

WALPACK historical society

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Newsletter of the
Walpack Historical Society

Published Quarterly

Spring/Summer 2025

IN THE SHADOW OF A ZINC GRAVE MARKER

by Jennifer S. Brylinski

In the Spring 2024 edition of the Walpack Historical Society Newsletter, Scott Yashay wrote a wonderful article about the history of Zinc Grave Markers. In this article I delved into the lives of the four people in Walpack Township, New Jersey, who are buried under a zinc monument.

The 1800s were a vibrant time in American history. The industrial age opened up numerous new and exciting possibilities for a great number of people. Part of that progress made its way to Walpack Township. This is evident in its village, commercial and agricultural growth.

The four people buried in Walpack Township with zinc grave markers were part of that ground swell of advancements and possibilities. They all lived the majority of their lives in the 1800s, and all lived during the turbulent times of the Civil War.

The first three people I researched are located in the Walpack Center Cemetery, in Walpack Center, New Jersey, on the eastern side of the Flatbrook River. These are Henry Berk (also spelled Burk, Buke, or Burke on some documents), Horace Mitten, and Isaac Losey. The fourth is Mary Smith Rosenkrans who is buried in the Lower Walpack Cemetery.

Henry Berk was born in Pennsylvania in 1796. He died in Warren County, New Jersey in 1876 at the age of 80 years old. His wife Laura was born about 1805 in New York State and died at the age of 79 in 1883. He was buried in Walpack Center Cemetery with a tall zinc monument as a grave marker. They had at least nine children, including Sarah, John (buried behind his father in the Walpack Center Cemetery with his wife Hannah), Henry, Synthia, Catharine, Emma, Franklin, William and Margaret, as cited in Henry's will.

Henry and Laura's daughter Catharine married Moses Hull. They lived in

Walpack. He died in 1866. Moses Hull's original headstone, along with son Victor's, are presently located on the Military Trail near Van Campen Inn in Walpack.



*Henry Berk's zinc grave marker
located in the Walpack Cemetery*

Discovered along the Delaware River in the 1950s, these gravestones are cenotaphs (empty tombs). Since Moses and Victor Hull are buried with other members of their family in the Lower Walpack Cemetery and their names identified on a newer grave marker, the original gravestones were relocated along Military Trail on the property that was once Moses Hull's homestead.

A recorded road return for 1836 with accompanying map shows Henry's house along the west side of Ridge Road (Thunder Mountain Road).

On May 2, 1831, property deeds show Henry and Laura Burk purchasing 105 acres from Levi Rosenkrans. In 1832, he purchased an additional 150 acres from Levi. This property is located on both sides of Thunder Mountain Road south of the current Thunder Mountain Camp. The Hopkins 1860 Map of Sussex County shows H. Berk at the same location.

Property deeds show Henry and Laura Berk as well as John and Sarah Heaney (could be Haney) quit claim deed to John Shoemaker. This deed is dated November 17, 1827. This shows that Henry owned this land prior to that date in 1827. The land amounted to 200 acres. Shoemaker sold it to Jesse Bell in 1836. Jesse Bell sold it to Cornelius Gunn in 1869. That house was bulldozed by the federal government in 1998 since part of the back wall was collapsing. Henry also owned property on the hill across the road from Chado Farms in 1841, located along what is now NPS 615, in Walpack Township.

The 1850 US Census shows Henry Burke living in Walpack, New Jersey, as a farmer. He is listed with his wife Laura (noted as Lora) and five of his children: John, Henry, Catharine (noted as Conthy), Emma Jane and Frank.

The 1860 US Census lists Henry Burke as a farmer living in Walpack, New Jersey, with Walpack Center as the post office. He is living with his wife Laura, three of his children (Emma, Franklin, William) and Jacob Mills.

The 1870 US Census shows Henry Buke living in Pahaquarry, Warren County, New Jersey, with Columbia as the post office. Henry's occupation is listed as being a farmer, and his household included wife Laura and his son William, aged 19. At one point the Burkes moved to Calno, south of

Continued on pg. 2

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This edition of the Walpack Historical Society newsletter was edited by Allyson Schwab and Art Lizza. Photographs are provided by the author, unless otherwise noted.

IN THE SHADOW OF A ZINC GRAVE MARKER

continued from pg. 1

by Jennifer S. Brylinski

the Depue and Calno Cemeteries, along the Old Mine Road in Hardwick Township.

Henry Berk's Will was dated May 13, 1876, and probated on June 8, 1876 in Warren County, New Jersey. The epitaph on Henry Berk's grave marker reads, "Thy Word Commands Our Flesh to Dust, Return Ye Sons of Men: All Nations Rose From Earth at First and Turn to Earth Again."

The Berks were well known in Walpack, as Henry Berk's offspring married into the Stoll, Fuller, Petty, Bevans, Losey, Layton, Struble and Bell families.

Horace Mitten was born in 1820, in Hampton, New Jersey, and died at the age of 55 in 1876. He was married to Hannah Spangenberg in 1843 in Walpack Center. Hannah was born about 1824 in Sussex County, New Jersey, and died in 1891. Horace is buried in the Walpack Center Cemetery with a zinc grave marker currently lying flat on the ground. Researched records do not show where Hannah is buried. She lived another 15 years after Horace died. Several of her Spangenberg relatives are buried in the Walpack Center Cemetery. Horace and Hannah had at least six children, including Ellen, William, Catharine, Mary Ann, George and Maria. Their son William was a Civil War veteran. He was a soldier with Company 9, 10th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteers, as shown on his headstone in the Pequest Union Cemetery in Warren County, New Jersey.



Horace Mitten's zinc grave marker located in the Walpack Cemetery

In the 1850 US Census, Horace and his wife and three of their children are living in Newton, New Jersey. Hannah's brother John Spangenberg and his wife Sarah and their children lived next door to Horace and Hannah.

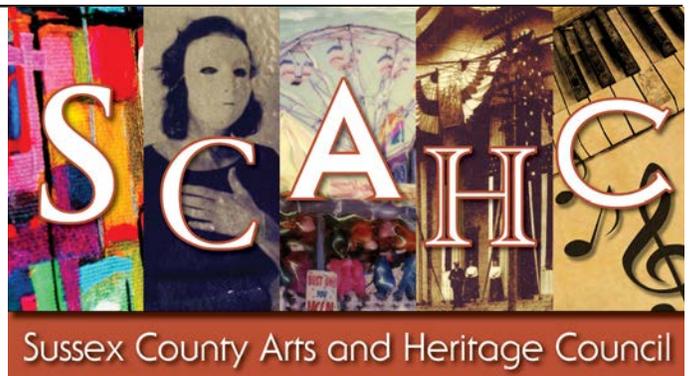
In the 1860 US Census, Horace (shown as Horris) and his wife and five of their children are shown living in Montague Township, Sussex County, New Jersey, with a Deckertown Post Office. His occupation was farm laborer, with a personal estate valued at \$200.

In the 1870 US Census, Horace (shown as Hnase Milteer) and his wife Hannah, and their daughter Maria (aged 9), are shown living in Walpack, New Jersey, with a Stillwater Post Office. His occupation is laborer, and Hannah's occupation is keeping house.

In the 1875 NJ State Census, Horace (shown as Horrace) and his family are living in Walpack, New Jersey. He is listed as a laborer. His and his wife Hannah's birthplace is listed as Hampton.

Continued on pg. 4

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.



2025 CALENDAR

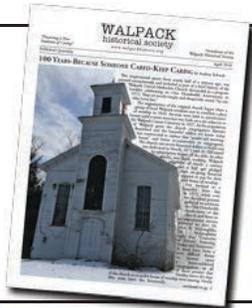
April 12	Spring Hike - Blue Mountain Lakes
April 26	*Spring Dinner
May 3	Peony bed and Walpack Center Village clean-up
May 18	Presentation - Shapanack: A Locality in Walpack
May 26	VCI open 12 -3 pm
May 26	Walpack Church, Rosenkrans Museum, and Barn open 12- 3 pm
June 20	VCI open and tours to the Black/Slave Cemetery 11am-2pm
June 22	Presentation – Inside the Walpack Archives
July 20	Road trip to Bethlehem, PA to explore Walpack's Moravian roots
August 17	Presentation - The Garden State: Where Ideas Grow
September 20	The Spirits of Lower Walpack Cemetery
October 12	Van Campen Day (Heritage Weekend)
November 9	Fall Hike - Details TBA
December 6	*Holiday Dinner
December 13 & 14	Walpack Christmas (museum open)

**Members and their guests.*

All events are subject to change. Visit WalpackHistory.org and [Facebook.com/WalpackHistory](https://www.facebook.com/WalpackHistory) for calendar updates, changes and details.

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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BE A PART OF HISTORY - DOCENTS & VOLUNTEERS ARE 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 email info@walpackhistory.org to learn more about how you can help play a part in history.



IN THE SHADOW OF A ZINC GRAVE MARKER

by Jennifer S. Brylinski

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Horace Mitten's New Jersey Death Record shows his death place as Walpack Center, New Jersey, on April 27, 1876. His occupation at death was listed as farmer. The epitaph on Horace Mitten's grave marker reads, "O, Grave, Where is Thy Victory." In the 1885 NJ Census, it shows wife Hannah living in Walpack, Sussex County, NJ. She is living with her son George and his family. She died in 1891.

In **The Shadow of A Zinc Grave Marker** will continue in the Fall 2025 issue of the Walpack Newsletter.

Jennifer Brylinski is a member of the Walpack Historical Society and is the DAR Van Bunshooten Chapter Historian.

WHS RECEIVES THIRD PLACE IN NEWSLETTER COMPETITION

by Ruth Stieh

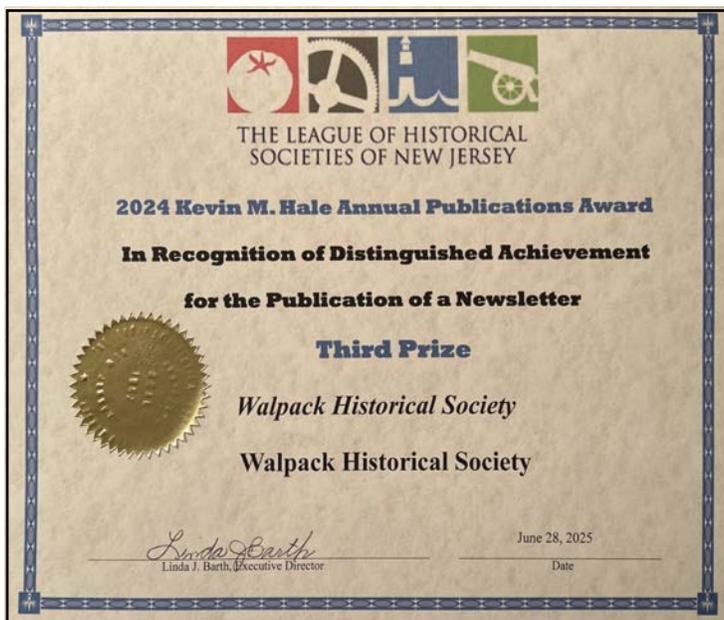
The League of Historical Societies of New Jersey held its summer meeting on Saturday, June 28, 2025, at which time the Kevin Hale Publication Awards were presented. We are proud to announce that the Walpack Historical Society received third place for our Fall 2024 edition of the newsletter. Allyson Schwab, Trustee, accepted the award on behalf of the society. WHS has entered this newsletter competition only 4 times earning third, second and third place honors respectively. This year first place was awarded to South River Historical and Preservation Society and second place to Boonton Historical Society and Museum.

We are very proud of the newsletter staff for their hard work, dedication to excellence and creativity. The link for this and other archived editions of the newsletter is <https://walpackhistory.org/newsletter/>

Newsletters submitted for the competition are judged on the following criteria taken from the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey website:

- Frequency of publication, clearly identifies the name of the group, date, location, website. Is it eye-catching?
- Contents: Does it contain articles that add to our historical knowledge or understanding of a topic? Does it encourage participation in the organization's activities? Does it encourage membership? Does it contain articles about events that are current (or were at time of publication)? Does it review previous activities and successes? Does it promote other heritage tourism? Does it promote other sites? Does the group partner with other sites? Can it be viewed online?
- Pictures: Do they have historic or cultural value? Are they clearly labeled and credited to the photographer? Graphic quality...eye-catching?
- Contact Info: Easy to contact the group or editor with more information? Is there an address/phone/email for contact?

It truly takes a village to make this quarterly publication possible. Your support of WHS enables us to promote the rich history of Walpack and the surrounding area. We are always looking for writers, contributors and articles of interest to share. Thank you for your support and sponsorship.



ABRAHAM L. ABER

WALPACK CENTER'S ONE-ROOM SCHOOLMASTER

by Sharon Spangenberg



Abe Aber
New Jersey Herald

Abraham L. Aber (Abe) was born in Hainesville, New Jersey in 1902. He and his wife Elizabeth (Roy) were married in 1931 and celebrated their 54th wedding anniversary in December 1985. Together they raised one son, Roy.

Abe received his early education at the Hainesville and Layton schools in Sandyston Township. After completing his high school education in Newton, he went on to take examinations and a summer “normal school” session where he earned enough credits for a permanent elementary state certificate.

In 1921 at the age of 18, he took over as schoolmaster at Walpack Center’s one room school where students ranged from kindergarten through the eighth grade. Some of the students were about the same age as he was. He continued to be Walpack’s schoolmaster for the next 30 years with only a one-year break in 1923 when he and other young men from Walpack Valley went to Detroit to work in the automobile industry. Mr. Aber returned to his teaching position in the fall of 1924. After two other one-room schoolhouses closed in Walpack, students were transferred from as far away as Flatbrookville, and by 1929, his students totaled 40.

His home on Old Mine Road in Walpack included a nine-acre farm where he raised at various times, chickens, sheep, hogs, and sometimes two or three cows. All these Mr. Aber tended to before leaving for school in the morning and later it was shared by his son.

Mr. Aber was more than just a teacher, his daily duties also included bringing the children to school in the morning and taking them home in the afternoon. While at school, he kept the fire going in the pot belly stove and kept the building and grounds clean. With no indoor plumbing or electricity, during his first years of teaching, water needed to be carried from a spring about 1000 feet away across a field. That was until he introduced the first modern convenience for the school – a hand pump just outside the door.

As a carpenter during the summer months and with electric coming to Walpack Center in 1937, Mr. Aber introduced the first industrial arts shop where he installed a lathe and jigsaw for the manual training class. There was a sewing machine for the girls and a piano on which the children were taught by a woman who visited the school one day a week. Although only a grammar school, he introduced biology to the children with specimens of small snakes and insects in jars of alcohol. Abe also took the children on hikes where they learned tree and plant identification.

Since the children seldom left Walpack Valley, Mr. Aber saw to it that they knew what the Atlantic Ocean and New York City looked like. He took them to Madison Square Garden to see the circus, made many trips to the Bronx Zoo, and even went to the Statue of Liberty.

With two typewriters and a mimeograph for the students’ use, they put out a 12-page newsletter called the Minisink Valley News which they sent to the boys who were in service. In 1943 the school received an award for an editorial published in the Minisink News by a ten-year-old who told of his experiences in New York and in Walpack. He praised the aid of his teacher, Abe Aber. The certificate was presented by then former County Superintendent of Schools, Ralph Decker who also praised Mr. Aber’s work in “teaching a variety of things not in the regular curriculum.”

As schoolmaster, Mr. Aber made a lasting impression on the lives of all his students. His name was synonymous with industry, loyalty, cooperation, interest in his work and community and love for rural life. He was known throughout Sussex County “for his reputation as a fine teacher, a good disciplinarian and a friend of the youth.”



The Last Year at Walpack Center School First Row: Christina Drelich (front) Carl Christie (center) Don Utter (back); Row two: Bob Gould, Jeanie Williams, Linda Utter, Alice Parr, John Little, Abe Aber (teacher, in rear of class); Row three: Janet Fuller, Dan Kantenwein, Fred Battali, Richard Meyers, Hap Warner (l), Ed Little (r); Row four: Eugene Rosenkrans, Paul Williams, Russell Meyers, Joyce Matthews, Jackie Heigis, Alzina Treible; Row five: Victor Guylones, Vera Parr, Larry Gioielli, Freela Haney, Jean Rosenkrans; Row six: Raymond Drelich, Jean Fuller, Markert Utter, Valentina Guylones, Jim Heigis; Row seven: Nelson Meyers, Sandra Wilson (l), Preston Haney (r), Russell Kantenwein, Robert Matheis, Ed Drelich.

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ABRAHAM L. ABER

WALPACK CENTER'S ONE-ROOM SCHOOLMASTER

by Sharon Spangenberg

continued from pg. 5

Not only did Mr. Aber guide the children of Walpack in their academic studies, he also worked with them in extracurricular activities such as community projects and 4-H Club activities. The latter he was recognized by Rutgers University for his meritorious leadership in 4-H work for 27 outstanding years.

His civic duties included being treasurer of Walpack Township for five years, chairman of the Civilian Defense Council during World War II, and president of Walpack Volunteer Fire Department.

In 1951, Walpack's lone grammar school closed and all students were transported by bus to the newly established Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated School in Layton where Mr. Aber became principal as well as teacher of the seventh and eighth grades. With his move to Sandyston-Walpack School also came a move into a new home in Layton that he built himself.

Mr. Aber held the unique record of having served the longest term of service in a rural school of any teacher in Sussex County. He remained principal/teacher for Sandyston-Walpack Consolidated School for another 10 years, retiring at the end of the 1961 school year.

During the next 20 years he devoted his time to his second career, woodworking and refinishing in the workshop he built behind his home in Layton. He held a life membership in the Sussex County Education Association and was the recipient of the first certificate awarded by that organization. He was also a member of the Kittatinny Lodge F&AM of Branchville for 37 years. Abe enjoyed hiking and was an avid hunter – his favorite game being woodcock and grouse. He was also a member of Sandyston Hunt Club.

Abraham L. Aber died in Allentown, Pennsylvania on August 25, 1986. Many of his former students have shared fond memories of their early education with their beloved teacher. Those memories have been compiled in a small book that is part of this year's display in our museum. Please stop in to see our display featuring Walpack Center's one room schoolhouse and its schoolmaster, Abraham Lincoln Aber. We hope to see you there.

(The above article is a collection of excerpts from local newspaper articles curated by Sharon Spangenberg.)

MISSING GRAVESTONE TO BE RETURNED TO FRANKFORD PLAINS CEMETERY AFTER 60 YEARS

by Sharon Spangenberg

While participating in Branchville's 2024 annual townwide garage sale, a gentleman saw the sweatshirt I was wearing with the logo, "Walpack Historical Society" and asked if I was associated with that organization. He then told me about a gravestone found in Walpack many years ago by his former neighbor. Interested in the story behind this gravestone, I contacted a family member of his former neighbor.

The following was shared with me by the oldest child of the family who found the gravestone. He recalled that about 60 years ago, his parents were out for a drive. After passing Tillman Ravine they turned left at the crossroads by the Walpack Center Cemetery. It was on that road that they saw a stone alongside the road. His mother thought that flat stone would make a great platform for their birdbath, so they took it home. After cleaning it, they discovered it was a gravestone. Not knowing what to do with it, they kept the



Photo provided by John Santoro

stone. His parents, now deceased, kept the gravestone in their possession until their home was sold in 2017.

Shortly after learning about this gravestone, I visited the home of the current owner of the property. There leaning against their red barn was a gravestone with the following inscription:
OCTO 1776 THEN DYED P.D.W. Jr.
IN The 54 Yr OF HIS AGE

Wondering who the P.D.W. Jr. initials represented, I began researching. The Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey volume 40, available at the Sussex County Library revealed a 1927 listing of those buried in Frankford Plains Cemetery. There, several DeWitts are listed including P.D.W. d. Oct. 1776, in 54th yr. What was odd though was that there were three gravestones listed in that genealogical magazine noted as "Stone gone, 1961," but the P.D.W., Jr. gravestone was not one of those listed as missing in 1961.

A subsequent visit to the Frankford Plains Cemetery revealed that those noted as "Stone gone, 1961" were actually erected within the DeWitt burial plot, but not the P.D.W., Jr., that one was missing.

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MISSING GRAVESTONE TO BE RETURNED TO FRANKFORD PLAINS CEMETERY AFTER 60 YEARS

Continued from pg. 6

by Sharon Spangenberg

After several phone calls and speaking with many associated with the Frankford Plains Cemetery, the cemetery association agreed to accept the return of the gravestone and to have it re-erected in the DeWitt family plot by the cemetery's groundskeeper.

A special thank you to Jim Massaro who was the gentleman whom I initially spoke with at the garage sale, the family of Arthur and Selma Rooney who found the gravestone in the mid-1960s in Walpack Township, John and Ellen Santoro who inherited the gravestone when they purchased their home from the Rooney family, Janet and John Price who assisted in obtaining cemetery contacts, as well as Martha Little and members of the Frankford Plains Cemetery Association.

It is true that what you wear says a lot about who you are. In this case, because I was wearing a Walpack Historical Society sweatshirt at Branchville's annual garage sale, a gravestone that had been missing for over 60 years will be returned to the Frankford Plains Cemetery.



John Santoro with the PDW Jr. gravestone.

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*REMEMBERING DIANNE AND
ALDEBERT KUENZEL*

by Ruth Stieh

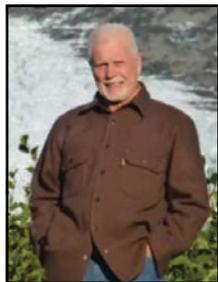


*Dianne L. Kuenzel
Photo courtesy of
Bradley Funeral
Homes*

It is with very sincere sadness that the Walpack Historical Society shares the passing of two long time members. Dianne and Adelbert (Bert) Kuenzel. Dianne shared her love of reading and teaching of literature to help proofread our newsletter for many years. Dianne passed away January 26, 2025. Her husband Bert passed away September 25, 2024 after a long illness.

Prior to the pandemic, both were regulars at the Holiday and Spring dinners, and were always so anxious to catch up on seeing friends from Walpack.

The Walpack Historical Society family expresses our deepest condolences to their son, Peter, his wife, Jennifer and their beloved grandchildren, Victoria and Hunter.



*Aldebert Kuenzel
Photo courtesy of
Bradley Funeral
Homes*

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 visiting walpackhistory.org/newsletter/

~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.