

The Jacobsburg Record

Box 345
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SOCIETY OFFICE - 610-759-9029

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Satchell Paige, the old right hander, was also a rather well known philosopher in his day. One of his classic admonitions was "Never look back, cause someone may be gaining on you!" That adage, you'll discover, becomes increasingly applicable as the years roll by!

Nevertheless, a newly arrived president's first instinct is to look back, and he does-at his predecessors. What he sees is sufficient to turn on the old adrenaline (A good thing!) for the duration. It's an awesome sight looking back and realizing one is going to be measured against the performance of our Jacobsburg Historical Society's past presidents. On the other hand, it is an honor and privilege to be given that opportunity, for which I thank each of you.

I have no doubt our Society is, and has been, on the right track with our goals and activities. But that observation brings to mind another of our homespun philosophers, Will Rogers. "You may be on the right track," said Will, "but you're sure gonna get run over if you just sit there."

Let's not "just sit there". That means all of us! Innovation and change are the life and breath of any organization. As we move ahead with plans that will affect our Society for the next year - and likely longer - I hope these plans are and will be influenced by your ideas, suggestions, concerns, and constructive criticism.

Please let me hear from you directly!

Ronald G. Gabel
President

VOLUNTEER SPRING CLEAN-UP, APRIL 8, 2000

Come one, come all! It's time once again to get together to clean up the grounds for our visitors. We'll gather at 9:00 A.M. - Come when you can and leave when you must. The whole day or just an hour or two will be a big help. Lunch will be served and coffee, tea and soda will be available all day. Most of the work will be outdoors but there are many things that must be done in the buildings to get them ready for the season. We hope to see you on the 8th. RAIN DATE - APRIL 22ND.

2000 OUTDOOR EXPO

The year 2000 Outdoor Expo was held March 2-5 in Ag Hall at the Allentown Fairgrounds. The Jacobsburg Historical Society was set up with a 30 ft. wide booth in the center of the floor and this year the display was reported to be the nicest one of the show.

Featured at both ends of our booth were gunmaking benches manned by our resident gunmakers and, for the first time, some of the students of our gunmaking course. Additionally, Bob Chattin sat in the middle demonstrating hornmaking. Our booth drew considerable attention and was well received by the sponsors and the public.

On display was a sampling of Henry guns and photographs from our collection and, also for the first time, a collection of finished and semi-finished rifles made by our student gunmakers. It was an extremely nice gesture on their part to share with us their handiwork. Their guns were a big hit and, at the time of this writing, fostered nearly enough registrations to fill up the class for the Fall course. Well done, guys, the show committee wishes to extend its thanks and appreciation.

The committee, consisting of Howie White, Tim Lubenesky, Jim Shedlauskas, and Earl Van Norman, wishes also to thank all the volunteers who worked so many hours before and after the show to make it the success that it was. Just a brief breakdown of volunteer hours looks like this:

| | |
|---|------------|
| Planning, Construction & Set-up | 165 |
| Show | 355 |
| Teardown, cleaning guns & display, and returning everything in order | <u>145</u> |
| Total | 665 |

Total number of men and women involved was a substantial 37, which included 10 Board members.

The show itself had a nice turnout, a little higher than last year, and was visited by many families and a large number of local schools. Much can be learned at the show with its historical and wildlife themes. There were numerous displays of mounted fish and animals and also many live deer, snakes, turtles, dogs, fish, and birds of prey.

Again, the committee wished to extend its thanks to all the volunteers for their efforts, and if any newcomers would like to share in the fun (and hard work) for next year, please contact us.

Earl Van Norman

THE INTERPRETER'S CORNER

By Jim Wilson

Winter Harvest at Jacobsburg, an interpretive program about the yesteryear business and industry of commercial ice harvesting, was held at the Henry Homestead at Boulton on Saturday, March 18. In Partnership with Jacobsburg Historical Society, Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center, the Historical Association of Tobyhanna Township, and local historian, Rick Smith, more than 30 people crowded the Homestead for the first interpretive program of Jacobsburg's Y2K community program season. *Winter Harvest at Jacobsburg* featured a presentation of the locally made-for-television video, *Winter Harvest*, an impressive display of authentic ice harvesting tools and memorabilia; and an exhibit of photographs and documents from the Boulton Ice Company at Henry's Dam. Additionally, Virginia Lopresti exhibited a collection of artifacts from the colonial frontier village of Jacobsburg. The program was well received and a great way to spend the last Saturday of winter!

The late Dr. James Kitchen of Pocono Lake, Pennsylvania, produced the video, *Winter Harvest*. The 20-minute-long video contains early film, still photographs and personal reminiscence by the folks who worked in the former ice industry, which was once a major winter business on the many ice dams, ponds and lakes that dotted the Pocono Plateau in Monroe County. Nowadays, the ice industry heritage is remembered in celebration every winter by members and friends of the Coolbaugh Township Historical Association and the Tobyhanna Conservation Association at Millpond #1, in the village of Tobyhanna. There, on President's Day weekend each February, celebrants score and cut the frozen millpond into blocks of ice and store them in an authentically recreated icehouse.

Apart from farming, commercial ice harvesting was the last industry to survive into the 20th century at Boulton and throughout the Jacobsburg reach of the Bushkill Creek Watershed. Granville, Robert and Charles Henry operated a wintertime ice business from the frozen waters and shores of Henry's Dam. In 1894, the brothers built the first of two icehouses on the banks of the same millpond that supplied waterpower to the family gun factory. Sometime in the early 20th century, a second ice house was built at Henry's Dam. By the end of each winter, the icehouses were chock full of ice that was scored and cut with hand tools into blocks from the frozen millpond. The frozen ice blocks were packed in saw dust, which insulated them from melting in the warmer months, and were made available for sale from Henry's icehouses well into the summer.

After the ice industry ended at Boulton, one of the icehouses at Henry's Dam was dismantled, moved and rebuilt as part of a home that still stands along Sullivan's Trail in nearby Belfast. In January 1926, ice-choked floodwaters in Bushkill Creek burst Henry's Dam during a mid-winter thaw and rainstorm. Within minutes, the unleashed waters of Henry's Dam went crashing down the Bushkill Creek Valley, forever taking with it the Henry gun factory pond and wintertime ice harvests at Boulton. Today, only foundations remain of the two icehouses that once stood on the shores of Henry's dam.

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SOCIETY SCHEDULE OF EVENTS 2000

- April 8 - Volunteer Spring Clean-up, starting at 9 AM. Rain date - April 22.
- April 29 - Speaker - Children's Book Author - Barbara Brenner. 11:00 A.M. +#
Benjamin West, The Boy Who Loved to Draw
- May 5 - Speaker- "Moravian Culture on the Colonial Frontier" 7:30 P.M. +#
- May 19-21 - Oxford Furnace Heritage Event. Oxford, N.J.*
- June 3 - Speaker - "Delawares on the Bushkill" 10:00 A.M. +#
- June 17-18 - Rifle Frolic & Primitive Rendezvous -Kentucky Rifle Display
- July 26-28 - Youth History Camp - 9:00-12:00 each day.
- August 19 - Tea Party in the Garden - Pa. State Master Gardener Program.
- Sept. 15 - Speaker-"The Roll of Pa. in the Civil War" - 7:30 P.M. +
- Sept. 27 - Start Basic Longrifle Gunsmithing Course - 8 weeks - 7-10 P.M.
- Sept.30-Oct.1 - Civil War Event - Civil War Display and Reenactment.
- Oct. 28-29 - American Fur Trade & Halloween Rendezvous-Fur Trade Display
- Nov. 4 - Volunteer Fall Clean-up.
- Dec. 2-3 - Old Fashioned Christmas Program
- *Denotes events on the road. +Programs to be held at Henry Homestead.
#Additional information below.

#Saturday, April 29th - Henry Heritage program, *Benjamin West, The Boy Who Loved To Draw*, 11:00 A.M., at the Henry Homestead.

Join noted book author, Barbara Brenner, and learn about the boy who would become "the father of American painting" - the very same boy who once lived with the family of William Henry of Lancaster in the middle 1700's. Copies of Mrs. Brenner's latest book (recommended reading for 3rd thru 5th grade students and teachers) "Benjamin West: The Boy Who Loved to Draw" will be available for sale and signing by the author. Reproductions of West's paintings of William and Ann Wood Henry will be on exhibit at the Henry Homestead. Reservations can be made by calling the Boulton Visitor Center, 610-746-2809.

Schedule of Events (Cont'd.)

#Friday, May 5th - *Moravian Culture on the Colonial Frontier* - 7:30 P.M., Henry Homestead
Interpretive slide program and exhibits with Karen Huetter of the Historic Bethlehem Partnership. A Commonwealth Speakers Program of the Pa. Humanities Council.

#Saturday, June 3rd - *Delawares on the Bushkill* - 10:00 A.M., Henry Homestead.
Interpretive slide program with exhibits about American Indian culture in the Bushkill Creek Watershed & throughout the Delaware River Basin.

GUNSMITH APPRENTICE PROGRAM

Jacobsburg Historical Society's Community Outreach Adult Education Program

Our Kentucky/Pennsylvania Apprentice Program is currently in its third year of operation. It began with a few members remarking that the Society should teach and carry on the tradition of hand crafting beautiful Kentucky rifles similar to those produced by the Henry Family. As I looked about the group having the discussion I realized our little group had over 130 collective years of experience building Kentucky-style Longrifles. Included were 4 or 5 of the nation's top experts on the history and collecting of these rifles. It appeared that JHS had the perfect environment for teaching the crafting of these longrifles as well as teaching their history and origins. With the commitment of this small group we put together our first course in the Fall of 1997. We set up the Boulton Gun Shop in the basement of the Henry Homestead, moving in workbenches and building others until a realistic Gun Shop emerged. This has been our home ever since.

The Master Gunsmiths for the first courses were George Dech of Bath, Richard Hujsa of Slatington, and James Correll of Weatherly (50 miles one way). These gentlemen donated not only their time to teach the Course but also their talents in producing, to date, five Henry Longrifles as a by-product of teaching the course. These are truly exquisite rifles handcrafted in the traditions and style of the Henry Gun Works. In an effort to keep track of these NEW Henry rifles, we have signed and numbered them sequentially, #1 through #5. The Society is retaining the first two rifles in the Society's gun collection. These are the first rifles built at Boulton in 100 years. Rifles #3, 4, & 5 were recently sold to members of the Henry/Scranton family. Our smiths are currently working on two new rifles. One is a copy of the Henry "South Carolina Flintlock Militia Rifle of 1835" and the other is a copy of a Henry "Fur Trade Flintlock Longrifle with the traditional Henry fleur-de-lis patchbox". These rifles should be completed by the June Rifle Frolic. Inquiries about the purchase of these rifles, pricing or ordering should be directed to the Society's President, Ron Gabel.

The Fall class will begin September 27, 2000 with the Basic Gunsmith Course. The cost of the Course is \$125.00 for an 8 week, one night a week class. Classes have been filled since the beginning of the program. Class size is limited to 12-13 students due to the size of our facilities at Boulton. Our students have produced many fine rifles as was evident in our display of their rifles at the Allentown Outdoor Expo at Ag Hall in March. Their rifles were very impressive considering they were the first or second rifle the students had ever built. The Henry gun makers would have been proud of the students' work. There are a few openings remaining in our Fall

Gunsmith Apprentice Program (Cont'd.)

class. If you are interested in joining us, call Jim Wilson at the Boulton Visitors Center to get an application. (610) 746-2809. Applications are accepted on a first paid basis. Also in our Fall course we are proud to announce the addition of another highly skilled and experienced Master Gunsmith to our staff. He is Rocky Schreck of our own Bushkill Township. Rocky has worked with us in the last few courses and has now consented to teach on a regular basis. Also donating their time and talents to our program on a cameo appearance basis are two very fine Master Engravers, Greg Dixon of Kempton and Geoffroy Gournet of Easton. These gentlemen come to our class in the Spring advanced session to teach engraving as well as to engrave the Henry Rifles our smiths have produced. This program continues to be a wonderful way to keep the Henry Legacy alive at Boulton.

Till next time,

Tim Lubenesky

ELLIS NEUNER

Ellis Neuner died on November 9, 1999, as reported in our last Record, at the age of 87. I did not know him long or well, and had not seen him for several years, but I feel compelled to jot down some memories of my own or which were told to me.

Ellis Neuner and his wife Louisa, lived in the Robert Henry house beginning sometime in the 1940s. I believe they bought the house from Robert's children. Ellis was employed in one of the mills in Nazareth. They had one daughter, Susan.

As I recall a story Matt Morris told me, when the electric company brought the power line down Henry Road to the corner between his property and the Neuners', the linemen had plans to continue down Henry, with a southeast branch along Schoeneck Avenue. Louisa Neuner, apparently petite only in size, went out to greet the linemen with a rifle, and said, "Boys, don't touch those trees!" The linemen were persuaded to run the line around the rear of the Edward and Robert Henry properties, and behind Granville's house, rejoining Henry Road between Granville's and the Stone House. Thus the ashes and hemlocks on Henry Road and Schoeneck Avenue were spared. The electric and TV cable lines still follow this path today, and over the past 50 years or so, the trees in Boulton grew straight and tall.

After Louisa's death, Ellis married Althea Ruhf in the late 1960s. Both were very active in the Jacobsburg Historical Society from its beginnings in the early 1970s, Ellis in maintenance of the Homestead and property, and Althea in house and hospitality activities.

I first met Ellis and Althea in February 1986, while house-hunting with a realtor. The house at 394 Henry Road was for sale, and I had long admired Boulton, a beautiful little community among the tall trees, although I knew little of its history. I learned later that Ellis wanted to move after so many years here because he thought Northampton County and Nazareth were getting "too busy, too much traffic." He had decided to move to Manheim in Lancaster County, where he thought it would be less developed and where he would find others with whom he could converse in Pennsylvania German.

Ellis Neuner (Cont'd.)

My first visit was on a cold and rainy winter day, and Ellis and Althea were playing Scrabble in the kitchen, with a crackling fire in the fireplace. After a tour, I decided almost immediately to buy the house and in the coming months Ellis told and showed me much about the place that I would have missed otherwise. Although the closing did not occur until September, I spent a number of days that summer working around the property with Ellis, mowing, etc. Although well into his seventies, one day Ellis climbed onto the two story barn roof to repair some damaged slate. I stayed on the ground to cut the slate, which he had instructed me how to do, and from the top of the ladder I handed him the pieces he called for. He scrambled up the steep pitch of the roof on a "chicken ladder" hooked over the peak, to remove the old slates and nail the new ones in place. Weeks later, when he and Althea finally departed for Manheim, Ellis left the slate tools with me and I still have them (but I have never climbed up on the barn roof as he did-the chicken ladder is still hanging in the barn where he stored it that day after we finished).

After moving away, Ellis and Althea returned to Nazareth for Mary Henry's funeral in 1989, of course, and on several occasions when visiting relatives in the area they stopped at their old house for brief visits with Barb and me. Ellis always walked over the property to see the trees, some of which he quietly observed were "past their prime." Both Ellis and Althea seemed pleased that our addition did not affect the original house to any great extent and that much of Ellis' work of prior years remained just as he left it, especially the kitchen fireplace. One time they showed Barb and me a "secret drawer," which Ellis had built into one of his projects and which we had not yet discovered. The house still contains many examples of his excellent carpentry and other handiwork.

On a weekend day in late November I noticed a big black limousine with New York license plates parked on Schoeneck near the John Joseph Henry barn. Two women and a man were walking slowly nearby viewing the JJH house and ours, and a driver was waiting by the car. Soon the car drove away, turning left on Henry Road, proceeding very slowly until well past 394. It occurred to me that perhaps Ellis's daughter, Susan, who resides now in Brooklyn, and her family, were on their way to or from a memorial service in Manheim for Althea, as I had heard she had passed away about a month earlier. I had not yet learned that Ellis himself passed away about two weeks after Althea. Ellis's and Althea's deaths occurred less than two months after Hurricane Floyd toppled two of the 120 year-old ash trees on Schoeneck Avenue, which Louisa had saved with her rifle, as well as the large black walnut in the backyard. It is the end of an era.

Phil Schroeder

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The National Canal Museum in Easton will open their new exhibit, "Floating to Prosperity: Flatboats and the American Dream," on May 2, 2000. Museum visitors will experience early river transportation. For more information, call 610-559-6613.

Estelle Shedlauskas, Editor