

HAYCOCK HISTORICAL NEWS

The Newsletter of The Haycock Historical Society • Summer 2012

SMITTY'S WORKSHOP

By Jim Tirjan

Jim Tirjan, born in Haycock, reflects upon three generations of his family in a book to be published in 2013. He traces his grandparents' lives from Galicia in Austria (before the First World War) to Haycock Township. If you have photos and stories of the Schmidts and Tirjans, call Jim at 408-374-1590 or email him at jim@tirjan.com. ©2012

“Jeez, Schwartzie, put that stuff away now! The kids are here. Hand me a three-quarter inch box wrench, will ya?” Smitty bellowed from under the car. My uncle Joe Schmidt had just graduated from high school. Now he was happily up to his ears working on his '48 Hudson Commodore Eight in the old tractor shed on his parents' farm in Haycock. Mike and I gazed admiringly at the big number 6 painted on the car door.

I was almost nine the summer of 1950 when my cousin, Mike Tirjan, and I spent a whole week with our grandparents, Bruno and Eva. Their farm had everything a boy could want: fruit to pick and eat, cows to chase and a dog that knew tricks. We loved being at the farm especially when the fruit was ripe. Mike and I ate cherries. We ate apricots. We ate plums and carried buckets back to the kitchen for Grandma to can. We picked beans and peas, tomatoes and corn. We dug potatoes and pulled carrots. Grandma made wonderful pies, cakes, dumplings and cobblers. She wasted nothing: whatever we didn't eat went into the root cellar.

The only thing missing was a way to cool off. July in Pennsylvania brought hot, sticky weather every day. We'd have to pester Smitty to take us to swim at the dam on the Tohickon Creek. Grandma and Grandpa never, ever drove a car.

Smitty's sisters, my mother and two aunts, were off in their own houses taking care of their babies. Although Smitty still lived at home we rarely saw him because he hung out with his high school buddies and only occasionally stopped by family gatherings. This made him all the more glamorous to me.

“Oh, that Smitty!” my folks, Joe and Eva, (my

mother was named for her mother, also Eva Madeline) would say, rolling their eyes and shaking their heads. I had never understood what that meant but this summer I hoped to find out.

Johnny Schwartz, Smitty's high school buddy, swung his feet off the workbench and tossed a magazine into a wooden box. It flopped open to a picture of a woman's naked body. Wow, I had never seen anything like that. This vacation was really going to be fun. Then, just like an old-time movie calendar, the pages fanned shut. Darn!

“Hey, how are you guys doin'?” Smitty said as he skidded across the

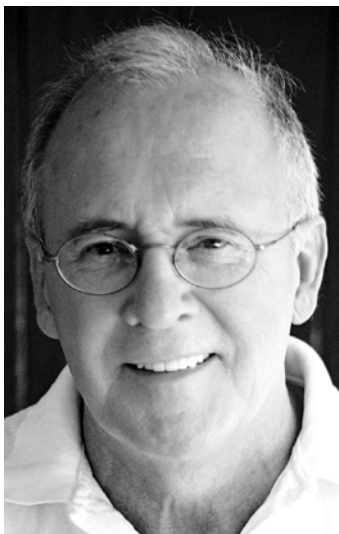
flattened cardboard boxes he used to keep himself off the oily floor. His face and arms were smeared with grease and a lit cigarette hung from his lips.

“I hear we're going to the lake for a swim. I could sure use that. First I have to get this trannie back in. Schwartzie, lend me a hand, will ya?” He disappeared back under the grey Hudson with flame-painted, yellow fenders.

Smitty's workshop was really a boy's dream shop. Outside it, old Hudson doors and fenders of various colors were strewn between blackberry bushes. A delicious smell of oil, gas and sweat hung in the air. He decorated the walls with old calendars with pictures of bosomy women wearing skimpy carpenter outfits and rusty license plates and old metal signs for Pennzoil, Skoal, and Rolling Rock. A heap of filthy car parts claimed one corner. Shafts of brilliant sunshine pierced that smoky, stuffy darkness. A flyspecked bulb dangled from a frayed wire hanging from a junction box on an overhead beam. Plugged into the side of



1948 Hudson Commodore Eight photo courtesy carnut.com



Jim Tirjan

the box was an extension cord that looped over the beam and was connected to an old radio that played pop tunes like *The Tennessee Waltz*, interrupted by ball game scores. And right there on the shelf next to the radio was that box with all those interesting magazines.

Were we pests? No, Smitty liked to have us around because our picking and pulling freed him up to spend more time on his car. In fact, he seemed so busy in his workshop we thought we'd never get to swim. Then one steamy afternoon after we'd tenderly soaped and rinsed the Hudson, paying particular attention to the flames and the big number 6 on the driver's door, Smitty packed Mike and me and the farm dog, Shep, into the car and we headed down the road for a swim.

He cranked up the radio and sang along to *Goodnight Irene* at the top of his lungs. Gee whiz, with the windows wide open the whole county could hear him. He knew all the music and when he sang *Hey Good Lookin'* his accent sounded just like Hank Williams. Shep stuck his head out the window and the hot wind blew his ears straight back. Maybe Shep was used to this speed but I never went 90 miles an hour in Dad's '40 Plymouth. It didn't even have a radio.

The creek water was still and dark, deep as a lake behind the slimy dam. No way was I going near that. I watched Smitty grab a Tarzan rope high on a tree branch. He jumped and

swung way, way out, then dropped into the deepest part right behind the dam. Oh, to be as brave as Smitty.

Mike and I wanted to know everything about him. There were always mysteries like the time we were playing *Ramah of the Jungle*, a kids' adventure program, and heard loud, awful noises off in the woods. We thought that might be the actual sound of lions mating. The terrible roars rose and fell exactly like beasts. But the woods were so buggy and so thick with poison ivy that we couldn't get through to see. Then the strange sound suddenly went quiet.

That night Smitty came in to supper wearing his baseball cap. "Take that off," Grandma ordered. "You know better than to wear a hat in the house." "There's a draft in here," he answered sullenly. "Ha," Grandma snorted and snatched off his cap. There's never a draft in any kitchen in Pennsylvania in July.

After a heated argument, some of it in German, we realized that Smitty was hiding a lump on his head as big as his fist. It seemed that he and his buddies had cut a dirt track in the woods and raced their cars on it every chance they got. So that was the lion's roar. Mike and I smirked at each other.

The Hudson was the fastest car around because it had a special step-down body that lowered the center of gravity. This let it corner better than any other production car at the time. But that day Smitty pushed it a little too far. The mighty Hudson slid off the track into the trees. We were very sorry to hear it was wrecked. We had just washed it! And it meant there'd be no more trips to the dam.

After this exciting visit to Grandma's we returned home and settled back into the school routine. Then one night when my sister Margie and I were asleep in our beds, the phone rang downstairs.

"Eve, Smitty's in the hospital," Dad called. "We better go see what's happened." That Smitty. Margie and I were all ears. "An accident," Dad said. "That's all I know now."

Smitty had been drafted and just finished basic training. That night he came back to say goodbye before shipping out to the war in Korea. His buddies apparently dared him to perform the "Angel Stunt" on his motorcycle, that is, ride fast down the middle of the highway standing on the seat, with his hands out to the side like wings. He'd often performed this in daylight but at midnight, after many farewell drinks, he crashed. His big Indian motorcycle cartwheeled over him breaking his back and crushing other body parts. He lay in traction and rehab for months. The Army discharged him and he never went to Korea.

I didn't see much of Smitty after the Summer of Number Six. He got back on his feet. Probably bought another car, another bike. He dated a string of beautiful women who probably looked like those Amey Lumber calendar girls. He married, lived on the Schmidt farm until his parents died, then moved to Mississippi and finally to Kentucky hill country.

Last I heard he was a pastor in an evangelical church, a role a hellion should be well qualified for. Or maybe he's found his calling convincing impetuous youth to suppress their reckless impulses, and instead, follow the path of righteousness.

Boy, I hope not.



Eva & Bruno Schmidt (1950)



Garden and shed project at Stokes House Headquarters

Complete with successful bluebird nest and cedar shake roof.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Johnny Rivers - American Marine - This new book by Quakertown High School graduate and retired U.S. Navy man, Lee Betz, is available for purchase, (\$20 donation) at the Haycock Township Building and at our Stokes House. It will also be sold at our general meetings and at Kringle Christmas Shoppe and at Sines 5&10 in Quakertown. Those who cannot attend functions and wish to buy this great-reading piece of local history may send (20.00 plus 5.00 shipping/handling) to our mailing address: P.O. Box 715, Quakertown, PA 18951. Indicate "Rivers book" in the memo of your check/money order. Books will be mailed within 14 days of the receipt of your check. Be sure to include the address your copy will go to.



Hand-painted china tea set and a collection of thimbles from the United States and other countries around the world. donated by Caroline Sawyer



This fire bucket was donated by Caroline Sawyer.



Tomahawk made by Chief One Star - donated by Clayton Fox Jr. A dime was placed by the handle for perspective.

THE JOHNSON FARM: FIVE GENERATIONS

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILMER JOHNSON

By Marjorie Goldthorp Fulp

Wilmer Johnson, born in 1924, and his younger brother Walter, were the fourth generation to work the Johnson farm, which was located on Sawmill Road in Haycock Township. This large farm was one of many homes taken and demolished by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in the 1960's, to make way for Nockamixon State Park and Lake. At that time the farm, consisting of about 78 acres, was owned by Wilmer's and Walter's parents, Clarence W. and Emma (Umstead) Johnson. Walter's two sons, boys at the time, were the fifth generation of Johnsons to live on the farm.

Wilmer's great-grandfather, Oliver James Johnson, born in 1838, established the farm. In the 1860 census records, James is in Richland Township, and in the 1870 census he is married and living in Haycock Township, which may be around the time he started his farm. Wilmer was told that O. James built the big farm house in 1894. James's son Elmer, born in 1868, and Elmer's son, Clarence, born in 1905, carried on the farming tradition. Wilmer and Walter and their older sister, Grace, grew up on the farm.

The Johnsons had a very attractive, spacious white house, with its double front doors, porch, and a striking gable. The other buildings on the property were the large barn, a wood shed, four chicken houses, a machinery shed, hog pen, and a big corn crib. A family photo shows a white picket fence, which was gone in the 1920's. In another photo, the neighboring Luszczak farm, the former Atherholt Tannery, is in the background.

The Johnson home also had a summer kitchen, which was a building set apart from the house. In hot weather, the cooking was done here so that the house could keep cool. The summer kitchen had one room downstairs and two rooms upstairs, connected by a spiral staircase. It

also had a bake oven, which Wilmer does not remember being used in his time. The family had a vegetable garden, and an orchard with mainly apple and peach trees. In earlier years the fruit was pest-free, but later would have required spraying, which was too costly to do.

Clarence had 30 Holstein cows, 5 large draft horses, 350 chickens, and about 12 pigs, which included 2 sows. Three or four hogs would be butchered in the winter time. A hog would weigh between 300 and 400 pounds. Wilmer's mother Emma canned meat and vegetables, and made sausage with a hand operated meat grinder. The family used kerosene lanterns for lighting, until Wilmer's grandfather Elmer bought a Delco electric plant, which used glass batteries stored on shelves. A generator was run once a week, and the batteries stayed charged for the entire week.

Wilmer and his siblings attended the Hickory Grove one-room school on Ridge Road. The teachers at Hickory Grove were Lando Moyer, Mrs. Litzenberger, and Mary Stone. Cedar trees were plentiful in the fields, and at school the students always had a cedar tree for their Christmas tree, as did Wilmer's family at home. The Hickory Grove School, which later became a private residence, was torn down for the creation of Nockamixon Park, even though the school was not in the park's way.

When Wilmer was a boy, there were no tractors on the farm. Horses pulled the wagons and other equipment. Horse-drawn binders cut the grain, and the sheaves of wheat were put onto a horse-pulled wagon. The grain was then bundled in shocks and left in the field to dry and cure. Corn was cut by hand. Wilmer's grandfather Elmer would plant the corn three or four kernels to little hills in a row. When it was time to shock the corn, Elmer would fold three or four un-cut corn stalks together to make a



Ruth and Wilmer Johnson



Oliver James and Maria (Stover) Johnson



The Johnson Farm circa 1940

“buck,” on which to gather and tie the cut corn stalks to make a shock. This kept the corn dry from the rain. When dry, the corn was husked by hand in the fields. Wilmer remembers the weather was usually cold, and the workers put shocks around them to keep warm while husking.

The corn was planted with the use of a corn planter pulled by horses. “Check lines” placed along the ground were caught up by the planting machine and guided the spacing of the rows planted. This way, the cultivator could be pulled across the rows of corn without hitting any growing corn. “Eight-row-yellow corn” was grown for corn meal. This was a darker, very yellow corn, which had eight rows to an ear. It was very hard to husk. This corn was loaded onto a wagon pulled by horses, and taken to the Stover Mill in Tohickon Village to be ground into corn meal. Wilmer remembers riding along on the wagon with his grandfather, Elmer. They also took milk to the creamery in the village. Tohickon Village was a favorite place to be. It had the mill, creamery, a blacksmith shop, and the large Smith Store, which later became the Groff Store.

The Johnsons also grew oats. Ear corn, oats, and wheat were taken to the mill and ground into food for the cows and horses. The cows were fed the corn and oats, and the horses ate ground wheat mixed with wheat chaff and water. In the barn, the boys chopped the corn stalks to make fodder for the cows. The fodder was raked into a corner and sent down a chute to a trough for the cows. Other ingredients and water were added and the mixture sat all day before being fed to the cows at the end of the day. The process was repeated in the evening, and the food sat all night to be ready for the morning feeding. The big black and white Holsteins cows were let out twice a day for their watering.

The stables were cleaned and the waste hauled away in a wheelbarrow to the manure pile. The manure was loaded onto a wagon and hauled by horses out to the fields, where the men and boys used pitch forks to spread the manure over



Elmer Johnson



Emma (Afflerbach) and Elmer Johnson

the ground. They learned a certain way of twisting the forks to better distribute the manure.

Elmer Johnson bought a draft horse from a jockey. The horse was skittish, so Elmer paired it with a quiet horse to pull the lime drill, which was used to spread lime on the fields. It consisted of a cart on two wheels, and had a 10 ft. hopper for holding the lime. When the horses started pulling the lime drill, the hopper's lid rattled, spooking the new horse, and causing him to bolt off to the orchard. The horses went one to each side of a tree, leaving a smashed lime drill against the tree. The quiet horse stayed in his harness, but the scared horse broke free of his. He was retrieved from the orchard with no further trouble.



Annie and Clarence Johnson

Wilmer was a little boy in the late 1920's when, one day, a biplane crashed into the Johnsons' field across the road from the farm. The owners of the biplane removed and took away the engine, but left behind the rest of the biplane, which was made mostly of wood. The family took photos of the plane, with little Wilmer facing the camera and getting into the picture.

In the winter time, Wilmer and Walter were able to take rides on their sled as it was pulled in the snow by their horse, Brownie. The children also had a small horse-pulled cart in which Brownie gave them rides.

When he was older, Wilmer did some trapping. He caught muskrats in the meadow below the house, and skunks, opossums, and weasels in the woods. A favorite pastime was spending Saturday evenings at the Kellers Church Grange, where there was picnicking, music, and dancing.

In 1936, when Wilmer was 12 years old, a local moonshiner's huge still operation was busted at a farm on the other side of Sawmill Road, not far from the Johnson farm. The neighbors had suspicions something was going on, but tried not to say too much in front of the children. A steam pipe for the still went from the back of the barn and into a well. This was hidden by a covering of fodder, but a passerby would be able to see steam rising from the fodder. A family lived in one half of the moonshiner's farmhouse, and the Freihofer Bread deliveryman remarked to Wilmer's mother about the large amount of bread that the neighbor bought. It was later learned that she was feeding the workers at the still. The moonshiners kept a box truck by the barn. The wheels were off the truck by day, to make it look like it was not being used. At night they put the wheels back on the truck and used it to haul away their brew. Truckloads of sugar were being brought in at night-time. This may be what clued the revenuers. After the bust, barrels of molasses and mash were found in the barn, and there were many jugs in the basement of the house.

Around 1937-38, lightning struck a walnut tree by a shed behind the Johnsons' barn. The lightning bolt followed a tree



Grace, Walter and Wilmer Johnson

limb, and then a rafter, into the shed. It then hit a buggy holding various items, and set the buggy on fire. The family saw the smoke coming from the shed, and was able to douse the fire with buckets of water. The Slifer farm was in the same Tohickon Valley, farther west along the creek, and Wilmer remembers the Slifers' barn burning down after being struck by lightning.

Most of the Johnson farm's fields were situated on the other side of Sawmill Road from the house and buildings, and were between the road and the Tohickon Creek. The Johnsons also cultivated fields in Bedminster Township, on the opposite side of the Tohickon Creek, which was the dividing line between



Clarence, Walter, Emma (Umstead), and Wilmer Johnson

Haycock and Bedminster townships. To get to these fields they had to go down into "Wolf Hollow," and drive their equipment through the creek at the Wolf farm, because there was no bridge to use. Mrs. Wolf came from New York on week-ends to stay in a smaller house on her property. Another family rented the main house.

Johnny Frei had a garage on the Bedminster side of the valley, and obtained Chief One Star's green 1934 Plymouth in a trade with Chief, who lived on the Haycock side. Chief was a Cherokee Native American who settled in Haycock in the 1940's. He became a well known Haycock character and artist, and gave talks and lessons on Indian lore. Wilmer became the

next owner of Chief's car when he bought it from Johnny Frei.

Wilmer didn't find many arrow heads while plowing fields, but in the 1950's his nephew, Lamar Shive, found plenty of arrowheads farther west on Sawmill Road after the township's road grader had gone by, scraping the dirt road and uncovering the relics.

Wilmer married Ruth Unangst, and they had their own farm in Nockamixon Township for 40 years, where they raised their two daughters. Wilmer and Ruth now reside in Coopersburg, Pa, where Wilmer keeps his tractor collection.

Walter and his wife, Thelma, and their two sons stayed on the Haycock Johnson farm until Clarence had to sell it for the state park. In the later years, before the park, Clarence Johnson started using a tractor for his work. He drove a green Oliver tractor, which would be a fitting tribute to his grandfather, Oliver James Johnson.

The large and thriving farm built by the hard work of Oliver James Johnson in the 1860's or 70's, and continued on by his descendents, was demolished for the making of Nockamixon State Park in the middle 1960's. Mountain View Drive, the new 563, follows the route that Sawmill Road took, and passes through the Johnsons' former property. The only reminder of the farm is a small piece of concrete alongside the road. This is the step to the walkway which went from the road to the front porch, which led to the double entry doors of the fine house.



RECENT ACTIVITIES HHS PICNIC



A large group of HHS members attended the picnic on July, 22. This year we had perfect weather to go with the great food and music.



GARDEN SHED PAINTING PARTY

Many hands make light work.

September 8, 9 a.m. to noon

Bring a paint brush if you have one. There will also be some on hand.

We will be using oil base paint. There will be plenty of brush cleaner available. The paint was donated by Countryside Paint and Wallpaper on Route 309, Quakertown. Thank you Countryside. If it rains we will plan another time. Coffee, soda, water and doughnuts will be provided for the workers.

STOKES HEADQUARTERS ACTIVITIES

The Stokes House will be open every Friday in September and October from 10 a.m. until noon.

October 21st Haycock Twp. will be having an open house from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. (Rain Date 28th) Plenty of free food and fun for the kids. The historical society will have displays at the township building as we have had in other years. We will be extending an invitation to visit the Stokes House from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. to become acquainted with the history of Haycock and tour the old house.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR THE KRINGLE CHRISTMAS SHOPPE

Please check out the enclosed form and volunteer to help where you can. You may provide your contact information and check off jobs you wish to help with and return via the post office, or Email Chris at the address on the form.

REFRIGERATOR DONATION

Thank you to Jeff Fausnacht and Jeff Slocum for the donation of a refrigerator for the Stokes House. The refrigerator the county supplied stopped working and they chose not to replace it. The county took the old one away and Henry DePue and Bob Knapp maneuvered the new one into place. Many thanks Bob and Henry.

We are saddened to note the passing of Ron Trauger

Ronald J. Trauger passed away on June 11, 2012, at the age of 70. Burial was on June 29, 2012, in Reigelsville, PA.

Ron was a collector of Pennsylvania German fraktur folk art for 30 years. He had 600 pieces himself, and was an authority on fraktur. He did it out of pride for his ancestors. Ron presented slide shows on the subject of fraktur to groups around the area, and gave a presentation to the Haycock Historical Society on November 13, 2003. He also attended some of the Haycock meetings.

SOCIETY MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings are held at the Bucks County Latvian Baptist Church in Applebachsville.

**September 20, 7 p.m. - DONNA RHODES
Pearl Buck's Legacy to Bucks County**

**October 18, 7 p.m. - HERB KAUFMAN
Medical Practices of the Civil War**

In our popular media physicians and surgeons in the Civil War are usually portrayed as blood soaked butchers, who do nothing all day but unnecessarily amputate limbs from the poor wounded soldiers screaming in pain. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Medical practices as portrayed in the movies, on television and in many novels are created to excite and dramatize the event. While the medical practices were certainly naïve and unsophisticated by today's standards, Civil War physicians truly worked tirelessly and diligently to heal the wounded and comfort the ill.

In my presentation I dispel the myths, explain the differences between the movies and the actual medical practices of the period, and discuss how many current expressions have come into popular usage. I also discuss the use of medicines, how soldiers were treated, and conclude with the medical treatment of our three assassinated Civil War presidents; Lincoln, Garfield (a Major General) and McKinley (a Captain).

The presentation includes an extensive display of Civil War era medical tools, photographs, and medicines.

**November 15, 7 p.m. - RONALD WALTER
Coverlets (woven cloth)**



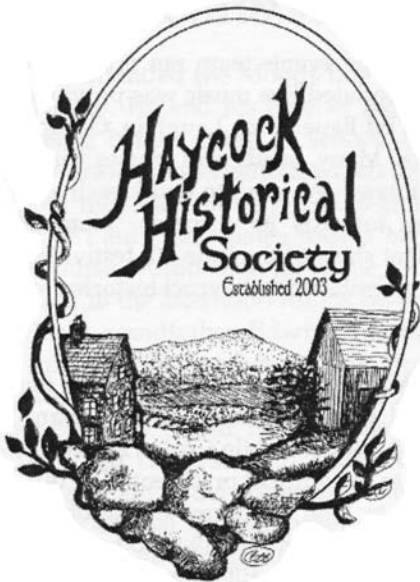
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AN INVITATION TO MEMBERSHIP

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**