

HAYCOCK HISTORICAL NEWS

The Newsletter of The Haycock Historical Society • Summer 2011

THE FLORENCE FLUCK STORY

by Chris Handschin

Many lifetime Haycock residents still remember the tall, thin, soft-spoken woman who taught them at a number of our area one-room schools. This generation of recent retirees is likely the last who will have experienced one-room schoolhouse education. Certainly, they are the last who will have remembered Florence W. Fluck.

The one-room school house experience was quite different from the standard teaching methods of today. The educator had to possess a keen sense of timing and order as well as broad base of knowledge. He or she would be responsible for advancing the education of the 6 year old student as well as the 16 year old student simultaneously, in all of the academic core subjects, while ensuring their basic needs and the functional needs of the school were met. Much like the conductor of an orchestra, the one-room school teacher was the central directing figure, responsible for the successful blending, augmentation, harmony and quality of the educational experience. Florence was one of the best.

She was born Florence White, in England on October 18, 1894 to George Herbert White, who had studied for the ministry at Oxford University. Florence's birth mother had died young, leaving George with Florence and her two younger siblings. He remarried and moved his newly formed family to the coal regions of central Pennsylvania where his brother owned a coal mine. While George had not experienced the financial success his brother had, he was able to provide for Florence, her two siblings and the six children that would follow. Religion and education were important to her father and became building blocks for Florence as well. She admired her childhood teacher and enjoyed learning. Not surprisingly, she was singled out by Kutztown Normal School (now Kutztown University) where she was offered the opportunity to earn her teaching degree and repay the \$449.00 tuition in installments--after she had graduated. Florence was just 21 when she began her first teaching job at the Fillman School in East Rockhill Township, just a few miles south of Haycock Township. She

started right in, installing a Literary Society which sponsored a highly competitive adult debating team. While at Fillman School, she met a dashing young man, six years her senior--Victor K. Fluck. He would eventually steal her heart. Victor came from a big family and had strong ties to the Haycock area.

In 1916 Florence was presented with the opportunity to become the assistant principal of a school just four miles from her Schuylkill County homestead, to the delight of her father. She left Fillman School and accepted the job at the Donaldson High School but her heart was elsewhere. In 1919, after three short years, she resigned to marry Victor and join him in Philadelphia where he'd secured a good-paying job with the postal service. The couple soon found they did not like city life and vowed to save their collected earnings and buy a country home. After a brief stint as a bookkeeper for a major oil refinery, she landed a job teaching grades 5 through 8 in Tabernacle, New Jersey, where she shared a room in a boarding home with another woman during the week. In 1924 the couple returned to Victor's childhood community when they bought their farm on Thatcher road in Haycock Township. Florence

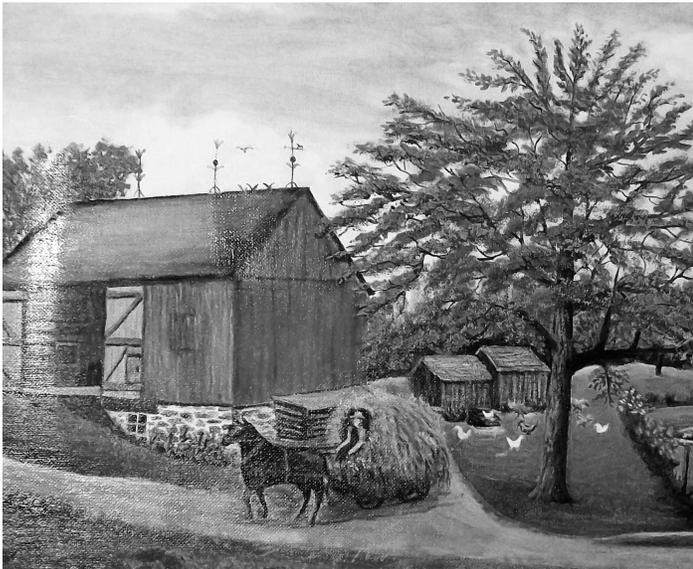


fondly noted the similarity between the Schuylkill area and Haycock. She felt at home, surrounded by the natural beauty of the area. Soon, she began teaching at the Stover School while tending to their farmhouse. Victor would leave for the city to work there during the week. Country farm life was harsh and demanding but she was up for the task. Florence was driven by deep religious convictions and work ethics that challenged her to be the best person she could be in order to live a Christian life. In rural Haycock of the 1920's, life was a meager existence. The Stover school did not have running water or electricity when she first arrived to teach there.

Long-time friend, caregiver and former student, Bonita (Bonnie) Whitham Zieseniss affectionately described "Aunt Florence" as a "Velvet Bulldozer." She had a gentle, yet persuasive way about her. She understood what was needed and deftly went about the task of doing it. When necessary,

she organized the help to ensure goals were met. Florence encouraged parents to invite her into their homes so she could get to know them and their families on a more personal level. She organized a teacher/parent group and soon had parents volunteering to string electric at the Stover School, dig a well and maintain the grounds around the school during the summer months. With Florence as the conductor, great things were accomplished. Yet it was the thoughtful, motherly Florence who arrived at the school early, even on the bleakest of winter days, in order to build a roaring fire in the pot-bellied stove and have a warm pan of water waiting to thaw out frozen little feet that had trudged great distances to arrive at school before the bell.

Florence and Victor had all they needed in each other along with their faith, although it saddened them that they were unable to have children of their own. A nurturing spirit, Florence cared for her younger sister, Alice, who had developed tuberculosis. Alice remained with Florence in their Haycock home until she died in 1926. Throughout her lifetime, Florence, along with Victor, took in foster children. Hoboes knew they had a safe haven sleeping in the Fluck barn. Even the birds and wildlife creatures were so used to her generous care that they barely moved when she arrived to feed them.



Painting by Florence Fluck of her own farm with husband Victor on the hay wagon.

Between 1930 and 1944 Florence was sent to teach at the Tohickon One-room School in Richland Township. These were said to be some of the most rewarding years of her teaching career. While there, she worked with many student-residents of the nearby Children's Home. These children were victims of broken homes at the time of the Great Depression. The children were encouraged to also attend nearby Flatland Mennonite Church. It was her strong connection to these children that drew her participation at Flatland, and ultimately into the Mennonite faith. Victor became a deacon at Flatland Church while she taught Bible school there for many years. She was often the only bright spot in the children's' lives, providing support and genuine concern for their well-being along with a top-notch education for them at the nearby Tohickon School. While there, she raised the standard education level for the

eight-grade one-room school to the highest in the county. During those years, two permanent foster children would call the Fluck household their home. The first, Elmer Anders, arrived as an 11 year old and left to serve in the U.S. Navy at the age of 18. Robert Neal lived in the Fluck household for 15 years until he married and moved close-by. It was not long before Victor gave up his city job and began farming full-time. He operated a 1000 chicken ranch and also grew and sold strawberries, corn, and other garden vegetables. From 1944 to 1954 Florence returned to the Stover School.

The 1950's marked the beginning of the end of the era of one-room schools. One by one, they were boarded up or used for other purposes as bigger, consolidated single-grade classroom schools were strategically built. A network of school bus routes and district regulations ensued, marking the progression of public education. Haycock Township's new flagship school was completed in 1954. From 1955 until 1959, Florence was sent to teach at the brand new Haycock Elementary school, where, after those four years, she ended her teaching career. *No longer teaching there, she must have felt like a conductor, removed from the symphony orchestra in order to conduct but a single section.*

Florence had thrived on the intense multi-tasking skill level as well as the community connectedness the one-room school environment provided. She had loved her years teaching in them. She was not ready to retire only to idly sit by, doing nothing in her golden years. When a marriage-related relative, William H. Atkinson, began teaching painting at the Richland one-room school, she decided to take a lesson or two. She had never drawn or painted before in her life.

Bonnie Zieseniss and her siblings had been taught by Florence at Stover School and she remained friendly after she graduated, married and had children of her own. Bonnie stumbled into painting about the same time, after experimenting with a painter's kit she had intended for her daughter. She shared her creation with Florence and it was decided the two women would take lessons from William Atkinson at the Richland one-room school to hone their skills.

In 1973, Florence lost her beloved Victor. She poured over scripture for spiritual support. Her new avocation provided self-therapy, as she captured scenes of the many happy memories she and Victor had shared in the community they were so fond of. Bonnie and Florence rode together to the painting classes. Florence suggested the students all bring lunch and urged each person in the little painting class to bring just a little extra for Bill. He was a gentle spirit and a patient, skilled instructor but sadly, he had little interest in house-keeping or preservation skills. He lived alone in his leaning clapboard house on Sterner Mill road, with nature encroaching on his doorstep. The house was shared with many cats, newspapers and discarded cans. Without sufficient heat or proper insulation, old coats--serving as blankets, along with the warmth of his feline friends, likely kept him from freezing to death over the cold winter months. After a diabetic coma made his hand shake uncontrollably, Florence took over instructing the painting classes for him. When a fire damaged the home and made it uninhabitable, she had him stay with her. Eventually she helped Bill install a mobile home on his property, deep within his woods, by what he considered the largest tree in Pennsylvania. There he contentedly lived and tended to his cats until a stroke ended his life at the age of 83, in 1978.

Both Florence and Bonnie submersed themselves in art and began to make a living at it. As word spread that the former teacher was now an artist, neighbors began to flock to her, ordering commissioned works. Well in her 70's, she once told Bonnie that she had enough work to last a year, if she painted for 8 hours every day. She had easily produced over 350 paintings during her late-blooming artistic career. Behind each painting she sold, she posted a note with its origins in scripture, (Romans 8:28): *"Since I have dedicated my painting ability to the Lord, you, too, now have a share in contributing to His Work."* Every penny of the money she earned from the sale of her paintings went to the Flatland Mennonite Church and needy members there. Countless stories are told of her quiet generosity and steadfast help to those in need. Perhaps one of the few tangible reminders of Florence's selfless community-spirit appear on a brass plaque at the gated entrance to the Flatland Mennonite cemetery at the corner of Thatcher and Erie Roads, just outside Haycock Township. It simply reads, "In loving memory of Victor K. Fluck by his wife, 1984". No doubt, the entire fence was paid for with painting money.

In 1986 at the age of 85, a birthday party was arranged for Florence. By that time, she had been responsible for starting the Richland Historical Society at the Shelly School in Richland Township as well as the One-Room Schoolhouse Reunion. Both were ways for people to come together to reflect on the wonderful education and closeness the one-room school fostered in the community. News of the event ran in local newspapers about the crowd of friends, family, students, neighbors and the religious affiliates who joined in the surprise celebration, held at Quakertown's Benetz Inn. Well over 80 guests attended. Shortly before her death on July 31st, 1986, the Flatland church joined forces with Bethany Mennonite church to become the United Mennonite Church. Times were changing. In the spirit of progress, a new and bigger facility was erected next door to the old stone building that had served the Flatland congregation. Florence's life wound down to its final chapter. It became difficult for her to attend services regularly and when she did, familiar faces there were disappearing.

Because Florence was in frail health with no direct family to attend to her, relatives had her placed in a local nursing home. She languished there, longing to return home until Bonnie, who visited often, could stand it no longer. With the help of their shared family physician, she removed Florence and brought her back to the Thatcher Road home she loved so dearly. There Bonnie and another former student, Patricia Harmer Stever set up shifts caring for Florence until a final stroke left her paralyzed and unable to be moved. After two weeks spent in hospital and convalescent care, Florence died peacefully. She was 92.

In the last years of her life she had been interviewed for a book, Encircled - Stories of Mennonite Women by Ruth Unrau, with Florence's part having been written by Mary Lou Cummings. An entire section was dedicated to her life, one filled with community service and the sharing of her gifts with others, an imitation of Christ's teachings. The book was completed just weeks before Florence passed away. Bonnie gratefully recalls one of her last visits. She had brought a copy to Florence and read it aloud to her. Although the stroke had robbed her of a voice, Florence smiled from ear to ear, especially when she saw the picture of her beloved Victor in the book.

Bonnie reflects having a keepsake book-holder Florence painted. It bears her favorite quote from Mark Twain: "Let us so live that when we come to die, even the undertaker will be sorry." By all accounts, she accomplished that mission.

Fittingly, her grave sits nearly at the center of the little gated Mennonite cemetery, surrounded by students, friends and family--the conductor, at the center, one final time. In a quiet corner of the little plot, William H. Atkinson is buried beside his sister with gravestones curiously similar to the stone shared by Florence and Victor

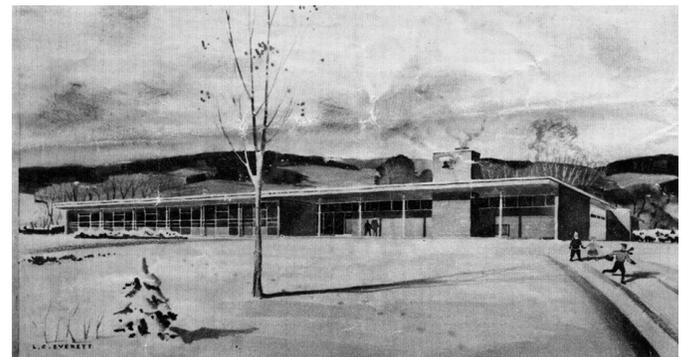


CONGRATULATIONS

Richland One-Room School!
Homecoming Celebration - 9/17/11
Shelly School Open to the public at Noon
Program - 2:00 p.m.

Fellow preservationists will be thrilled to know neighboring Richland Historical Society has finally gotten their little brick one-room school house, (Shelly School), on the National Historic Registry! President Victor Stevens reports the process took about six years and a lot of effort on behalf of the officers, but the community is grateful for their perseverance! HHS members are invited to attend the Richland One-Room School's Special Homecoming & Open-house.

Guest speakers will include State Representative Paul Clymer, Jeff Marshall from the Heritage Conservancy, as well as representatives from Ricland Township supervisory board.



Haycock Elementary School Dedication - 1954

Wendy Ellsworth

- The Kringle Shoppe's Featured Artist

by Jane Nase

Seed bead artist Wendy Ellsworth is as diverse and multi-faceted as her creations. Her life has many twists and turns, as does her art. An international award winning seed bead artist, ordained minister, author, teacher and philanthropist are a few of her complexities.

After graduating from the University of Colorado with a history degree and uncertain of what she wanted to go into as a career, she started to explore making leather purses embellished with beaded mandalas. That was the start of her award-winning career. She added beaded jewelry to her repertoire and eventually, wanting to work 3-dimensionally, she began a series of beaded stick figures, one of which was accepted into a two-year traveling exhibition of Contemporary American Craft. Understanding the fragility of these beaded tree branches, and wanting to continue to work 3-dimensionally, she taught herself how to make beaded baskets. This series led her directly to her signature work that she calls her 'SeaForms'.

The process of making her SeaForms begins with 3 beads in the center and then she adds on one bead at a time. As in knitting, when beads are increased in the row it forces the beads to ruffle. When this procedure is continued, the piece becomes 3-dimensional. When she creates her masterpieces, she doesn't begin with an overall plan; this allows her to create each piece as it evolves. Some times she makes individual beaded components and then stitches them together. She estimates that some of her larger SeaForms have been created using over 30,000 beads stitched together, each bead added one at a time and each bead having two threads passing through it!

Through the many years that she has been beading, she has taught herself multiple beadweaving stitches that she uses to make her beaded jewelry and 3-dimensional forms. The glass beads that she uses come from Japan or the Czech Republic. Because she sews the beads together using these different beadweaving stitches, her work is considered a fiber art, though it has also been exhibited as contemporary glass, basketry and sculpture.

I am in awe of the patience it might take to create her SeaForms. She said beading is more like meditation for her. She is so involved in the process that time just flies by. Her favorite part is the creative process: selecting the beads and seeing the form develop as the creation begins to take shape. She has written a book describing the spiritual

aspects of beading. *Beading – The Creative Spirit: Finding Your Sacred Center Through the Art of Beadwork* is the name of her book that was published in 2009 by SkyLight Paths. The book brought together much of her life experience and synthesized the many different aspects of the world of beading.

Wendy's work is shown all over the country. She has pieces included in the collections of the Museum of Art and Design in New York City and Museum of Fine Arts in Boston as well as in multiple private collections. Her work has been shown in galleries in Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Denver, Santa Fe and Austin to name a few. She has won various awards from: SE PA Bead Society (numerous times), Art of the State of Pennsylvania 2002, Flower Challenge 2001, Bead Need Florida, and twice in International Bead & Button Show in Texas. She was the featured artist at Bethlehem Fine Arts Exhibition and went through the State Jury Selection of the Pennsylvania Guild of Craftsmen. She and her husband, woodturner David Ellsworth, have participated in the Bucks County Elephants Eye Open Studio Tour for the past three years.

In 2003, one of Wendy's awards, a PA Council on the Arts Fellowship Grant, allowed her to travel to Kenya to study the beadwork of Maasai and Samburu women. She recently made her fifth trip to Kenya in January. Being inspired by these women, she has created a non-profit organization (The Umoja Uaso Women's Fund, Inc.) to support the general health and welfare of a Samburu all-woman's village in northern Kenya called the Umoja Uaso Woman's Village. Umoja is a refuge center and safe haven for women running away from rape, beatings, FGM, forced marriages and early pregnancies. Emergency funds are needed for mosquito nets, school lunches, teachers' salaries, and famine relief. Long-term projects are focused on drilling a fresh water well, building a primary school, and constructing a security fence around the village, as well as literacy lessons for the women and income development. A pipeline for water into their village would allow the women to have accessible clean water instead of having to carry 45 pounds of water on their heads from the nearby river back to the village. Being involved with this project has changed her life. It has brought her a bigger sense of gratitude for her rights as an American woman and has turned her into a social entrepreneur, knowing she can make a difference in the lives of the women and children of Umoja. She is determined to help them survive. The website for her fund is: www.UmojaUasoWomensFund.org. To purchase beadwork made by the women of Umoja go to: www.umojabeadedjewelry.com.



Teaching is another aspect of how Wendy spends her time. She believes it is very important to teach children how to create things with their hands. With a national and international reputation, she is sought after to teach at trade shows and several craft schools around the country and abroad.



Like her work, Wendy's multi-faceted life is an inspiration to many. Haycock Historical Society is honored to have her as our featured artist this year at The Kringle Shoppe on December 2-4. She will show a collection of her beaded SeaForms. Her jewelry and book will also be for sale. This is a collection you don't want to miss!

The Bucks County Traveler, 3/1952 issue identified five one-room schools in Haycock Township in 1872. They were Frankenfield, New Harrisburg, Applebachsville, Landis (later called Mt. Airy), and Dunlap.

HAYCOCK FRIENDS REUNION

The annual reunion of people who attended the Bible School at the Haycock Mennonite Church, and their friends, will be held on Saturday, October 8, between 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. If you wish to attend this event at the Haycock Mennonite Church Auxiliary Building, bring a potluck dish and/or dessert. Please RSVP to Nancy Bitikofer by October 1st.
(610-754-1219)
E-Mail: ervnanc@dejazzd.com

TWO EXCITING PLACES TO GO

The research committee has planned two exciting outings for September. Sunday, September, 18, we have planned a trip to the Ephrata Cloister. The cloister was built in and around 1732 and at one time housed 300 people. It is German architecture with five story buildings, which is very unusual for this time period. I think you will also enjoy learning about the daily life of the inhabitants and their occupations.

Ephrata Cloister

632 West Main Street, Ephrata, PA 17522, adult admission \$ 9.00, senior citizens \$ 8.00, telephone 717-733-6600.

The cloister is open noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays. We plan on meeting at Pat DeWald's house at noon and arriving at the cloister about 1:30 p.m. If you would like to drive yourself we could meet at the cloister.

The second outing is also on a Sunday, September 25, and is a trip to Pottsgrove Manor in Pottstown PA. This house was built in 1752 and sat on a 1000 acre iron plantation. Presently the house and garden occupy 4 acres. The house is ten years newer than our Stokes House, which we believe was built in the 1740's. I believe Pottsgrove Manor will give us some idea of what Stokes was like in the 1750's, although Pottsgrove is a larger and grander house than Stokes.

Pottsgrove Manor, open 1-4 on Sundays

**100 West King Street
Pottstown, PA
610-326 4014**

Suggested donations are \$2.00 per person. Meet at Pat DeWald's house at noon and arrive at Pottsgrove about 1 p.m. It probably takes about 45 minutes to get there from Haycock, or drive yourself and meet us at Pottsgrove Manor.

I think you will find both of these historic places interesting. Hopefully we will have nice fall weather.

4th ANNUAL HISTORICAL FALL FESTIVAL & OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, September 17, 10 a.m to 3 p.m. –Rain or Shine
403-407 Keystone Drive, Sellersville PA (Corner of Bethlehem Pike & Keystone Drive)

Free Admission

Sponsored by The Historical Society of Hilltown Township

SOCIETY ACTIVITIES



Dave Guttman's car at market day.



Greg Seifert and his horses give rides from market day to the Stokes house.



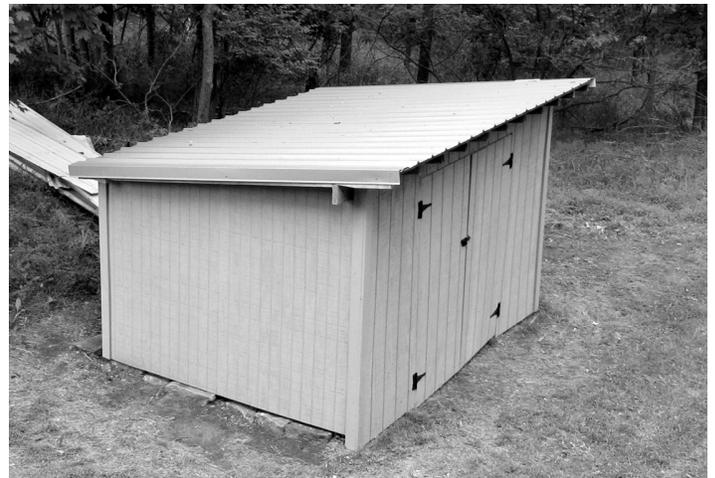
Charles Fulp, Lester Goldthorp and Pat DeWald start the cleanup of the parking area.



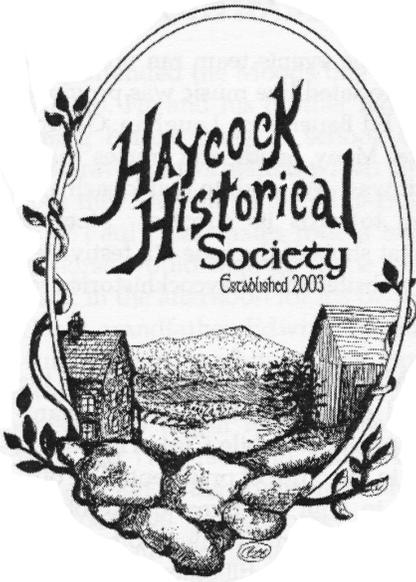
Pat moving brush.



Richard Landgreen moving lumber for the shed.



Completed shed renovations.



P.O. Box 715
Quakertown, PA 18951

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