

HAYCOCK HISTORICAL NEWS

The Newsletter of The Haycock Historical Society • Fall 2015

John Flynn – Atypical Haycock Artist

by Chris Handschin

What identifies a fine artist? This is challenging to explain with a single definition. The artist is not simply one who makes his livelihood creating inspiring works. Often, he is one who simply enjoys the process of creating and along the way, creates appealing works. This is the case with our featured artist, Haycock resident for 43 years, John Flynn.

John Flynn's late journey into the realm of fine art had an unusual beginning. He spent many years as a high school mathematics teacher with a Bachelors degree from Carnegie Mellon and a Masters in Mathematics, from Duquesne. How and why did he bridge the divide between Science and Art? He will tell you that as a mathematics teacher he became adept at drawing three-dimensional figures, showing how they intersected along well-known curves. Later, computer programming introduced him to twentieth century mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot's world of fractals, (intricate repeated patterns) and their amazing connection to the world of art, often created by simple mathematical formulas or algorithms.

Our life's work may be seen as a continuing journey of self-improvement and reflecting, re-awakening and reflecting -- adjusting and reflecting. The modest, soft-spoken Mr. Flynn will tell you there is no great story behind his journey or his works. We beg to differ.

While many artists recall a lengthy history of creative influence, John does not. In fact he cannot remember a single painting hanging on the walls in his youth. Interestingly, despite that, he and his siblings have all excelled in creative endeavors. What he does recall is a childhood of transience. His father was a travelling salesman during a time when the man of the house was the bread-winner and made all major decisions for the household. Yet, his father did not spend much time at home. During World War II, the pickings were slim for this family of six. They struggled to get by. John recalls once looking at the front pages of the family bible. It listed all the addresses the family had lived. Those addresses meandered in columns across several pages! Once, when living in North Carolina, his mother learned they'd be moving when she looked out their front window to see a man pounding a "For Sale" sign on their

lawn. By the time John was in the fourth grade, the family lived on Sunset Island, northern New York State, on the shores of Lake Ontario. The little island supported fifty to sixty seasonal cottages during the spring and summer. His family was one of only three families who stayed on year-round. Mom would row the kids out to the main land so that they could attend school. In winter, the brutal Canadian wind blew cliffs of snow around the little island and in their back yard. When the lake froze over, they'd walk across it to school. Experiences such as these profoundly affected John and seemed to have provided him with an enduring love of nature. It is a dominant theme in his pieces. The nomadic lifestyle of his youth may well have given cause to desire a permanent address.

It was Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where John would graduate from high school. Pittsburgh in the late 50's was a dirty city, fueled by steel mills and the ore industry, --not a place he intended to settle. In those years, John earned his way through college as a carpenter's helper, recalling the great satisfaction



John Flynn

of creating and working with his hands. Although he and his wife, Jeannie, both had attended Carnegie Mellon, they first met when, fresh out of college, they landed teaching jobs in Allegheny County together, he in mathematics and Jeannie in home economics. The couple married in 1962. After visiting his sisters who had re-located to the Philadelphia area, John took a job teaching at Jenkintown High School and he and Jeannie moved to a house in Glenside where they lived for five years. With daughters Anne and Susan, the couple decided to look for the proverbial 'house in the country where they could raise a family.' In January of 1972, they purchased their Mission Road farmhouse in Haycock Township. Asked if Lake Nockamixon had anything to do with the decision to buy in Haycock, John said, "Not at all!" "It was only *after* the sale, the realtor told us,--'Oh, by the way, a lake is going in behind you soon!'"

John commuted to Jenkintown throughout most of his teaching career which spanned over 40 years plus spent the summers teaching night school and summer sessions in both Philadelphia and DeSales University. When he wasn't putting

additions onto his farmhouse or teaching, he spent many hours hiking the expanse of land cleared for the lake. When Anne and Susan were old enough, he took them hiking and let them climb to the top of the dam. He felt sadness for the people and their beautiful old homesteads displaced by the lake. John and his wife still live in that same farmhouse. The girls grew up surrounded by nature along with dogs, cats, goats, even horses as pets.



Flynn oil

Some years later, the couple also purchased a place in southern New Jersey, where they would enjoy the views of the ocean, birds and aquatic wildlife. Seascapes and ocean vistas are sprinkled throughout John's collection. He enjoys surf fishing and reflects, "Sometimes you get a great catch and sometimes your 'catch' is a glimpse of the nature around you."

Over the years, John has taken many watercolor art classes, including locally, with Fran Schmidt of Quakertown, Pricilla Rosenberger at Katie Stauffer Memorial Art Center, a workshop with Michigan water-colorist, Roland Roycroft and many classes with New Jersey artist, Phil Carroll.



Flynn oil

John recalled one early class taught him more about life than art. As a beginner in watercolor, often the novice gets over-ambitious and ends up with a "muddy" picture. This happens when too many colors are mixed together and

applied too quickly. He sought guidance from teacher, Fran Schmidt. She concentrated on a very tiny patch of the paper that was left "un-muddied" and said "There, that's what we are looking for!" It taught him a valuable lesson which he carried into his own teaching career: Concentrate on expanding that which is good--don't criticize the bad. When a student handed in a test with mostly wrong answers, John concentrated on the few right ones. He said, "After all, the poor fella that got the "D" knows he did badly, he doesn't need me to tell him that!"

When John felt he learned all he wanted to know about watercolor, he saw his journey there complete. While he could have chosen a second career focused on making and selling his watercolors thereafter, he chose instead, to move onto experience painting in oil, due in part to the influence of a great teacher. "Teaching art well is a rare talent," John reflects. "Some artists are fabulous at what they do but they can't teach." During a chance encounter at the Jersey shore, he met Phil Carroll, an inspiring teacher as well as a master watercolorist and oil painter, well established in New Jersey. John is currently attending Perkins Art Center in Moorsetown, New Jersey, where Phil is an instructor.



Flynn oil

Although John has experienced "plein air" painting, he prefers to take photos of those subjects which inspire him. Many are of scenes photographed in his back yard. Painting from the kitchen table, he manipulates the subject matter on canvas or gesso board, recreating backdrops and adjusting the view until he is satisfied with the end result. Of the hundreds of works in his possession, each and every one he has personally framed. Those early years spent in carpentry give him an edge when presenting his finished pieces.

John Flynn's works have appeared in galleries in Frenchtown, Lambertville, Dublin, Quakertown, Mainline Art Center and Perkins Art Center with a seascape in Cooper Hospital's permanent collection. John participates annually in Haycock Historical Society's Kringle Christmas Shoppe. His time and skills have been donated generously for many years, helping the society's Social Events Committee prepare for this annual fund-raising event. It is a great honor to name him Haycock Historical Society's featured artist for Kringle Christmas Shoppe, 2015.





Boy Scout Trail in Towhee Park

Ken Fox has been mowing the lawn at our Stokes House headquarters, and has explored some of the pathways around the property. The trail from our driveway out to Sawmill Road has been mostly cleaned up, and he discovered the start of a well marked trail, which over the years was maintained by a local Boy Scout troop. This trail winds around in Towhee Park behind our headquarters.



Thank You

Nancy Singer donated several frakturs, and a 1905 map of Bucks County.



Woodpecker damage

This spring a woodpecker attempted to invade the Stokes House.



Our window sill has been repaired by Lester Goldthorp.



Fall Cleanup

We had a good turn out for our Fall Cleanup session. The HQ property is looking nice. Thanks to all who were able to come out and help.



Thank You

Lorey and Bob Smell donated this water color done by Lorey's cousin, Calvin Ruth. This painting is on display at our Headquarters, in the Stokes House.



House in Applebachsville



Covered Bridge Road



Back of Sheards Mill and Covered Bridge

**Four additional water color paintings
by Calvin Ruth**

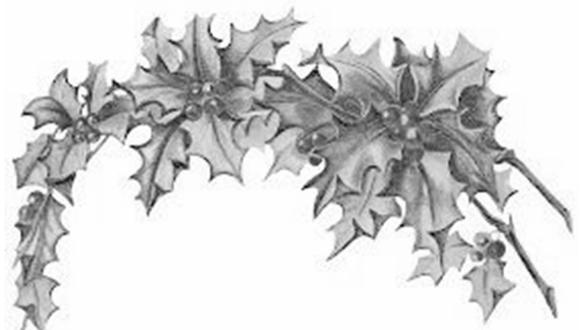
Some quick action by Dave Long helped us acquire four additional Haycock area paintings from the estate of Calvin Ruth. They will be framed and also displayed at our Stokes House Headquarters.

Thank You

Toni Wirth sent us a donation as a thank you for the research aid she received from Nancy Janyszeski. We frequently get requests from folks looking for things on our website.



Isaacs' Home



ACTIVITIES

Kringle Christmas Shoppe - Dec. 4 (1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.) Dec. 5 (10:0 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) and Dec. 6 (12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

Victorian Tea - This year the Victorian Tea has been cancelled.



New Sign

We now have a sign along the driveway as guests approach the property.

MEETINGS

March 17, 2016: to be announced in the Winter newsletter.

April 21, 2016: to be announced in the Winter newsletter.

May 19, 2016: to be announced in the Winter newsletter.

Meetings are held at the Bucks County Latvian Baptist Church in Applebachsville and begin at 7 p.m.

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Please submit material for the newsletter or suggestions for interviews to Margie Fulp. (215-257-7472) or m_fulp@hotmail.com

Bucks County
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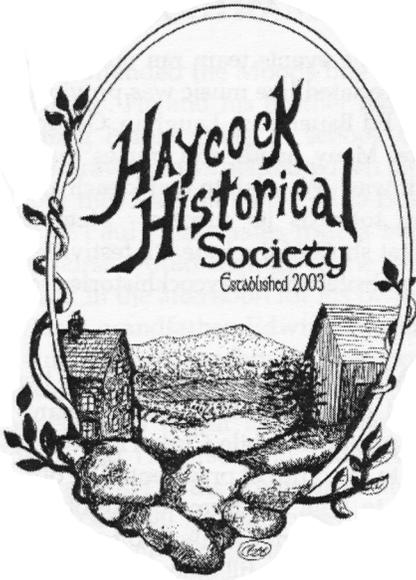
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AN INVITATION TO MEMBERSHIP

YES, ENROLL ME AS A MEMBER OF THE HAYCOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY!

I WANT TO BE PART OF RECLAIMING OUR HISTORY AND PRESERVING IT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

- Individual Membership - \$20/year**
Receive quarterly newsletter and attend all special functions this year – Jan. thru Dec.
- Family Membership (Parents & Children in household) - \$30/year**
Receive quarterly newsletter and attend all special functions this year – Jan. thru Dec.
- Corporate Sponsor - \$100/year**
Gain advertisement in our newsletter by yearly sponsorship (ad size smaller than business card)
- Corporate Patron - \$200/year**
Gain advertisement in our newsletter by yearly sponsorship (ad is full business card size)
- Lifetime Individual Membership - \$200**
Receive honorary lifetime status, receive quarterly newsletters and attend all special functions
- Lifetime Household Couple Membership - \$250**
For just \$50 more, join as a household and enjoy all the benefits of lifetime membership

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SEND APPLICATION ALONG WITH CHECK MADE PAYABLE TO HAYCOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO:
P.O. Box 715, Quakertown, PA 18951