

HAYCOCK HISTORICAL NEWS

The Newsletter of The Haycock Historical Society • Fall 2009

HAYCOCK BLOCK WORKS

by Dave Guttman, edited by Pamela Varkony

You've heard the old adage, "Necessity is the mother of invention"? That's how my family's business, Haycock Block Works, later incorporated with the name Palmer Concrete Products, Inc., came into being.

In 1949, my grandfather, Andrew Palmer, had need of a new out-building on his farm. Instead of using wood, he decided on concrete block. There was no one in the area that sold such a thing, so he bought a small machine that made two blocks at a time. He persevered and built his out-building. A neighbor saw it and asked if my grandfather would make blocks for him. He agreed, and soon a business was born.

Eventually, it got to the point where my grandfather and my father couldn't run a dairy farm and a block business at the same time. So they decided to focus on the block business and sell the dairy farm. It was a hard decision-my grandfather had been a farmer all his life. My dad, Mike Guttman, had been a helper on the farm when in 1941, he married the "farmer's daughter", Naomi Palmer. But looking to the future, the three, together set out to build the block business. My mother worked in the office as well as raising 4 children, and my father took care of the actual labor of making cement blocks.

The company found ways to innovate, making lighter blocks with more insulation value by adding an ingredient called Waylite. Waylite, a by-product of making steel, was considered a waste product by nearby Bethlehem Steel, so they were only too happy to have us haul it away...for a price.

Business flourished and the block plant had to hire

more men. There were about six to eight employees working at the plant. Dad had the same men working with him for the entire life of the business-no one ever quit. There were no insurance plans back then, so my dad would pay for the medical needs of his men and their families. It was a tight knit group.

My brother, Bill and I worked at the plant beginning at the age of 12. We worked after school, weekends and in the summer. We weren't forced to, we wanted to. Dad paid us "wages" and put them in the bank.

When I turned 15 in 1959, those savings allowed me to purchase my first car for \$600. That was a lot of money in those days.

On my 16th birthday, I took my driver's test and passed. When I got home, there was a load of blocks on a truck

ready for me to deliver. I did every job at the plant. Dad said that was how you learned to run a business and how to appreciate and understand the work your employees do.

In 1963, the State of Pennsylvania took my family's business under the Eminent Domain Act for the Nockamixon State Park. The block plant still stands; the park uses it as their maintenance headquarters. The site looks much as it did in the 50's and 60's. For my family, visiting there is like stepping back in time...always emotional.

The block plant represents our family's history, and part of the history of Haycock Township. It is important that it be remembered and preserved for those who follow. We appreciate that the park administration shares that view and allows us to visit frequently.

Haycock Block Works
ANDREW PALMER, Prop.
Quakertown R. D. 3 Phone: 1053-W
Manufacturer of all Sizes of
WAYLITE BUILDING BLOCKS
CHIMNEY BLOCKS — LINTELS
Light — Suitable — Insulating — Fireproof
Low Absorption

Old ad from the 'Free Press' submitted by Pat De Wald

MEETING BY CHANCE:

HOW SOME OLD HAYCOCK HISTORY WAS DISCOVERED

by Henry DePue

Editor note: Henry DePue met members of the Stanislaw family who owned several farms in Haycock and Springfield Townships.

The meeting took place at St. Paul's Cemetery in Applebachsville in May 2009. As a member of St. Paul's Cemetery Committee, I am usually present when a burial takes place. This particular one was a little unique since a funeral director wasn't involved and the family placed the ashes into the grave.

I met the three Stanislaw Family members at the cemetery and escorted them and the ashes of Helen Cornelia Stanislaw (age 93) to the gravesite. After placing the ashes into the grave, I left to give the family some time alone. Before they departed I talked to Ruben Stanislaw, his wife, Mary and Theodore Stanislaw, Helen's other brother.

I shared with them that my grandmother had mentioned the Stanislaw name as a family friend when I was very young. The Stanislaws told me about several Haycock family farms, growing up in Haycock and the Latvian Church. The Latvians would baptize their members at the bridge in the creek that runs through my property. I asked if they had any photos of life in Haycock that they would share with the Haycock Historical Society.

Within a couple of weeks I received a huge package in the mail from Mary and Ruben containing dozens of family and church photos along with family documents. Every photo had a sticky note identifying the people or event. Obviously, they worked hard to put this all together.

The photos and documents were shared with the membership and all scanned into the HHS archives. They were also loaned to the Latvian Baptist Church. Many of the photos had never been seen before, some of which appear in this article.

Rather than risk mailing these priceless treasures back, Nancy and I delivered them to the Stanislaw home in Jenkintown.

Ruben said he moved from the farm to Philadelphia in 1923 when he was two years old, but would often visit the farms of his extended family. During the visits they would attend church activities or do what most city kids did when they visited the country. Some of his activities included running in the fields, playing in the hayloft in the barn and swimming in the local swimming hole near the Stover Dam. Ruben mentioned the other side of the dam where the water swirled around, leaving a deep swimming hole that many kids enjoyed.

Mary and Ruben shared with us an oil painting of the Stone Arch Bridge, now under Lake Nockamixon, painted by Dorothy Weichman (Ruben's cousin). It was painted while she was seated on Stover's Dam. Haycock Township is to the right of the painting. Dorothy Weichman, now 88, still paints and lives in Media.

Thanks to the generosity of the Stanislaw family, many old photos have been recovered and some of the early history of Haycock has been preserved.

More about the Stanislaw family in future issues....



Anna (James) Westberg at Haycock Mountain Farm



Farm cows photographed in 1925

photos continued next page

MEETING BY CHANCE *continued from page 2*



The homestead of John and Mary Stanislaw on Bursonville Road off Rt. 412., also known as Fairview Farm



Early 20th century photo of Applebachsville church believed to have been Pentecostal and now a private home across from Haycock School

BIRTHDAY WISHES TO STELLA BENNER

by Jane Nase

"Happy Birthday Stella Benner, Happy Birthday to you!" That song has been sung to Stella 90 times! Haycock Historical Society wishes you our best.

Stella and her family (Laskoski) moved into the now Mountain Pride Farm on Woodbine Lane when she was a year old. She and her three sisters and one brother helped on the farm. They raised chickens, pigs, dairy cows and also grew vegetables. All items were sold for the family income. Her father worked in Hellertown as a baker at night and then on the farm during the day. Her family moved from the farm in the 1944.

After Greg Seifert and Laura DiDonato bought the farm, they had a reunion for Stella and her family and Bill Peischel's family. Bill's family lived on the farm across the street. They enjoyed seeing all the improvements Greg and

Laura made. Most recently, a small outbuilding that was used for pigs was renovated into a work area for Laura. Greg enjoyed talking to all of them about the farm's history.

As a young girl, Stella attended Applebachsville School and later graduated from Quakertown High School in 1938. Bill remembers walking to school with Stella and her brother and sisters. He mentioned the kids would play in the fields after the chores were done. Occasionally, Stella would accompany Bill when they would haul milk to Richlandtown. A truck from a processing plant in Philadelphia would collect the milk and take it to Philadelphia to be bottled. When she graduated from high school, Stella worked in a factory in Richlandtown making buttonholes on Navy pants.

On her days on the farm, she kept busy with many

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HAYCOCK PROFILES: CAROLINE PALMER

by Jane Nase

You may not know Haycock Historical Society member, Caroline Palmer, but if you drive through Applebachsville, you have surely seen her. Caroline and her faithful four-legged pal, Emma take frequent walks through the village. Caroline enjoys going on these walks and keeping an eye on the properties as well as stopping to chat with many neighbors.

Caroline was born in Trenton, New Jersey and was the second oldest in a family of nine children. Her mother's maiden name was Beatrice Doan, from the infamous Doan family. The Five Doan Brothers robbed many people in the local area during the time of the Revolutionary War. (The Doan Gang will be the topic of the presentation during the HHS March meeting.) Her childhood was less eventful than her relatives and was spent in Lambertville, New Jersey in various homes. She attended Lambertville High School.

Caroline married her neighbor and Navy veteran, Russell Ledger at eighteen years old. They had three children, Suzanne, Diane, and David. After he passed away, she married her second husband, Steward Decker and lived in Somerville, New Jersey. They had one son, Steward. Her second husband then died from leukemia.

Caroline was introduced to the Haycock area through camping. She enjoyed tent camping and then bought a VW camper and finally a motor home. She

would usually camp at the Covered Bridge Campground. Actually, for a few years, she lived there in the early 1970s.

Although she lived in Pennsylvania, she worked in Flemington, New Jersey at Copper Hill Golf Course, a private golf club. She started as a waitress and moved into managing the restaurant. This is where she met her third husband, Herbert Palmer who worked as a bar tender at the golf club. They were married in 1974 and moved into her current home with her son, David who lives in Applebachsville. He made a nice apartment for them in his home. Herbert and Caroline enjoyed living in Applebachsville until Herbert passed away in 1990. Now just Emma and Caroline reside in the apartment.



Caroline also worked as a cook for the Alpha Chi Rho fraternity at Lehigh University from 1993-2002. She used to buy and cook the meals from scratch rather than buy food products from a food service. The several dozen fratern-

ity brothers enjoyed the home cooked meals. She proudly displays the mug the fraternity men gave her.

She also worked in the Quakertown schools cafeteria. Currently, she is a substitute cafeteria worker and cooks in any school in the district when she is needed.

In her free time, she enjoys doing things with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She enjoys the friendly people in Haycock. But her favorite pastime is walking Emma. When you see them on the road, give them a wave.

BIRTHDAY WISHES *continued from page 3*

chores, such as making hay, pulling weeds, collecting eggs and helping with the canning of the vegetables. She did take time out to enjoy roller-skating at Menlo Park in Perkasio. She met her husband, Claude roller-skating and was married when she was 22 years old. She raised two boys and now has 4 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren with two more on the way.

After they were married, they moved to Souderton, then

to a farm in Berks County and finally to East Greenville where she lives today. Stella keeps busy by reading and doing word search puzzles. Most of all she enjoys spending time with her family. She doesn't drive anymore so she can't attend the Haycock Historical Society meetings, but she likes reading the newsletter.

Haycock Historical Society wishes you many more birthdays, Stella.

SOCIETY NEWS

SOCIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE

Kringle Christmas Shoppe VI

Friday, Dec. 4, 1-8, Saturday, Dec. 5, 10 - 4:30,
Sunday, Dec. 6, 12:30 - 4:30

Bucks County Latvian Baptist Church Social Hall
Applebachsville - 1142 Apple Road, Quakertown, PA

Mark your calendar and visit our website www.haycockhistoricalsociety.org for a complete schedule of events.

HHS Member, Greg Seifert of Mountain Pride Farm will offer Belgian Horse & Carriage rides, departing from the church and riding through the village of Applebachsville, on Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Our exciting "Old Fashioned Christmas Shoppe" is created for those who want to experience the magic of getting or giving unique, hand-crafted gifts. Haycock Historical Society highlights renowned authors, artists and craftsmen who call the Haycock area their home.

Be serenaded by our talented local performers who bring the spirit of Christmas to life with continuous live holiday music. Stop in at our hospitality center for a sweet treat and remember, every purchase helps not only the society, but also our local artists.

For the first time, HHS member, Tom Kazary will be highlighted as Kringle's featured artist. Tom will be opening his studio, Diabase Lodge, on Nov. 21 & 22 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for members who wish to preview the ceramic sculptures that will be for sale at Kringle. Diabase Lodge, located at 860 Old Bethlehem Road, Applebachsville, is a must-see—you will walk away amazed.

We'll also debut our 2009 collectors plate, made by the talented hands of ceramic artist, Loretta Belac. This limited edition plate will feature the American chestnut leaf. Our historical link to the American chestnut tree will be shared at the spring 2010 general meeting.

This year's Haycock Historical Society calendar on sale at Kringle, will feature a "Scavenger Hunt" theme. Each HHS member household will receive one calendar which is our gift to you. Inside each calendar will be a postcard to guess the spot featured each month. Submit your completed list of guesses on the special postcard. Mail it or bring it to the March HHS meeting. Cards with correct responses will be entered into a drawing for several cash prizes that will be announced at the March meeting. Calendars will be on sale at Kringle. Remember, calendars make great gifts for out-of-state families.

The featured author at Kringle will be Pat DeWald and her newly published book, 'Haycock Township and Eddie Bauer from 1930 - 1970'. Pat and Eddie will sign books on Sunday, Dec. 6 from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Kringle always welcomes volunteers and donations. If you are interested in volunteering your time or donating items for our gift raffle, please contact Chris Handschin, (215) 536 - 0364 chandschin@verizon.net

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

All yearly memberships are due by December. Please cut out the form on the back of the newsletter and send it to our PO Box.

Haycock Historical Society is looking for paintings by Bill Atkinson. He was a local artist who lived in the area from about 1930 to 1976. His paintings are usually signed W. H. Atkinson. If you have a painting please contact Pat DeWald at 215 804 0216 or wdewald@verizon.net.

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Thank you to our guest writers, Henry DePue, Pam Varkony and Dave Guttman for contributing to this issue. If anyone else has an interesting item they want to share or write themselves, please contact Jane Nase at 215-536-0496 or Michele Malinchak at 215-538-0959.

SOCIETY MEETINGS

November 19, Ilze Celmina Diaz, "Latvian Culture and Customs"

March 18, Ed Tice, "The Doan Gang"

April 15, Michael Webb, "American Chestnut Restoration after the Blight"

May 20, Carol Schroding, Master Gardener

The Haycock Historical Society is a non-profit organization whose mission is to research and record the history of Haycock Township and the surrounding environs. General meetings are open to society members and the public. Meetings are held six times a year, clustered in the fall: September, October and November; and spring: March, April and May, and usually held at 7 p.m. at St. Paul's Lutheran Church across from the Haycock firehouse in Applebachsville.

The society's newsletter is published four times a year and distributed to members and also available to the public at general meetings, the Haycock Township Building and other public locations in the area.



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