

WALPACK

historical society

*“Preserving a Fine
Tradition of Caring”*

www.walpackhistory.org

Newsletter of the
Walpack Historical Society

Published Quarterly

Summer 2024

THE WHITMORES

by Lee Ingersoll Whitmore

The year was 1900. According to the US Census, Barnea Evans Whitmore was a piano leg maker at the Cornish Organ & Piano Company factory in Washington, NJ.

He lived two blocks from the factory on West Washington Ave. He was married and had three sons, Augustus, William and Jay. In June 1902, his wife Carrie came down with an illness and became very sick. She had an acute case of appendicitis which in those days was often deadly. She died June 29, 1902. The loss hit Barnea very hard, so hard, he decided to make a major change in his life. Somehow, he obtained the credentials to become a Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) minister and five years after his wife died he was ready for his first “charge” (assignment) in the village of Walpack Centre, NJ. It was now 1907. The Reverend B. E. Whitmore had remarried and moved to Walpack Centre. He set up residence at the parsonage on Main Street which was near the M.E. church.

The Whitmores, pictured below from left to right, are Augustus, Jay, Rev. Barnea, Ada, Blanche and William. He remained in Walpack for at least three years. His children attended the one-room schoolhouse which was immediately across the street from the church.

An unidentified news clipping described a flag ceremony that was held at the Walpack school. “Augustus Whitmore, William Whitmore, Edward Brown, the Misses Thelma Brown, Susie Losey and Ciesta Gunn, scholars of the school recited very appropriately on the flag, and in a manner which reflected



Cornish Piano Factory, Washington, N. J.

credit on Miss Emma Van Houtan, their instructress.” After a presentation of a new American flag to the school, a comment was made by Barnea, “Rev. Mr. Whitmore spoke stirringly of the flags greatest foe—whiskey – and his remarks were enthusiastically received.” The article continued, “The flag is 8x12 feet and will float from a high pole erected on Thursday by the scholars.” Bob Williams, the founder and first president of the Walpack Historical Society, once recalled a story told to him by Alice Whitmore, one of the Reverend’s daughters-in-law. One night a group of pranksters took the Whitmore carriage and somehow lifted it on top of the barn/shed that was next to the church. Apparently, it was the talk of the town at the following Sunday service. Just imagine the Reverend facing his congregation knowing that several members were part of the prank. Were his sons part of the prank? We’ll never know, but if you knew the eldest son later in his life, there was a good chance he was involved. Barnea’s eldest son was Augustus, nicknamed “Gus.” He was born in 1894. The 1910 US Census identified him as living with his parents in Harmony, NJ which was Barnea’s second charge. The same 1910 Census had Gus living with the Grant Layton family in Walpack as a “farm laborer.” While Gus probably did not have a formal education after 8th grade, he went on to bigger things in Sussex County. He was the owner operator of a burial vault business which worked with Wolfe Granite Works in the center of Sussex Borough. He was one of the original 14 founders of the Sussex County Farm and Horse Show which officially started in 1940. Gus became a member of the Sussex School



*The Whitmores, from left to right, are
Augustus, Jay, Rev. Barnea, Ada, Blanche and William*

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WALPACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY CELEBRATES ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY!

by Jeff Stoveken



The Founders of the WHS.

On Sunday, June 23, 2024 the little village of Walpack came alive with people from all over who gathered to celebrate Walpack Historical Society's 40th Anniversary.

The more time I spend in Walpack, the more people I meet that have a connection to this empty little town that once was. This particular day was no different, we had former residents as well as relatives of previous farmers.

Sunday's event was put together by WHS's core of officers and trustees. They planned a program that would display the entire 40 year history at a glance. Bob Williams, founder of WHS back in 1984, told the story of how the Society was created. He spoke about how, when he was a boy, his parents purchased a home where they could spend their summers out in the country. They all enjoyed it so much and he was so happy whenever he could spend time there. Being a young lad, and always out and about, he had met and befriended a lot of the year-round residents and farmers. He shared many of his favorite memories of summering in this quaint little town.

Some years later the government acquired all this land for a proposed dam that never materialized. Bob started to watch his old Township slowly deteriorate. Every time he came to visit more residents had moved out. He realized he needed to find a way to save it. He invited everyone he knew that would support such a cause, and hosted a meeting inside this very church. He received a positive response, everyone who attended showed a great amount of interest. But he

knew he had to keep the momentum going, this could not be a one-time meeting. It was easy to get a whole bunch of history buffs together and have a good talk, but it was another thing to form a group that would carry this on. Bob was a young man when he started WHS. What young person does such a thing?! We are very fortunate that this one did!

I have spent time with Bob over the recent years and his priority still is to keep Walpack alive. The first time I met Bob was at an old graveyard that needed to be cleaned up. There were a few people there, and we all said hello and started to look around at what we were going to do. The grass was very high, and there were headstones laying down among overgrown bushes. And this one guy just kept pushing the mower. I wondered why he didn't turn it off and come over and chat with us. Soon enough, we had decided what each one of us was going to do given the equipment we had. We worked for a few hours, and at one point the quiet person that had been mowing the whole time mentioned that he was leaving so hopefully we could finish up.

What I didn't realize was that this quiet worker was Bob Williams who would travel quite a distance on a Sunday morning to come to Walpack with a mower in the back of his truck to maintain one of the properties. Instead of standing around chatting, he wanted to get things done! Since that time, I have gained a lot of respect for that man as he has passed that torch on to the rest of us!

The audience that consisted of many volunteers, NPS officials, former residents of the township and families, historical society members from surrounding towns, and our New Jersey assemblyman were all treated to a very entertaining slideshow spanning over the 40 year history. It brought to my attention just how active WHS has been from its beginnings right up to the present day. We celebrated the end of this monumental day with cake and other refreshments.

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.



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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.

2024 CALENDAR

April 21	Spring Hike - TBA
April 27 (Saturday)	*Spring Dinner
May 4	Peony bed and Walpack Center Village clean up
May 19	Presentation - East/West Jersey Line
May 25	VCI open 12 -3 pm
May 26-27	VCI open 12 -4 pm
May 26	Walpack Church, Rosenkrans Museum, and Barn open 1- 4 pm
June 23	Presentation – WHS 40th Anniversary
July 21	Presentation - Two Local Creameries - Sharon Spangenberg
August 18	Walpack at the Movies
September 21 (Saturday)	The Spirits of Lower Walpack Cemetery
October 13	Van Campen Day (Heritage Weekend)
November 10	Fall Hike - Details TBA
December 7 (Saturday)	*Holiday Dinner
December 14 & 15	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.

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

Michael Brink
Ray Capelli
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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) 552-8880 to learn more about how you can help play a part in history.



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ASKED, "WHY ARE YOU SAVING THAT?"

by Sharon Spangenberg



Although saving a program from a concert or an event generally has no monetary value, it certainly has a lot of historical value as can be seen with these programs. Over 70 years ago, the field at The Walpack Inn was the site for at least four All Western Horse Shows sponsored by the Walpack Fire Department.

As one flips through the dozen or so pages of these old programs, they will see local businesses and others who purchased a section of the program to place an advertisement, as well as many local residents who paid that small amount to become a "booster." The following is a list of those who did

just that in 1953. Perhaps you will recognize at least one.

So, why save these programs? Because it keeps history alive, and it gives enjoyment to the one browsing when a relative's name or acquaintance is seen.

But, if any of our readers are inclined to discard some of their old memorabilia, consider donating it to a local historical society. Because someone chose to save these All Western Horse Show programs and donate them to the Walpack Historical Society, we are able to share some of the area's former businesses, residents and other horse show enthusiasts with you.

Airport Diner
B. S. Riding Stables
Broadstone Farm
Butch, an English Gentleman
Carl Lance Trucking
Central Hotel
Chet Edgerly Dairy Products
Culver Brook Snack Bar
Delabar Farms
Ed Geis Dealer in Choice
Western Saddle Horses
Ed Hull, Jr. Repairs
Edmund E. Johnson
Electrical Sales and Service
Farmland Milk Bar
Frank & Nevin McBride
Frank A. Urban, Plumbing,
Heating & Electrical Contracting
Fred B. Spoolstra
Contractor and Builder
Glen Cole's Garage
Hainesville Garage
Hainesville Inn
Howard Schryber Western

Saddle Horses and Ponies
Jacob R. Haney Lumber
John Hunt
Kek's Bar and Pizza
Kent's Liquor Store
Layton Paint Store
Lombardi's Walpack Home Supply
McKeown's Culvers Lake
Miller's Servicenter
Milton G. Long Horse Shoer
Mitchel's of Bevans
Mitzi's Road Stand Pizza Pie
and Sandwiches
Musa's St. Moritz Inn
Newton Trust Company
Quality Print Shop
Republican County Committee
Rosenkrans Garage
Shays Store General Merchandise
Silver Spray Farm
Silverman's
Skip & Andy Meat and Groceries
Taylor's of California, Fringed
Jackets in Suede and Leather

The Branchville National Bank
The Rendezvous
The Walpack Inn
Van Den Heuvel and Fountain, Inc.
Insurance
Village Barber Shop
Worthington's Home Bakery

BOOSTERS

Roy Aber
Richard Elsworth (Bronc Rider)
Evelyn Fee
Adam Heigis
Jim Heigis
Louise Heigis
Ernie Hotalen
Manny (Miss Walpack Valley)
J. Frederick Masken
Mrs. Sauer
Albert Spoolstra
Fred E. Spoolstra
Bob Wentz
Helen Wentz
Herbert Wilson

THE WALSHAKS OF WALPACK

by Scott Yashay

On May 3rd 2024, my father Stan, two of my uncles, and I grabbed our hiking sticks and set off into the woods at the base of Rattlesnake Mountain. Our mission: to locate the site of an old family hunting cabin that once sat on top of the ridge.

Nearly 70 years earlier, in May of 1956, my great uncle Louis Capelli (1921-2010) and his brother-in-law Florian Walshak (1912-1997) purchased 36 acres on top of the Kittatinny Ridge from the Mullins family. Near the edge of the ridge, they built a small, simple structure to serve as their hunting lodge. This crude little cabin was home to many years' worth of memories and outdoor adventures until the Tocks Island Dam project forced the men off the mountain sometime around 1970. Louis and his other brother-in-law Fred Walshak Sr. (1922-2019) decided to use the money the government had bought them out with to purchase land in Schoharie County, NY. There, with more land and a larger cabin, they continued to hunt and make memories with their children, grandchildren, and extended family. That land remains in the family today, owned by Louis and Fred's children.

The cabin in NY and its surrounding property has always been a special place for my family and me. It was the site of my first camping trip and has been home to countless memories since then. My dad and his cousins continue to hunt there year after year, and it has become a tradition for our families to gather there every summer around the Fourth of July. It's interesting to think that we would have nothing to do with that corner of the world if my great uncle hadn't been driven out of another beautiful spot right here in Walpack. Years before I knew anything about the Walpack Historical Society, I remember learning from my dad that the retreat in upstate NY only existed because the Capellis and Walshaks been forced off their property in NJ and that an ill-fated dam project was responsible for the relocation. The cabin itself had been somewhere in the Water Gap, but until recently, its exact location was a mystery to both of us, since my dad had only vague memories of it from when he was young.

On learning of my involvement with the WHS, my Uncle Fred (Fred Sr.'s son) was inspired to try and nail down the cabin's



Scott and Stan Yashay with Ray Capelli standing on the site of the cabin.

exact location on top of Rattlesnake Mountain. Working largely off his memories of the area, he sent me a map on which he pinpointed where he believed the old family cabin sat. Fred recalled that the property was accessed by Mullins Road, overlooked Quick Pond and the old summer retreat Camp Kiamesha, bordered the Appalachian Trail, and rested on a particularly steep part of the ridge. Putting those details together while looking at topographical maps, Fred marked what seemed to be the most likely spot. My dad and I were surprised to discover that it was so near to Culver's Gap, which we pass through every time we come up to Walpack and Stokes State Forest.

After realizing that we were more familiar with the area than we expected, my dad organized an expedition with the object of finding the location for ourselves. He invited Fred and his cousin Ray (Louis' son) to join us, hoping to bring back some memories if we succeeded.

I passed Fred's maps and other information on to WHS's expert excursionist, Jeff Stoveken, who determined the best way to access the spot from below. Acting on Jeff's instructions, we turned off Route 206 and paralleled the base of the ridge for a short distance. Off Owassa Road, we passed through two stone pillars – remnants of the Camp Kiamesha gateway – and parked just up the road from Quick Pond. Crossing the dirt road, we entered the woods via an overgrown trail. From there, it was merely a matter of hiking to the top of the ridge.

About halfway through the woods, the land transitions from belonging to the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. Around here, the ridge became increasingly steep, and we hoped more and more that the place we came out on top would be as close

to the site of the cabin as possible. Fred led the way, as he had the strongest memory of the area. He spotted a portion of the top of the ridge with a near vertical drop. Believing this to be the steep edge of the property he remembered, we snaked our way up the mountain towards that location. Sure enough, we reached the top of the ridge at the exact site of the old cabin. Fred called "this is it" from ahead, immediately recognizing the clearing in the



Cabin site 2024: The clearing as it appears today.

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THE WALSHAKS OF WALPACK

by Scott Yashay

Continued from pg. 5

woods as the original Capelli-Walshak property. Exhausted from the climb, we were all quietly relieved that we didn't have to continue walking along the top of the ridge in search of the spot.

At first glance, there were no remnants of the hunting lodge, though the area was still open and hadn't been overtaken by nature. At the opposite end of the large clearing was the driveway by which the cabin was accessed. It passed along the top of the ridge a ways before descending down to Mullins Road. We entered from the other side, a steeper but shorter and more direct route. Quick Pond was still somewhat visible through the trees, and it was easy to image what a clear view the property would have had of the water before the forest overtook the ridge below.

We took some time to explore the area while resting from the ascent. It was the first time in roughly 55 years that anyone in the family had set foot on the property. A few "artifacts" were discovered at the site. Cinderblocks, part of a metal



The original cabin during hunting season, mid-1960s.

bunkbed frame, pieces of a stovepipe, and a lawnmower blade were among the evidence that there had once been a cabin present. While standing on the actual site, Fred and Ray gave a clear picture of what it looked like back in the day. After regaining our energy and taking several pictures, we began the (considerably easier) descent down the mountain. Along the way, we passed three large cisterns, possibly once used to provide gravity-fed water to the camp. Another strange discovery was a crumbling stone gateway with a triangular symbol and the words "body," "mind," and "spirit" carved into it. This may have belonged to either the YMCA-run Camp Kiamesha or a Korean religious meditation order that briefly occupied the property. We reached the bottom and later celebrated our find with dinner at the Walpack Inn, from where we could spot the exact part of the ridge we had been on just a few hours before. A couple of weeks later, Fred discovered some old slides of the cabin taken about 60 years ago during hunting season. It was my first time seeing a photo of the original cabin.

As sad as it is to think of all the people forced off their land as part of the Tocks Island project, I can't help but think of how different some of my fondest memories would be if my particular family hadn't. The differences between the two properties mean that our family has been able to create more memories in NY than we would have been able to make in NJ. Camping at nearby Stokes and being involved with the WHS has allowed me to embrace the Walpack Valley in a different way, and I'm pleased that I can still make it a big part of my life. Though the cabin Louis and Florian built didn't last forever, Walpack continues to be a retreat of a different kind that certainly will.



Fred Walshak uncovers the stovepipe cap.

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..... WHS RECEIVES SECOND PLACE IN NEWSLETTER COMPETITION

by Ruth Stieh



Don Stieh, President, accepts the Kevin Hale Newsletter Award for the Society.

The League of Historical Societies held its Summer Meeting on June 15th. The Kevin Hale Newsletter Awards are presented annually to historical groups that publish newsletters.

Walpack Historical Society received second place for our Fall 2023 Edition of the newsletter. Don Stieh, President, accepted the award for the Society. WHS has entered this newsletter competition only 3 times, our first entry earned third place, this time WHS has earned second. First place went to South River Historical Society, third place to Amateur Astronomers, Inc. <https://asterism.org>.

We are truly proud of the newsletter staff for their hard work, dedication to excellence and creativity. The link for this edition can be found at <https://walpackhistory.org/newsletter/> The criterion for the newsletter includes the following areas.

- Frequency of Publication, clearing identifies the name of the group, date, location, website.
- Contents: Does it contain articles that add to our historical knowledge or understanding of a topic? Does it encourage participation in the organizations' 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.

www.walpackhistory.org

THE WHITMORES

by Lee Ingersoll Whitmore

Continued from pg. 1

Board and became the Chief of the Sussex Fire Department in 1941 according to his inscribed badge. Later in life, Gus and his wife Alice told stories of how well-respected the Reverend Whitmore was in the Walpack community.



Prepared by Lee Ingersoll Whitmore, great grandson of Rev. B E Whitmore. Lee deeply appreciates the efforts of the Walpack Historical Society. He has shed many a tear at the successes of WHS.

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.