their work and if the budget is project based rather than open-ended let them take their time. On the other hand always keep that whip in your back pocket you are probably going to need it a couple of times.

Look for any resources that might help with donations in kind. The King Of Prussia Inn had window panes painted by volunteers from the Lockheed-Martin Company, electrical service courtesy of Independent Local of Electrical Workers Union 380, phone wiring by members of the Communications Workers of America and grading and landscaping from the Gambone Brothers Development Company with a wonderful sewer lateral by American Infrastructure. Volunteers also hung pictures, cleaned floors and cut grass. Every one of them saving the project thousands of dollars that we ended up needing.

On that note, in the restoration of an old building we put a generous 25% reserve in the restoration budget. Too bad we needed closer to 40%. Keep that in mind and good luck.