

WALPACK

historical society

*"Preserving a Fine
Tradition of Caring"*

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Newsletter of the
Walpack Historical Society

Published Quarterly

Spring 2022

HISTORIC PROPERTY STEWARDS DEDICATED TO PROTECTION OF PARK PROPERTIES

By Mark Miller and Audrey Schwab



Historic Property Stewards/Walpack Historical Society team cleanup event at Van Campen Inn (Photo by Mark Miller)

Do you have a yen to adopt and care for an historic property? Perhaps you have a particular connection or fondness for one of our stubbornly steadfast historic buildings or even one that is in hopeless disrepair and listed nowhere except within someone's proud personal history and cherished memories. If you have ever pondered what you might do to help keep these properties safe and secure, please consider what is already being done and how you might assist or possibly advance these efforts. Everyday people, perhaps like you, with their own unique interests is all it takes and all levels of participation are welcome.

The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DEWA) Historic Buildings Strategy Newsletter reports there are over 500 buildings within the park, of which 286 are listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. 170 of those buildings are in New Jersey and many can be found in the Walpack/Sandyston Township areas. Sadly, most of these properties are seldom visited except by those who would do them harm and have nary a thought of responsibility or stewardship toward our disappearing history and no regard for the still standing legacies of those who have lived, loved and toiled in these places.

Though the Historic Property Stewards (HPS) volunteer effort encourages park- wide participation, most if not all of the current team is composed of members of the Walpack Historical Society. Due to the rather modest number of active participants and the vast geographic boundaries of the park, the members largely concentrate their efforts within the

Walpack/Sandyston/Flatbrookville area.

Teams of volunteers have committed to weekly mowing of grass and clearing of weedy growth around several Old Mine Road properties including the Knight Farm in Walpack and the Smith-Lennington, Smith-Dodd and Smith- Birchenough houses in neighboring Sandyston Township. Several other properties are mowed and trimmed on a less frequent but repeating schedule; most notably the Richard Layton 1812 House on Pompey Ridge, which annually involves a mustering of the entire team for a work/fun day of mowing, raking, leaf blowing, weed trimming, and cookies and bagels aplenty.

The respectful care for many of our historic cemeteries also falls within the stewards' routine task list. The Clark and Shappanack Cemeteries along Old Mine Road, and what is referred to as the Slave Cemetery just off of the Military Trail, are mowed and trimmed on at least an annual basis. The Lower Walpack Cemetery in Flatbrookville, boasts an extremely dedicated team of property stewards who have done an outstanding job of resurrecting and restoring tombstones and appropriately marking the graves of our forebears who have served in the military. The Lower Walpack Cemetery now welcomes park visitors as an integral part of the historic message we want our park places and structures to convey.

Most notable among recent HPS achievements was the craftsmen's repair of the Van Campen Inn's deteriorating front entry stairs and railings. The project was overseen by DEWA and tackled by two of our members with significant

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woodworking skills. They were supported by other volunteers who assisted with the scraping, painting, and removal of construction debris. It is an incredible honor to be able to contribute to the long legacy of such an historically significant building on any level.

A more mundane, but perhaps the most important task of our HPS members, is the regular inspection of both our readily accessible buildings and outlier places that are frequently the prey of vandals and humanoid scavengers. HPS members are encouraged to perform these duties in teams of at least two individuals. The abandoned structures are often located in lonely and desolate areas; some with unknown hazards such as old wells and

cisterns that could imperil the casual passerby. When breeches to the structures are noted, they are repaired by team members and reported to DEWA security. Likewise, graffiti is remediated where possible and game cameras installed in frequently vandalized locations.

The HPS invites all volunteers; whether it is a quiet walk-in-the-park with a purpose you seek; a more hands-on tending to the security of a singular beloved property; or the camaraderie of like-minded and always welcoming members of the current team; we would love to have you join us. Please contact DEWA at (570) 426-2452 or the Walpack Historical Society at (973) 948-4903. We look forward to hearing from you!

REPAIRS TO WALPACK CENTER PARSONAGE TO BE ENTERTAINED BY PARK

by Audrey Schwab

The tragic demise of the first Walpack Center parsonage (built circa 1854), was summarily recorded in the August 4, 1888 minutes of the Second Quarter Conference of the Walpack Center Methodist Episcopal Church. The recording secretary noted then Pastor John Newton Crane's verbal report with a simple phrase: "Parsonage struck by lightning and destroyed by fire, July 5, 1888. Pastor lost his books, papers, clothing, furniture, etc." More disturbing, the building, valued at \$800, was uninsured and declared a total loss. The New Jersey Herald article dated, July 11, 1888 described how the lives of the minister, his wife and four children were "providentially saved" due to the fact they were not home at the time of

the blaze. Two of the Crane children were subsequently taken in by a local family and the Reverend and the rest of his family were offered the hospitalities of a Walpack Center resident. The article goes on to say: "As the congregation is not a wealthy one, an appeal is made to neighboring churches and to a generous public to lend a helping hand in this time of need. It is hoped that a generous response will be promptly made."

On May 24, 1890, the quarterly report of the Conference included new Reverend, George D. Price's comment as scribed in his own handwriting: "It is with the greatest pleasure that I make note of the cordiality with which we have been received by the people in general, as well

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2022 CALENDAR

April 24	Spring Hike: Donkeys Corner Trail
May 1	Spring Dinner at The Walpack Inn
May 15	Presentation: The Original Columbia and Walpack Turnpike
June 4	National Trail Day
June 26	Presentation: The Anniversary of the 1955 Flood
July 17	Presentation: Lower Walpack Cemetery Event
Aug. 21	Presentation: History of the Appalachian Trail
Sept. 18 or 25	Presentation: Fire Tower hike
Oct. 9	Van Campen Day
Nov. 6	Fall Hike: Military Road East
Dec. 3	Walpack Christmas - Church and Museum
Dec. 4	Holiday Dinner - Walpack Inn
Dec. 10 & 11	Walpack Christmas - Church and Museum

*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."



2022 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 membership dues online using PayPal.

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

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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.

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

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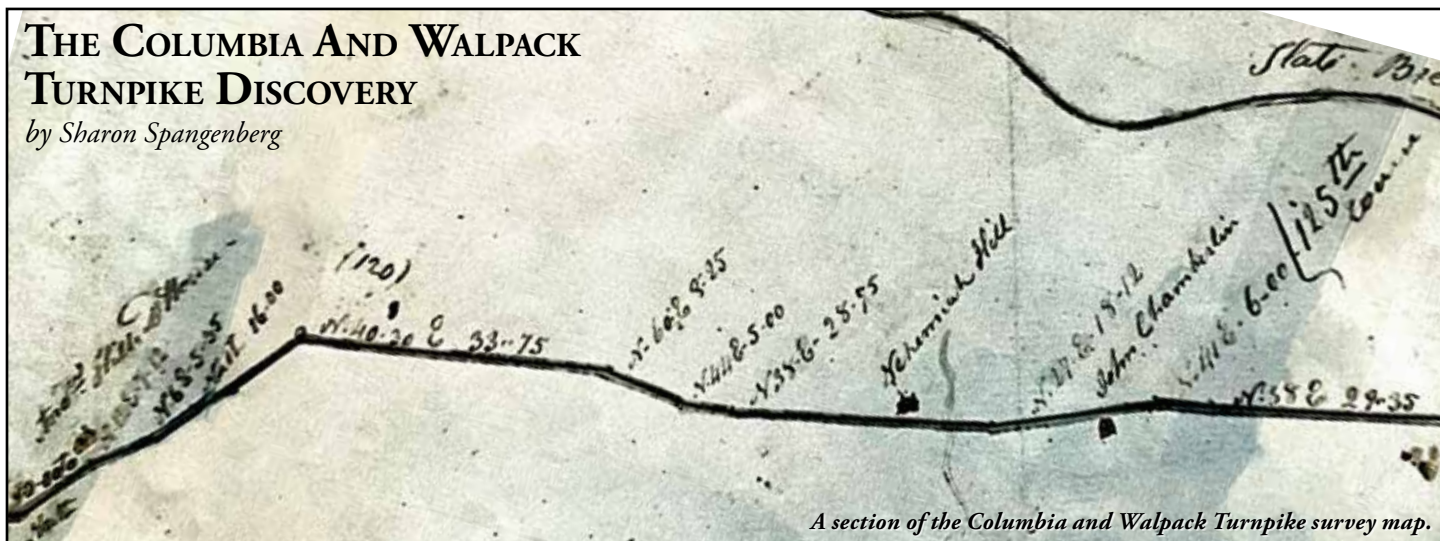
A docent is a person who acts as a guide, typically on a voluntary basis. We are always looking for new people to help us at our events and meetings throughout the year.

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



THE COLUMBIA AND WALPACK TURNPIKE DISCOVERY

by Sharon Spangenberg



A section of the Columbia and Walpack Turnpike survey map.

How many of you have been told or believed that the road through the Village of Millbrook was once part of the original Columbia and Walpack Turnpike? I was one of those who read and saw on official maps that the turnpike began at the Columbia Bridge in Knowlton Township, NJ and traversed through Millbrook on its way to Donkeys Cornerⁱ just off Flatbrookville/Stillwater Road (Stillwater).

For me, this belief changed several years ago. To assist in preparation of my now-published bookⁱⁱ on the property owners in Millbrook Village and its surrounding area, I visited the New Jersey State Archives in Trenton. While there, a request was made for information on the Columbia and Walpack (C/W) Turnpike. Much to my surprise, the head archivist brought the original mylar-preserved survey map from the secured archives room. When it was unrolled, it hung off both ends of the 10-foot table. It was in excellent shape; but, due to its age it had turned to a sepia color with the Delaware River still bright blue. Because the overhead lighting reflected on the mylar, it was difficult to take photographs without a glare. To be sure not to miss any part of it, over 100 pictures were taken. Reconstructing the map was time-consuming as each photo needed to be cropped and sized before it was taped together. Written on the map was the following, "Whole Distance of Turnpike from Columbia to the Entersection (sic) of the Sussex & Morris Turnpike – 30 miles 57 chains & 56 links. Survey^d & protracted by James Van Kirk on a scale of 4 inches to one mile – Dec. 28th 1821." Since each chain equals 66 feet and each link is about 8 inches, the total distance to its end on Rt. 206 in Sandyston Township was about 30.7 miles. As Jennie Sweetman wrote in her February 10, 2019 New Jersey Herald article, "it was on January 21, 1819, by an Act of State Legislators, a company to be called the Columbia – Walpack Turnpike, was approved for incorporation."

Since photographing and researching the original turnpike survey in 2016, my recent research on a stretch of road through Walpack Township began late 2021 as a result of speaking with Kathy Rivers, a life member of the Walpack Historical Society. Kathy mentioned that she was related to Nehemiah Hill. Recalling that his name was noted on the C/W Turnpike survey, I reviewed the map again and found that a small figure of a house was next to his name.

Proving the exact location of Nehemiah's house took a bit of researching. After reviewing property deeds and several road returnsⁱⁱⁱ, Nehemiah's property was located near Salamovka/Delaware View House. In fact, it was just off the north side of Stillwater Road, (known also as the road to Blue Mountain Lakes).

Wondering though, if this house site was about half-way between Salamovka and Donkeys Corner, why or how did the C/W Turnpike coming from Millbrook Village cross the main road at Donkeys Corner? To find the answer, several historic aerial views, a geological survey map, and a Walpack Township tax map were reviewed, as well as the 1960's Corp of Engineers Segment map showing properties acquired for the Tocks Island Project. Choosing to use the Segment map scale, the other documents were sized and printed the same.

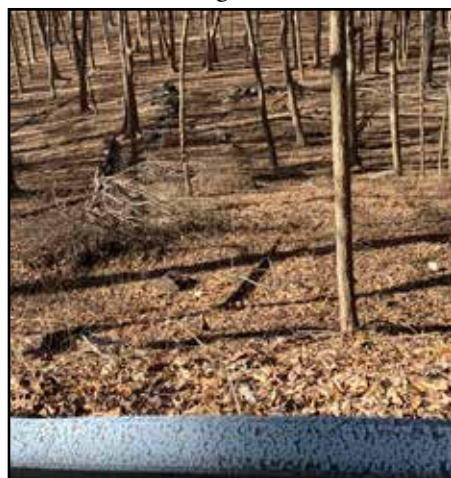
Using a mapping program, a section of the C/W Turnpike survey was plotted at the same scale as the Segment map. When the plotted road was placed on all maps, it revealed an interesting discovery. After passing through the Water Gap and going by Col. Abraham Van Campen's house, southwest of Millbrook Village, the turnpike followed what is known today as Hamilton Ridge Road^{iv}, exiting at Andrew Hill's house. Further research revealed that Andrew Hill's house site was just north of Millbrook Village on the west side of Millbrook/Flatbrookville (Millbrook) Road near the visible spring-fed pond. Survey calls revealed that the turnpike entered the woods a short distance north of that pond on the east side of the road.

Although many hours of research were spent indoors to discover and factually prove the location of the original C/W Turnpike, field work had to be done to document exactly where the turnpike had originally been laid. Dan Tassey, an active member of the Walpack Historical Society has been my hiking companion for several years. Since Dan knows the woods of Walpack very well, I always include him and my husband Hixon when searching for a piece of history to prove locations of historical home sites, bridges, or roads.

If the original turnpike did not cross Stillwater Road at Donkeys Corner, we wondered where it could have crossed the steep ravine. Believing there had to have been another opening where the turnpike crossed the spring brook, a closer look at an

aerial view revealed a light-colored area that could have been the opening we were looking for. On our first excursion, we walked about 325 yards downhill from Donkeys Corner and found the opening, the remains of a collapsed stone bridge and a visible road. Although difficult to follow, about a half-mile into the woods, this old section of the turnpike eventually intersected with what is known today as Mountain Road. Our findings were confirmed and documented on our second hike to this area. The next time we went out, we wandered in the woods northeast of the pond. Although we were not successful, we were able to find small sections of an occasional road. However, during our second and third excursions, with survey measurements in hand, we were able to follow the old turnpike roadbed to its intersection with Stillwater Road near a 250-year-old white oak tree. The turnpike continued across the macadam road where an old stone foundation can be seen over the guardrail. This had to have been the house site of Nehemiah Hill whose name is written on the original C/W turnpike survey as well as a recorded road return.

If the original turnpike did not originally go through the Village of Millbrook, when was the road through the Village created? Further research revealed that in 1833, a Warren County^v road was officially approved and laid out. It began southwest of Millbrook, at the “bridge over the mill creek” (near Van Campen’s Glen). It continued east about two miles to Abram Garis’ gristmill in Millbrook, and ended nearly one mile northeast at the Sussex/Warren County line. Another road was created and officially approved five years later. That 1838 recorded road^{iv} began at the Sussex/Warren County line and



Nehemiah Hill’s home site along the Road to Blue Mountain Lakes.

extended to Donkeys Corner, eventually intersecting the original roadbed of the C/W Turnpike.

Although it can be factually proven where the original C/W Turnpike was laid out in accordance with the 1819 Act of the Legislators of New Jersey, several questions remain, including;



- When the 1833 and 1838 county roads were created, were they built specifically to be part of the C/W Turnpike?
- If the answer is yes, then would the same rules and regulations set forth in the 1819 Act need to have been followed and approved in accordance with that State Act?
- Since the 1833 Warren County and 1838 Sussex County roads were created, approved, and recorded at least 11 years after the turnpike’s charter, why was there no indication in either or both of those road returns stating specifically that they were to become part of the turnpike?
- Was the section of the original turnpike bypassing Millbrook Village still referred to as the C/W Turnpike?
- In what year was the road no longer called the Columbia and Walpack Turnpike?
- When did the road from Donkeys Corner through Walpack Township become known as Mountain Road?
- Finally, if the original turnpike bypassed the Village of Millbrook when it was surveyed and protracted in December 1821, why did historians and cartographers believe it went through the center of the Village?

This question cannot be answered; however, there is a possibility that the C/W Turnpike survey was not available for public review until recent years.

For those who are doing historical or genealogical research, the New Jersey State Archives is a perfect place to spend the day. Perhaps you may leave there having found a historical document such as I did in 2016 that changed past historical accountings.

Pending unforeseen COVID restrictions, a presentation on the Columbia and Walpack Turnpike is scheduled to take place at the Walpack Center Church on Sunday, May 15th at 1:00 pm. Additional research information and photos will be shared at that time. We hope you will be able to join us.

ⁱ Donkeys Corner is located on Flatbrookville/Stillwater Road, known also as the road to Blue Mountain Lakes. The National Park Service has an approved trail that begins at Millbrook Village and runs northwest paralleling Van Campen’s Brook. It climbs a wooded hillside and terminates at an intersection at Donkeys Corner on the road to Blue Mountain Lakes.

ⁱⁱ Millbrook Village Pahaquarry Twp, Warren County and Surrounding Area, ...Owners Map and Index from 1732 – 1886

ⁱⁱⁱ A road return is an approved survey of a road filed and recorded at the County Hall of Records.

^{iv} Hamilton Ridge Road (once known as Walpack Road and Old Mine Road) is an approved National Park Service trail that begins in Warren County near the bridge over the brook at Van Campen’s Glen. It follows the ridge-top about 2½ miles to its end where it intersects Millbrook/Flatbrookville Road known today as Old Mine Road about three tenths of a mile north of Millbrook.

^v Warren County road return Book 1, page 134 dated 1833

^{vi} Sussex County road return Book C, page 162 dated 1838

REPAIRS TO WALPACK CENTER PARSONAGE TO BE ENTERTAINED BY PARK

by Audrey Schwab



Rev. Whitmore (center) with Augustus, Jay, Ada, Mary Blanche, and William Whitmore c. 1908

as the official board on the charge.” Rev. Price would go on to become the dynamic force needed to guide the church for the next several years and to initiate and personally participate in the construction of the new parsonage. By June of 1892, Rev. Price stated that the trustees of the Walpack Center M.E. Church had decided to build a parsonage, and a committee was appointed “to take in consideration the size of the house, etc and to secure workmen to put up the foundation.” By December of that same year, he noted, “The new parsonage is about done except for plastering and painting and a few little things which cannot be done until the walls are on.” As was anticipated, the winter of 1893 finally intervened and work to complete the structure had to be postponed.

Ever hopeful, the good Reverend anticipated the house would be ready for occupancy by early spring. He submitted his February 17, 1893 report to the Conference with the optimistic and deeply inspired comment, “We believe this house will be a reminder to all for years to come of the interest of the Trustees and members and friends of the church in the convenience and comfort of their Pastor and the success of the Church and their fidelity and loyalty to God and his cause.” The new parsonage was finally completed at a cost of approximately \$1,000 and was thereafter fully insured. Though the parsonage no longer serves the Walpack community in a spiritual support role, this powerful statement made nearly 130 years ago, serves as a charge to this generation of custodians to further the not insubstantial efforts of Rev. Price and our Walpack forebears.

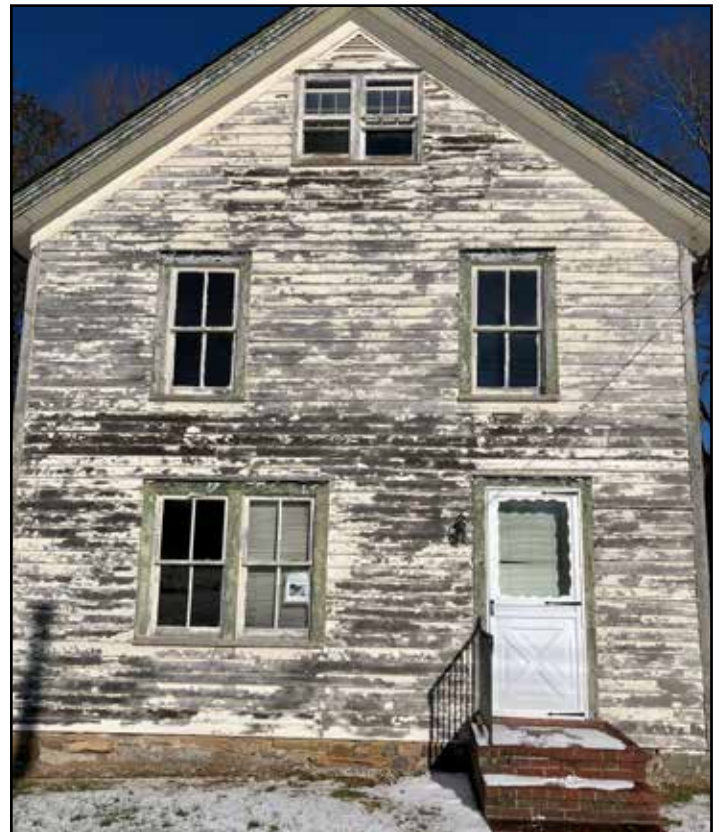
Following Rev. Price’s reassignment to a new congregation in 1894, a series of shorter termed pastors took charge of the Walpack Church and its congregation. In 1907, the Reverend Barnea Evans Whitmore, his wife Mary Blanche, and their four young children, brought youth and a renewed vitality to the parsonage and church community as he served his first charge as a Methodist minister in Walpack Center. The endearing photograph of the young family on the porch of the home, substantiates the sense of pride and stewardship the

church constituents put into this property. Rev. Whitmore served as pastor through 1909 when he was called to serve in a different community.

The parsonage thereafter endured through many lean years as world turmoil intervened and congregation numbers declined. Eventually, Walpack was placed on the same circuit with Sandyston and shared a pastor for many years. The Walpack parsonage was subsequently deemed to be too great a financial burden upon the dwindling congregation and sold by the Trustees into private ownership in 1944. The parsonage was ultimately sold to the United States of America in the 1970s, as were most of the properties in Walpack. It is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Walpack Center Historic District. This designation did not then, and does not now protect properties from sinking into decline and disrepair.

As the decades evolved, the Walpack Historical Society (WHS) undertook several renovation projects to stabilize and maintain the property. *Spanning the Gap*, the newsletter of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DEWA), included an article from the spring of 1993 that offered a special thanks to the volunteers from the WHS for their efforts in making property improvements and repairs to the 1893 structure. Among many projects, the team of Len Peck and Gordon Castimore rebuilt the back corner of the wood frame

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The Parsonage today as viewed from Main Street. The original front porch, chimney and gable windows were removed by a former owner. The replacement stoop and new gable window configuration predates 1972.

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THE TALE OF ELI'S SEVEN SCYTHES

By Sharon Spangenberg and Dan Tassey

There was an old man
by the name of Eli;
he lived in Sandyston
on the mountainside.

All that remains
of the house of this guy,
is an old foundation
and blades of seven scythes.

Eli we hear
harvested all of his rye;
cutting it down
with one of his scythes.

When the blade was worn
on one of his scythes,
he'd make another
as long as his thigh.

When Eli harvested
his crop of rye,
he'd work all day
from morning 'till night.

Nary a neighbor
would ever stop by,
to visit this man
on the mountainside.

A hand was never offered
to old Eli;
the men would come only
to get his rye.

They'd toss him a coin
for a bag of rye,
then turn around,
never saying goodbye.

Year after year
this mountain man Eli,
would make himself
at least one more scythe.

When this old man
could hardly see from his eyes,
and could barely swing
one of his scythes,

Neighbors then came
to help this old guy;
they found that he had
seven worn scythes.

Each of the men
sharpened one of the scythes,
and finished the fields
working morning till night.

How happy was he,
this old man named Eli,
when he looked out his window
and saw all his scythes.

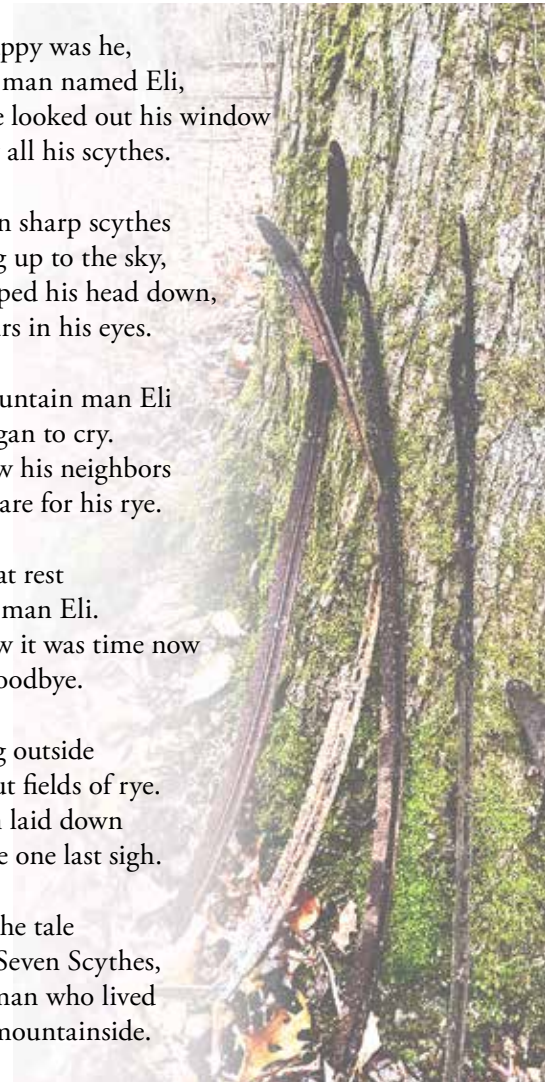
All seven sharp scythes
pointing up to the sky,
he dropped his head down,
with tears in his eyes.

Old mountain man Eli
then began to cry.
He knew his neighbors
would care for his rye.

Finally at rest
was old man Eli.
He knew it was time now
to say goodbye.

Looking outside
to see cut fields of rye.
He then laid down
and gave one last sigh.

This is the tale
of Eli's Seven Scythes,
an old man who lived
on the mountainside.



*You never know what you will find while hiking the woods in Sandyston and Walpack Townships.
On a beautiful day this past December, we discovered a pile of seven rusted scythe blades next to an old foundation.*

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house and installed an I-beam where the structural integrity of the home had been compromised by the removal of floor joists to accommodate a second floor bathroom. The building was then freshly painted and made ready for the occupancy of a new tenant. The parsonage thus became a regional office of Eastern National, a nonprofit cooperating association with the National Park Service.

Following their brief tenancy, the house was left to languish in its current “vacant and waiting” state. The scabrous facade it presents to Walpack Center’s Main Street, said to be the result of water damage due to frozen pipes, is a blight upon the venerable old structure and the village as a whole. Fortunately, DEWA has agreed to partner with the WHS to accept proposals for carpentry repairs and exterior painting to stabilize and protect it.

With homage to the earlier quote of Rev. George Price, the Walpack Historical Society believes the care we bestow upon this historic house and others in Walpack Center, will be a reminder for years to come, of the interest and concern that we, our members and friends have for the parsonage and all of the historic structures in Walpack. We move forward together; one building at a time; hopefully just in time; to assure all of our historic past and previous preservation efforts are not lost forever.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

The Walpack Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the on-going contributions of LIFE member and former trustee, Mike Orłowski, who has raised over \$3,000 toward Walpack Center building repair projects through his social media page. Mike and his generous followers, in cooperation with the 501(c)(3) Network for Good Donor Advised Fund, are continuing their efforts. We are most grateful as work on the Hendershot house continues and we look forward to a similar effort at the Walpack Center parsonage.

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.