

# THE JACOBSTOWN RECORD

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## SPRING CLEAN-UP April 20th - Rain Date April 27th

It's that time of year again - a time when most of us are anxious to get outside in our yards to prepare our properties for the coming Spring and Summer seasons. Some of our Spring flowers are already in bloom with the promise of others coming a little bit later. The Jacobstown Historical Society property also needs a bit of tender loving care.

Our annual Spring Clean-up has been scheduled for April 20th. We'll begin the day at 9:00 A.M. and look forward to seeing many of you coming out to help. The emphasis for this project will be on getting our vast grounds ready. It means a lot of raking, and piling and picking up the winter debris, not only on lawns and walkways, but around the buildings too.

Come when you can and leave when you must - we will appreciate every hour you can give us. This is also a great time to renew acquaintances with those you have not seen over the winter months, and to meet some new faces. Everyone is welcome!

## 2002 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<b>April 20</b>	<b>Spring Clean-up. Rain date April 27.</b>
<b>May 18-19</b>	<b>Oxford Furnace, N.J.</b>
<b>June 15-16</b>	<b>Rifle Frolic</b>
<b>October</b>	<b>Walk In Henry's Woods (Date to be announced)</b>
<b>October 17</b>	<b>Annual Dinner and Meeting</b>
<b>October 19</b>	<b>Fall Clean-up. Rain date November 2nd.</b>
<b>October 26-27</b>	<b>Fur Trade Rendezvous</b>



## SPORTSMAN SHOW

On Friday, March 1, 2002, the Society answered an invitation to set up a display at the 29th Annual Lehigh Valley Outdoor Expo in the new Pennsylvania Expo Center in Allentown, Pa. The show lasted three days and was attended by thousands of visitors.

On display was a sampling of guns and photographs from the Society collection. Our volunteers demonstrated and interpreted 18th C. gunmaking. We also had a TV/VCR set up showing the twelve minute tape made by Porcupine.

The 30' wide booth was manned by no less than 22 volunteers who contributed 280 manhours of labor. This included assembling the equipment, set-up, showtime, teardown, and put-away. We also sold a small amount of merchandise and a number of names were taken from folks interested in the Gunmaking Course.

As usual, we received the thanks and appreciation of the promoters, Dick Laros, and his daughter, Judy.

*Earl Van Norman*

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## JACOBSBURG ELM TREES

The huge English Elm trees around the John Joseph House are no more. After approximately 165 years, the magnificent trees on the north and west sides of the house have succumbed to "Dutch Elm Disease."

The demise of these huge trees was alarmingly rapid from the time the first signs were noticed until they were completely gone. Around mid-June 2001 it was noticed that the top of one of the westerly Elms seemed rather sparse. It is not always easy to see the tops of these trees since they all exceed 100 feet in height. As soon as this was noticed, Burns Tree Service was contacted to examine the trees. Samples of the foliage and branches were taken and dispatched to the laboratory at Penn State. Here the samples were examined and tested and it was determined that "Dutch Elm Disease" was present.

Penn State immediately made a recommendation to isolate the diseased tree and treatment for the remaining trees. By the time these tests were completed and the results given to the Society Board of Directors, it was August and it was obvious by now that all four of the trees were infected and the trees were rapidly dying. By September, the Elms were completely barren. The treatment for this disease is both costly and only effective in the case of healthy or trees in the very early stages of infection.

We cannot be sure exactly the age of these Elms since there has not been any record found of when they were planted. Family legend has it that these trees were a gift from John Jacob Astor of the American Fur Company, one of the largest customers of Henry arms. The new house



### **JACOBSTOWN ELM TREES (Cont'd.)**

as it was called, was begun in 1834 and just about complete in 1836, and landscaping would be next. If the trees were a gift from Astor, 1836/37 would be about the high point of the business between the Henrys and the Fur Company.

These estimates are also based on the estimated age of the English Elm that stood next to the Homestead House and died several years ago. At the time that tree was cut down we attempted to count the growth rings and determined that it had been planted in the mid-1830's.

Unfortunately, we are now faced with the removal of these huge trees. They vary from four to five feet in diameter near the ground line and are well in excess of 100 feet in height. The latest estimate we have received is \$3,000.00 per tree to take them down and remove them. The Board is currently trying to find some one who would purchase the logs and turn them into useful lumber and thereby reduce our cost of removal. It would be extremely sad to see these magnificent Elms reduced to firewood or trash.

*A. James Shedlauskas*

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### **THE INTERPRETER'S CORNER**

by Jim Wilson

This year marks the 250th anniversary of Northampton County. Founded March 11th, 1752, Northampton County was created from the upper end of Bucks County, one of the Commonwealth's original three counties. Named in honor of William Penn's daughter-in-law's home county of Northamptonshire, England, British-born Northampton County, Pennsylvania is a community rich in American history. And the William Henry family was there, nearly from the beginning.

William Henry II brought the Henry family gunmaking tradition from Lancaster County to Northampton County in 1776, via the Moravian Church. At Christian's Spring, the one-time Moravian settlement and trade school, William II completed his gunmaking apprenticeship under one of colonial America's master gunsmiths, Christian Oerter. In 1780, William Henry II moved to nearby Nazareth, where he established a gun shop on Main Street. In the 1790's, he built a gun barrel mill on the banks of the Bushkill Creek at Jacobstown to augment firearms production at his Nazareth shop. It was during this time that William II (a.k.a. William Henry of Nazareth) was first awarded military contracts to produce firearms for both the Pennsylvania militia and the United States government. In 1808, Henry was awarded a federal contract for 10,000 muskets. These weapons, made in Northampton County, armed U.S. troops during the War of 1812, helped defend our nation's freedom and guaranteed America's independence from Great Britain once and for all.

In addition to his gunmaking enterprise, William Henry of Nazareth was a major player in the development of anthracite transportation on the Lehigh River - a direct catalyst of the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the United States. For the Lehigh Coal Mine Company, Henry explored the upper Lehigh River valley for anthracite deposits; laid out landing sites, access roads



### **THE INTERPRETER'S CORNER (Cont'd.)**

and company towns; and directed the actual mining and shipment of coal to the Lehigh Valley from the upper reaches of the Lehigh River. William Henry II was also involved in the Lehigh Valley's iron industry. To meet the need for iron parts in his gunmaking business, Henry built the very first iron forge in Northampton County in 1808. William Henry of Nazareth contributed to the civic and political history of Northampton County as well. In 1788, he was commissioned to serve as a Commonwealth Justice of the Peace. He was later appointed Judge of the Courts of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions in Northampton County and was a presidential elector, casting a vote for the second term of George Washington. In 1795, Henry was appointed to the commission that directed construction of the first bridge to span the Delaware River at Easton - a colossal, double-winged, covered bridge that stood throughout the 19th century.

Subsequent generations of Henrys made history in Northampton County and beyond as well. Henrys built the first iron furnace in Northampton County in 1824, and were the first Americans to successfully use the hot blast method in smelting iron. They operated some of the earliest slate quarries in Northampton County, and produced the favorite firearms of the "mountain men" who settled the American West. They wrote and published history books on Northampton County and the Lehigh Valley in 1860, and supplied Union soldiers and sailors with firearms from their Northampton County gun factory during the American Civil War. For well over 100 years the Henry family contributed, not only to the history and heritage of Northampton County, but also to the history and heritage of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States of America.

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### **SPEAKER'S BUREAU**

Our Speaker's Bureau has been active during the month of March:

Earl Van Norman presented a program at the Lower Mount Bethel Rod and Gun Club.

Bob Newell spoke on the Henry Heritage at a meeting of the Whitehall Township Historical Society.

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The National Canal Museum is hosting a Silk Celebration on June 9th as part of its continuing effort to interpret the history of the silk textile industry in the Lehigh Valley. Silk Celebration employs a variety of arts and humanities formats to celebrate the legacy of what was once the Lehigh Valley's largest and most important industry.

The Celebration begins at 6:00 P.M. with a tour of the silk exhibit, an illustrated slide lecture, a panel discussion, premiere of a video, and a concert performance by Anne Hills.

The Silk Celebration is free and open to the public.

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*Estelle Shedlauskas, Editor*



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