

WALPACK

historical society

*"Preserving a Fine
Tradition of Caring"*

www.walpackhistory.org

Newsletter of the
Walpack Historical Society

Published Quarterly

Summer 2020

THE CHANGING WORLD AFTER THE PANDEMIC



During these challenging times, the Walpack Historical Society will continue to work within the safety parameters set forth by DEWA (Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area) and health professionals, while continuing to share and promote the rich history of the Walpack area to the greatest extent possible. Our programs for the 2020 season were planned with all of you in mind and we are proud of the schedule we had proposed. We will need to wait until next summer to experience programs such as the Lower Walpack Cemetery presentation about many early settlers and military heroes buried there; the 65th anniversary of the Flood of 1955; various hikes to points of interest and more.

It is not currently feasible to maintain social distancing in any of the historic buildings where we normally offer programs and conduct tours. It is also still unclear if "outdoor only" events will be permitted under the National Park Service guidelines later this year. It is unlikely the WHS will be able to host our popular Van Campen Day in October or "A Walpack Christmas" in December

of this year. Be assured, our dedicated members continue to monitor our buildings, engage in ongoing research and investigation, and coordinate planning and idea exchanges via semimonthly telephone conferencing. You may anticipate timely posting of matters of interest on our WHS website and social media pages.

In its long history, our beautiful valley has experienced frontier conflict, war, flood, fire, eminent domain and governmental neglect and destruction, yet still it manages to survive. May the strength and spirit of those who lived and thrived in Walpack for generations, help us overcome the challenges we face today.

Walpack Historical Society wants everyone to be safe and healthy.

Continue to check for updates at the website www.walpackhistory.org and follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Hope to see everyone in person soon.

Don Stieh, *President of the Walpack Historical Society*

Board of Trustees Officers

President

Don Stieh

Vice President

Chris Cunningham

Treasurer

Dave Hayes

Recording Secretary

Ruth Stieh

Corresponding Secretary

Myra Snook

Trustees

Allyson Schwab-Miller

Audrey Schwab

Jen Wycalek

Joanne Wirths

Mike Orlovski

Tom Dust

Membership - Join Us!

Individual \$15

Family \$25

Corporate \$50

Life \$200

Patron \$250

973-948-4903



WALPACK FIRE
DEPARTMENT
T-SHIRTS

SIZES AVAILABLE:

SMALL, MEDIUM, LARGE,
EXTRA LARGE

ONLY \$20 EACH

WALPACKHISTORY.ORG

Event Photos by Tom Dust
Walpack Historical Society Newsletter
Designed and Edited
by Dusty Roads Media



LOWER WALPACK CEMETERY UPDATE

by Sharon Spangenberg

The Walpack Historical Society had planned to have a presentation earlier this year on the grounds of the Lower Walpack Cemetery. However, this event needed to be canceled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic restrictions.

Several members of the Walpack Historical Society have been caring for this cemetery for the past two years. Dan Tasse, Jeff Stoveken, and my husband Hixon Spangenberg have been mowing the cemetery grounds as well as cleaning and re-erecting fallen gravestones.

The land on which this cemetery is located was once owned by Joseph Kirkbride. In 1725 he conveyed the land to Nicholas Schoonhoven and Thomas Brink. In 1737 they donated and deeded to the "Christian people of that community, the church and burial grounds for the first Walpack church near the bend." It contained 4 acres of land with the boundary "beginning at the northwest corner of the burying yard." This deed call would indicate that a burial ground was already in use by 1737. Today, 1.14 acres is set aside for the cemetery.

This cemetery was incorporated

in 1877 as The Walpack Cemetery Association, then in 1915 as The Lower Walpack Cemetery Association. Today, the cemetery is no longer active. The cemetery had been maintained by members of the Rosenkrans family until 2016 at which time Historic Property Steward volunteers kept the grass mowed. Beginning the Spring of 2019 members of the Walpack Historical Society have cared for and maintained the cemetery.

In preparation for the Tocks Island Dam Project, in 1974 the Army Corp of Engineers visited all cemeteries that would have been potentially in danger of being flooded. At that time all gravestones in this cemetery were documented. A total of 255 burials were recorded as well as 21 unmarked gravestones and 36 possible graves. Since that accounting, our team has probed, discovered, and reset many more gravestones. The earliest inscribed stone that has been discovered thus far has the initials IMD with the year 1752. The last burial was Dolores Rosenkrans in 2008. Dolores and her husband Benjamin lived in the only home now remaining in Flatbrookville.

continued on pg. 7

Our appreciation and thanks to all the members and friends of WHS who remembered the Society while taking advantage of their employer's *Employee Matching Gift programs*.

Your generosity helps projects such as the Walpack M.E. Church Restoration Project.

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

2020 CALENDAR

| | |
|--------------|---|
| April 19 | Spring Hike: Pompey Ridge to Chado |
| April 26 | Spring Dinner at <i>The Walpack Inn</i> |
| May 17 | A presentation by Jennifer Palmer |
| June 6 | <i>National Trail Day</i> |
| June 28 | Walpack at the Movies |
| July 19 | Lower Walpack Cemetery by Sharon Spangenberg |
| Aug. 16 | 2020 anniversary of 1955 flood by Don Stieh |
| Sept. 20 | Fire Tower hike by Dan Tassey & Mike Orłowski |
| Oct. 11 | Van Campen Day |
| Nov. 1 | Fall Hike - Military Road East |
| Dec. 5 | Walpack Christmas - Church and Museum open |
| Dec. 6 | Holiday Dinner - Walpack Inn |
| Dec. 12 & 13 | Walpack Christmas - Church and Museum open |

Visit WalpackHistory.org for calendar updates, changes and details.

SUPPORT THE WHS NEWSLETTER

We are looking for Corporate sponsors and/or WHS members who are interested in supporting our newsletter. As costs continue to rise and our membership grows we need to offset some of the costs. Companies can have a business card sized ad, about 3.5" x 2". For WHS members, we would proudly display your name in our newsletter as a sponsor, or you can remain anonymous.

Info@WalpackHistory.org



THANK YOU Brian Banner! He is a LIFE MEMBER who has donated \$100.00 in support of the newsletter in honor of Len Peck and Ruth Ann Whitesell.

2020 MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE NOW DUE

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

1. Visit www.walpackhistory.org, click on the Membership tab to pay your 2020 membership dues Online using PayPal.
2. If you wish to pay your dues through the mail, please fill out the Membership Form on page 7 and send it along with your payment to the given address on the form.

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

NEW MEMBERS

Patricia Lasalandra
Patrick Mahon
Marjorie Kleiman
Lisa Murcko
Daniel O'Brien
Christian Hartman
Nicole Bello
Joseph Bello
Michael Farrell O'Brien
Lee Stephens
Donna Komorek

Thank you for becoming a member of the Walpack Historical Society. Your dues helps us to fulfill our mission to actively stimulate 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.

THANK YOU!

We offer a most gracious THANK YOU to the following members and friends who have so generously made donations.

Ernest Hemschot
Lori Reich
Patricia Lasalandra
David Gilbreth
John & Carol Ford
Madeleine Brennan
Richard & Janet R. Schooley
Sarah E. Verbeke
Gail Wershing
Gene Whitesell
Myra Snook
John Rosenkrans
Rick & Toby Lear
Patricia N. Fowler
Ernest Bouyet
Gregory Cholet
Sally J. Busam
Arlene Sliker
Donna Komorek

BE A PART OF HISTORY - DOCENTS & VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



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

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



Follow Us & Share • WalpackHistory.org



COLONEL BENJAMIN ROSENKRANS

by Jeff Stoveken
Sussex County Excursions



What a better way than to spend New Year's Day with some bloodletting! We decided to walk out to the Benjamin Rosenkrans Homestead remains. Dan had found some writing on this house in an old book and it stated that it had a spring at the front door of the house that was said to be "such good quality water that it was preferred over whiskey." The road out to it is on the 1860 map but you can barely call it a road now. The bed is still defined and in pretty good condition, however, the growth down the middle makes this road almost impassable even by foot. We could've opted to circle around the road and find a clear path this time of year, but something about using a very old road brings you back to the time when the residents of this land approached this house on a horse and buggy or perhaps a sleigh in the winter.

So we moved forward through some of the thickest briars we've ever encountered with hiking, sticks in hand, that were no match for this chest high brush full of needles. Slow, but sure, we followed this road until the spring was on our right. We stopped here to try to figure out which side the house remains were on and basically where our next step would be because you literally could not see anything around you. As Dan was clearing his next step I looked past him and could make out a square shaped object buried in the brush. He was so close to it but looking down you would not see it, that's how thick these briars were. I asked him, "what is that next to you?" Dan replied, "that is the trough for the spring that is located at the front door of the house, so the house

remains must be right over there." As we looked up over the brush we could see some stonework but it would not be easy to get to.

As we turned to enter the foundation of the old home we saw a low-lying stone lined wall along the edge of the road we had been walking and at the midway point it had a cut out allowing the spring water to flow through from the point we had observed on the other side. Surprisingly, the interior of the "house" was not as bad as far as brush and we were able to make our way around. We believed we entered along the fireplace wall because of the depth of the stone. To our left and technically outside of the foundation were a few stone slab steps leading up to that trough. So, we knew that would've been the front door area which made sense because it faced the road. We cleaned some of the leaves and debris away and photographed what we could. We examined how all the walls were built and it was unusual how some bricks were put in the gaps in all different directions. We also found a very nice corner on the south west wall of the fireplace. The only thing I forgot to take note of was the approximate size of this foundation, but I do remember it being quite large.

Upon leaving we decided to cross the running spring closer to the house, then to the road itself, and make our way back up. We had left a car at each end, so we wanted to continue to the end and make our way out to Old Mine Road. Dan had found a barely discernible smaller farm road that we followed to a crudely built slab stone bridge. We crossed there and after several minutes of scouring the area we located the main road again and headed west. This road never let up and challenged us right up to the end. Between all the briars and downed trees, it took everything we had to make it back to the other car. But just before we did we came across a very old well that seems to have supplied another home in the area and just before getting back in the car Dan spotted a property marker appropriately indicating that we were at the end of the tract that we had come to check out.

It wasn't until driving back to my car that I realized whose property we actually just visited. Rosenkrans is a huge name in the Walpack area, so it's hard to keep track of who is who in that family.

continued on pg. 6



THE E.S.H. ROCK

by Jeff Stoveken
Sussex County Excursions



Two years ago, Dan had returned from a kayak trip down the Delaware and told me he saw a rock in the river that had writing on it. He wasn't sure what it said because he couldn't get close enough to read it or even sit there long enough because the current was too strong. So, he carried on with his trip and noted its approximate location was south of the Dingmans Bridge and the bridge was still visible from the rock. He said, "we need to make a trip out there, but we have to wait until the river is low enough and preferably very low, like the end of the summer." For the past two summers every time the water level got fairly low, heavy rains would bring it right back up again.

A few weeks ago Dan said we had to keep an eye on the water level and get out to that rock. Then last week he said it was time, we should be able to find it and get close enough to read what's on there. Dan, his wife Diane and I met up at the Dingmans launch Sunday morning. The water had risen a little bit, probably from rains further up the Delaware. But it was a perfect day to try to find it so we set out on the river.

The East/West Jersey line is about a mile south of the bridge so we aimed for that first, we figured to mark a rock in the river, it would have to be pretty important. Dan led the way and we paddled over to every sizable rock we saw. The more we looked for that one, the more there were! The only two things he knew for sure was that it was far enough out in the river that you could boat around it, and as mentioned earlier, the Dingmans Bridge could be seen from the rock. The only problem with that was we had traveled over a mile already, checking every stone and we could still see the bridge. We looked up to a point ahead of us that seemed to have quite a few larger rocks sticking up out of the water, so we kept paddling forward. I couldn't really picture what we were looking for and started to wonder if we were going to locate it only because Dan made it clear that the water had to be

low enough.

Sure enough Dan shouts "here it is"! As we paddle closer I can see some letters on this large rock but I heeded Dan's warnings about the water pushing you up against it so we decided to head to shore. We all beached our boats and Dan pulled rope out of his backpack. He said the safest way to get to that rock is without a boat and I was like really? He said yes, I'm sure. He tied both ropes together and wrapped them around a larger rock on the shoreline. He broke down a paddle into two pieces and said here now we have hiking sticks! Both of us grabbed hold of the rope and started out into the river. Diane opted to stay behind to keep an eye on us and also photo document the excursion.

Fortunately, the water was super clear that day, no matter where we were on the river we could see the bottom. So we finally made it out to the rock after using about 75 feet of that rope. The rocks on the floor of the river were very slippery and moved under our feet so we were glad to reach the rock. However, the force of the water rushing around this rock could push your legs out from under you at any given moment. The first set of letters, and also the largest, were E.S.H. On the opposite side of the stone is what I believe to be the date 1900. It's not perfect, but that is my best analysis. As I am reading that date, Dan is noticing more initials on his side of the rock. Another set that ends with an H. Then we see more and as we reached down under the water level, we could actually trace more out with your fingers. Other than the crudeness of the date, the rest of the initials were chiseled with great detail. This was not where a random boater stopped and carved some initials into a rock. Someone chose this rock for a particular reason and most likely marked it for an equally important reason.

It's located just south of the East/West Jersey line and in Walpack Township. It is also

continued on pg. 6



COLONEL BENJAMIN ROSENKRANS

continued from pg. 4



Reading books and looking at old maps that name comes up everywhere. I was most familiar with Colonel John Rosenkrans because his home and complex became the Headquarters for all of the forts along the Delaware during the French and Indian War. The fort was also referred to as Fort Johns and sat above the Van Campen Inn on the Military Road. From what I remember, his original large tract of land was divided amongst three of his sons; one of them being Benjamin. Ironically, this past summer a woman traveled out to Walpack from California to deliver Benjamin's family Bible to the Walpack Historical Society! It was part of her friend's collection and was most likely purchased years ago at an estate sale. She doesn't recall this woman having any ties to this family and most likely just admired the Old Bible enough to add it to her collection. Fortunately, her friend, the woman who traveled cross country, cared enough to return it to its home right here in Sussex County!



THE E.S.H. ROCK

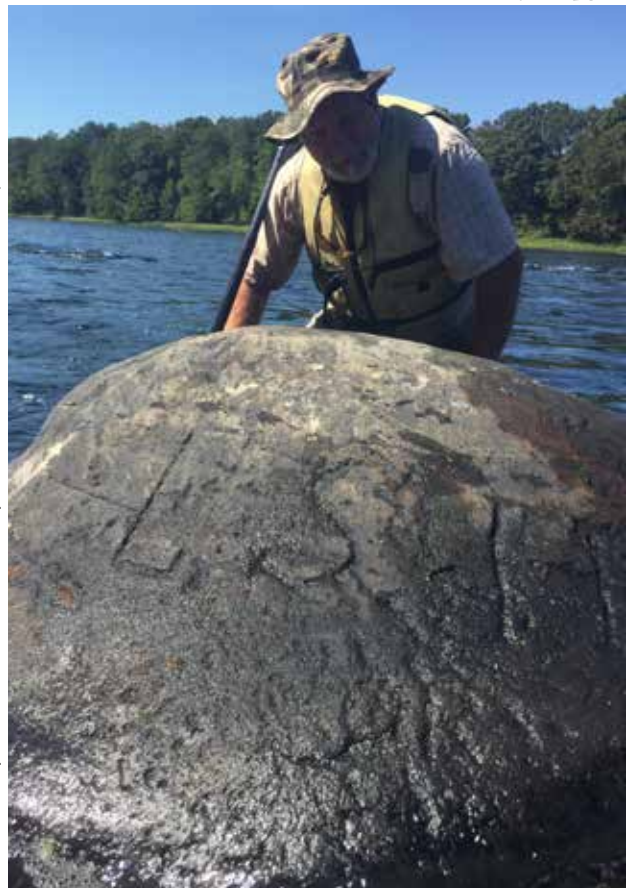
continued from pg. 5

located on the New Jersey side of the river. I know of at least one farm just nearby with a name that begins with an H. The Hankins farm site. Dan sent a picture of the rock to Sharon Spangenberg, expert researcher with the Walpack Historical Society. She compiled a list of H's and started sorting through them.

Then shortly afterwards, Sharon contacted me to say that she and her husband Hixon believed that those initials were that of Elias S. Hursh who happened to be the father of Lena Lennington. She then followed up a few days later to say she confirmed those initials with a long-time Sandyston Township resident as well as the grandson-in-law of Mrs. Lennington. Sharon went on to say that Elias S. Hursh and his brother-in-law Merton Hankins were quite the characters in their time. In fact, Merton Hankins was indicted for an incident involving shooting at a United States Naval Dirigible (Airship USS Los Angeles) while it was flying low over the Delaware on its trip from Lake George, New York back to Lakehurst, New Jersey in 1928 but was subsequently freed of the charges.

With that, all the pieces of the puzzle fell into place. Sharon found the original newspaper clipping from the incident with the airship. We located the old Hankins' farm site that sat along the road down the river from where the rock sits, and even Merton's headstone in the local cemetery.

So the rock that I thought was going to turn out to be some type of property marker turns out to be (so far) where a few locals of the area in 1900 left their own mark! However, we did spot some more letters under the water level and when you reach down you can trace some out. Once the river gets even lower, we will be back!



MEMBERSHIP/DONATION FORM

Name _____
 Company _____
 Street _____
 City/Town _____
 Zip _____
 Country _____
 Phone _____
 Email _____

Select:
 Membership Renewal Donation

Donation to:
 WHS General Fund
 The M.E. Church Renovation Project
 Newsletter Sponsor

Membership Type:
 Individual \$15
 Family \$25
 Corporate \$50
 Life \$200
 Patron \$250

Total Payment enclosed \$ _____
 Newsletter preferred delivered: Digital Mailed

Tear off and return with payment.

Mail to: Walpack Historical Society, PO Box 212, Layton, NJ 07851

The Walpack Historical Society, Inc. is a non-profit, tax exempt organization under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Donations are tax deductible, as allowed by law.

LOWER WALPACK CEMETERY UPDATE

continued from pg. 2

Eight men buried here served our country in the Military. They are: Revolutionary War: William Hill and Nathaniel VanAuken; War of 1812: Andrew Dingman Decker; Civil War: Simeon Earl, George A. Garis, Alexander Hornbeck, George LaBar, and Henry D. Snover.

Besides these men, Asa Losey served our country while employed by the United States Customs during the Spanish/American War and again during World War I.

July 4th, 2020 was a special day in Walpack history. After greeting visitors, our team enjoyed the beautiful day with their families. At 9 pm while walking to water the newly planted flowers, and with probe in hand, I discovered a stone underground. With help from our team, the grave marker of Nicholas Schoonhoven was lifted out of the ground. A few days later, part of the base of the stone was also found. Nicholas' unique-shaped gravestone was repaired and re-erected in the exact spot where it had been

underground for so many years. Below are photos of the grave stone as it appeared at 9 pm, with its base, and as it appears today. The inscription reads, "Here lies the body of NSH died June 10, 1764."

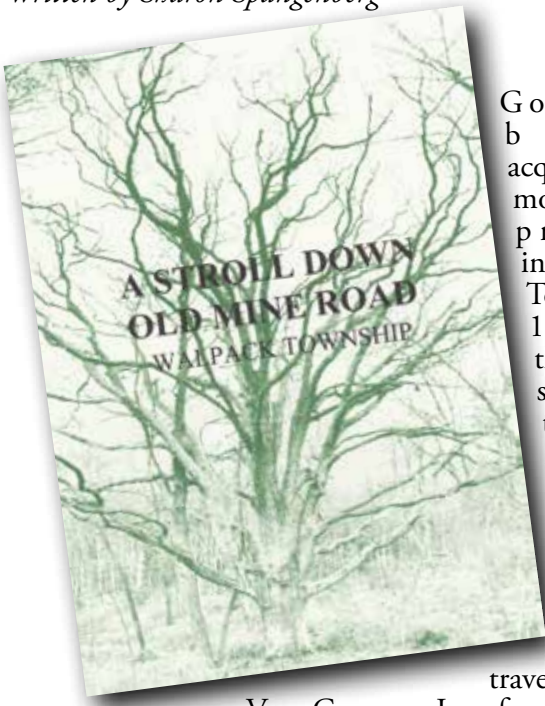
The Lower Walpack Cemetery has many notable men and women from all walks of life who are buried in this ancient cemetery. It is our hope that we will be able to have our program next year to properly honor all nine men who served our country, and to recognize Nicholas Schoonhoven, who was one of the two men who donated the land for this cemetery.



www.walpackhistory.org

NEW BOOK: A STROLL DOWN OLD MINE ROAD

Written by Sharon Spangenberg



Since the Federal Government began acquisition of most of the properties in Walpack Township in 1967, homes that once stood along the Old Mine Road were either bulldozed or left to fall into a state of disrepair.

While traveling to the Van Campen Inn from the north, have you ever wondered who lived along this old dirt road many years ago? Society member, Sharon Spangenberg had planned to lead a tour of the historic properties and landmarks along the Old Mine Road beginning at

Kuhn Road in Sandyston Township. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the society is not permitted to do so. Instead, Sharon prepared a book that describes the sites that we would have visited. *A Stroll Down Old Mine Road* shows images from the past as well as photos taken during late winter and early spring of 2020. It also has reproduced renderings of the earliest known photos of the Smith/Hill House, the Smith/Lennington house and the Van Campen Inn.

Take this book with you while you enjoy your own personal 2½ mile stroll, or read it while relaxing at home.

It is available free to those who wish to make at least a \$50 donation to the Walpack Historical Society. See page 7 for the donation form. When our book store reopens, this 30-page book will be available for sale.

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.