

WALPACK

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Newsletter of the
Walpack Historical Society

Published Quarterly

Spring 2023

SUSSEX COUNTY LIBRARY'S WALPACK STATION

by Sharon Spangenberg



"Mrs. Lee Rosenkrans, wife of the store owner, came out with a pleasant smile to help carry in books."

Imagine the excitement of children and adults alike when Sussex County's Traveling Library arrived in their hometown. Some of our readers may remember from their younger years looking forward to the day when the bookmobile arrived at their school or local store.

Although there were several town libraries in operation beginning in 1872, they were located in populated town centers. Sussex County residents voted in the 1941 general election to establish and maintain a County Free Library to serve all residents. Thus, the first County library opened on May 15, 1942 with Ms. Dorothy Henry appointed as Librarian. At that time, the permanent location was in the basement of the Sussex County Hall of Records in a 621 square foot room where "a plank on two sawhorses served as a desk." The library itself consisted of 8000 books. It then moved to three rooms in the basement of the Sussex County Courthouse. As the library and courthouse became overcrowded in the mid-1950s, plans were made to construct a new Sussex County Library in Frankford Township. It has remained at that location for the past 63 years.

Ms. Henry believed that if readers in rural Sussex County areas could not go into the library, then books needed to be brought to them. Thus, local stations were set up and run by

volunteers. Those library stations would display their signs on the front of their building and "sharp eyes [would] spot them" on a sporting goods store, a feed store, a general store, a hardware store, or even a service station, as well as nearly a dozen private homes throughout the county.

The first bookmobile began visiting county schools in 1942, and by the following year, Ms. Henry began making routine visits to Walpack Center where she would park a second-hand 1936 International book truck, a "Library on Wheels" outside the school. Five years later in 1947, a three-quarter ton Dodge truck was purchased by the County. That new outside bookmobile was planned, designed, and supervised by Ms. Henry. She even chose the truck's dark green color that was lettered with the motto, "Books for All," painted in gold.

According to the official Sussex County Library report for January/February 1943, "at Walpack Center, the Board of Education is responsible for the Library Station which is housed in the school. Abram L. Aber will have charge of the books, assisted by Mrs. Lee Rosenkrans and Mrs. Eva Heater." At the end of this article is a copy of the original February 3, 1943 letter from the Board of Education President offering an arrangement to house the books at the Walpack Center school.

In 1955, a second bookmobile

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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.

WHAT A BACKGROUND!

Next Time you're feeling rather unimportant, try a little arithmetic trick based on the undebatable fact that it took two people, your parents, to get you here. Each of your parents has two parents, so in the generation just prior to that of your mother and father, there were four people whose pairing off and sharing love contributed to your existence. You are the product of eight great-grandparents, 16 great-great-grandparents, 32 great-great-great-grandparents, etc. Keep on multiplying the number by two. If you figure an average of about 25 years between each generation, you'll discover that a scant 500 years ago, there were 1,048,576 people on this planet beginning the production of you.

The Rev. Gene Britton - East Point, Ga, *Southside Sun*

Photo by Tom Dust

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	Program TBA
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

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John Church
Kimberly Coslitt
Eleanor Murphy

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Thank you to all of those people 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.

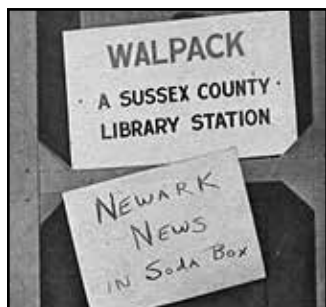
Please call 973-948-4903 to learn more about how you can help play a part in history.



SUSSEX COUNTY LIBRARY'S WALPACK STATION

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by Sharon Spangenberg



was added. According to a March 26, 1961 article written by John T. Cunningham for the *Newark Sunday News* titled, "RFD for Booklovers," Ms. Mary Lee Cavan who was the official assistant librarian, was seen taking her red and white walk-in bookmobile through the Flatbrook Valley where she would stop several times during the trip. She said, "life in the valley is slower and more basic," and its "isolation makes for natural beauty." She added, this "valley is a place cherished both by sportsmen and summer folk who visit and by people who live there year-around (*sic*)." Every six or seven weeks, Ms. Cavan, in her traveling library, would be seen at a combination post office/store in Walpack Center and in Layton, at a service station in Hainesville or at a combination garage/store in Montague. Between these visits, two bookmobiles would service 14 other library stations, 7 town libraries, 30 schools, and 10 'stops' where it would park and serve as a temporary library."

The following is also from that same *Newark Sunday News* article: Ms. Cavan, "understandably loves the trip to Flatbrook Valley in the summertime. She carries her lunch, stops the bookmobile under a pleasant grove of trees and enjoys the wonderful feeling of being in Sussex County in summertime." She likes the trip in the winter as well. "The roads are good even when it snows. Up here we're ready for snow." On one winter's day in 1961, Ms. Cavan "loaded books aboard the red and white bookmobile for a run up the valley. She made sure [to have] an adequate supply of paper bags marked: I borrow books in Sussex County." She added that "they protect the books. Most of our people carry their book bags until they disintegrate. The book girl [as she was nicknamed] gassed up the truck herself, then jumped behind the wheel and headed west for Kittatinny Mountain. Through Culver's Gap rolled the truck, over the west side of the mountain and down toward Walpack (*sic*) Center. Not a house could be seen in the wide expanse of snow-covered fields until the truck reached Bevans, and that settlement took less than a minute to traverse." The article went on to say that Ms. Cavan, "slowed her bookmobile and maneuvered it close to the wooden porch of the Walpack Center store. Mrs. Lee Rosenkrans, wife of the store owner,

came out with a pleasant smile to help carry in books. Ms. Cavan and Mrs. Rosenkrans discussed books as they filled the two shelves in the front of the store. The books fit nicely beside the Holdfast mouse traps, the Handyman's Guide, the light bulbs, and postcards of the Walpack M.E. Church."



From Walpack, Ms. Cavan went northward to the Layton General Store/post office, then on to Hainesville's Garage and Montague's combination garage and store. After two more stops and while on her way back to the library building, she relayed a conversation she had with a lady who had come to the area from Brooklyn. "She said the library service was good there [in Brooklyn] but asked, where else can you get books brought practically to the front door and then put in a store that's open from 7am until 9pm every day including Sundays? That's real service."

A former Walpack resident shared her memories, "The library continued to bring joy in the '50s with shelves of library books in the Walpack Store. Always exciting to see what was new." Memories of former students in three other Sussex County grammar schools recalled the excitement of the children when the red and white bookmobile arrived at their schools. One said, "I remember vividly the occasional arrival of the large mobile library in the 1960s, having difficulty climbing the steps to get into where the books were, walking down



the aisle and seeing books on both sides. To be able to choose a book and to take it home was exciting to me." Two others recalled lining up outside the bookmobile in single file, waiting their turn to enter. One said she "loved it when the bookmobile arrived. I liked to read, especially books about animals. I also remember going to Whitesell's garage in Hainesville and getting books there too." The other remembered "The librarian would show us where to look for books that would interest us. My favorites were *Highlights* and *Boys Life* magazines. When I was older, it was *Field and Stream* and *Outdoor Life*. They even got me to read *Moby Dick*."

Although the convenience of the bookmobile officially

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AN INTELLIGENT BLACK BASS

By Sharon Spangenberg

For ease in reading, this article was retyped.

The Jersey City News

JERSEY CITY, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1893

An Intelligent Black Bass

How "General," Has Made Friends With the Hankins Family.

One of the most singular pets that we have ever seen is a fish owned by Hiram Hankins and family, of Walback Township, Sussex county, N. J. The fish is a four pound black b. s. which was caught in the Delaware River by Mr. Hankins about one and a half years ago and placed in a large spring in his milk house.

"General," as it was named by the children, was at first very shy but almost constant attention and unvarying kindness from the entire family soon won his cold-blooded affections and he endeavored to reciprocate the kindness by a slow absence of fear in their presence and a seeming desire to please. He is somewhat shy of strangers but soon gets accustomed to them if in the company of any of the Hankins family and will go through his regular programme of amusements.

Mr. Hawkins will give a shrill whistle and "General" will shoot to the surface with such force that he goes fully a foot into the air and about times makes a complete somersault. He will leap from the sand as fearfully as a kitten and, like that animal, likes to have his back rubbed and scratched. He will roll over and tumble most like a porpoise. "General" about two months ago was much annoyed with great sores on his sides, and for a time Mr. Hawkins was fearful of losing him, but he experimented with some applications and fortunately saved the intelligent fish's life.

Mr. Hankins and his estimable wife state that the fish seemed to enjoy being taken out of the spring and having the sores attended to. The "General" now is as frisky as ever, and it is worth miles to see him go through his performance.

Mr. Hopkins was offered a large sum of money for the fish by a wealthy farmer, A. S. Spoil, of Peter's Valley, but the children raised such a remonstrance that the bargain fell through. Because of the sores "General lost flesh and weight: a trifle less than four ponies, his weight when captured."—*Port Jervis Gazette*.

How “General” has made friends with the Hankins family.

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Mr. Hankins will give a shrill whistle and "General" will shoot to the surface with such force that he goes fully a foot into the air and sometimes makes a complete somersault. He will feed from the hand as fearlessly as a kitten and, like that animal, likes to have his back rubbed and scratched. He will roll over and tumble most like a porpoise. "General," about two months ago, was much annoyed with great sores on his sides, and for a time Mr. Hankins was fearful of losing him, but he experimented with some applications and fortunately saved the intelligent fish's life.

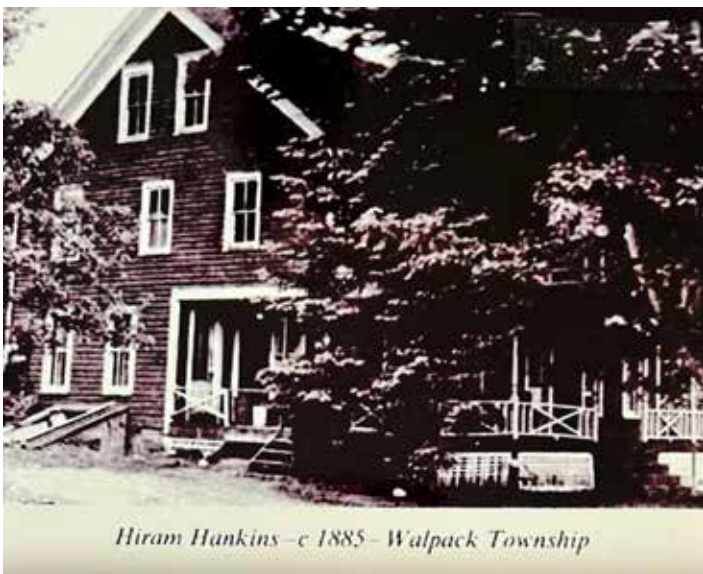
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Now that spring has arrived, anglers are seen at their favorite fishing spot along the Flatbrook attempting to catch their limit of trout. But how many of those trout fishermen have actually attempted fishing for bass.

Five years after the “Intelligent Black Bass” story appeared in *The Jersey City News*, another article about black bass was discovered in the *Port Jervis Tri-State’s Union* newspaper. That article reported that there was not one black bass in Pennsylvania in 1863. However, from that time “the population increased at an amazing rate as it was estimated that a pair of large healthy bass can deposit from 20,000 to 30,000 eggs.”

Bass fishermen who are successful in catching the black bass say "they are the most gamiest and finest fish that ever tipped a



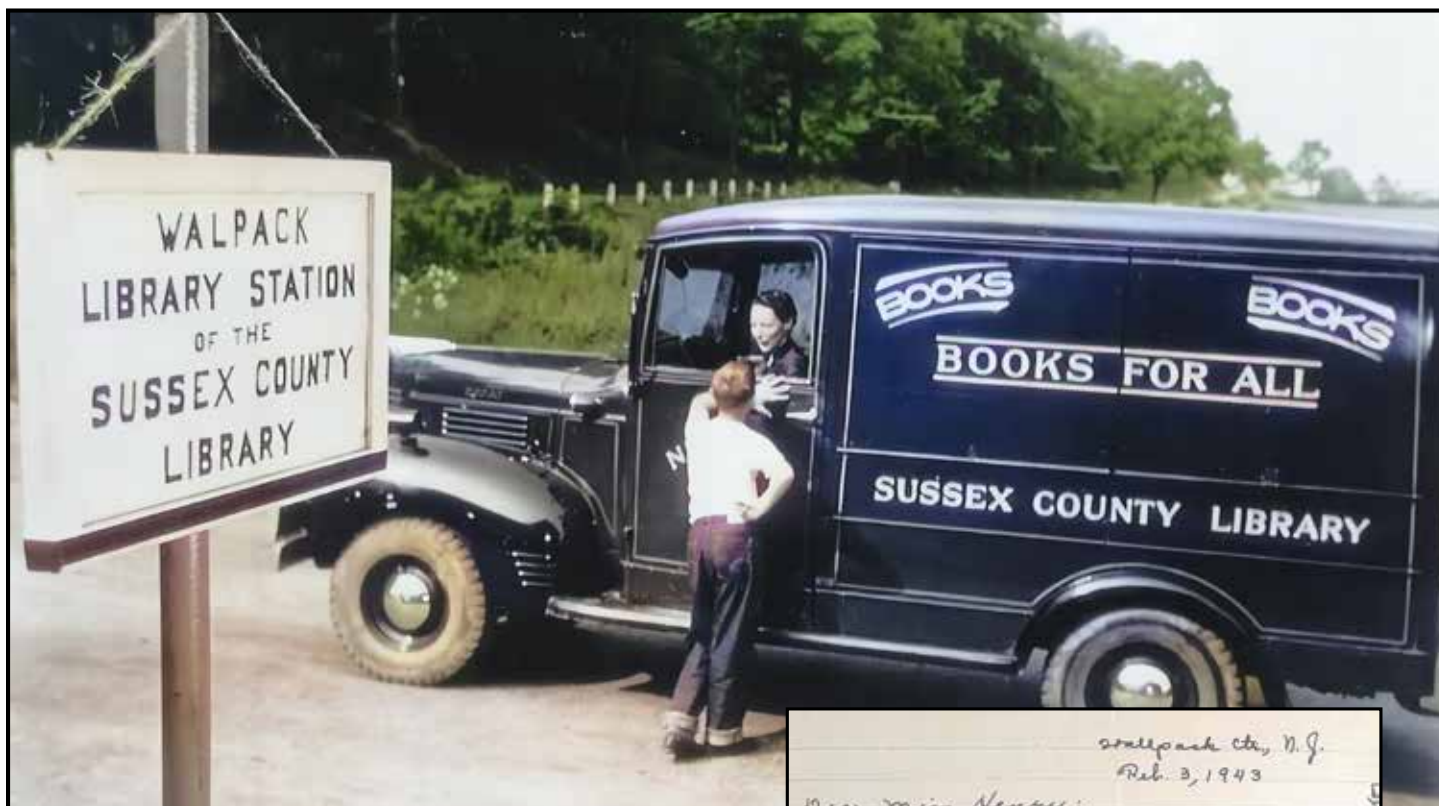
The Hiram Hankins farm was located on the Old Mine Road, 1.7 miles north of the Van Campen Inn.

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SUSSEX COUNTY LIBRARY'S WALPACK STATION

Continued from pg. 4

by Sharon Spangenberg



ended in 1996, the Sussex County Library System continues to conveniently serve the public in many ways. Besides the Main Library in Frankford, there are five library branches, the Dennis Memorial in Newton, the Dorothy E. Henry Memorial in Vernon, the E. Louise Childs Memorial in Hopatcong, the Sussex Wantage Branch in Wantage, and the Franklin Branch in Franklin. Patrons in these locations can be informed, inspired, and use their imagination through the library's print books, audiobooks, e-books, downloadable audios, newspapers, magazines, microfilms, CDs, DVDs, and many research databases including the newly acquired Richard M. Stevens property deed and will abstract files. Besides these, all libraries offer computers with high-speed internet access, Grab & Go services, as well as federal tax forms for those filing their annual income tax. All six library locations have community rooms for meetings and programming, as well as children and teen sections and a staff member devoted to youth services. The Main Library also has a Local History and Genealogy Department maintained by a full-time librarian. For a complete list of the Library's services, visit sussexcountylibrary.org and click on "Access Your Library."

Surely, if Ms. Dorothy Henry were here today, she would be quite proud of how the Sussex County Library system has progressed over the past 80 years.

A special thanks to Sussex County Library's Local History and Genealogy Librarian for her time and research in providing copies of several documents and photographs for this article.

Walpack Ctr., N. J.
Feb. 3, 1943

Dear Miss Henry:

We have decided that the Board of Education will sponsor the local library, and to house the books in the school house, and Mr. Aher, our teacher has consented to take care of it during School Hours. Mrs. Eva Neeter, during Board Council Meetings and Mrs. Lee Rosenkrantz if anyone should come to the store and want a book.

He thought this arrangement advisable, because of the gas situation. Mrs. Rosenkrantz lives next to the school and it would be very convenient for her to help out. Is this arrangement satisfactory to you?

We will have Mr. Aher build the book closet, so we will be ready. We can meet you any time you set. Just let us know about a week ahead so we can all get together.

If I haven't given you all the data you need please write me at once.

Thanking you very much.

Sincerely,
(Mrs. Ralph) Curtis B. Layton
President "Board of Education"

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WALPACK'S FIRST FIRE TRUCK

By Sharon Spangenberg

According to an April 21, 1949 New Jersey Herald article, Walpack Township's newly organized Fire Department was eagerly awaiting the arrival of their first fire truck purchased for \$300. That truck was a Model A 1929 Ford equipped with a 175-gallon booster tank and pump capable of pumping at the rate of 350 gallons per minute.

After tuning up the fire truck and practicing for eight months the firemen awaited their first call, but were they ready? The following article appeared in the December 22, 1949 New Jersey Herald.



*Restored 1929 Ford Model A Fire Truck
Mecum Auctions online photo*

Fire Fighting, Hunting Do Not Mix in Walpack

DEC 22 1949

Deer hunting season almost spelled disaster for the newly-organized Walpack Township Fire Department last Wednesday.

For months the volunteer firemen have been tuning up their new fire truck and practicing diligently in anticipation of their first fire call.

Last Wednesday the fire call for assistance came when fire broke out in the Belleville Rod and Gun Club near Walpack Center. When the alarm was received at the post office and store operated by Everett Rosencrans, Mrs. Rosencrans began telephoning to the homes of the firemen. Call after call resulted in the same answer: "He's out deer hunting".

Finally, when further delay was deemed dangerous, Postmaster Rosencrans climbed behind the steering wheel of the fire truck and took off. Mr. Rosencrans was not familiar with all the gadgets on the truck, but he fiddled, pushed and pulled until he got the engine

rolling and reached the scene of the fire. He was then confronted with the problem of laying hose and operating the pumping device, with which he was also unfamiliar.

About that time, Leter Bauer, another Walpacker, appeared on the scene, and together they figured out the mechanism and finally poured a stream of water on a smoldering beam under the fireplace in the clubhouse.

In the meantime, a call for assistance was sent to the Branchville Fire Department, but fortunately for the morale and peace of mind the Walpack volunteers, Mr. Rosencrans and his assistants had the fire out before the Branchville truck arrived.

Women in the township this week are promoting a project by which they will learn to operate the fire truck—just in case there should be another fire during the next deer season.



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

AN INTELLIGENT BLACK BASS

by Sharon Spangenberg

Continued from pg. 5

scales. But those who used gallons of bait and returned bassless (*sic*) say that they are nothing but packages of bones wrapped up in scales and entirely unfit to eat." The article goes on to say that black bass dislike stagnant water, thus the reason anglers troll the Delaware River for hours in search of the perfect deep hole. The muscles of these fish are well-developed and when the angler hooks one, the black bass will "fight for liberty." It plunges out of the water and then back into the water several times and unless the able-bodied fisherman with strong convictions nets his prize, the hooked black bass will continue fighting until it snaps the line or breaks the pole.

Hiram Hankins had to have been one of those able-bodied and experienced fishermen who was successful in catching his four-pound black bass in 1891. Why "General" was kept as a pet is not known, but as the *Tri-State's Union* newspaper reported, it was worth going miles to see "General" go through his performances."



Photo courtesy of ncwildlife.org

REMEMBERING CHARLES GRIPPO

It is with great sadness that we share the recent passing of long-time member and former treasurer, Charles Grippo.

Charlie passed away on February 16 at the age of 83 after a hard-fought battle with Parkinson's Disease. He will be fondly remembered for his humor and strong sense of responsibility and dedication to our society and its members. Our heartfelt sympathy is extended to Charlie's wife, Mary Ann, and his children, grandchildren, and extended family. He will be dearly missed by all who knew him.

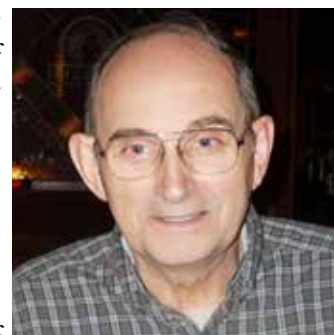


Photo courtesy of Legacy.com

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.