

The Jacobsburg Record

September, 1975

Vol. IV No. 4

GET READY FOR OUR ANNUAL WALK IN THE WOODS

It's hard to believe — but it is FALL already. We saw our first flocks of geese flying south, and the trees are starting to change their colors in the Poconos. Along with these we also have other signs of Fall — the school bus that causes our delay on the roads, the talk of the Phillies at the World Series, and, of course, the good old football pools at work.

As in previous years our directors and officers are busy planning projects and activities for the benefit and education of all our members and friends. Because of the great response that we have had for the last four years (has it really been that long?) we have decided to try again.

Our reservations already are in for good weather for Sunday, October 10. (But, just in case, the rain date will be October 17.) We will be meeting at the new parking area along the Bushkill Creek, on Belfast Road (the road leading to Jacobsburg). We will have signs along the way.

Even if you have been on one of our previous walks, plan on attending our gala 'Bicentennial Edition'. We will be going all out to make this an outstanding, exciting and worthwhile day for young and old alike.

A bus will transport you to the Colonial Village of Jacobsburg where guides will tell you about the history of the area and its people. You will be able to spend time viewing the 'digs' where Joe and Virginia Lopresti will explain the extensive work that has been accomplished this past summer.

The next leg of the tour will be through the State Park by bus — past the Henry Homestead, headquarters of our Society, and to the ruins of the old Henry Gun Factory where the famous Kentucky-type rifle was manufactured.

Guides will explain the story behind the now crumbling ruins and tell you fascinating tales of our ancestors who played such an important part in forming our nation.

You will then be able to walk back to the parking area through the beautiful Henry's Woods, a distance of about one and a half miles. There will be guides and exhibits along the way to point out some of the interesting natural aspects of the area, explain the unique educational features, and, of course, answer any questions. Refreshments will be served at the end of the walk.

PLEASE NOTE: The first bus will leave at 12:30 p.m. and the last bus at 2:30 p.m. This is necessary to insure that all the participants will be able to complete the entire tour in comfort. Allow one to one and a half hours, depending on how fast you wish to walk — and wear comfortable walking shoes.

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— Joe DiGerlando

ANNUAL MEETING WILL BE HELD OCTOBER 26

Our Annual Meeting this year will be something a little special. It will be a dinner meeting at 6:30 on the evening of Tuesday, October 26, and will be held at Memorial Hall, 109 State Street, Stockertown, Pa. Tickets will be \$7.00 per plate, and you will receive further details by letter, including provisions for making your reservations.

The special purpose of the meeting is to honor our Archaeologists, particularly Joe and Virginia Lopresti, who have racked up countless hours of service. It was through their generous donation to us this summer of their time that the Society was able to meet its \$3,600. share of the Bicentennial Grant. Speaker will be Jeff Kenyon, archaeologist from the University of Pennsylvania. Guests are welcome — bring them!

VOLUNTEER ARCHAEOLOGISTS STILL URGENTLY NEEDED

Our summer crew of students finished work on August 20th. Although they made some wonderful discoveries and worked hard there is much more to do. On Labor Day we were able to get our back-hoe man interested again. He and Joe Lopresti spent three days back-filling our trenches and investigating some intriguing exposures. They discovered more foundation between the tannery and the creek. On Saturday, September 11, five volunteers worked at this new site and found some very interesting things. The Loprestis expect to be at the dig every Saturday, rain or shine, until the snow flies. If two or more volunteers express a willingness to work on Sundays or during the week the Loprestis will go with them to the dig. Do come! You don't know what you might find!

So you can't dig but are interested in our archaeology project! Maybe you have a few hours to spend at the Court House to look up and check deeds. The University of Pennsylvania, under the direction of Archaeologist Jeff Kenyon, is going to produce for us a set of historical base maps documenting the areas we have been digging. The Society must furnish legible copies of all pertinent land transactions from the original warrants. This is necessary to complete our summer project.

If you can go to the Court House with Joe Lopresti week days anytime during regular hours, or early evening from 5 to 7, please call Joe or Virginia Lopresti at 759-1580. We desperately need this help.

ARTIFACTS BY THE BUCKETFUL

We have buckets full, bags full of artifacts from our digging. They are an important part of the data necessary for the permanent records of our archaeological studies. What to do with them? What to keep? What to discard? These are problems that are to be solved for us by our Archaeologist Jeff Kenyon and three members of his staff from the University of Pennsylvania. They will arrive on September 20 and will work from five to eight days at the 'Homestead'. They will organize an archaeological lab for analyses. They will organize and catalogue all our artifacts. They will analyze these materials and date them and relate them to the context of our research. This professional work, as well as the production of the map, is made possible through our grant from the Bicentennial Commission.

— Kay Beers

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MORE ABOUT THE 'DIGS'

Having spent more manhours on our storage shed than was really necessary for the little knowledge we gained, we were happy to get back to our beloved tannery. After three summers we still had not cleared enough areas to say we had a level floor. We were really anxious to see what was lost or left behind in the tanning vats. Since we had already exposed the seven foot square vat in the northeast corner part of the crew were put to work in the adjoining vat. It also proved to be approximately seven feet by seven feet, but the floor was not level. We eventually discovered it had a level floor which was covered by a floor with an undulating top. This washboard effect was achieved with the aid of three 2" x 2" boards placed east and west. The top level was warped when it was nailed to the bottom floor, halfway between each 2" x 2". Later on we found more washboards in the four vats in the southeast corner.

Part of the crew was relegated to the smaller vats — six feet by four feet. There were four parallel rows of them, four more in the south half of the building. They were made of 2" thick boards, quite well preserved. Several had dowel pins in the long sides to attach other foot-wide boards. We think, for efficient operation, each vat would have been three feet deep. Most all of the floor boards were beautifully preserved. One half of each vat was exposed at a time and all the vats in a long row were worked on simultaneously. The first half was refilled before

the second half was exposed. None of the vats were removed to this date. By refilling them we hope to preserve them.

Most of the vats were filled with a rich red brown tanning bark. In two of them were hides, not yet further identified. One still had visible hair attached to it. Another contained a high leather boot, similar to a riding boot, which because of its size appeared to have been worn by a female. We found several wooden plugs, hand-made, to fit into the wooden water pipes used to supply water to the vats.

Two crew members were put to work excavating the area between our seven-foot vat and the six-foot vat along the north wall. It was an interesting area, because at the floor level of the vats a ten-inch wide board was exposed. Eventually it proved to be a 10" x 10" wooden water pipe, twenty-two feet long, running north and south. Four wooden pipes were placed at right angles to the main pipe. They drained our twenty-eight small vats. When we discovered a 2-1/4" hole in the corner of Vat #4 last December, we found it supplied clear water to our excavation.

Eventually we started to dig into the area parallel to our free-standing wall in the eastern end of the tannery, which appeared to be the wettest spot. The more material carried out by wheelbarrow and by five-gallon cans, the wetter it seemed to be, and it even appeared to be bottomless. We discovered it had a wall on all four sides, which areas were packed with clay, held in place by other boards. The outside boards were not placed side by side as the inside boards were. Only the half nearest our stone wall was worked on, and about three feet from the top there appeared to be a log wedged against the east side of the vat. Immediately the other half was excavated.

Usually only two boys were inside at one time. The muck they shoveled out of that area was unbelievable. At each break time they went to the creek to wash clothes, shoes and bodies. When sufficient material was removed from the west half of the 7' x 7' area Mr. Lopresti said no-one would go home until the log was removed, and he and the boys set up the block and tackle. It was secured on a tree above the northeast corner walls, and a chain was placed around the 'log' in the vat. It was carefully lifted to a drier area west of the vat. It was twelve inches in diameter and five feet six inches long. Imagine our delight when we discovered ... (Continued next month.)

- Virginia Lopresti

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OUR SINCERE APOLOGIES!!!! In the last issue of the Record we somehow got the married name of the donor of our Beef Barbecue recipe as Mrs. 'Barbara' Johnson. It should have been Mrs. Urbanus (or 'Ben') Johnson. Please forgive!

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DATES TO REMEMBER

RESEARCH COMMITTEE -- Still on for Sept 20 at 7:30, at the home of the Chairman, Charles Sandwick, Sr.

BOARD MEETING -- Wednesday, October 6, 8:00 p.m., at the President's home.

FOURTH ANNUAL WALK -- Sunday, October 10 (Rain date October 17) at Jacobsburg State Park; buses from 12:30 to 2:30.

ANNUAL MEETING AND TESTIMONIAL DINNER -- October 26, 6:30, at Memorial Hall, Stockertown. You will receive special notice.

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PENNSYLVANIA FEDERATION OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

Will hold their Regional Conference on Saturday, October 9, from 9:30 to 3:30 at the Historical Society of Berks County, 940 Centre Avenue, Reading, Pa.

\$5.00 Registration Fee includes buffet lunch. Topics: Morning session, Library and Archives. Afternoon session, Source material on people and property in southeastern Pennsylvania. If interested call our President at 253-4547, or Charles Sandwick, Sr., 252-1290.

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WE GAIN RECOGNITION IN SEVERAL AREAS

On Wednesday, August 18, The Easton Express carried a full-page feature article by Mark Miller, Staff Writer, on Joe Lopresti's excavation work at the tannery site, with illustrations showing the student crew at work, Carl DiGerlando shoveling muck, and Joe himself trying to figure out the workings of the five-foot pump unearthed in one of the last of the vats.

Suburban Scene also carried a nice article on the work. We are being recognized!

But the most impressive recognition came as an award granted by the Bicentennial Commission of Pennsylvania to our president, Mrs. Lewis S. (Kay) Beers 'in grateful recognition of her important contribution to the Pennsylvania Bicentennial Program'. The award, called an 'Appreciation Award' was granted August 25, 1976, and is most definitely to Mrs. Beers personally, although she insists it was to the Jacobsburg Historical Society. Not so! I saw it, and it is to her, as she most richly deserves. The Society deserves recognition too, but they got a 'grant'.

SEED — A *NOTE*WORTHY PUBLICATION

About a year ago there first came to our attention a 300-page work book compiled by a team of forty-eight teachers from Colonial Northampton Intermediate Unit 20 pursuant to an ESEA Title III grant from the Department of Education of the State of Pennsylvania. Entitled very simply 'SEED', an acronym of the official caption of the work, "Sites for Environmental Educational Development," the work is important, and of great interest to the Jacobsburg Historical Society because of its being adapted for use in the natural area of Jacobsburg State Park. In their introduction to the use of the work-book the sponsors state that "the purpose of preparing the modules was not to create any new material, but rather adopt what has already been written to the local level using Jacobsburg State Park as the resource."

Briefly stated, it is a manual for the use of teachers on field trips with student groups, and practically every such field trip is keyed to a specific site within the confines of the Jacobsburg State Park. The subjects treated are divided into seven categories: History, Physical Education, Nature, Math, Science, Language and Art, and these subjects are further divided into seventy-five study areas or modules. Studies are adapted to the capabilities of students in Grades 5 through 10, and treat of subjects ranging from simple game-type activities into the more complicated fields of math and science.

Of particular interest to members of the Society are the three maps included in the introductory part of the workbook, and their accompanying descriptions: Area Location, Site Locations, and Historical Sites Map. The latter two are numerically keyed to the descriptive material which accompanies them. Twenty sites are identified and described in connection with the site maps, most of them topographical in nature, but locating as well some of the more important structural sites and remains: the ice house foundation, the dam, the Henry and Benade houses, the Boulton Gun Factory location, the tannery, with credit for the exploratory work of the Loprestis, the boring mill, and the old Jacobsburg Hotel. Identified on the Historical Sites Map are eighteen such sites, fourteen of them bearing asterisks to indicate that they are still visible today.

Other background material includes a Jacobsburg Chronology from the remote Geological ages through the time of early white settlement, about 1740, up until 1945, when the last traces of the Boulton Factory were removed.

A great deal of the historical information was supplied by Albert Toth, of the Society's Board of Directors, who collaborated in the preparation of that area of the book.

Cooperating in the planning and production stages were more than a dozen organizations and entities from local level to top state agencies, and besides the forty-eight teachers taking part in the project, more than twenty consultants whose services were acknowledged. All in all, it is an impressive work, professionally done, and all the more gratifying, from our standpoint, because it places Jacobsburg most definitely and significantly 'on the map'!

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION for JACOBSTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Student - \$2.50

Individual - \$5.00

Sustaining - \$10.00

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Contributing - \$15.00

Organizations - \$25.00

Check Enclosed \$ _____

Name _____

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Please return this application with your check made payable to Jacobsburg Historical Society, and mail to:

Miss Margaret H. Taylor, Treasurer
733 Paxinosa Avenue
Easton, Pa. 18042

All contributions are TAX DEDUCTABLE to the extent provided by law.