

WALPACK

historical society

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Newsletter of the
Walpack Historical Society

Published Quarterly

Fall 2023

GENERAL PULASKI AND THE VAN CAMPEN INN

by Scott Yashay



Photo is courtesy of NJ.com

The United States' reputation as "The Great Melting Pot" is as old as the nation itself. In addition to our American Founding Fathers, notable international figures such as the Marquis de Lafayette of France and Baron Von Steuben of Prussia were essential in securing the young nation's victory over the greatest military of the age. Another famous and considerably more controversial foreign leader was the Polish General Casimir Pulaski (1745-1779).

Known today as the "Father of the American Cavalry", Pulaski is perhaps best remembered for his valiant actions in the Southern theater of the Revolutionary War, culminating in his heroic death at the Siege of Savannah in 1779. However, Pulaski had been in the United States nearly two whole years before he received orders to take his infamous legion South. In fact, his very presence there and ultimate sacrifice for American independence may have been the direct result of what happened here at the Van Campen Inn.

Born to a noble family in Warsaw, Count Pulaski was already a national hero in Poland before The United States was even an idea. He achieved numerous military victories against

Russia, Prussia, and Austria, most notably during the War of the Bar Confederation, during which he further solidified the Polish cavalry's historic reputation for being the best in the world. Despite his victory over Russia, after which he was forced into exile, Pulaski had distinguished himself enough to gain the attention of Benjamin Franklin, who personally recommended that General Washington consider offering Pulaski a command in the Continental Army.

Pulaski arrived in Boston in the summer of 1777, determined to find a new home for his patriotic fighting spirit in the American cause for independence. He was disappointed to find the fledgling Continental Army woefully inexperienced, disorganized, and undisciplined. Pulaski's nationality did not help matters, as most of his men were reluctant to take orders from a foreign officer who could barely speak English and tried to impress upon them his strange European fighting tactics. Pulaski's unit quickly became notorious for its high desertion rates and questionable recruitment practices. His grandiose vision of a cavalry seemed beyond what the young army was capable of, and Pulaski was often incensed at his superiors' inability to respect his authority or give in to his many requests. Repeated demands for promotion, relocation, and the formation of a lancer unit were often ignored. Washington frequently found himself in a difficult position, trying to placate Pulaski and get him to follow orders without showing disrespect towards his experience. Nevertheless, Pulaski was usually insulted and developed a persecution complex.

After reportedly being asleep during the Battle of Germantown and suffering a disastrous defeat at Little Egg Harbor, Pulaski was unofficially banished to Minisink, then referred to as "the Western frontier" under the guise of allowing his forces to regain their strength and prepare for possible Indian attacks. However, with the wilderness being totally unsuitable for a cavalry legion, it was obvious to all that Pulaski was being placed in "time out." Pulaski's initial instructions had been to go to Fort Cole in Port Jervis. He found it burnt, possibly one of the many victims of John Butler's combined force of Loyalist "Rangers" and Iroquois. Pulaski proceeded instead to the Rosenkrans Fort and nearby Van Campen Inn. Washington had written Pulaski promising that "two Gentlemen of particular influence in that Country, Mr. Depui and Mr. Van Camp[sic]...will assist you very much in procuring Forage and other necessaries." However, when Pulaski arrived at Shapanack in November of 1778, he found things quite unlike Washington

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The Walpack Historical Society
newsletter is designed and edited
by Tom Dust. Photographs are provided
by the author, unless otherwise noted.

FLASHBACK: NEWARK EVENING NEWS SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1923.

by Jeff Stoveken

Because of the print quality of the original clipping, this article was retyped for ease in reading.

"Newton, October 12 -- Time will turn backward in its flight tomorrow morning, when marksmen for miles around are expected to gather along a historic section of the Delaware River for the Van Sickle target event. As the reports of the high-powered rifles ring out, some may picture in their minds eye that same countryside, when a bit of rifle practice daily was a necessity; when to be a good shot was to enjoy long life, when the paddle of the red man bit noiselessly into the river that bears his name.

Undoubtedly Sunset Hill, the spot in Pike County Pa, chosen for the firing line will be a gathering place tomorrow for many motorists who will halt in the course of the day's ride to watch the progress of the novel match. Town committeeman, John J. Van Sickle, who conceived the notion and who is running the match, states that from advance indications a large number of shots, including women, will participate.

The bullseye six feet in diameter and mounted on a 10' x 13' background is in readiness to receive and register the bullets which, if successfully aimed, will cross the Delaware three times, pass over several places of notable historic interest and travel across four counties, two in Pennsylvania and two in New Jersey.

Considerable difference of opinion is heard as to the practicability of shooting at a mark a mile and a half distant. It is pointed out that most rifles are cited for a maximum of only 1000 yards and that the remaining 600 yards will have to be guessed

at; that the various currents of wind coursing over three stretches of the Delaware will be enough to throw off the bullet; that a single shot does not permit the marksmen to correct faults, in sighting and windage, and that the competitors won't be able to see the target distinctly enough without telescopic sites.

Nature of Target

The target consists of a center and five black rims with narrow spaces of white between them, although at a distance of a mile and a half, it will look like a solid black bull and a very small one at that. In addition, it is divided clockwise. When a shot is fired the man in the pit will observe if it has struck in the bullseye. If so, he will put over it, a poster bearing a number corresponding with the numerical order of the marksman. If not, he will put the poster outside the target. In addition to that the results of each shot will be signaled through the army semaphore code to the firing line, where an observer will be stationed with a telescope. The problem of marking and reporting the position of the shots was one that required much thought.

The prize consists of \$75 offered by members of historical societies together with the amount contributed by those who attend the shoot.

Mr. Van Sickle has long been interested in the Sussex County Historical Society and particularly in the history of Walpack Township, upon which he is an authority.

The firing line on Sunset Hill stands between two interesting spots. Above it on the Delaware is Rosenkrans' Ferry and below, Fort Benjamin Franklin. The trajectory

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Funding has been made available in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, through the State/County Partnership Block Grant Program, as administered by the Sussex County Arts & Heritage Council.



2023 CALENDAR

April 23	Spring Hike to Schoonover Cemetery – Bushkill, PA
April 30	*Spring Dinner
May 6	Peony bed and Walpack Center Village clean up
May 21	Presentation - 1967 Video Tour of the Minisink Valley
May 27	VCI open 12 -3 pm
May 28	Walpack Church, Rosenkrans Museum, and VCI open 1- 4 pm
June 25	Presentation – Recollections of Blue Mountain Lakes
July 1	Peony bed and Walpack Center Village clean up
July 16	“Tock’s Island: Dammed if you Do” - David Pierce
August 20	Flatbrookville Presentation
September 17	Catfish Fire Tower Hike and Presentation
October 8	Van Campen Day (Heritage Weekend)
December 2	Walpack Christmas (museum open)
December 3	*Holiday Dinner
December 9 & 10	Walpack Christmas (museum open)

**Members and their guests.*

All events are subject to change. Current CDC & NPS Covid guidelines may affect events. 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.”



DUES ARE DUE

Members and friends of the WHS can fill out the membership form on page seven and mail it in with a payment to the address on the form.

Also, payment can be made online with a credit card by visiting WalpackHistory.org.

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

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

THANK YOU!

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

New Members

Peter Daly
Jim Eden
Robert J. Erbs
Terry & Vinnie Fiedler
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Thank you to all of those who have chosen to support Walpack Historical Society through anonymous donations on Facebook.

BE A PART OF HISTORY - DOCENTS AND 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) 552-8880 to learn more about how you can help play a part in history.



**FLASHBACK: NEWARK EVENING NEWS
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1923.**

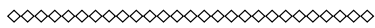
by Jeff Stoveken

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of the successful bullet will pass over the ten-acre Moravian settlement where in 1746 Rev. Joseph Shaw preached to a mixed congregation of Swedes, English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, Germans, Walloons, Shemanese, Mohawks, Delawares and Catawbias. Also through the region occupied by the ancient Decker burying ground, the scene of the fort erected by New Jersey in 1775 and Decker's Ferry, another historic spot on the backwards loop of the river as it turns to form the letter S.

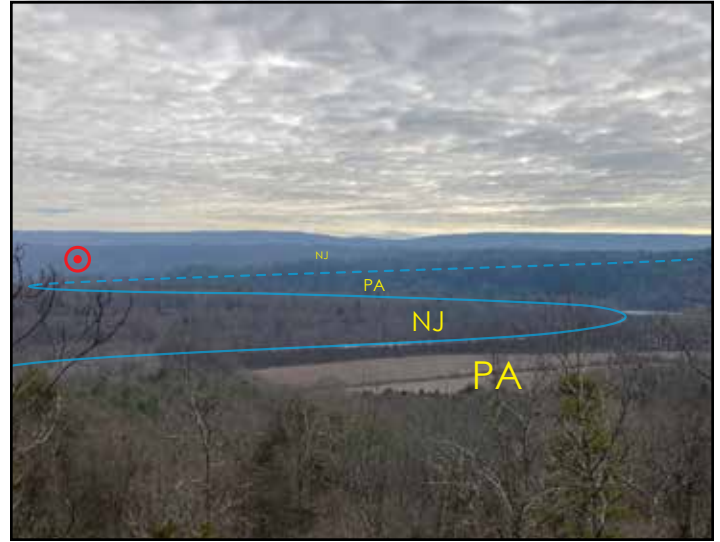
As the projectile speeds toward the target it will leave on the left the famous old whirlpool at the point where the Flatbrook empties into the Delaware and the thing that gives Walpack Township its name. Wahlpeck was the Indian name for the swirling waters. On the right and way down in the loop is the scene of the old Indian ford. Not far to the north are the sites of the Dutch Reformed Church erected in 1737 and the reformed cemetery.

The bullet will pass twice over Pennsylvania and twice over in New Jersey finding its objective on Sambo Ridge in a corner of Warren County."



Fast forward 100 years. It began about three years ago when I happened to see a Facebook post of an original newspaper article with a hand drawn map posted by Tasha DeGeorge. She had come across this newspaper clipping in her father's collection of Sussex County's history. Ironically her father, Jack Decker was a former Sussex County Historical Society president, and the gentleman featured in the article was John J. Van Sickel who was also the Historical Society's President himself!

Being active members of the Walpack Historical Society, this article and map piqued our curiosity. So we began working on distinguishing exactly where the shoot would have taken place.



Dan Tassey, Hixon and Sharon Spangenberg, and I started off by identifying all the historic sites noted on that map. We then studied all the clues that we could ascertain from what we read. Then over the past year, we were ready to track down the firing spot and the destination target. Wintertime made doing something like this a lot easier for many reasons. Our first trek out was to pinpoint where the shoot took place. Andy Chernati joined us as we met up on the Pennsylvania side near Bushkill. We located an old woods road that entered the area next to Sunset Hill. We headed down this road on foot until it intersected with a road that shot upwards to the left. We followed this road to the second highest shelf on this hill. When we got up as high as we could get, we walked right into a view of Walpack Bend. We also noticed what appeared to be a decent-size parking area in this vicinity. We spent some time on the edge of this bluff, which we suspected was the firing spot, but we needed to climb higher and check out the rest of the hill to be sure. As we climbed higher the views lessened

because each shelf was set further back. Near the top, we stepped out into this enormous shale quarry. It was an extremely large flat area that had been worked many years ago. We then headed back down to the original spot and verified its position in that shooting match. We took some photos and recorded the GPS location so we could enter it on our map.

With spring rapidly approaching we needed to get out at least one more time and try to find the target location before everything grew in. So, after scouring topo maps for a week, we finally headed to the woods again. We walked along Sambo Ridge for a while until we came to the creek. Just as we got into that area, we picked up a crude road that came over near the bluff from the current roadway. We were wondering why it came into this area where there was really no way out with steepness all around us. We followed it 'till we got to an old stone wall and



MAP SHOWING TERRITORY WHERE SUSSEX SHOOT WILL BE HELD.



CAVE BANK

by Sharon Spangenberg

For nearly 19 months, Route 615 in Flatbrookville has been closed due to a landslide onto the road just east of the Flatbrookville bridge. Those entering Walpack from the south must detour left onto Old Mine Road and travel one additional mile to avoid the area of the caved bank. Although the landslide that occurred in 2022 appears to be a problem, it is not a new event.

According to a 1942 New Jersey Herald article on the early history of Walpack Township, Cyrus Jones (1812 – 1895) “lived near the cave bank and he worked out his taxes by keeping stones and dirt off the road when the bank caved in from time to time.” In addition, an 1869 article that also appeared in the New Jersey Herald, reported cave bank was badly damaged because of a late storm that caused a flood. According to an 1890 Evening Gazette newspaper clipping, “The township committee of Walpack will sell...the contract to erect a railing along the public highway at cave bank.”

Prior to the February 2022 landslide, the chain link fence attached to a concrete barrier seemed to have done what it was intended to do. Even though a small section of the bank did slide downwards onto Route 615 collapsing about 30 feet of the fence, only the northbound lane received some soil and debris.

Although this very small section of Route 615 called “cave bank” has been a matter of concern for over 150 years, it is doubtful both lanes were closed to traffic for an extended period of time.



Cyrus Jones' House, Flatbrookville, where the road is next to the cave bank.

October 14, 1869 LOCAL AFFAIRS The Late Storm.

We continue to receive accounts of the damages sustained along the Delaware, and its tributaries, during the late flood, which has proved to be the most disastrous of any experienced in these valleys.

One mile above the village, the bridge at Esq. Smith's was carried away, also Elijah Rosenkrans mill-dam at Flatbrookville and the road at Cavebank badly damaged.

The evening gazette., March 19, 1890

The township committee of Walpack will sell at the American House, March 22d, at 2 o'clock, p. m., the contract to erect a railing along the public highway at the Cave Bank near this place.

New Jersey Herald, May 14, 1942

Moses had two sons, Cyrus and Andrew. Cyrus remained on the old homestead. Cyrus Jones' home was located near the "cave-bank", and he worked out his taxes by keeping stones and dirt off the road when the bank caved in from time to time.

SHAPANACK A location in Walpack, NJ

Shapanack and its spelling variants is a Lenape Indian word meaning outstretched arms or the place where the river spreads out. Frontiersman Alexander Rosenkrans settled at Shapanack in 1729/1730.

Van Campen Inn was constructed circa 1754 and is located 1.5 miles south.

Military Road built 1756/1757 was first used as a supply route from Elizabethtown to the French and Indian frontier forts. Fort Shapanack along Military Road was also called Fort Johns and Headquarters. It was commanded by Revolutionary War Col. John Rosenkrans and is located just north of Van Campen Inn.

Col. Rosenkrans memorial and Shapanack Cemetery where Anna Symmes, mother-in-law of US President William Henry Harrison and great-grandmother of US President Benjamin Harrison, is buried, about 1 mile south.

Camp Shapanack located here, was operated by the McKeebys as a resort during the early 1900s.

Proposed wording, not finalized.

Earlier this year Walpack Historical Society trustees discussed the submission of an application through the County of Sussex for a historical marker recognizing Shapanack, a locality in Walpack. Approval by our trustees was granted with the understanding that half of the total cost would be paid for using society funds. In early August, we were informed by

Sussex County's Historian, Bill Truran that our application had been approved by his committee. A ceremony took place on August 5th at the NJ State Fair where our president, Don Stieh accepted the award on behalf of Walpack Historical Society.

Shapanack's long and storied history dates back to 1729 when Alexander Rosenkrans and Frederick Schoonmaker purchased 900 acres from a land merchant. Shapanack derived its name from a Lenape Indian word that translates to mean "out-stretched arms or the place where the river spreads out." Shapanack includes a fort and its blockhouse that served as a safe haven during times of trouble on the frontier as well as a base during the French and Indian War and the American Revolutionary War. It is also the location of the Van Campen Inn, cemeteries, Military Road, an island, and was even the headquarters for an early 20th century summer camp. Anyone wishing to make a donation to help offset our share of the cost of this marker (\$1535), please complete the membership/donation form on page 7 of this newsletter. Pending unforeseen circumstances, our society's plan is to unveil the marker at a ceremony to be held in August 2024.



Membership/Donation Form

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Tear off and return with payment.

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Continued from pg. 1

had described. Isaac Van Campen, preoccupied with his active public service career, did not have much time to play host to Pulaski and his men, and this “Mr. Depui” was thirty miles South. Survivors of the Wyoming Massacre, a devastating Patriot defeat which took place in Pennsylvania only a few months earlier, flooded to Minisink seeking refuge and contributed to a degree of chaos in the area. Pulaski lamented that “nothing remains but the bears to fight with.” His legion continued to desert in droves while he preoccupied himself writing letter after letter to Washington demanding to be placed where the action was or else be allowed to return home and resume the fight against Poland’s enemies. Pulaski flattered himself by detailing his contributions to the American effort thus far and, presuming that his requests would be met, proposed another Polish count he had once served with as his successor. He even went as far as to dictate what that officer’s rank and salary should be, something he was hardly in a position to do.

It seems that the final straw for Pulaski was his prospective assignment to join the Sullivan Expedition against the Iroquois confederacy of the five Nations. Though the expedition proved to be successful, Pulaski felt it was beneath his talents as an officer and he refused to take part of it, threatening to resign his command and return to Europe. He considered that fighting hostile Natives at such close quarters was a victory that brought “no honor.” After three months at the Van Campen Inn, Pulaski was finally given permission to withdraw his troops

and accepted a commission to head South where he would fulfil his destiny. His superior officer and Commander of the Western Frontier, General Edward Hand, arrived at the Inn shortly after. Learning of Pulaski’s new assignment, Hand continued North to inspect forts in the area. One of Hand’s units, Colonel Philip Van Courtlandt’s 2nd NY Regiment, stayed at the Van Campen Inn while on the return journey from a fort in Ulster County, NY. Leaving in May of 1779, they were the last military presence at the Van Campen Inn, though not the last of its distinguished residents.

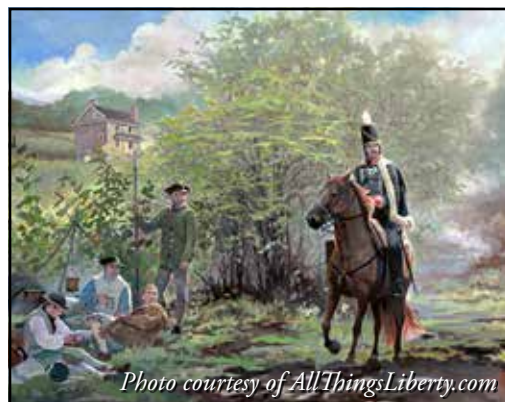


Photo courtesy of AllThingsLiberty.com

Many of us today like to imagine what the Delaware Water Gap looked like 250 years ago with its primeval forests and virgin farmlands. Though seeming to stand silent through centuries of change, the Van Campen Inn has and continues to shape the destinies of even those who are put off by her surrounding beauty. For Casimir Pulaski, who was killed by grapeshot while leading a charge of French cavalymen, Minisink was perhaps the sobering effect that helped him see the greater picture in placing his duty over personal glory.



WE ARE LOOKING FOR WRITERS

As we continue to keep Walpack’s history alive, we are requesting our members consider writing an article for possible inclusion in our quarterly newsletter. Please know in advance that any article submitted must be

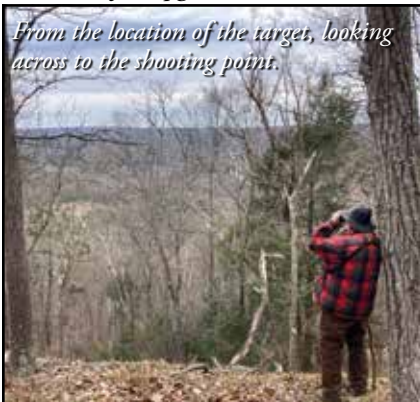
approved by our trustees and must go through our editing process. If you have an interesting story to tell or have photos of Walpack that you would be willing to share, please submit them to us by mail to info@walpackhistory.org or by visiting walpackhistory.org/newsletter/

www.walpackhistory.org

FLASHBACK: NEWARK EVENING NEWS

by Jeff Stoveken

Continued from pg. 4



noticed that someone had opened up the wall by moving the stones out of it to create a gate. Leading up to the gate, we could see a large rectangular flat area to the right on higher ground. We proceeded in between this stone wall and came out to a very narrow shelf. At the very edge of this shelf the ridge sloped rather steeply, so steep that it would be a very difficult walk down. Going side to side along this narrow shelf area we realized there was nothing on either end. The path which seemed to have been dug out was about 4 feet in depth (not deep but between the back of it and the edge before it dropped off). It's also about 30 feet wide and ended abruptly on each side. Standing on it, we could see how there is not much blocking the view. Imagine 100 years ago it was probably pretty clear and even if it wasn't, you would probably only have to drop a few trees.

It was amazing what you could see while you were up there;

the mouth of the Flatbrook, the field behind Decker's Ferry, the Rosenkrans house, the fields at the bottom of Hogback Mountain and a great view of the river flowing south as it leaves the Walpack Bend. Of course, you can see out to Sunset Hill, and when we dropped pins on our map, the line was a perfect match to the hand-drawn map in the article that created all this interest in the first place!

Who would've thought 100 years later this old newspaper clipping would make this event come back to life. Please see the accompanying photos. The article that Tasha had posted spoke about an event that was set to happen, but for almost 3 years we had no idea if it ever materialized, until Sharon found the results of the competition.

Visit Jeff on Facebook - "Sussex County Excursions"

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 and VCI.