

HAYCOCK HISTORICAL NEWS

The Newsletter of The Haycock Historical Society • Summer 2022

MEMORIES OF A FARM AND FAMILY

IN BEDMINSTER TOWNSHIP BEFORE LAKE NOCKAMIXON

By Edward J. Powers Sr.

Warren and Celia Myers Gilmer owned a farm with a mailing address on Mink Road in Ottsville. The farm had been in the Yerger family from 1859 through 1918. I think Warren and Celia bought it in the 1930's or 1940's. Celia and Warren married in 1907 and had two children - Edward Gilmer and Anne Gilmer Glassey.

Celia grew up in Doylestown, a daughter of Jacob F. Myers and Mary C. Buck Myers. Celia's father Jacob served in the Union Army from February 1864 until July 1865, first in Company C, 1st PA Provisional Cavalry, and later in Company C 20 PA Cavalry.

Edward Gilmer married Margaret "Peg" Rehnert Gilmer in 1942. Peg was my mother Rita Rehnert Power's sister. I spent summers on the Gilmer farm from 1949 through 1957 and visited often until they sold the farm to the Ziegler family who left in 1961 for the lake project. From 1953 through 1957, my brother Tommy stayed on the farm with me, and Peg and Ed welcomed son Edward "Buttons" Gilmer in 1950. Ed Gilmer worked as a salesman in Quakertown and sold silos while he and Stanley and Celia tried to keep the farm.

Celia's farm family after Warren died included Stanley and Matt. Stanley may have been a "misplaced person" after WWII, as my dad once said, since he could have been Celia's youngest son. Stanley Yezerski raised goats, and after farm chores, built grandfather's clocks and other furniture, including corner cupboards and desks, and refinished antique furniture pieces. He frequented the Ambler antique auction

houses to buy old cherry chests to make his clocks. Stanley died in 1980. Matilda "Matt" Fisher Frank, a cousin of Celia, also lived with Celia and Stanley in one half of the farmhouse, the side with a full kitchen area, a living room and three bedrooms. Ed and Peg Gilmer and Eddie "Buttons" Gilmer lived in the adjoining half of the house, the

part that featured a wood paneled fireplace, a narrow-curved stair to two "shotgun" bedrooms upstairs, a long living room and a kitchen and bath that had been added. When I first stayed there, there was a pump on the kitchen sink for water and it was a short walk to the outhouse. Warren died in 1950. Celia died in 1960, not long after a cow had knocked her down and broke her hip. When Ed and Peg sold the farm, they moved to Idetown, PA. Ed died in 1982; Peg died in 1994.

I learned to drive on Farmall and John Deere tractors; never got to drive the 1937 Chevy panel truck. We rode the combine to fill and tie-off grain bags, we shocked cornstalks, stacked hay bales on the wagon

behind the baler, and fed corn stalks into the moving belt that sliced and diced them and then blew them into the silo. We climbed the silo steps to distribute the silage. I held the piglets in the crook of my arm as Stanley neutered them and smeared ointment on the cuts. I struggled to move a sow off her newborns, and puzzled at the behavior of the boar, who, when he finished his stud task, broke out of the enclosure. I ran from angry drakes, watched calves being born, walked a horse down the incline from the barn doors to raise hay bales on a pulley into the barn, and climbed the mulberry trees. I knew all the cows' names and walked the cows down Mink



UNCLE LOG CABIN — Tearing down a house near Kellers Church to make way for the state park, workers uncovered this built-up and

built-over log cabin. The walls are made of logs with mud mortar between them.

Peel Like An Orange

Pioneer's Cabin Is Discovered, But It Will Be Razed For Park

By LESTER TRAUCH
Intelligence Staff Writer

Road, almost in line with the "ghost town of Tobickon (Stovers- hear about the time when Indians

Road and back every day to pasture at the tree line (Mink Road was dirt, and at the tree line, went downhill to Tohickon Creek, a gloriously cool walk on a hot summer day). I ground corn cobs with the big grinder, helped clean out both the cows and the pig stalls, and jumped back as Stanley would behead the chicken and laugh at me as the headless fowl ran around, seemingly after me. I rode along to Trauger's Store and enjoyed the sweets, got gas at Frei's Garage (where I first saw Marilyn Monroe on her iconic calendar pose), picked cherries and raspberries, and watched and waited for the mailman to come up Mink Road, twin plumes of dust marking his progress. I carried milk pails all-too-heavy for me, shared handles on the milk containers to leave them out for the creamery driver, rode into Ottsville to deliver chickens in crates, and saw the long row of funnels with blood draining into the gutter. I helped milk the cows twice a day, and got hot milk squirted in my face when I didn't pay attention.

We went into Doylestown to shop, Quakertown for ice cream and church, and Sellersville to the granary. The TV was black and white with three channels and no remote. Sunburn and sweaty summer sleeping nights were taken for granted.

The sounds and aromas of the farm are long lasting - the piglets squealing as they ran around, roosters crowing and goats bleating, the deep moan of the mother cow whose calf was taken and sold, dogs barking at unfamiliar cars, the pop-pop-pop of the big John Deere, the creaking of the well pump, and the radio set to the same station for the cows at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Newly cut fields are still among my favorite aromas, and the sweet smell of manure and fresh straw brings the farm memories rushing back. I know all these are shared with most kids who grew up on a farm, but my family lived in Pottsville in NE Pennsylvania (often confused with Pottstown) the county seat of Schuylkill County. My brother and I can say we were raised in Pottsville and Ottsville. We were lucky kids.

There were few neighbors. Bob and Joy Platz had the farm opposite the Gilmers, the Fretz and Shellhammer families lived nearby, and Ed Kulp and his wife owned a house along the same road that the small Yost schoolhouse was on. Joy Platz raised and showed horses, a treat for us to see in the fields.

When Ed and Peg sold the farm, they sold all the equipment at an on-site auction - a sad way to see implements that were of such good use sold for scrap value. My Dad watched as the buyer of two old-style Conestoga-like wagons (the front tree converted for a tractor to pull, the huge brake blocks next to the iron-clad wheels) burned them, leaving only scrap metal.

In the summer of 1999, brother Tom and I, with wives Helen and Rosalie, spent a day looking for the farm. The new roads of the park stymied us at first, but a homeowner on the edge of the park told us where the old dirt road going down to the creek started. We traced the road by following

the barbed wire stapled into the trees along with some old posts, and eventually found the tall toothbrush pine, shortened no doubt by lightning, as it stood tall on the knoll. Our memories of the house and barn, goat house, truck patch, cookhouse, milk house, pig pens and chicken coops came back, but the landscape was overgrown, and landmarks were missing. After about an hour of determining direction and pacing off distance, we found the circular concrete base of the silo, and a rusted silo step, all that remained of the farm buildings. That find helped us envision the rest of the layout.

I have many of the black and white photos that Celia, Ed and Peg kept, reminding me of the carefree days we spent on the farm. I also have a now-yellowed copy of The Daily Intelligencer from Friday, March 22, 1963, with the headline: "Pioneer's Cabin Is Discovered, But It Will Be Razed For Park" and the sub-head "Peeled Like An Orange." In the article, a few descriptions help pinpoint the site of the cabin - ...a mile or so south of Ridge Road... almost in line with the ghost town of Tohickon...with ... a tall, gaunt, used-toothbrush-like pine tree stand(ing) between the road and the home...and "Mrs. Robert M. Platz, who lives across the road...described how their 66-acre farm would become a part of the park." The article says the house was on Deer Run Road.

I lived in that house and never knew what lay behind the walls. There were some clues, as I look back - the well between the house and the road, close to the pine tree, the depth of the windows between the living room and the kitchen addition, the doorway depth between the two halves of the main house - a door that was never opened; the narrow half-circle stair at one end to the small bedrooms above, the exposed beams in the ceiling of the living room, the fireplace, the Heatrola stove for winter heat, the Navy Colt pistol and the musket above the fireplace. Joy Platz is quoted in the article: "There must be arrowheads in those logs." The Summer 2019 issue of The Newsletter of The Haycock Historical Society brought all these memories flooding back, as Marjorie Fulp wrote about the Aspinall family: "The road into the village crossed the bridge to the Bedminster side and meandered up past a small quarry. Further up was the home of a friend of Dennis. This house was later taken for the Nockamixon Park. When the outer covering of the house was torn off for demolition, the house was discovered to be a log cabin. Dennis remembers the deep windowsills in the house, and what a nice cozy home it was. He isn't sure if the cabin was razed, but wishes it was left to stay."

After we visited the park and found the farm site, on another trip through the area, my wife and I called Bob and Joy Platz at their new home. They graciously invited us over to share some memories. Bob talked about Stanley, and how Stanley made a few of the pieces of furniture in their house. Joy took us into their family room and showed us the wood paneled fireplace enclosure from the Gilmer home they had

rescued and refinished in their home - that brought back a flood of memories. Joy also had some mementoes from the time the Yerger family had owned land in the area.

I did not look up all the old deeds and titles for the Gilmer farm, now included just within the boundary of the park. I have found aerial maps going back many years that help me see the farm over time -the Tohickon Creek and the bridge to Tohickon Village are good guideposts. I am indebted to William S. Buck, author of "Account of the Buck Family of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and of the Bucksville Centennial Celebration held June 11th, 1892; including the proceedings of Bucks Wampun Literary Association of Said Occasion" for an immersive look at the Buck family history. I have a letter he sent on July 16, 1892, addressed to Mrs. Mary Meyers, asking for names of relatives and dates of marriage and death. It is difficult to imagine how one person gathered and wrote such an expansive history when letter-sending was the chief means of communication. Thank you to Joy and Bob Platz for their hospitality. And a warm thank you to Celia, Warren, Stanley, Matt, Uncle Ed and Aunt Peg and Cousin Ed for sharing their home and farm to two young kids from the Coal Region. Finally, our thanks to Rita Rehnert and Thomas E. Powers who let their two oldest boys, almost four years apart in age, spend summers on the farm while they took care of the two youngest at home, brother John born in 1949 and sister Peggy born in 1950. Although both John and Peggy visited the farm, they never got to spend an entire summer there.



Edward "Buttons" Gilmer at the farm – the tooth-brush pine tree in the background, and the concrete addition to the back side of the house.



From left: Mr. Frank, husband of Matt Fisher Frank, Margaret "Peg" Rehnert Gilmer, (unknown female), Edward Gilmer with bowtie, Stanley Yezerki, Matt Fisher Frank, Edward "Buttons" Gilmer with bowtie, (unknown female holding him) Celia Myers Gilmer, Edgar "Ted" Glassey standing and his son David Glassey. Ann Gilmer Glassey likely took the photo.



Warren and Celia Gilmer



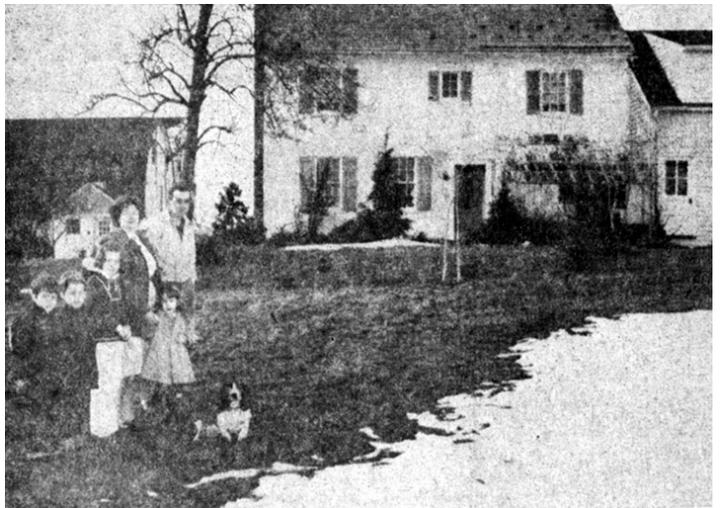
Edward Gilmer in the living room of the house, with the wide width window to the kitchen.



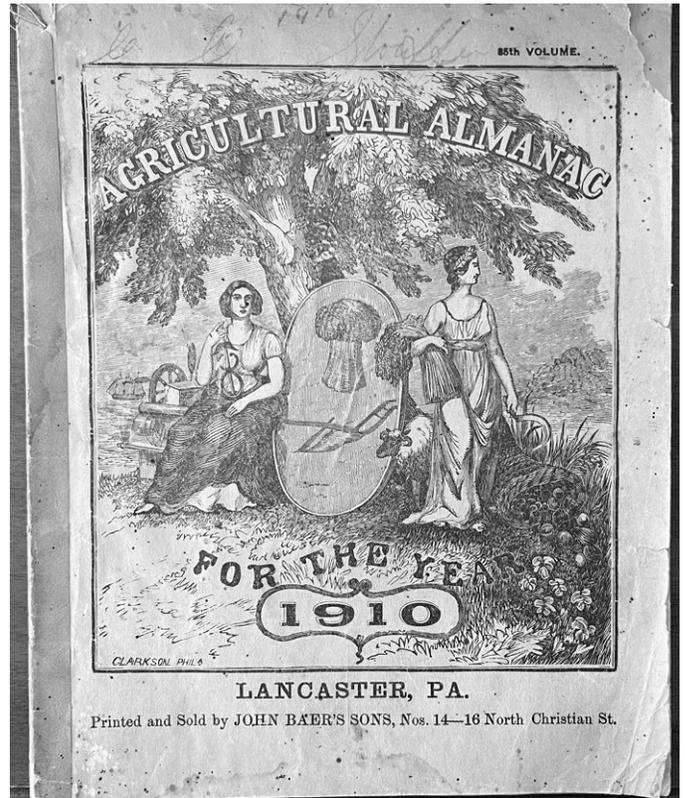
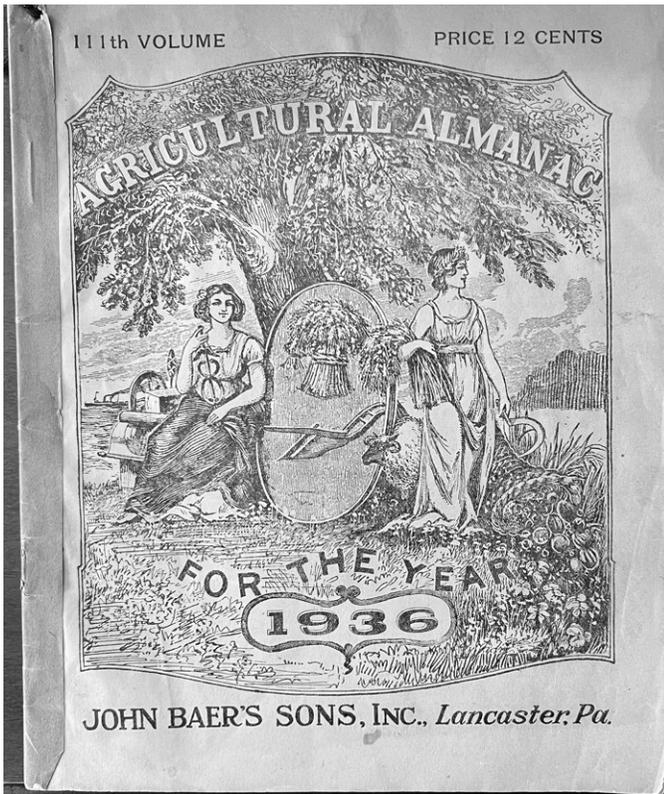
Edward "Buttons" Gilmer sitting on right. Aspinall children with him on the incline leading up to barn floor.



The wide width window to the left. Edward Gilmer and Dennis or Doug Aspinall.



Joy and Bob Platz and family in front of the home they lost to the park.



THANK YOU

Linda Stauffer for the vintage Agricultural Almanacs and the black border funeral card of Adda Swope, age 7 months and 21 days.

CORRECTION

To the TITLE of SPRING 2022 printed version of our newsletter. SARAG ANDRES should be SARAH ANDRES.

SEPTEMBER OPEN HOUSE HHS MEETING

Sunday September 25, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Do you own a painting by one-room school teacher, Florence Fluck or artist, William Atkinson?

Would you consider loaning it for the day for our themed open-house presentation featuring Mrs. Fluck and Mr. Atkinson. These area residents left an indelible footprint on our local history, one worthy of sharing! If you can help, contact Chris:(215) 490-4940 (text or leave message).

Even if you can't loan a painting, come out and spend the afternoon at the open-house! Guaranteed, you will have fun!

Brenda K. Lee and Tom Schnabel of Riverfront Blue will be performing for the afternoon and there will be light food fare to enjoy while you socialize with old friends and new!



IN MEMORY OF
William F. Amey, Jr. "Buck"
September 29, 1936-June 12, 2022



IN MEMORY OF
Jean Keller
November 6, 1937-January 16, 2022



STOKES HOUSE

Our headquarters at the end of Apple road in Applebachsville, will be open every Friday from 10 to noon through October. We will have an open house Meeting on Sunday September 25 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

THANK YOU

Clayton and Linda Fox for the lawn care, and Kenneth Fox for keeping the trails open.

You may view these photos in color by downloading the digital version of this newsletter from our website:

<https://haycockhistoricalsociety.org>



The Garden at our Headquarters

The garden is looking great in spite of the drought. Thanks to Pat DeWald and Doug Goldthorp for all the garden work they do.

FRIDAY MORNING COFFEE

Friday coffee at Stokes will continue, 10:00 a.m. to Noon, each Friday through October. Come out to visit and see the garden. We will have seating outside if weather permits.

STORIES WANTED

We are collecting stories from members about what you are doing during the isolation for the COVID 19 pandemic. These stories will be placed on our website under Haycock Stories. Years later the stories will tell how we coped with the situation.

FREE ACCESS TO PENNSYLVANIA RECORDS ON ANCESTRY

<https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Research-Online/Pages/Ancestry-PA.aspx>

Past years' issues of our Newsletter are available on our web site.

www.haycockhistoricalsociety.org

“Our Lost Tohickon Valley” and “Haycock Township and Eddie Bauer” are available as E-Books on Amazon

PRINT VERSIONS

“Haycock Township and Eddie Bauer” is available at Stokes Headquarters, Haycock Township Building, and Margie Fulp

“Our Lost Tohickon Valley” is available at Sines 5&10, Stokes Headquarters, Haycock Township Building, The Treasure Trove in Perkasio, and Margie Fulp

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MEETINGS

September 25, 2022: 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Stokes Open House on Sunday. The community is invited to come visit with members and learn about our HHS headquarters, the Stokes House. See page 5 for more details.

October 20, 2022: 7 p.m. Bonnie Gehman and Eileen Hockman, from the Treasure Trove in Perkasio, will give appraisals of objects brought to the meeting by members. Please bring your items to be appraised early, at **6:30 p.m.**, they will be displayed on the tables in our meeting room.

November 17, 2022: 7 p.m. • “Pennsylvania’s Flying Camps During the American Revolution.” Presentation by **Historian and Author Rebecca Price Janney.**

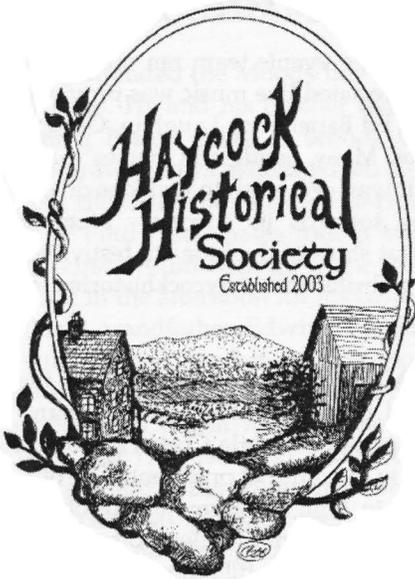
Third Thursday meetings are held at the Haycock Community Center, formerly the Haycock Elementary School, at Old Bethlehem Road and Sawmill Road, in Applebachsville. The meeting room is Community Room West.

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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

HHD USA



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www.haycockhistoricalsociety.org

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

DATE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

PHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

SEND APPLICATION ALONG WITH CHECK MADE PAYABLE TO HAYCOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO:

P.O. Box 715, Quakertown, PA 18951