

HAYCOCK HISTORICAL NEWS

The Newsletter of The Haycock Historical Society • Winter 2023

THE HICKORY GROVE SCHOOLHOUSE

EVOLUTION FROM SCHOOLHOUSE TO HOME TO FIELD

By David R. Funk, Ph.D.

On the day that the school bell on the roof rang for the last time, the future of the old fieldstone schoolhouse was uncertain. The school was closing because of a lack of local students in 1941. After 1950 the Haycock Township School District merged with the Quakertown Community School District. The last remaining one-room schoolhouses closed after the 1954-55 school year when the new Haycock Elementary school opened. It was the end of the old concept of multiple grades of rural local children being taught by a single teacher in a single room all at the same time. The following two photographs of two classes at Hickory Grove Schoolhouse in Haycock Township are from the HHS archives, first from 1908, and second from the late 1930's.

The old schoolhouses of this era were most often put up for sale, and in some less likely cases, abandoned or demolished. Sometime in 1942 the Hickory Grove Schoolhouse in Haycock was offered for sale. I imagine that there must have been a sale sign posted in front of it next to the old Ridge Road not far from the tiny village of Harrow to the east and the Tohickon Village (now underwater) to the west. The Hickory Grove Schoolhouse sat on the north side of Ridge Road at the base of Haycock Mountain about a quarter mile west from Top Rock Road and in between the current Haycock Boat Access and the Tohickon Boat Access. Back in 1942 Nockamixon Lake and the marina didn't yet exist, but the Tohickon Village still did. This is an old picture of the schoolhouse sitting empty, with its shutters closed, looking cold and forlorn, waiting for its fate in 1942. If you look closely, you can see one of the outhouses way in the back.

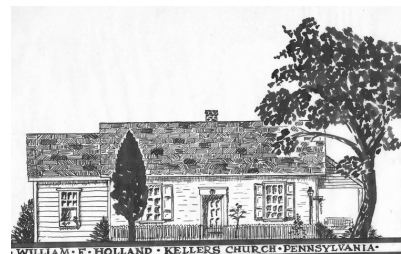


TREOP
 1st Row: Evelyn Truer, Ruth Gulden, Pearl Gerhart, Betty Gulden
 2nd Row: Gus Richter, Walter Johnson, Russell Leatherman
 Wilmer Johnson, Alfred Frey FREI
 3rd Row: Florence Gerhart, Gladys Gerhart



Hickory Grove School in 1941-1942. This school was located off the old Ridge Road, and built in 1876 as a replacement for the old Frankensfield School.

It might have been bought for conversion to a store, or for use as a farmers storage building, but most likely it would be purchased for conversion into a home as many were. And this is exactly what happened to the Hickory Grove Schoolhouse.

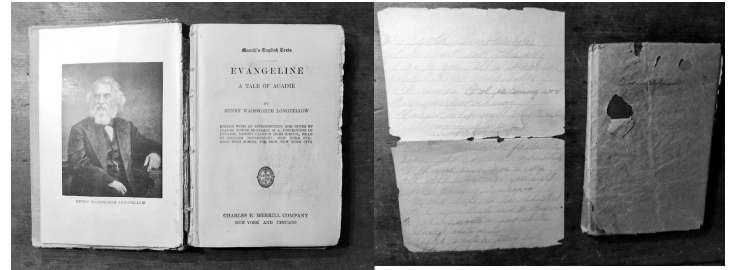
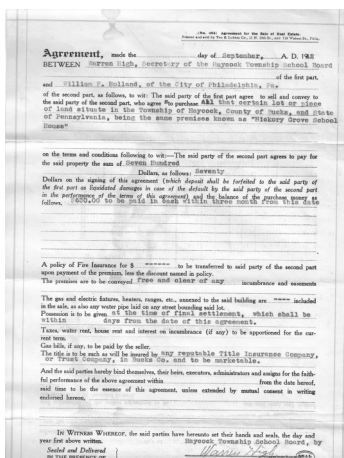


My uncle, local physician Dr. Dennis [Stombaugh](#) and his wife, my Aunt Dorothy, lived very close to the schoolhouse on the south side of Haycock Mountain. I am certain that it was my Aunt Dorothy who informed her parents, my maternal grandparents, about the Hickory Grove Schoolhouse being for sale. My grandparents, William and Edna Holland, lived on Rosalie Street in the Frankford section of Northeast Philadelphia. William Holland had worked for years as a postman and they had both raised four girls – Dorothy, the eldest, twins Marguerite and Helen, and finally my mother Alva. My grandfather Holland was retiring, and he and my grandmother had talked of leaving the city and moving up to Bucks County. It was at this time that the idea of buying the schoolhouse and converting it to a home first materialized. William Holland enjoyed woodworking and had made many pieces of furniture. He was very handy. I am sure that the idea of renovating an entire old building into a home was extremely appealing to him. Also, the possibility of living in the beautiful location of Haycock Township was undoubtedly a huge factor in my grandparents putting in a bid to buy the schoolhouse. Fortunately, they did place the winning bid and bought it in September of 1942, all for the princely sum of \$700! In today's dollars, that amounts to \$12,692.06! A bargain in either year!



I imagine that it originally had a potbelly stove in the center of the room for heat, as there was a center chimney. In its later years, the school had been somewhat electrified and there were several hanging ceiling lights equipped with white “schoolhouse” globes. I still have one of these light fixtures.

I am not certain just how much of the contents of the school were left behind when it was closed and sold, but I do know that many old schoolbooks were left up in the attic. I have one of these still with a copyright date from 1929. It is a book of the poem [Evangeline](#) which still has a homemade plain brown paper book cover on it and inside, a folded, lined sheet of paper from a tablet on which some child had copied the words to the song “[Jolly Old Saint Nicholas](#).”



The schoolhouse had originally been built in the mid to late 1800's. It was built entirely of fieldstone, with a covered wooden front porch facing Ridge Road. It consisted of a large single room with three big windows on each side, and a large blackboard on the rear wall. There was a small cloak room and closet on either side of the front door. Outback there were two outhouses, one for girls, one for boys. There was at one time a small cupula on top of the roof with an iron bell in it which rang to call the students to school and to dismiss for the day. The shutters on the windows were of a three solid raised panel design with iron hooks to hold them open or shut. The windows were large six over six paned. This is an early picture of the schoolhouse as my grandparents bought it before the renovation. Notice my grandmother standing on the front porch, and my grandfather standing next to the building, as well as their 1939 Chevrolet out back next to the original woodshed attached to the back of the building. You can also see that the tall chain link fence was still standing out front to protect the children from running out onto Ridge Road.

The long oak schoolmasters' desk was also left behind with a slanted opening writing surface (originally covered with black oilcloth, now gone) in the middle of the top, and with two flat surfaces on either side with a single drawer underneath each. It dates to the late 1800's. It now lives in my living room with the [Evangeline](#) textbook inside.



A wooden handled handbell which I imagine the teacher used to call in the children from recess was also found. My sister has that same handbell to this day. I also know that the bell in the rooftop cupola was included in the sale of the building to my grandparents, but unfortunately, it was stolen shortly after my grandparents bought the schoolhouse which greatly disappointed them.

The conversion of the schoolhouse into my grandparents' home took several years. Initially, it was a weekend project for my grandparents as my grandfather was still working as a postman in Philadelphia. My grandparents would drive up from the city in their 1939 Chevrolet and would often be joined by their daughter Helen and her husband William Dunham. My mother Alva also frequently came along while her boyfriend, (soon to be husband) John, was in Europe in the Army Air Corps. Also, my great-grandmother, Edna Holland's mother, "Nanny," would always be included. Obviously, my Aunt Dorothy and her husband Dr. Stombaugh would also come over since they lived nearby. This was ten years before I would enter this world, but I imagine that these were wonderful family times of hard work, laughter, warmth, and excitement. A few of the pictures that I have of that time show the family sitting together on a glider and chairs outside, watching and talking while my father and grandfather work on the house.



Hickory Grove School August, 1944.

There is another picture that shows my grandmother inside the schoolhouse by the original open front door where the living room fireplace would eventually be built. The cloakroom and a closet can be seen with the front door to the left. One of the hanging schoolhouse lights is shown, which I still have.



When my father returned home from the service in 1945, he also became a weekend regular at the schoolhouse. Shortly after his return, my parents married. My father, like my grandfather, was also extremely handy and he worked closely with my grandfather at the schoolhouse as both greatly enjoyed the renovation process. Below is a picture from Labor Day 1945 of my parents, John and Alva Holland Funk, having just arrived back at the schoolhouse after their honeymoon.



My other aunt, Marguerite and her husband Robert Wood and daughter Dorothy lived near Washington DC but would join in at the schoolhouse gatherings when visiting. Their daughter Dorothy, known to my sister and myself simply and affectionately as "Cousin," would spend the summers with our grandparents after they moved into the schoolhouse fulltime.

The result of all the work over several years resulted in the large single room schoolhouse eventually being divided into four rooms and a bathroom. There were two bedrooms, a dining room and a living room. There was also a two-story addition built onto the rear of the stone building which became the kitchen and two other small rooms – the "cozy room" and the "heater room," as well as a third bedroom on the second level. The kitchen had a then stylish pink and black color scheme as well as a large bay window facing west.



The cozy room was actually an entry foyer from the rear door of the house off the screened porch, and also had a stairway to the upper level of the addition which held the third bedroom. The heater room contained some sort of oil heater along with an old wringer washer and a big wooden cabinet with about 30 drawers (seriously!) that held many of my grandfather's tools. I still have this particular cabinet, and it is still used to hold my own tools. I was told by my parents long ago that it was an old "flat file" filing cabinet that came from a quarry somewhere in the general area of the schoolhouse. I remember my grandmother using the old wringer washer and peeling little strips of hand soap into the wash with a paring knife. I also still remember being warned about the danger of the wringer and to stay away from it.

They eventually removed the front porch and the front entry door to the schoolhouse was closed. In its place was built a stone fireplace with another big multipaned box bay window right next to it.



The "new" front door was placed where the center window on the west side of the school had been. This entered the new living room.



On one wall of the living room, they built a floor to ceiling bookcase. The entire exterior of the schoolhouse was stripped of its stucco and sandblasted, and then the stone was pointed. The addition was wood frame construction with white wooden siding. On the back of that addition, they built a large screened in porch which was later converted into a three-season porch with jalousie windows. (Note the Studebaker in the driveway).



My grandmother and mother both had "green thumbs" and joined a local flower club and attended Bucks County agricultural extension meetings. My grandmother planted rows of flowerbeds that lined the edges of the driveway, encircled the screened porch, and lined the perimeter of the little picket fence front yard. I remember a wide variety of various indoor and outdoor plants everywhere, but my favorites were the geraniums, irises, and the beautiful multicolored pansies.

A concrete block, two car garage with sliding doors was built out back near where the outhouses had been. There was also a huge weeping willow tree in the back yard along with a fieldstone outdoor barbeque that they built. On the west side of the house, my grandfather built a small white picket fenced yard with handmade copper post lights that they bought from a craftsman down in New Hope when it used to be an artist community. This is a picture of my mother standing next to one of these light fixtures. There is also a metal bracket attached to the post with the name "Holland" fashioned in script with metal. At this point, the original front porch was still there, and the stone had not been pointed yet.



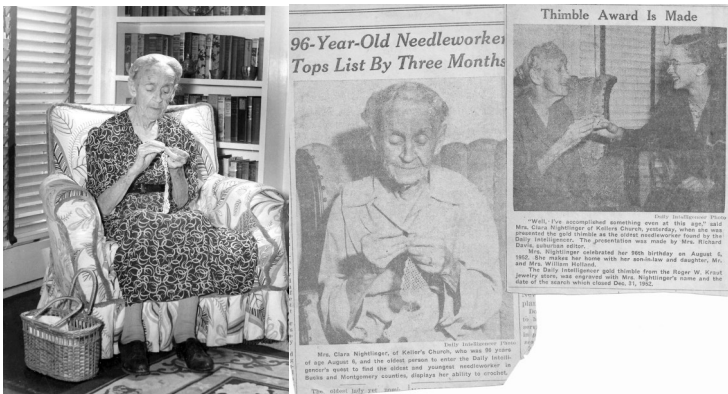
Amazingly, I still have these same post lights too! There was a flagstone walkway from Ridge Road to a gate in the white picket fence that created a small flower filled front yard. After passing through the gate, the walkway then led to the new front door entering the new living room. This picture is of my sister Marguerite taken in June 1951 just outside the picket fence yard. By then, the house had been pointed and renovation was mostly completed.



Within the next several years, my aunt and uncle, Helen and William Dunham, and my parents all moved from Philadelphia to the Haycock area too. Both families bought separate houses a few houses apart along Ridge Road on the other side of the Tohickon Creek Bridge just up the hill from the now underwater Tohickon Village.

My grandfather passed away at the age of 69 in 1953 and my grandmother continued to live in the schoolhouse with her mother “Nanny” who then passed away in 1956 at the age of 98. Near the end of her life, she won a gold thimble in a newspaper contest to find the “oldest needleworker in Bucks County”. She crocheted yards and yards of edging for sheets and pillowcases and anything else she could sew it to.

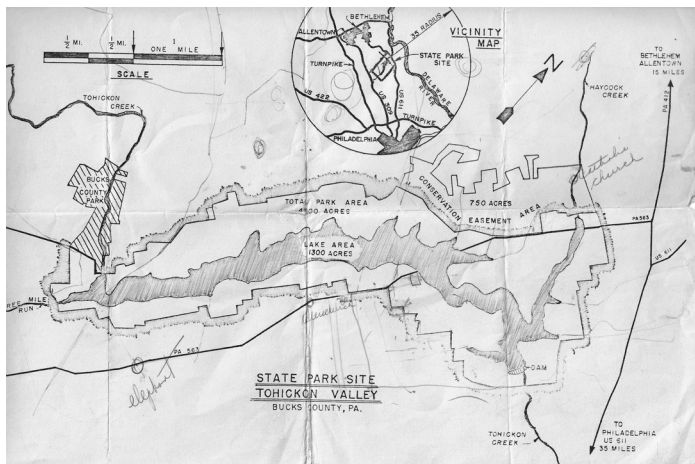
The schoolhouse was situated just outside of the proposed border of the park, but my parent’s home and my aunt and uncle Dunham’s homes would be condemned by the state under eminent domain. There was no choice for anyone. Everyone in the proposed park area had to leave. As with countless other families, this proved to be a major, life altering problem. The biggest problem with this for my family was because my grandmother by then lived in the schoolhouse alone, was getting older, and did not drive. My parents and aunt and uncle left early, and built new homes nearby in Bedminster, moving in 1961 and 1962. However, they also realized that once the Tohickon Valley was flooded creating Nockamixon Lake, they would then live on the opposite side of the lake from my grandmother which would then require a long drive all the way around the lake to get to her at the schoolhouse. Unfortunately, my grandmother felt she also had no choice, so she decided to sell her beloved little schoolhouse and built a new home next door to my parents. I am not sure just how it happened, but the state then bought the schoolhouse from my grandmother with the declaration that it would likely be “used as a park office.” Despite this promise, it just sat empty and overgrown for several years.



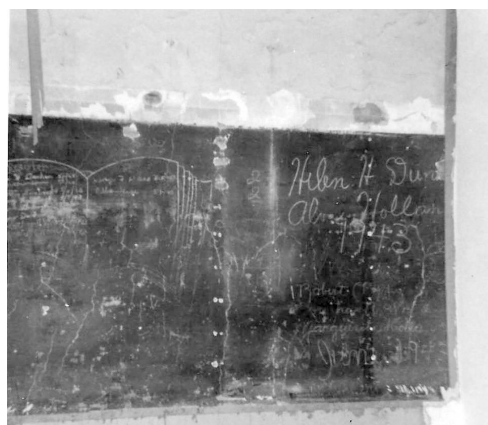
Hickory Grove School as a residence in 1954. Hickory Grove School was demolished for the construction of Nockamixon State Park.

In about 1960, there were newspaper articles and community meetings about the plans for a new Pennsylvania State Park, eventually named Nockamixon, that was being planned for the Tohickon Valley area. The maps made it clear that many of the homes in Haycock and Bedminster would be subject to forced sale by the use of “eminent domain” by the state of Pennsylvania.

Then one day, my grandmother’s former neighbors called to tell us that “They are tearing down the schoolhouse!” Evidently, the state had decided against using the historic schoolhouse as a state building for the park, or leave it as a historic structure, and rather than sell it to preserve it, they simply knocked it all down. I remember we all went up to see it when the schoolhouse was partially demolished. There were old schoolbooks from the attic scattered all around, which was when I picked up the Evangeline textbook. Surprisingly, the old original blackboard from the schoolhouse was still there on the remains of the rear wall of the dining room too. The workmen had uncovered it while tearing down the kitchen addition. Before my father and grandfather had covered it over with plasterboard in 1945 during the renovation, all my relatives had taken chalk and written on it and signed and dated it, and the writing was still there. It is hard to see in the picture, but on the left they drew an “opened book” with family names seen (Dunham, Stombaugh) and dates, and on the right, my Aunt Helen Dunham and my mother Alva Holland signed their names at



the top with the date "1943" and below that, there is barely visible "Robert", "Marguerite", and "John". It seems everyone in the family joined in an effort to preserve the family history that had happened there.



It was a very sad time to see the old schoolhouse, which had been renovated into a lovely little stone home, simply be torn down for no good reason. For several years, a neighbor used to keep the property mowed despite the schoolhouse being gone. However, now it is just the site of a wild field with a few gigantic overgrown yew bushes that I recognize as being a couple of the many shrubs that my grandparents had planted in their yard long ago.

There are countless similar stories of cherished homes demolished, families, friends and neighbors scattered, and most importantly a vast history lost as a result of the development of Nockamixon State Park. The Tohickon Valley was a beautiful rural countryside dotted with farms and ancient houses. This photo was taken of Haycock Mountain from Ridge Road at the top of the hill from the original little Tohickon Dam. It is clear to see farm buildings and fields in the distance under the mountain.



It is hard to reconcile the tremendous loss for so many people who lived in this area with the benefits of the beautiful land that Nockamixon State Park will hopefully forever preserve. I am glad though that at least my family got to enjoy this beautiful part of Bucks County history, and for a few years as a child, I was able to live there too.



Kimble Creek

Haycock Township has an abundance of small spring-fed streams, but only one, Kimble Creek, important enough, it seems, to get its name upon maps. It is named on the Morris Map of Bucks County, 1850, and in the Noll Atlas of Bucks County, 1891, but is not named on topographic maps of the U.S. Geological Survey. The creek rises just across the Springfield line on the east side of a ridge 600 feet in elevation forming the watershed between Durham and Tohickon valleys. Leaving Applebachsville to the west, it crosses the entire township of Haycock in a southerly direction and empties into Tohickon Creek south of Thatcher. An attempt was made by the Bucks County Fish, Game and Forestry Association about twenty years ago to stock this stream with rainbow trout, but it was not successful. In mid-eighteenth-century deeds for Haycock lands mention is made of Joe Tuneams Run, sometimes written Joe Toonums Run. Though the fact has not been definitely determined, this stream appears to have been Kimble Creek or perhaps one of its small tributaries. Tuneam was one of the Indians who figured in the Walking Purchase Treaty of 1737 and whose signature is attached to the purchase deed. He lived on its banks for some time before moving northwestward into Northampton County, where it appears his name was the first given to the stream now known as Marshalls Creek.

Davis, Vol. I, pp. 3,4, (From the William Watts Hart Davis History of Bucks County, first published 1876)



Kimble Creek photos from 1939-40 by Henry Castor



Bridge over Kimble Creek as it appeared in 1939-40. Photo by Henry Castor



Historian and Author Rebecca Price Janney

Historian and author Rebecca Price Janney gave her presentation on “Pennsylvania’s Flying Camps During the American Revolution.” at our November meeting.

THANK YOU

With grateful thanks to **Linda Weaver** of Quil-Lin Quilling, <http://www.Quill.Lin.com>, for her very helpful donation of a Cannon Laser All-In-One copier/scanner/printer, to speed up operations at Kringle Shoppe!

THANK YOU

Thank you to our Bucks County Commissioners for a generous donation to the Haycock Historical Society.

THANK YOU

Thank you for the donation from the Latvian vendors of Baltic amber jewelry, Latvian food and other products



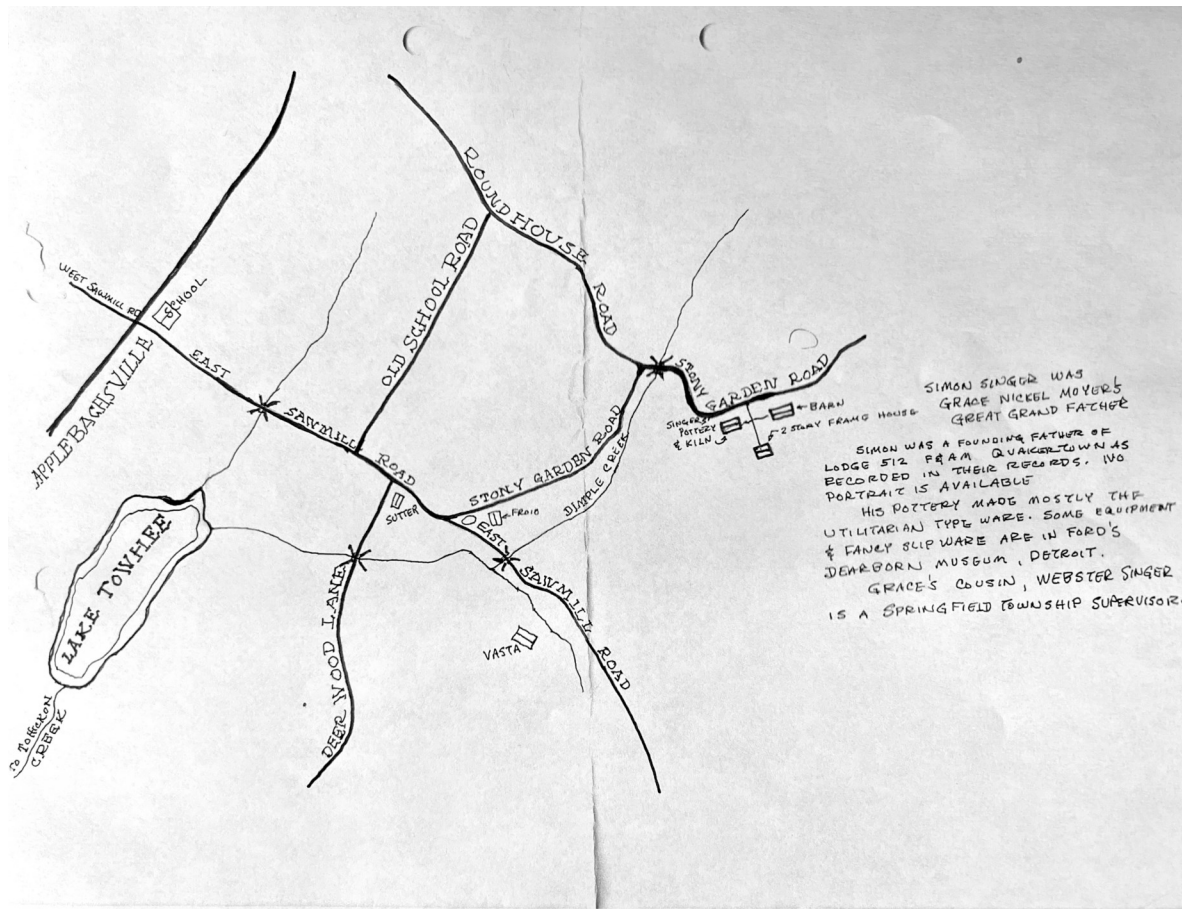
Michael Cuba

Michael presented a program on Dendrochronology Demystified at our May meeting.

DUES REMINDER

If we do not have your 2023 dues on record, there will be a green reminder sticker on the front page of this newsletter. Help support HHS by renewing now. Individual membership is \$20 per year and Family Membership is \$30. Send your check to Haycock Historical Society, PO BOX 715, Quakertown PA.

Thank You



Letter from Grace N. Moyer to Dr. Vasta about Singer Pottery

Dear Dr. Vasta:

This piece of pottery comes from the Singer Pottery in Haycock, Pa. It is utilitarian pottery, glazed inside. It was used to store milk or meat. Also used to preserve meat by final cooking the meat, placing it in the pot, and then topping it with hot fat, which made the seal for storage.

The pottery ceased operating around 1900, so this may have been made in the late 1800's.

The machinery from the pottery and some beautiful slipware are on exhibition at the Ford Dearborne Village Museum, Detroit, Michigan. We were fortunate to be able to see it in 1949. There are also examples of the pottery in the Mercer Museum, Doylestown, Pa.

Hope you will enjoy this memento of your area.

Sincerely,

Grace N. Moyer

Great-granddaughter of Simon Singer

Granddaughter of Milton Singer, the last operator of the pottery.



THANK YOU

Thank you Fred and Vicki Vasta for donating this Singer Pottery bowl plus photos of the area including the Kimble Creek photos in this issue.



Sherlock "Homes". Old House Detective.

Many old house features and the stories they hide can be explained by taking a close look at various physical elements. It takes experience to see and read the clues to unravel the mystery.

Don't miss your chance to experience this unique opportunity to step back in time and see how a house detective examines an old house!

"Jeff, Thank you so much for your informative (and oh so much fun) walk-through tour of my house and barn. It was wonderful to hear your commentary and your theory of how the house was constructed. I've always had a deep appreciation for history and the enduring nature of old architecture. And to hear you talk brings to life the amazing people who worked so hard to achieve a house and barn that could/ would stand going on two hundred years! And that, even though as you said, my house was standing by "habit" [instead of physics]. Enjoyed it so much."

- Denise Rohan, owner of the historic Charles McHenry house and barn in Doylestown

MEETINGS

March 16, 2023: 7 p.m. Sherlock "Homes". Old House Detective. A presentation by Jeffrey Marshall

April 20, 2023: 7 p.m. To be announced.

May 18, 2023: 7 p.m. To be announced.

Our programs for April and May will be announced by Email and in the Penny Power.

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.

FRIDAY MORNING COFFEE

Friday coffee at Stokes will resume every Friday starting April 7, 2023. Hours will be 10 A.M. until Noon.

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

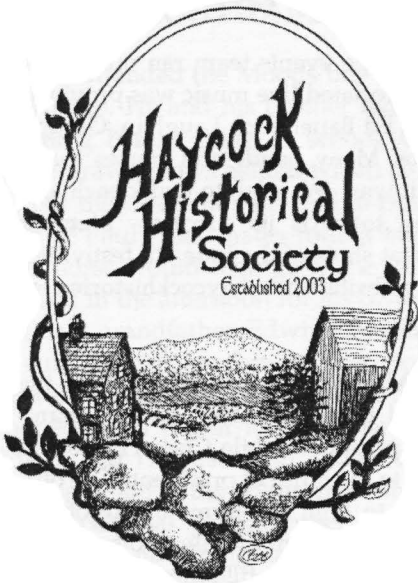
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