

JACOBSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

May/June 2003

Volume XXX, Issue 3

THE JACOBSBURG RECORD

8th Annual Kentucky Rifle Frolic slated for Father's Day weekend at the historic Boulton plantation

2003 Calendar of Events

(Call the Boulton Visitor Center at 610-746-2809 for more information/reservations)

March 29 - "Nature of the Slate Belt" (slide-illustrated program at Homestead about local natural places)

April 12 - "Better in the Poconos" (lecture program at Homestead on the history of the Pocono vacation)

April 26 - Spring Cleanup at Boulton

April 26 - "An Evening on Main Street" (Henry gun display & Jacobsburg exhibit at the Kern House in Nazareth)

May 17-18 - Henry Gun Exhibit at Warren County Heritage Festival at Oxford Forge, Oxford, NJ

May 21 - "The Lehigh & New England Railroad" (illustrated program at Henry Homestead on the local L&NE RR)

June 14-15 - "Kentucky Rifle Frolic" (living history encampment at Boulton)

June 21 - "Cultural History of the Slate Belt" (slide-illustrated program at Homestead on local ethnicity & culture)

June 28-July 6 - Henry Gun Exhibit at the Kutztown Pennsylvania German Festival, Kutztown Fair Grounds

July 23-25 - "The Historians" (Summer youth program at Jacobsburg EE Center)

August 16 - "The 153rd Pennsylvania Militia Regiment" (interpretive Civil War program at Henry Homestead)

September 20 - "An Evening on Main Street" (Henry gun display & Jacobsburg exhibit at the Kern House in Nazareth)

October 4 - "Bushkill Stream Festival" (watershed celebration with music, craft demos & more at Henry's Forge)

October 23 - Annual Membership Dinner

October 25-26 - "American Fur Trade Rendezvous" (living history encampment at Boulton)

November 15 - Fall Cleanup at Boulton

Boulton—the Henry family's historic industrial plantation community—will be the site of Jacobsburg Historical Society's eight annual Kentucky Rifle Frolic over Father's Day weekend, June 14 and 15.

The pre-1840-style living history encampment is a re-creation of what rural

social life was like for men, women and children living on the eastern frontier of early America. The Boulton plantation includes the John Joseph Henry estate and the Henry Homestead and grounds on Henry Road in Bushkill Township, Northampton County.

Like the Rifle Frolics of yesteryear, Jacobsburg's Rifle Frolic will be complete with knife and tomahawk throwing competitions, black powder shooting, primitive fishing and archery events, and hearth cooking. Plus period-dressed craftsmen and women will be plying their trades throughout the weekend-long event. All the sights, sounds and smells



Rifle Frolic-goers at Boulton pass by a sutler's tent where re-enactors are encamped.

of real history will come alive for Rifle Frolic-goers at Boulton this Father's Day weekend!

Additionally, the newly renovated Museum of the Pennsylvania Longrifle at the Henry Homestead will be open all weekend long. A wonderful collection of Henry and other gunmakers' firearms—including original Kentucky

Rifles—will be on exhibit at the museum. A cadre of Pennsylvania Longrifle experts will be on hand, and visitors are encouraged to bring along their family gun to learn more about its history and its maker.

Scottish Highland Games round out the Rifle Frolic on Sunday, June 15, beginning at 10:00 a.m. The Rifle Frolic runs from 10-5 Saturday and from 10-4 Sunday. Admission is free for Jacobsburg Historical Society members.

For more information about Jacobsburg's eighth annual Kentucky Rifle Frolic, contact the Boulton Visitors Center at 610-746-2809.

Local rail history and the ethnic heritage of the Slate Belt are topics of upcoming programs at the Henry Homestead

The history of the Lehigh & New England Railroad and the cultural heritage of the Slate Belt are topics of community programs at the Henry Homestead in May and June.

At 7:00 p.m. on May 21, Paul Carpenito, President of the Phillipsburg Railroad Historians, will present a slide-illustrated program on the Lehigh & New England Railroad. The Nazareth Branch of the L&NE RR once passed through Jacobsburg State Park, along today's Sober's

Run Trail.

At 11:00 a.m. on June 21, Melissa Hough, Chief Curator for the Cigna Corporation in Philadelphia and a Bangor native and historian, will present a slide-illustrated program on the history, ethnicity and material culture of the Slate Belt.

Both programs are free-of-charge and open to the public. Due to limited seating, reservations are required. To make reservations, call Jim Wilson at 610-746-2809, or send email to jacobsburg@fast.net.

Boy Scout Troop 551 from Danielsville clears the Boulton Gun Factory site in preparation for wayside exhibits

As part of a community service project, six Boy Scouts and leaders from Troop 551, Minsi Trails Council in nearby Klecknersville, Northampton County, spent several hours April 29th clearing the Boulton Gun Factory site of vegetation in preparation there for permanent wayside exhibits. Bill, Adam and Eric Romanishan and Donald, Jonathan and Travis Bickert cut down several truck loads of sumac, spicebush, multiflora rose, and other growth from within the 84-foot by 32-foot factory foundation. The cut vegetation was then trucked to fields behind the Jacobsburg EE Center's Maintenance Area off Jacobsburg Road, where brush piles were created from it for wildlife habitat.

The three 36" by 48" wayside exhibits that will be installed at the Boulton Gun Works site are part of the Boulton Wayside Exhibits Project, which includes some 21 exhibits that will be installed along the Boulton Heritage Walk—a one-



Scouts from Troop 551 pose for the camera at the gun works site.

half-mile walking trail that connects the Boulton Parking Lot on Henry Road with the Henry Homestead and John Joseph Henry House at Boulton. The gun factory remains are the only site along the Boulton Heritage Walk that requires any formidable site preparation.

The wayside exhibits at the gun works site will interpret the factory itself, the types of guns that were made there and the markets for which they were manufactured. Other

exhibits along the Boulton Heritage Walk will focus on Henry's Dam, the Bushkill Creek, the Henry Homestead, the Jacobsburg Historical Society and much more. The Boulton Wayside Exhibits Project is expected to be completed later this year, at which time a special community program and celebration will be held.

Many thanks to the scouts and leaders from BSA Troop 551 for their efforts in this long-awaited project!

Made in Boulton, but for who...and where did they all go? A look at the marketplaces, near and far, for Henry guns and gun parts

For well over a century, the Henry family made guns in Northampton County. A conservative estimate puts total production at well over 100,000 firearms of all sorts. Local farmers, trappers and hunters bought many of these guns, but most Henry guns made far journeys in their time. Early production of Henry firearms include a variety of muskets and pistols for various military organizations, including the United States Army and Navy, and a number of state militias. Most of the Henrys' military work was done prior to and during the War of 1812, with at least 6,000 flintlock muskets made, and smaller numbers of rifles, pistols and even swords. The Henrys last military firearms were small cadet muskets that were sold to Nazareth Hall Military Academy, and to various retail outlets in the Northeast.

Another major market for Henry firearms was the American Indian fur trade. From 1826 to the eve of the American Civil War, a variety of guns were shipped to places like St. Louis, Missouri for eventual sale to American Indians in the Midwest and Rocky Mountains. An early client for this market was John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company. A most popular firearm in the fur trade was a Henry copy of the traditional North West trade musket. These guns were close copies of the types that had been made in Birmingham, England since the mid-18th century. Henry trade guns had several unique characteristics, including an ornate brass side plate in the shape of an oriental dragon. The dragon motif dates to the late 17th century when the Dutch began

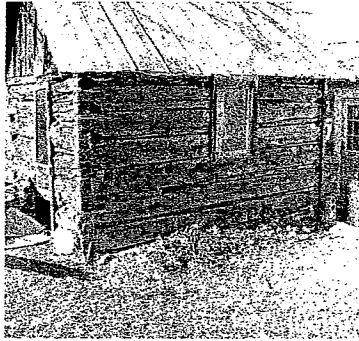
making trade guns for North American Indians. Another unique trade gun feature on Henry-made arms is an oversized sheet-iron trigger guard, which allowed use by the shooter while wearing gloves or mittens. The Henrys also made more traditional guns, including rifles that were destined for the fur trade. The Henry Rifle was one of the favorite firearms of the famed Mountain Men and frontiersmen and women of the great American West.

Many gunmakers in eastern Pennsylvania—including Nicholas Hawk of Gilbert, Monroe County, Henry Albright of Nazareth, Peter Moll of Hellertown, John Moll of Allentown, Peter Young of Easton, Jacob Hines of Moore Township and Jacob Correll of Smith Gap, Monroe County—bought barrels, locks and other part from the Henry's Boulton Gun Works.

During the 1840s and 1850s, the Henrys made a variety of rifles and shotguns for the G.W. Tryon and P.S. Justice firearms firms in Philadelphia. Other retailers included William Gammel of Houston, Texas and Henry Ledford of North Carolina. In the 1870s, the Henrys made breech loading rifles and shotguns for retailers in the Midwest, like the Simmons Hardware Company in Indiana. The firm of Smith, Seltzer and Company of Philadelphia also bought and sold Henry breechloaders. After production ceased at the Henry's Boulton Gun Works in 1895, guns were assembled from parts on hand, and sold locally to sportsmen, farmers and shooters until at least 1907.

Lock, stock and barrel, the Jacobsburg Historical Society receives, relocates the historic Nicholas Hawk Gun Shop

The Jacobsburg Historical Society recently received a gift of the historic 19th century gun shop of early American gunmaker Nicholas Hawk of Gilbert, Monroe County. The gift was made by the Baumgartner family of Monroe County's West End, who recently purchased the Hawk homestead—where the gun shop was located—from the Hawk family, and had no use for the aging building, which for years had been used for storage.



The Nicholas Hawk Gun Shop in Gilbert before it was dismantled and moved to Boulton by Jacobsburg volunteer staff.

Six Jacobsburg Historical Society members—Joe Flemish, Ron Gabel, Tim Lubenesky, Rich Hujsa, Mac Spencer and Mike Jones—spent a rainy Good Friday dismantling—timber by timber—the 12-1/2'x15-1/2' log structure, loading it onto a trailer and transporting it to Boulton, where it was unloaded and stored at the Henry Homestead Barn. The Society plans to one day re-assemble the gun shop at Boulton as a miniature museum, which will interpret the likes of an early 19th century, one- or two-man gun shop—similar to the kinds of shops scores of Pennsylvania riflemakers once worked in.

Acquiring the Nicholas Hawk gun shop was a boon to

Jacobsburg's interpretive programming. Nicholas Hawk (1782-1844) was one of early America's premier riflemakers. He made some of the most beautiful firearms of the era and was an exceptional engraver. We know from the Henry's business records that Hawk—who lived and worked only some 20 miles north of Jacobsburg—regularly purchased gun barrels from the Boulton Gun Works for his own manufacture of firearms. And while not confirmed, it's possible that Hawk learned the art of gunmaking as a laborer at the Henry's Boulton Gun Works (*Polk Township Pennsylvania: 1846-1996* by Gary R. Bruch). Records

show that Nicholas Hawk's son, Peter, followed in his father's footsteps and was himself a gunmaker in 1835.

About 1830, Nicholas Hawk donated land near Gilbert for construction of the first schoolhouse there. Now fittingly, 159 years after his death, Hawk's gun shop has been donated to Jacobsburg so that his spirit of educating others may live on at Boulton.

Converting Austrian-made rifles to Henry-made shotguns: Boulton business savvy in the post-Civil War era

At the start of the American Civil War, both the North and the South found themselves greatly in need of military firearms. As a result, agents from both the Union and the Confederate governments, as well as state governments, sent agents on arms buying tours throughout Europe. Great Britain was the major supplier of shoulder arms to both the North and the South, exporting close to one million small arms to North America. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was second, exporting at least 350,000 small arms to the opposing sides, with the Confederacy purchasing at least 125,000 of those arms.

After the Civil War, the United States Ordnance Department quickly sold off the European arms. Prices for these weapons on the open market quickly sunk to almost the level of scrap iron. Taking full advantage of this situation, the Henry gunmakers purchased thousands of surplus muskets and parts, such as barrels. Among the rifles that the Henrys used for conversion to inexpensive shotguns were at least three Austrian types. Among these are the Model 1842 and 1849 percussion rifles. These guns were caliber .71 and were originally rifled with 12 grooves. Less than 30,000 of these early types had been imported for Civil War use. The third type was the Model 1854 Lorenz rifle musket in caliber .54. This gun was a very popular and reliable weapon, and was used in large quantities by both sides during the Civil War. The Henry firm

shortened the barrels from these muskets and also reamed out the rifling, converting them for shotgun use. As a result, the Henrys were able to market a very cheap, but serviceable civilian arm at less than half the cost of a gun that would have been made lock, stock and barrel at the Boulton Gun Works.

These guns helped keep the Henry firm in business at a time when much larger concerns that had been very successful during the Civil War were closing down due to lack of business. Many people from the Nazareth area bought these guns, with prices as low as \$3.50 per firearm. Most guns from this production have no Henry markings at all, but sometimes traces of the original Austrian markings, such as crowns or manufacturer's stamps, can still be seen. As a point of interest, Robert Henry was once paid \$5.52 for shortening 442 Austrian gun barrels.

The simple shotguns with Austrian heritage helped keep many local men employed at the Boulton Gun Works during perilous economic times for the firearms manufacturing industry, and helped keep the Henrys in business for at least 20 years following the end of the American Civil War.