

HAYCOCK HISTORICAL NEWS

The Newsletter of The Haycock Historical Society • Winter 2003

EDISON, EINSTEIN, AND THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF THE ROUND HOUSE

by Beth Kerdock

Few people traveling down Round House Road are aware of the unusual house by which this byway gets its name. Tucked back on a wooded lane this home with a white pillared covered entranceway, known as a portecochere, and an octagonal roof, has an elegant air of historical mystery. The mystery was compounded when township resident Eddie Bauer gave the Society an old newspaper story, which contained the following headline:

"ROUND HOUSE HAD THOMAS EDISON'S FRIEND AS OWNER—Prof. Steinmetz Once Lived in Famous Haycock Mansion."

So who was Prof. Steinmetz?

Born in Germany, Steinmetz was a hunchbacked dwarf who stood four-feet high, yet was one of the most brilliant, young mathematicians at Breslau University. Angry at the oppressive politics of the Bismarck government, Steinmetz became involved in socialism and was forced to flee Germany for America. Although almost turned away at Ellis Island for being a cripple, in time Steinmetz was to become the colleague of such scientific giants as Einstein, Edison and Marconi.

When Steinmetz arrived in America in 1889, Edison's low voltage DC (Direct Current) electricity was king. Backed by industrialist JP Morgan through the newly formed company, General Electric, there were 121 Edison plants, but Edison's low voltage design would have required an electric plant on every city block. Nikola Tesla had invented a high voltage AC (Alternating Current) for Westinghouse. Morgan realized that the AC method was superior to Edison's DC, but it needed to be adapted in order for General Electric to use it.

Then in 1892 before the American Institute of Electrical Engineering, a 27 year old Steinmetz—who had just learned English—presented a lecture on the law of hysteresis which permitted the practical distribution of AC electricity. Morgan made Steinmetz head of General Electric's research laboratory and the Morgan financed power plant at Niagara Falls came on line in 1895 starting the first large scale distribution of AC electricity. What Steinmetz lacked for in size he made

up for in personality and the GE publicity machine made him a legend.

Steinmetz spent years as head of GE's laboratories in Schenectady, NY, so how would he have ended up with a farm in Haycock? There are no definitive answers to this question but there are some clues. In the later years of his life, Steinmetz had been working on several projects which brought him to the area. Being a German scientist, Steinmetz was upset by the impact of WWI and the role of technology in that conflict. He became involved in a New York City-based utopian group called the Technocrats which proposed a techno-scientific state. He also started a Brooklyn company involved in manufacturing electric cars. It was known that Steinmetz was a great outdoorsman, and while working in Schenectady he had a cabin in a rural area outside the city which he used as a weekend retreat. The cabin was outfitted with a complete lab in which he conducted many of his experiments (Steinmetz worked extensively with lightning). Perhaps he was seeking the same arrangement in Haycock?



Albert Einstein and Charles Steinmetz

There are many famous quotes and stories concerning Steinmetz. In one, the cigar loving Steinmetz spotted a no smoking sign in the GE plant. The next day the sign read, "No Smoking-No Steinmetz." Another story tells of Henry Ford hiring Steinmetz to fix a broken engine in one of his plants. Steinmetz shows up chomping on one of his cigars, examines the engine for a few minutes and marks an X on the machine. Later on the engineers find the malfunction to be behind the X. Steinmetz sends in his bill for \$10,000 and Ford screams, "It only took you 10 minutes!" So Steinmetz sends an itemized bill which read:

"Drawing the X : \$1.00.

Knowing Where to Draw the X: \$9,999."

Sources: *A Century of Electricals: An Exhibit by the IEEE History Center (1984)*, *CHARLES PROTEUS STEINMETZ: THE WIZARD OF GENERAL ELECTRIC*, Dick Reiman, *Historian*, *Edison's Miracle of Light* PBS.

HONOR TO A HAYCOCK HERO

by Chris Handschin



In the early 1930s, Private John Rivers won the hearts of Haycock residents. Rivers was one of the first township residents to die in one of World War II's bloodiest and decisive battles: Guadalcanal.

Rivers was born to Lillian Goodwin Ford Rivers on November 23, 1917, the second of three children from her second husband, Joseph Rivers. In addition, she had two older children from a previous marriage when the family lived in Riverside, N.J. John was given the birth name, Joseph, Jr., but was called John to avoid confusion with his father, Joe. The

large family struggled to make ends meet and must have had many turbulent times.

On Dec. 16, 1924, Lillian died in Philadelphia. John was only 7. It is unclear what happened to Joseph Sr., but the children were placed as orphans in the Lutheran Home of Philadelphia. John once told someone his father had been an Inca from South America. Some people speculated his father was of Lenni Lenape origin but it had never been documented. Each child was put in separate homes and lost contact with the other. John spent the next 6 years going from one family to the next, trying to find a suitable match. After each trial family, he would return to the home.

Rev. Arthur Chatten, an assistant at the Lutheran Home, for 10 years, came to know Johnny. He was happy to learn that finally, Johnny was to have a stable, well suited home when Elvin and Florence Horne of Applebachsville took him under their wing. Elvin had taken in other children from broken homes over the years. Along with his own children, he had the boys helping him farm in and around Applebachsville.

Although Johnny was never legally adopted, he stayed with the nurturing Horne family. He went to Applebachsville School and graduated from Quakertown High School where he was a stellar football player. Former Quakertown football coach, Jacob Stoneback, recalled John coming to him once after practice. John told him he was thinking about dropping out because he didn't think he had what it took. The coach told him he was sure he would develop that "something" if he just stuck with it. He took the coach's advice. In 1936, in his senior year, he made the Bux Mont team and was voted one of the most valuable players on the Quakertown team. He had also begun a promising career in boxing.

Nothing stood in his way of training. When he broke his

right arm in 1938 crank-starting a Model T Ford, instead of hanging up his gloves, he practiced with his left arm, perfecting his left punch. Rivers won the Golden Glove championship sponsored by the *Bethlehem Globe Times* newspaper.

After graduating, John took a job at Bethlehem Steel, then later in worked in Philadelphia, but continued boxing professionally until enlisting in the Marines in January of 1942.

He was sent to Guadalcanal, a small island located in the Solomon Island chain in the South Pacific. In the spring of 1942, the American military decided an amphibious landing at Guadalcanal was a way of preventing further Japanese expansion in the South Pacific. Amphibious warfare tactics had been studied after World War I but never used in actual battle conditions. Guadalcanal and sister Island, Tulagi, would be the first ever amphibious assaults of WWII. The First Marine Division was given the task which was spearheaded by the First Marine Regiment. John, a private with only seven months of service, was assigned to the 2nd battalion of that group as a machine-gunner.

John, Corp Lee Diamond and another Pennsylvania Marine, Pvt. Al Schmidt, were assigned to a machine gun post on Guadalcanal at a location known as Alligator Creek. This place was to be a focal point of the Japanese army counter attack. The Japanese infantry assault happened approximately 2 am and involved about 1000 Japanese against 100 Marines of the 2nd Battalion. By all accounts, the battle was terrifying and bloody because of its suddenness and intensity.

John fired endless rounds of ammunition across the creek until a Japanese Nambu machine gun zeroed in on him. He was killed instantly. Diamond continued firing the weapon with Schmidt feeding him ammo - all the while with John laying dead beside them. Soon after, Diamond was shot in the arm, forcing Schmidt to become the lone gunner. That soon ended when a Japanese hand grenade went off near him, blinding him and silencing the machine gun. He continued firing, except now using his .45 caliber handgun blindly shooting at the sounds of the enemy.

When all looked grim, a timely reinforcement of artillery support came and finally subdued the Japanese. When daylight came, 200 Japanese and 38 Marines were killed and 70 Marines wounded. Our local boy lay among them. The American soldiers were buried with simple wooden crosses, with barely any recognition. As fate would have it, Rev. Chatten became a military chaplain assigned to the engineers division of the Marine Corps. in the Solomon Islands. While assisting the wounded, the name John Rivers struck a sad bell with Chatten.

He was so moved by the life of the boy who came from nothing to give everything, he inspired the soldiers to make a more permanent marker out of the available concrete. That year, the March 24th edition of *The Lutheran* contains

his excerpts from a letter to the director of the Lutheran Home.

"Here is the picture, which I promised you of Johnny Rivers' grave and the headstone, which the men made for him. As you can see, I could not let his grave go with only that little wooden cross. So I had to do something for it. I would want someone to do as much for me. I hope it is satisfactory with you."

John's stepbrother, William, a Seabee, stationed in the Solomon Islands was only miles away when John was killed but never knew it. John died without ever being reunited with his siblings or ever knowing their fate.



In August of 1995, the VFW dedicated their post ,11322, to John and in preparation for the ceremony located his siblings who were scattered across the country. They came together on August 21, 1995, fifty-three years from the date of his death to honor him.

John's body was later exhumed by the military and because the body was not claimed by a family member, he was given a final resting place on the Hawaiian island of Oahu.

Through the tireless work of historians and veterans, his story will live on for future generations.

THE SAGA OF A PORTRAIT

No one knows exactly when, but shortly after Marine Private John Rivers' death, Bethlehem artist Hoyt Howard created a life-sized portrait of him as a boxer.

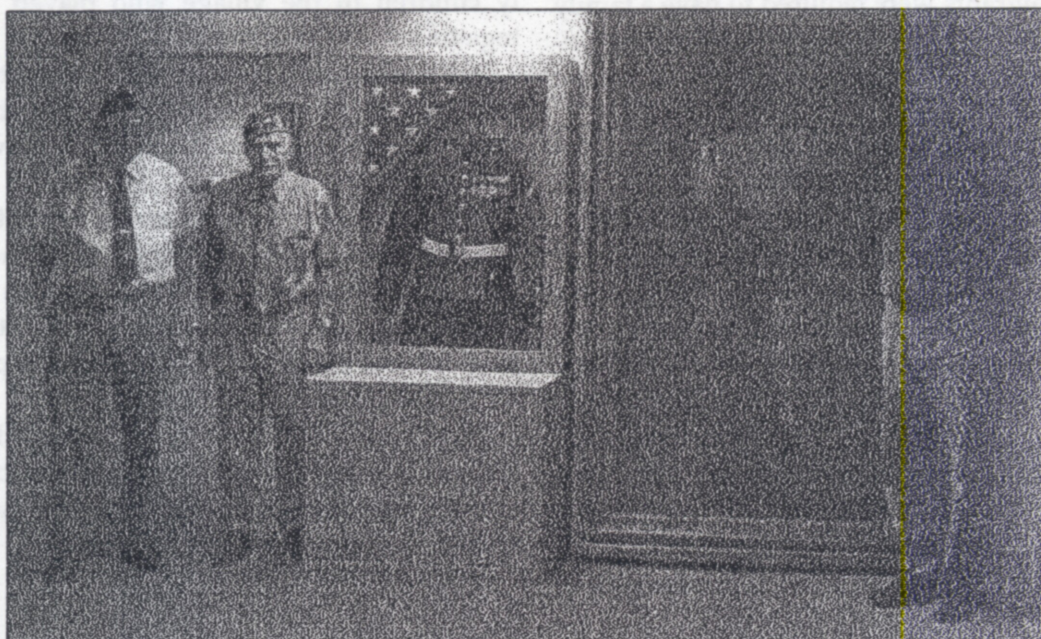
The 8' tall painting eventually came into the possession of the Bethlehem Boys Club. While there, the lower half of the painting was badly damaged. Before it was slated to be destroyed, someone from the Boys Club asked Veterans Post 11322 if they would want it. Post 11322, formed in 1991, accepted the portrait and renamed their group John Rivers Memorial Post to honor him and the painting.

George Bedford, commander of the Post, collected more than \$3,000.00 to have the painting restored. However, the post has no building in which to display it. All who donated towards the restoration were made aware that the painting would some day be placed on permanent display in the post's building.

The painting and a replica of Pvt. Rivers' dress uniform,

complete with his Bronze Star and Purple Heart lay in storage, awaiting a place and time to honor him. That time came in June 2003 when the painting was accepted as a loan by the Haycock Township Supervisors. The portrait is now on display in the township building. George Bedford and Bill Peischel, also a member of Post 11322, were instrumental in finding a place for the painting. Bill, who is also a Lifetime Charter Member of the Haycock Historical Society, attended the Haycock one-room school house with Rivers.

Today the John Rivers Post has 97 members and meets once a month downstairs in the Quakertown American Legion. As the members grow older, the chances that a building will become available seem remote. But if one does, it is their intent for the painting and uniform go back to the post to be on permanent display there.



LATVIAN BAPTIST CHURCH

by Sue Kleiner Grew

The Latvian Baptist church on Apple Road has been an important contributor to the identity of the village of Applebachsville.

When a wave of Latvian immigrants came to the area in the 1950s, there was already a well-established Latvian community within Haycock. This was brought about through the involvement of the Apple Road church. Many settled in Applebachsville and one family in particular was the Celmins.

Ilze Celmina Diaz came to the United States at age 8 in 1950 after spending a several years in a displaced persons camp in post World War II Germany (Celmina is the feminine version of Ilze's last name). Latvia is located on the Baltic Sea, east of Sweden, and bordered by Estonia, Russia and Lithuania.

Ilze, now married and a resident of Bethlehem, recollected some of her memories of the church's role in her life and her childhood in Applebachsville.

Her route to the United States began with an 11-day journey by sea to New York. She came with her maternal grandparents, her mother, a younger sister, and two aunts. At the time, Ilze's father was in the Latvian army and was missing in action. He was thought to be somewhere in Poland.

Soon after arriving, the family went to Applebachsville where they stayed with a sponsoring family. Most immigrants were required to have a family to go to when they arrived and these were called sponsor families. Eventually, the Celmins bought a home in the village.

The Apple Road church was the hub of the Latvian community, she recalled. The church was a spiritual and social center and its members provided sponsorships for new arrivals and many other forms of support. For example, the children helped each other with schoolwork while the adults helped each other find jobs.

Ilze spoke no English when she arrived and said she still didn't when she entered first grade at the Harrisburg School. With the help of other Latvian children, she learned English by the time she completed first grade.

She went on to attend second and third grade at the Stover and Mt. Airy schools and some of third and all of

fourth grades at the former Latvian school. This school is today a private home across the street from Haycock Elementary School. For fifth and sixth grades, she went to the Applebachsville School.

One special memory from her school years, she recalled, was helping to make Red Cross C.A.R.E. packages. She

remembered telling her classmates, "I know what it's like to get these," as she had been a recipient of just such boxes while in the camp in Germany.



Ilze Celmina Diaz

The white boxes with the Red Cross emblem often included toothbrushes, toothpaste, wash cloths, soap, and one or two small toys. She recalled telling her friends, "Put in something they'd like...put in 2 crayons, put in some toys because as any kid knows no one wants to receive a washcloth instead something fun like a toy."

Ilze also recalled how wonderful it was to grow up in Applesbachville. "I loved growing up in this village...This was home. My friends were here. We had so much fun," she said.

Some of that fun included ping pong games in the church's community room and volleyball outside on the yard next to the church.

There were also many places to explore. "We roamed the woods," she said, during the long, relaxed summers in the village. She said there were probably about twenty children in the village who played and grew up together.

Ilze points out that her cultural identity is an important possession. Her connection with the church, she said, "has given me an identity....a Latvian Baptist...a Latvian-American."

One of the key reasons Latvian Baptists were fleeing their eastern European country was the conflict and oppression brought about by the Soviets in post World War II. They came to the U.S., like all other ethnicities from around the world, to freely worship, seek a better life and establish a community.

The Latvian Baptists have maintained their distinct and rich heritage. The Apple Road church still uses the Latvian language in its services and the books in its lending library are written in Latvian.

THE ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE PICNIC

(Held Sept. 14th '03)

The weather for our picnic may not have been the best, but the company and entertainment could not have been better. The food brought by everyone was delicious and Dick Landgreen was the perfect MC, and both Dick and the Bauer family were gracious hosts. We would like to thank the following contributors and performers:

- Greg Seifert and his handsome team of Belgian Horses for the delightful rides through scenic Applebachsville. (To book a private Carriage or Wagon Ride call Mountain Pride Farm 215 804-1075.)
- Linda Haverson - Accordion Traditions
- Strings & Things with Gordon Allem (An American Folk Band - 610 346-8576)
- Folk, Country Bluegrass & Blues singer John Danaher (267 987-7855 or mergingmusic@earthlink.net)
- Dagnija Berzins, the Augstoze family & friends who performed lovely traditional Latvian music.
- Ed Bauer - Old Time Songs on the Dulcimer
- Heather Radick for her stunning photo display in the Picture Tent.

In addition we would like to thank all the many people involved in the planning and set up for this event including Chris Handschin, Susan McLaughlin, Jane Nace, Henry & Nancy DePue, Diane Kelly, Chris Bauer and everyone involved for creating such a successful event.

CHRISTMAS COOKIE SOCIAL

All members of the Society are invited to an end of year celebration. Bring your favorite cookies and join us on Friday, Dec. 12th at 1:30pm.

At Tohickon Camp Ground Restaurant (in the barn) at the Tohickon Family Campground (Sheard/Clymer Mill) on Covered Bridge Road.

LIFETIME MEMBERS

As of Oct. 2003 the following have become lifetime members of the Society:

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Helen Anderson | Janis Peischel |
| Betty Smell Wolfe | Richard Peischel |
| Clemntine Hottle | Chris Handschin |
| Barbara Kuter | Greg Seifert |
| William Peischel | |

Thank you to the following for their Gene Anderson Memorial Contributions:

Mrs. Helen Anderson
Honeoye Veterinary
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Gelwick

The Haycock Historical Society newsletter can be found, in limited quantities, at the following locations:

- At the General Meetings of The Historical Society
- The Haycock Township Building
- St. John's Roman Catholic Church (Nockamixon)
- St. Paul's Lutheran Church
- The Latvian Church
- The Michener Library
- The Haycock School

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION

General Meeting Thurs., Jan 15th, 2004
7:30 pm • St. Paul's Church, Applebachsville

Come join us for a presentation on how to preserve your priceless family photos given by Karen Roehner (Creative Memories Consultant). Karen will explain how to prevent the destruction and disintegration of vintage photos.

(A General Business Meeting will precede the presentation at 7:00 pm)



SHEARDS/CLYMER GRIST MILL

General Meeting Thurs. March 18th, 2004
7:30 pm • St. Paul's Church Applebachsville

Hear the about the history of one of the oldest structures in the area. Situated next to the Sheard's Covered Bridge the entire mill, miller's house and barn are still standing with many of the mechanisms intact. Current owner Jerry Deegan is forming a Gristmill Preservation Society to allow the public access to the mill and creek area. (General Business Meeting 7:00 pm)

To join the Society contact Mr. Deegan : (215) 536-7951
Fax (215) 536-7367
Sheard's/Clymer's Mill Preservation Society e-mail:
GristMill@fast.net
Covered Bridge Drive, Quakertown Pa 18951