

WALPACK

historical society

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Tradition of Caring"*

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Newsletter of the
Walpack Historical Society

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PASSING OF BERNICE "BEE" HAYDU

By Ruth Stieh



*Bernice "Bee" Falk Haydu, a member of the Women Airforce Service Pilots who served during World War II, died January 30 at age 100.
Photo by Chris Rose.*

January 2021 notes the passing of Bernice "Bee" Falk Haydu at age 100. Bee was the last private owner of Walpack's Van Campen Inn Farm which she and her husband, Joseph Haydu, purchased in 1966 from Frieda Beisler, widow of the late Charles Beisler. The farm was then sold in 1970 to the US Army Corp of Engineers to become part of the now aborted Tocks Island Dam Project. Bee was the widow of Joseph Haydu, whose family

operated the Haydu Meat Packing Plant in Newark, NJ, famous throughout the Northeast for high quality meats.

A pioneer of early aviation, Bee served with the Women Airforce Service Pilots during WW II. Their duties included serving as instructors, flying as test pilots, and ferrying combat aircraft from the US mainland to overseas bases. She was a tenacious advocate for women's rights in military service and fought long and hard to get all WASPS the recognition and benefits they deserved. Her efforts came to fruition in 1977 when these courageous women were afforded full status as military veterans. July 1, 2009, Bee, along with surviving WASPS, proudly stood in the Oval Office as President Obama signed a Bill awarding them a Congressional Gold Medal for their wartime service. It was additional battle years later, giving these brave women the right to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Bee Haydu's story and the story of these Women Aviators can be found in books entitled: *The Women with Silver Wings* by Katherine Sharp Landdeck and *Final Flight Final Fight* by Erin Miller.

Walpack Historical Society honors the memory and service of Bernice Falk Haydu, one of many notables whose presence has graced our Shapanack Flats over the centuries.

REOPENING OF VAN CAMPEN INN - BY RESERVATION ONLY

The Walpack Historical Society, in cooperation with the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, has reopened the Van Campen Inn for free tours. Tours will be by reservation only, following the guidelines of the National Park Service and certain restrictions apply. There are no public bathrooms on the site or anywhere in the immediate area.

The Inn, located on Old Mine Road in Walpack Township within the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, boasts some of the finest examples of woodwork and hardware of its period (mid-1740's) in Sussex County. It was known as a hot spot of activity during the French and Indian War and a gathering place for well-known patriots during the fight for independence.

Call the Society at 973-948-4903 to schedule a tour.



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Event Photos by Tom Dust.

The Walpack Historical Society
Newsletter is Designed and Edited
by Dusty Roads Media.

WALPACK CENTER'S PEONY BED

by Jen Wycalek



Romance. Prosperity. Good Fortune. Honor. Compassion. The peony symbolizes them all in the language of flowers. Forgiveness? Forgiveness is not symbolized by the peony.

Nevertheless, the Society had no choice but to forgive a maintenance crew hired by the National Park Service who inadvertently mowed down the historic peony bed at Walpack Center last year, during its growing season, not once, but twice!

No one seems to remember who planted the bed, about 50 feet long and 5 feet wide, located to the left of the Losey – Robbins house. Some say it was Joe and Ciesta Robbins, who lived there from 1949 until 1971.

Bob Williams, former Society president, opines the peony is a Victorian-era flower. He believes the perennials might have been planted by the Transues, who lived in the house, located across from the Post Office and Rosenkrans Museum, from 1912 to 1948. George and Arminda Transue were the son-in-law and daughter of Jacob Roe of Walpack Center.

When the petals fall, Bob notes, the ants attracted by the sweet nectar “run all over the place and the bed can look a bit messy.”

Native to Asia, Europe, and Western North America, the gorgeous, sweet-smelling, many-petalled blooms appear

in white and pink in the Walpack Center peony bed. Elsewhere in the world, in addition to the standard herbaceous peony, tree forms grow. And in addition to white, pink, and red, yellow flowers appear. In Walpack, peonies bloom in June, thriving in full sun in well-drained soil. They don't mind cold Walpack winters. In fact, they thrive in them. Peony petals are edible and can be used in salads and as a garnish.

But, peonies do not like to be disturbed. The Society wondered if the plants would survive after two inadvertent mowings. Society members met May 1st to weed and rejuvenate the garden, under guidelines established by the National Park Service under the supervision of park archaeologist, Jennifer Palmer. Orange flags and a low fence now delineate the bed. After blooming, peonies' glossy green foliage is supposed to be allowed to continue to grow throughout the summer, thereby nourishing the plants, providing energy for next year's blooms. In autumn, the leaves turn purple and gold. Then they can be cut down in late fall.

As this article was being written, three huge white and two pink peony flowers were in bloom. The legacy of the Walpack Center peony bed will continue for years to come.

2021 CALENDAR

Aug. 15	Cancelled
Sept. 19	Cancelled
Oct. 10	Van Campen Day (Yes, it's happening)
Nov. 7	Fall Hike - Van Campen Inn, time TBD*
Dec. 4	Walpack Christmas - Church and Museum*
Dec. 5	Holiday Dinner - Walpack Inn*
Dec. 11 & 12	Walpack Christmas - Church and Museum*

The Walpack Historical Society, in cooperation with the National Park Service, will host our annual Van Campen Day on **Sunday, October 10, 2021**. This is a day to celebrate the history of the Van Campen Inn, the Old Mine Road and our early settlers. Guided tours of the Van Campen Inn, Fort Shapanack site and nearby historic cemeteries will be conducted.

*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 trustees of 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."

The Walpack Historical Society would like to particularly thank the Wards of Montclair, NJ for their most generous support of our Newsletter.



2021 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 along with your payment to the address on the form.
2. Visit www.walpackhistory.org, click on the Membership tab to pay your 2021 membership dues online using PayPal.

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

THANK YOU!

To everyone who becomes a Member, makes a donation, sponsors the newsletter, attends a dinner, and/or buys a book.

New Members

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

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, to speak with Jen Wycalek to learn more about how you can help play a part in history.



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LOCATING THE SMITH FERRY AND DANIEL S. SMITH HOUSE SITES

By Sharon Spangenberg

Identified by a black dot on maps, the Smith Ferry was located on Old Mine Road north of Walpack Bend. Personally, not knowing the name of the ferryman or when the Smith Ferry was in operation, or for that matter, its exact location, I decided to do some research.

Frank Talbot Dale, author of the *Ferry Boat Business on our Delaware River*, wrote that the founder and only owner of the Smith Ferry was Daniel S. Smith.

Daniel S. Smith was born in 1838. He was the son of Philip Jr. and Elizabeth Smith and married Amanda Rosenkrans in 1866. In 1867 he purchased seven tracts of land totaling nearly 200 acres, and it was on this property that he built his home.

Dale wrote that Daniel S. Smith was a successful farmer who owned many acres of prime farmland along the Delaware River. This was proven in that according to an 1888 Port Jervis Union newspaper, Daniel produced a crop of 10,000 melons on his farm. In 1889, the Pike County Dispatch reported that his watermelons were famous and that every day, two horse-loads of melons were sold. He continued to grow his large crop as late as 1894, as it was reported that he was the principal melon grower in the area.

The Evening Gazette also reported in August 1881 "D.S. Smith established his ferry across the Delaware." In February 1887, that same newspaper reported that there was an ice gorge in the Delaware and that perhaps the Smith Ferry was damaged. This proved to be true because the following month on March 18th, it was reported the Ferry was in running order and would be launched that week.

A near fatal disaster happened in May 1888 when six cows were loaded on the boat on the Pennsylvania side of the river. As they started for the Jersey shore, in the middle of the river, the cows "stampeded" to the Jersey end of the boat causing it to dip water. The force of the high water caused the boat to sink deeper and deeper under the water. The two men who loaded the cows immediately commenced throwing their clothing, and within a few

minutes they were in water so deep that they were forced to swim for their lives until they reached the shore, but not until they were nearly exhausted.

The Tri-states Union newspaper reported in 1898 that D.S. Smith "launched his new ferry boat that we dare say it is as complete a ferry as it has been our privilege to see since 1880." The article goes on to say that Mr. Smith had been the proprietor of the old ferry and throughout

that time ran it with one flat boat; but seeing the need for improvement, a new boat was made which he named "The Dewey." In October 1887 he "had an electric call bell put up which ran from the opposite side to his dwelling house." He also cut the price down from 50 cents a round trip to 20 cents, making it the cheapest ferry on the river.

The New Jersey Herald reported that Daniel S. Smith continued his ferry business until the disastrous flood of 1903 when his ferry boat and cable were washed down-river. Although he continued to live on his farm, the 1910 census shows him living with his son Clinton in Mt. Bethel, Pennsylvania. Daniel died in October 1918 and is buried with his wife in the Lower Walpack Cemetery.

Still not knowing the exact location of the Daniel S. Smith property, records from long-time deed researcher, Richard M. Stevens, Ph.D. were reviewed, and all of Smith's seven tracts of land were plotted. The Smith property on Old Mine Road began about four tenths of a mile south of the Knight house on the river side of the road. Walpack Historical Society's founder and first President, Bob Williams provided me with a picture of the house that he had taken in the early 1980's. The Park Service's *Historical Architectural Survey of 1974*, includes a photo of that same house; however, the historic name was not noted in the report located on tract 7632. Elizabeth Menzies' book, *Before the Waters*, also shows the same dwelling pictured on page 71; however, she described it as belonging to Judge Dingman.



Ferry landing on the New Jersey side of the Delaware River.

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*Photo by Stephanie Blunt Lescault
Daniel S. Smith house, later owned by Charles Blunt*

Coincidentally, while researching Daniel S. Smith's property, society member, Stephanie Blunt Lescault contacted us about the location of the property once owned by her grandfather, Col. Charles Blunt. Stephanie provided me with a photograph of her grandfather's house. It matched the photos of the others. Noting that a large evergreen once stood directly in front of the dwelling, finding it was quite easy. Although, the tree had fallen, a large portion of the trunk was still standing, marking the house site of both Daniel S. Smith and Col. Charles Blunt.

A walk down the lane just north of the house site leads to a swimming beach on the river. Examining it a little closer, we discovered that it was once the Smith Ferry

landing. Using a clue from a July 1891 *Evening Gazette*, we then headed to the Pennsylvania side of the river to find the landing site there. That newspaper mentioned a woman who "boarded at Mrs. Swartwood's opposite the Smith Ferry." It didn't take us long to find a lane off Rt. 209, opposite the Swartwood/Valley View Cemetery. At the end of that lane, we discovered the ferry landing diagonally across from the Smith Ferry landing on the New Jersey side. Pictured with this article are photos of the

Smith Ferry landing on both sides of the Delaware.

Deed research revealed that the property on which the Daniel S. Smith house was built was never owned by Judge Daniel Dingman. In the early 1700's, Adam Dingman owned over one thousand acres of land in Walpack Township including Daniel S. Smith's land. Judge Dingman, did, however, own property on the New Jersey side of the Dingman's Bridge in Sandyston Township.

After many hours of research and sorting through all available sources, we are quite confident that Daniel S. Smith's dwelling and the Smith Ferry sites were found. Hopefully, in the near future, Walpack Historical Society can sponsor a walk to the Ferry site in Walpack.

Ferry landing on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River.



BUILDING REPAIRS TO RESUME IN WALPACK CENTER

by Audrey Schwab



The Walpack Historical Society, in a cost share partnership with The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DEWA), is anticipating the start of repairs to the Hendershot House located to the east of the Rosenkrans Museum in Walpack Center.

The Hendershot House is one of two Creamery Houses, with its “fraternal twin” known as the Christie House being its immediate neighbor to the east. Over the years, the properties have changed owners and been remodeled and adapted to suit the lifestyles and whims of the many who have called them home. Today, while maintaining their own unique architectural identities, their shared past is a fleeting though enduring part of our Walpack history when agriculture was the driving economic force of the region.

Walpack residents dug in their plows and cultivated their agricultural ambitions since the earliest days of the area’s colonization. As decades passed, dairy farming became one of the primary agrarian pursuits. In 1850 through 1880 agricultural census records indicate a mostly steady population of between 500-600 milk cows in the township with farmers primarily marketing butter from their modest herds. Though dairy farming waned for a time, it saw a revival after the turn of the 20th Century when farmers slowly transitioned to the primary sale of whole milk. Area farmers delivered their bulk milk to several creameries, including those in Branchville, Augusta and beyond. In 1914, the NJ State Board of Health listed 30 creameries being registered in Sussex County.

These creameries served as cooling and pasteurizing stations prior to shipment of the milk to larger city markets. In 1907, a Dairymen’s League Co-operative Association was formed in New Jersey and neighboring

states which greatly enhanced the farmers’ ability to market their product for higher prices. The dairy industry was seeing a revival.

It is about this time that Montclair businessman, George Batten literally exploded upon the Walpack agricultural scene. *The Central New Jersey Home News* of New Brunswick, published a brief article in March 1911 that announced: “Farming by dynamite will be introduced by George Batten, of Montclair, at his property, The Walpack Farms, next Friday, and he has invited his neighboring farmers to witness the innovation.” The article goes on to note that Mr. Batten had recently purchased what was previously known as the Jacob Roe farms near Walpack Center. His intent at the time was to convert the property of over 200 acres to a large fruit farm. The innovative “dynamite plan” was implemented to excavate holes for the fruit trees by use of the explosive, rather than the more pedestrian use of a plow. We are regrettably unable to report the results of that endeavor!

What we do know is Mr. Batten went on to establish a highly respected dairy herd and private creamery operation. From Batten’s acquisition of the Roe property in February 1911 to the sale of the property and dairy herd in August 1915, he managed to leave his mark upon the land and favorably contribute to the Walpack economy. By July 1913, a *New Jersey Herald* article announced that foundations were being dug for two new houses in Walpack Center. These foundations refer to the Hendershot and Christie Creamery Houses we see along Main Street in Walpack Center today. By 1912, Pauline Appleman Ott states in her book, *116 Years of Creameries in Sussex County, New Jersey*, that “Mr. Batten was making good butter at his creamery in Walpack, selling it retail for 40 cents a pound.” Ms. Ott notes that in 1913, “a lot of farmers that had been taking their milk to the creamery in Bevans are now taking it to Walpack.” A steady chronicle of Batten newspaper updates continued through 1914, whereby he was heralded for adding a number of new residences and a new barn to his properties. It was further noted that he had “spared no money in other ways, proving himself to be a very generous, accommodating gentleman... welcome among us.” Batten hired superintendents to run his newly named Deep Spring Farm dairy and creamery, but apparently never made Walpack his full time home. The two creamery houses, built for his workers served that purpose for a relatively brief period of time.

In addition to new real estate, a dairy herd of nationally recognized Jersey cows and bulls was soon grazing the

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pastures of Deep Spring Farm. A show string of Batten cattle was traveling on a nation-wide circuit where stellar confirmation and milk production made the herd rock stars in the show ring. A May 1915 *New Jersey Herald* article went to great lengths to laud the barns and the cleanliness and expeditious manner the milking was done by the farm workers. The highest accolades, however, went to the cows. "Those beautiful Jerseys, certainly they are the genuine aristocrats, no codfish aristocracy about them; clean limbed, graceful in body, and every line the line of beauty and breeding." The writer ends his article with a reference to *Gulliver's Travels* and his wish that he were of Brobdingnag instead of Lilliput, whereby he would tuck one cow in each pocket and innocently walk away with them. The hyperbole and enthusiasm must have incited the imagination, interest and perhaps a touch of envy among dairy farmers throughout the area. After so much promise and not a small investment, Mr. Batten's vision came to a rather abrupt end. A September 1915 article was published announcing the sale of the farm, the portion of the working dairy herd that was not show stock, and all of the working equipment of the farm. The lead sentence in the article written by Batten himself is: "I am going to quit." George Batten went on to explain his decision in a rather unusual manner when he likened slamming the brakes on his once full throttle endeavor to a friend who played poker. Batten claims the friend quit playing poker not because he thought it was wrong or he was a loser, but because he found the game "too interesting, too absorbing, and it was taking thought and time that should be devoted to his business and family." Batten goes on to say "I find the development of a large

herd of Jersey cattle much the same. I am too intensely interested in the cattle and this diverts too much of my thought in their direction." Thus, Batten walked away from Deep Spring Farm and the Batten Creamery and its doe-eyed cows soon fade from memory.

Note: As a brief postscript to the Batten Creamery history, a *New Jersey Herald* article of July 2001 stated, "Following the destruction of Conner's Creamery (the successor to George Batten's endeavor) by fire in 1917, 18 Walpack farmers banded together and formed the Walpack Transportation Association to facilitate delivery of their milk to Borden's Creamery in Branchville."

After the brief episode as a creamery connection in the property's saga, the house and lot went through a series of owners. Its sale to the federal government by Jeffrey and Janis Hendershot in 1972 lends their name to the property's legacy. Today the home is languishing in that all too familiar zombie state between promise and disrepair. After serving as park ranger housing during the earlier part of this century, the house is one of the few properties in Walpack Center still on the power grid. It seems the home is awaiting the return of its people. The range clock is blinking the time of the last power outage and comfortably sized rooms in a pleasant configuration feel just right for a small family to lease or enjoy as a recreational property. Much needs to be done to bring the home from its current state of "despair" to repair. Roof, gutter and flashing repairs to the structure have been completed with more extensive carpentry repairs currently under review by DEWA. Please stay tuned!

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THE LASTING LEGACY OF NANCY SHUKAITIS *by Audrey Schwab*



Nancy Michael Shukaitis seemed uniquely destined to devote most of a lifetime to the protection and stewardship of her beloved Delaware River Valley. It is largely through her efforts that the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DEWA) exists today. Delivered by her grandmother in a farmhouse on land owned by generations of Michaels going back to 1794, Nancy grew up along the river and noted in an interview with DEWA: "The river is a live creature. It's like a human body... The benefits are manifold and I don't think we can even know them all." She also keenly understood its moodiness and rancor as well. Former DEWA Park Superintendent John Donahue related in his *Spanning the Gap; Living Treasure* Interview of 2005, that Nancy recalled the flood of 1936 when she noted "Because when the river is mad, it can be awesome and awful." It was the flood of 1955 that resulted in human tragedy along with economic devastation that would set the stage for an ill-conceived dam project and galvanize Nancy Shukaitis' efforts to stop it.

In her highly respected and superbly researched and written book, *Lasting Legacies of the Lower Minisink*, Nancy dedicated her work "to all those who have lived in, labored for, treasured and maintained their places in the Minisink, and to present and future generations upon whose shoulders rests the responsibility of its stewardship." The mantle of stewardship was one she passionately and most capably donned to lead the efforts of the many she inspired to fight the United States Government. In so doing, she succeeded in creating an enduring environmental awareness of

the benefits of a free-flowing river and served to awaken public passions to champion the efforts to stop a dam. As part of her arsenal to save the Delaware, Nancy founded the Delaware Valley Conservation Association and co-founded the Save-the-Delaware Coalition whereby she spearheaded a decades long battle to have the Tocks Island project defeated. Though several issues led to the death of the dam, Nancy Shukaitis' efforts to stimulate awareness of the environmental and cultural impacts earned her an Environmental Stewardship Award from the National Park Service. Her long career in public service continued beyond the Tocks era where, most notably she was the first woman elected to the office of Monroe County Commissioner where she served for 16 years.

Nancy Michael Shukaitis passed away one day after her 96th birthday on March 4, 2021. Her towering presence will forever be part of the history of the Delaware Water Gap area she so loved and served; and by a nationwide kindling of an environmental awareness that profoundly impacts the entire nation today.

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.