

WALPACK

historical society

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Newsletter of the
Walpack Historical Society

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Fall 2021

BACK TO SCHOOL IN WALPACK CENTER

By Audrey Schwab



Photo from WHS Archives

"May tender memories around thee twine, like the ivy green around the pine. Your schoolmate, Cora (Rosenkrans)." Minnie Smith fondly references this and several other entries from her autograph album that classmates signed in February of 1892. Minnie describes the album as "not a fancy one; the cover measures 2-1/2" x 4", the insides are of cheap 'tea paper' and it probably came from a prize package." Clearly, to ten year old Minnie, it was a treasure. Minnie Smith recorded her album entries and Walpack Center school house memories decades later in her 1964 book, *Sussex County School Sojourn In The 1890's*. Minnie was in her eighties when she recaptured bits of her childhood and wove them into a charming reflection of her coming of age during the waning years of the 19th century.

The old school house Minnie first attended in Walpack Center must have been a rather dismal place. Warren C. Hursh chooses not to describe it in his 1889 *New Jersey Herald, A Tramp On His Travels* article, when he states, "I was gently reminded not to say anything disparaging of the school house and will only say that a new building would fill the bill better than anything I could say on the subject." A *Tri-States Union* article from December 1887 wasn't nearly as kind and described the decrepit building as "too old to vote, and much too old for use. But the seats, they take the cake. They are just the thing to use when loafers are not

wanted, but we should hate terribly to sit on those seats. The teacher should not punish his pupils. They get enough of that sitting on those seats." Thankfully, Minnie tells us that she and her classmates were welcomed back to a new school in Walpack Center, when the bell tolled to ring in the 1893-1894 school year with Ralph Decker as the teacher.

Over the decades, former Walpack residents have similarly shared their personal memories of pleasant times spent in the schoolhouse we recognize today as a key feature of the village. Julia Ellett Lewis shared experiences of her school days (c.1915-1922) and reflected upon fun times spent flying kites at recess and playing Andy Over and Fox and Geese. She also recalled box socials whereby money was raised to support the hot cocoa and potato soup lunch treats the students prepared at the school during cold weather. A box social required all of the young lady students to prepare a box lunch for two persons. The lunches were then auctioned off to the highest bidder, presumably a young male classmate, who then ate lunch with the young lady. One can only imagine the anxiety and anticipation this event must have held. Julia recalled that the village teacher, Dorothy Swenson boarded with her family at their home, which today serves as the Walpack

Historical Society's Rosenkrans Museum.

In June of 1996, Frances Condit Maley shared some of her childhood memories with the Walpack Historical Society. She recalled attending the one room school house and her admiration for her teacher, Abraham Lincoln Aber. "It was his first teaching job. He was a teenager himself and all twenty-three students thought he was wonderful. He called us up, a few at a time, to the bench in front of his desk for our lessons and to receive our assignments." Abe Aber began his teaching career at the Walpack Center school in 1921.

Similarly, Jacqueline Potofsky Broughton conjured her classroom memories from 1943-1944. She, too, recalled Mr. Aber as her teacher and reflected upon the school seeming so large to a little girl. Her reflections guide the reader through the big front doors that "opened onto a cloak room with a lot of hooks. The entrance to the school room was off to the right." If you visited the Walpack Center school house today, you would step right into Jacqueline's memories. The lift top desks are since gone, as are the eight grades of three or four pupils per class at that time; but the experience of the quiet she describes while school was in session, still very much pervades the room and creates a perfect atmosphere to become a reflective student of the building's history. Jackie related that some of the subjects would be presented

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Event Photos by Tom Dust.
The Walpack Historical Society
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to the entire classroom rather than to individual grades. She commented that geography was for the entire school room and "Mr. Aber would pull down the big maps over the blackboard and take us to places far away."

Not every moment of every day was a serious studious endeavor. Jacqueline stated that "at lunch time we sat at our desks and ate while we listened to news on the radio. It may have been Lowell Thomas. After lunch we went outside to play." While the rest of the school week was much about the "three Rs," Fridays were a uniquely different experience where Mr. Aber had the students move the desks to the sides of the room and workbooks put away. He then went about the business of teaching many useful life skills including making soap, refinishing furniture, making baskets or caning chairs. On pleasant Fridays, a nature walk down to the Bell Bridge below the school, provided its own learning experience where Jacqueline recalled finding birds' nests, fungi and bugs, and learned how to make whistles from green sticks. "It may be here that my interest in natural history began. The Walpack school was, for me, a magic place."

Today the Walpack Center school house is the property of the Township of Walpack and serves as the municipal building. The original wood floors mark the passage of many young feet, and the portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln still hold their prominent place in the front of the room, gazing down from the bead board wall over the school's original slate blackboard. If these portraits could speak, there would be so many more happy tales to tell.

Saturday Nites Are Fun
Walpack Inn
Likker — Suds — Vittles
Dancing Entertainment
FUZZY CASTNER AND
THE HURRICANE TRIO
Special Halloween Costume Dance
Saturday, Oct. 27
Walpack Center, N. J.
Branchville 2853
New Jersey Herald 1957

WALPACK VOLUNTEERS CLEAR BRUSH AT VAN CAMPEN INN

by Bill Schwab



Over thirty years of brush was slowly overtaking a good portion of the parking area of the Van Campen Inn on Old Mine Road in Walpack. With guidance from the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, nine volunteers from the Walpack Historical Society and the Historic Property Stewards gathered their weed whackers, loppers, rakes, pitch forks and mower to clear yards of invasive undergrowth. Sensitivity to nesting birds was taken

into consideration when scheduling the event and cautious avoidance of all wetlands was maintained so as not to disturb any resident reptiles or amphibians. The objective was to clear back to an existing hedgerow of more mature trees and restore available parking capabilities for Van Campen Inn visitors. The final removal of the resulting brush piles and the spreading of gravel for the parking surface remains to be accomplished.

2021 CALENDAR

Aug. 15	Cancelled
Sept. 19	Cancelled
Oct. 10	Van Campen Day
Nov. 7	Fall Hike - Van Campen Inn, 10am*
Dec. 4	Walpack Christmas - Church and Museum*
Dec. 5	Holiday Dinner - Walpack Inn*
Dec. 11 & 12	Walpack Christmas - Church and Museum*

The Walpack Historical Society, in cooperation with the National Park Service, will host our annual Van Campen Day on **Sunday, October 10, 2021**. This is a day to celebrate the history of the Van Campen Inn, the Old Mine Road and our early settlers. Guided tours of the Walpack Center Village, Van Campen Inn, Fort Shapanack site and nearby historic cemeteries will be conducted.

*All events are subject to change based on current CDC & NPS Covid guidelines
*Visit WalpackHistory.org and [Facebook.com/WalpackHistory](https://www.facebook.com/WalpackHistory)
for calendar updates, changes and details.*

WHS NEWSLETTER SPONSORSHIPS

The production of our newsletter is a time-consuming and costly ongoing project for the WHS. As our membership grows so do our expenses for printing and mailing the newsletter. To help, please consider becoming a sponsor. Simply make a donation and note that it is for "Newsletter sponsor."

The Walpack Historical Society would like to particularly thank the Wards of Montclair, NJ for their most generous support of our Newsletter.



2021 MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE NOW DUE

Did you know there are two ways to pay your membership dues?

1. If you wish to pay your dues through the mail, please fill out the Membership Form on page 7 and send it together with your payment to the address on the form.
2. Visit www.walpackhistory.org, click on the Membership tab to pay your 2021 membership dues online using PayPal.

*All memberships must be made current
in order to remain on our mailing list. Thank you!*

THANK YOU!

To everyone who becomes a Member, makes a donation, sponsors the newsletter, attends a dinner, and/or buys a book, we sincerely appreciate your support.

New Members

Jane Hill-Rosato
Kenneth Ross
Paul Goepfert
Pete & Carol File

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Jane Hill-Rosato*
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**Newsletter Sponsor*

The Walpack Historical Society would like to acknowledge and express its appreciation to our many Lifetime Members for their generosity.

BE A PART OF HISTORY - DOCENTS & VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

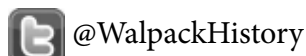


A docent is a person who acts as a guide, typically on a voluntary basis. We are always looking for new people to help us at our events and meetings throughout the year.

Please call 973-948-4903 to speak with Jen Wycalek to learn more about how you can help play a part in history.



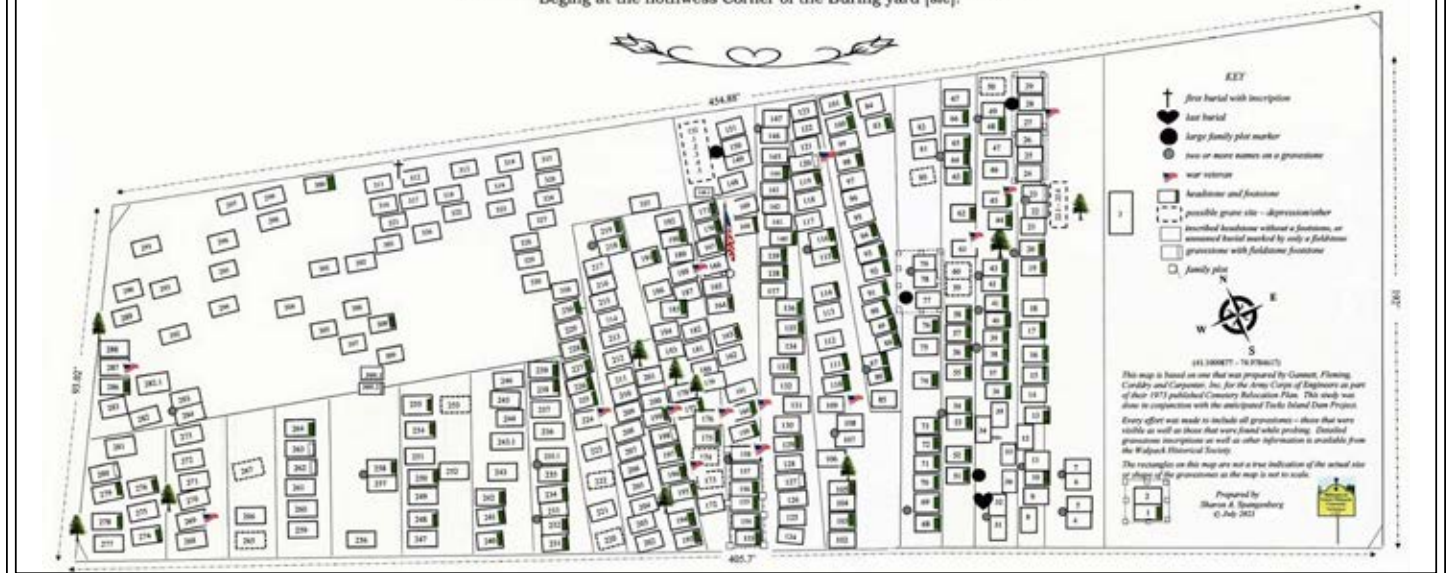
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Lower Walpack Cemetery

Established c. 1737

According to a deed received courtesy of the Minisink Valley Historical Society, on February 1st, 1737, Thomas Brink and his brother-in-law Nicklas Schoonhoven granted to the inhabitants of Walpack, about 4 acres of land, said property "Beging at the nothwest Corner of the Buring yard [sic]."



Plot No.	Deceased Name	Year of Birth	Year of Death	Footstone	Epitaph	Headstone Inscription	Carver's Name on Gravestone	Additional Information - Bolded names below indicate the deceased was a war veteran
266	Labar, Ann	1806	1850	None	yes	wife of Charles Labar, died December 31, 1850 aged 44 years, 1 month, 15 days	HB Osborn HackettsT	leaning headstone was straightened 9/2020
64	Decker, Calvin	1809	1891	CD	yes	born September 14, 1809, died August 11, 1891		footstone found underground, re-erected 8/2019; obituary says he was married two times
196	Hill, Andrew	1788	1859	AH		died February 8, 1859, aged 70 years, 5		leaning headstone, straightened 7/2020;

Here is what is new in the Lower Walpack Cemetery.

In April of this year, four War of 1812 flag holders were purchased and placed next to the headstones of William Dunn, Andrew Hill, Benjamin Hull, and Jacob Smith.

A "Little Library" Information House was erected at the base of the cemetery flagpole. It contains business-type cards providing information for those who are interested in making a donation toward the continued maintenance of the cemetery. A guest book is also included for visitors to sign and share their interest in the cemetery. A Walpack Historical Society membership application can also be found inside.

During the summer months of 2021, our volunteer team continued to repair and re-erect gravestones that had been lying on the ground. Because of the weight of some of the tombstones, a tri-pod and hoist were needed to lift and move the stones onto their bases. Another gravestone had to be incased in concrete because of its fragility.

In preparation for the Tocks Island Dam Project, in 1974, the Army Corps of Engineers awarded a contract to

Gannett, Fleming, Corddry, and Carpenter, Inc. to visit all cemeteries that would have been potentially in danger of being flooded. At that time all gravestones in the Lower Walpack Cemetery were documented. A total of 312 burials or possible burials were recorded. Over the past two years, our team probed, discovered, and reset many more gravestones. A total of 345 gravesites were documented and a 21" x 21" color map was made showing all burials. A 22-page legal-size spreadsheet containing detailed information on each burial has also been created. This map and accompanying spreadsheet are available for sale from the Walpack Historical Society at a cost of \$30.00. Although the Lower Walpack Cemetery is a separate entity, our volunteers are also members of the Walpack Historical Society. Therefore, proceeds from the sale of the map and spreadsheet will be used for the continued maintenance of the Lower Walpack Cemetery as well as to support the Walpack Historical Society's general fund. Please call 973-948-4903 for more information. We appreciate your support. Thank you!

DRIED POND - WALPACK, NEW JERSEY

by Bob Williams



Photos by Sharon Spangenberg

Nothing conjures up stories of a carefree youth as does Dried Pond. Growing up in the suburban community of Verona in Essex County, New Jersey it was always refreshing when my family would take a weekend trip to the property they owned on Skyline Drive in Walpack. At that time vacation houses sat on the ridge with a stunning view of points east. In the middle of summer it was a ritual to walk into Dried Pond, a glacial deposit of a field of what appeared to be boulders—somehow, they have seemingly gotten smaller through the intervening years. As a boy I would hop from stone to stone doing my best to maintain balance—the sounds of the stones hitting together as I went from one to another was very distinctive and when I hear it today, like music, it takes me back to another time.

My mother, father, two sisters, grandmother and I would walk in and indulge in God's bountiful harvest of wild blueberries. Many of the bushes were in excess of seven feet high but there was always something available for every age group and height. As we walked in, Dad would routinely warn of snakes always prepared with his snake bite kit, and would be sure that each of us had a long stick to carry before us in order to help in warning of any impending danger.

Dried Pond was well-known by the locals who had property on the ridge and thus became a gathering place for neighbors and friends in the middle of summer. Oh, but the wonderful pastries that were made as a result of the blueberry picking—I well remember my grandmother, a master baker, and her wonderful blueberry pies—there were none better!

In the winter months, Dried Pond took on a different look when the field of stones were nearly completely under water giving the appearance of a small lake. The water would last into the spring, and I remember the water bugs

darting from point to point as I looked into the crystal-clear water always on the lookout for a frog as young boys would do. The water would eventually dry up each season leaving a brown-like covering of moss or the like over some of the stones.

As the Government came in and confiscated the land for the ill-fated and un-wanted Tocks Island Dam Project, the houses disappeared one by one and Dried Pond fell into the land of the forgotten, save for a few souls like me, who cherish the past, including my own, with great reverence. I well recall the Bergdahl house that stood next to my father's property—where the scenic overlook is today. As with so many others, when the house was abandoned, debris was left behind to be claimed by the bulldozer. I remember being with Dad when visiting there and picking up some old postcards of the area scattered on the floor and off to the side was a home-made blueberry picker which Dad saved.

One by one the homes along the ridge, including Dad's old house, disappeared but we continued to faithfully visit Walpack and Dried Pond as the area went through its change. My grandmother became too crippled to walk in on her own and I well remember Dad would pick some branches for her and take them back to Verona where Nana would pick them clean then go to work in her kitchen working her magic!

Today, nearly all these people are gone but, the memories are still there and ripen each summer as an everlasting reminder to me of a time long ago and a carefree youth in a wonderful family.





Photo by Audrey Schwab

Shade-dappled paths, glistening glens, and the beckoning byways of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DEWA) are a paradise to all who love to spend time in this narrow strip of a great alone. To wander in the moccasin and boot-steps of those who once trekked the Walpack ridges and valleys is an evocative step back-in-time where it is not at all unusual to sense the presence of the past, or perhaps even witness an aura of our history in the periphery of a gaze. While it is tempting to be dismissive of that “goose walking over a grave,” it is well we remember that those who came this way before us frequently documented sometimes strange, often eerie and at times, macabre tales of haunted happenings and dastardly deeds.

In a modest step back in time to December 1991, the Walpack Historical Society printed a brief newsletter article about a spine-chilling scream heard in the woods near the location of the old Darrone farm not far from Walpack Center. The article related the experience of a group of hunters who approached a small meadow just about twilight, when they were startled by horrifying screams from a location a few hundred yards distant. The hunters bravely set out to investigate the source only to find nothing unusual or unsettling at all. The newsletter article went on to say that every twenty-five years or so, a

similar experience has been shared by others who walk in those same dusky woods just before full dark. In an effort to shed more light upon the mystery, Walpack Historical Society requested our then readers to share anything they might know about this apparent haunting and the “scream in the woods.”

A follow-up article published in the March 1992 newsletter edition, may have shed some light on the mystery. With the passing of time not in our favor, no one could be located with a personal knowledge of an incident that would engender a cyclically spectral recurrence. However, a Walpack Historical Society newspaper sleuth did locate an article in *The Port Jervis Union*, dated July 7, 1917, that recounted the discovery of a skeleton in the woods not far distant from the area of current interest.

A newspaper archive investigation of the events revealed the ghostly screams may have emanated from one of two probable sources. The likeliest source was a woodsman who was hired by a Branchville company to chop wood in the Walpack area from whence the spectral screams seemed to originate. According to then Walpack farmer, George Van Sickle’s reckoning, the lost woodsman incident occurred circa 1909, when the ill-fated fellow vanished three days after he arrived and never returned to collect his pay for the work he had done. Ironically, a second mysterious

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THE ROSENKRANS FERRY/JEREMIAH ROSENKRANS

by Sharon Spangenberg



The following are excerpts from an obituary appearing in The Summit Herald of NJ.

Jeremiah Rosenkrans, 62 of Flatbrookville, Sussex County, died on Friday, April 13, 1951. "Mr. Rosenkrans, who operated a ferry service between New Jersey and Pennsylvania for 40 years, was known to thousands of people in this state, including many from Summit, and Pennsylvania, and from almost every state in the Union, was born in Flatbrookville and lived there all his life. His ferry for a number of years was the only Delaware River crossing between Columbia and Dingmans, after the closing of the Dimmick ferry at Calno. His family for generations has lived in Flatbrookville. The ferry was originally known as the Decker ferry." It "was located a couple of miles further down the river from the later Rosenkrans ferry near Stephens Point. Later Philip Rosenkrans was the proprietor and he sold to his brother Eugene in 1898 who moved the ferry to where it was when

Jeremiah operated it. It was a pole-operated ferry at first and later the flatboat was attached to a cable. In those days it was used principally by farmers crossing between the two states. In later years, Jeremiah used an outboard motor which was much less work for the owner and was much quicker in crossing the river. Mr. Rosenkrans ceased operation of the

ferry in 1945 when an Army fighter plane practicing dive bombing over the river, flew too low and striking the cable, cut it in two. The cable sank into the river and was not recovered and owing to war-time restrictions and other handicaps, Mr. Rosenkrans called it quits."

This excerpt and early 1900 photo of Jeremiah Rosenkrans and his ferry were provided by Jeremiah's grandson, Eugene Rosenkrans of Flatbrookville and Bonita Springs, Florida.

Also pictured is Jeremiah and his friend, Al Stieh in 1942. Al is the father of Walpack Historical Society's President, Don Stieh.



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BOOT RATTLING BONES AND RESTLESS SPIRITS

by Audrey Schwab

Continued from pg. 6

find was recalled by Edward Darrone who had previously located a bloody handkerchief hanging from a bush in the same general area in 1913. It wasn't until July 1917, that the skeletal remains came to light when Elmer Crawn and his young son were berry picking in a remote area near their farmhouse in Walpack Township and came upon an old boot. Elmer Crawn kicked the boot free and was alerted to the rattling sound of the foot bones within. Realizing there was some dead reckoning ahead, the father left with his son to summon help from more adult sources and enlisted the aid of Edward Darrone, a nearby farmer. Crawn and Darrone returned to the skeleton's rude resting site. Located mostly on the surface of the ground, the remains were only partially covered in leaf duff, weedy undergrowth, and whatever else the forest could generate in its attempt to respectfully inter the corpus. Upon closer inspection, holes were discovered in the skull that were apparently caused by a gun shot. A second shoe of a different size and style, a solid gold cuff link, a dime, a nickel, and silver fillings in some of the teeth were the only remnants of a mystery man whose spirit may still be

wandering the wilds of Walpack. It is speculated that the man could have been that of the missing wood chopper or perhaps that of a long truant and missing-in-action farmhand, a Mr. J. H. Carter who was remembered for having unmatched footwear. Was our Walpack deceased a victim of a hunter mistaking him for a deer? Or was there a deed far more nefarious; perhaps perpetrated as a felonious assault and secretly taken to another's guilty grave? In all probability, we will never know the who or the why, but if you are the next one to hear the bone-chilling screams, and we are a tad over-due for the next happenstance, by all means let us know if you have any clues to share.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Society actively stimulates an awareness and interest in the Walpack area through lectures, tours, publications and special events, such as Van Campen Day, hikes and exhibits at county-wide events.

It promotes collection, preservation and dissemination of Walpack area history and acts as a repository for artifacts of the Walpack area, and also maintains a small museum and book store and provides tours of Walpack Center.