

# WALPACK

## historical society

“Preserving a Fine  
Tradition of Caring”

www.walpackhistory.org

Newsletter of the  
Walpack Historical Society

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### HOW LIFE WAS IN SUSSEX COUNTY AS SEEN BY CY HARKER

by Sharon Spangenberg

It has been over 17 years since the passing of Enos (Cy) Harker who lived on Old Mine Road north of the Lennington Farm in Sandyston Township.

Cy died on October 12, 2006 as a result of a tractor accident; he was 93. In memory of Cy, the following is being shared with you which is a typed copy of his handwritten accounting of how he saw the area after his arrival in Sussex County. Due to lack of space, Cy's story has been shortened.

*“In March 1935 my pardner[sic] and I arrived in Walpack Center, Sussex Co. on horseback. We had accepted a job at the Lazy K Bar Ranch as dude wranglers. Not being able to afford trucking of the horses, we rode them from Millville, N.J. over the road. We stayed in farmers' barns at nite [sic].*

*Sussex Co. was a beautiful, prosperous, healthy county, heavily engaged in agriculture. The dairy cattle outnumbered the human population several times over. With the dedicated farm families, many dating back several generations, it was a nice place to live an excellent quality of living. Even families with small acreage were pretty much self-supporting, generally with two family cows bred so as to have milk year-round, their own pigs and chickens and gardens and honey bees. Farming was done by horses, and there was kerosene lamps and ice-refrigeration in summer months. The dug wells, the cellars and the spring houses were used the rest of the year for perishables. The natural terrain in Sussex Co. made it possible, generations ago, for the surveyors to break the large chartered grants of land down into one man or one team farms or two men or two-team farms. The former consisting of 80 – 130 acres and the latter somewhere from 130 acres on up. Most all of them have an amount of good tillable land, some low or meadow land, some pasture land and some wooded land and a spring or stream or pond. Dug wells were common and some very good, and the cistern was used a lot to supplement. Most farmers planted an orchard on a suitable sunny field with early and late varieties of apples. They also planted pears, cherries, plums, and all types of wild nut trees were allowed to grow around the edges of the fields. The farms furnished firewood, fence posts and lumber for building or repairing on the farms. White ash, oak, hemlock, white pine and tulip poplar were some of the most used. Saw mills were fairly close. Just about everything could be raised in Sussex Co. Most of the soil contained a small percent of limestone and anymore needed to condition it for a specific crop, could be gotten in Sussex Co. at the Limecrest plant. Burning of limestone by farmers for themselves was before my arrival in Sussex Co.*

*It was a real treat to enter a farmhouse run by a truly domestic woman. The food was plentiful and most were good cooks. Meat, potatoes, vegetables, were home grown and pies, cakes, jellies, pickles, relishes and puddings all home-made. The women taught their daughters all phases of housekeeping and cooking, sewing and knitting as they grew up. The women had a lot of pride in their home and dooryard. Cheerful pot flowers inside the house and perennial bushes and flowers in the yard as*



*well as other flowers to be planted each year. The men and their sons took care of the stock, and all phases of outdoor work. As the boys grew up they learned to do whatever their size and age would enable them to do. Together as a family unit they worked long hours close to nature with the animals and the soil.*

*There were church dinners several times a year to make money for the church. Lots of good square-dances around the county with good fiddle and guitar music and good callers. People were friendly and enjoyed socializing at farm sales, clam-bakes, picnics and visiting each others homes. They were quick to respond to a friend or neighbor in distress. They were “live and let live” people. Believing in treating another person as you would like to be treated by him. They believed in 7 years feast and 7 years famine, so when it was dry they learned to accept it as God's will and knew that in time nature would bring rain and balance the situation, also vice-versa. Being diversified farmers and rotating corn, oats, wheat, rye and hay crops, they sorta had an “ace in the hole.” If excessive dry weather or excessive wet weather at certain times ruined one crop, they still had something else to carry them through.*

*Well, after working two seasons at the Lazy K Bar Ranch in*  
Continued on pg. 5



# JASON G. LOSEY AND THE OLD ELM TREE

by Sharon Spangenberg

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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.

Jason G. Losey was a well-known man in Sussex County. He lived in Flatbrookville until his untimely death in 1948 when he was struck by an automobile. Mr. Losey was educated in the Walpack schools and was a school teacher for 15 years in the early part of his life. He was an avid fisherman and at one time was an attendant at the state hospital in Morris Plains. Seventy-five years after his death, an undated newspaper clipping was found in our archive files. That clipping was a poem titled “The Old Elm Tree” composed by Jason G. Losey.

Pictured is a 1920 photo of what could be that Old Elm Tree on the front lawn of the Sussex County Alms House/Welfare Home in Frankford Township from the collection of Sussex County Library. Today, that same old tree measures over 110 feet in height and 12 feet 4 inches in circumference. Although still alive, it has several rotten branches – the main branch is being held together by a cable.



## THE OLD ELM TREE

My roots grow deep in mother  
earth,  
Many years I've stood alone.  
You'll find me standing on the  
lawn  
At the Sussex Welfare Home.

My first limb points eastward,  
Welcoming the morning sun.  
The birds sing sweetly among my  
leaves,  
Where the oriole's nest is hung.

My second limb points southward;  
All through the month of June,  
I breath the sweet southland winds  
Laden with magnolia bloom.

My third limb points northward.  
In winter I'm forlorn.  
I breast the cold arctic winds,  
And equinoctial storms.

My fourth limb points outward,  
Where the sun smiles in the west;  
Its shadows o'er the cemetery,  
Where the weary sleep, at rest.

My last limb points heavenward,  
Where fleecy clouds float by  
Giving the trail upward  
Toward the Great Divide.

Ye who stand beneath me,  
Bow not your heads to me;  
Praise God up in Heaven,  
Who created me a tree.  
By Jason G. Losey.

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.





## 2024 CALENDAR

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| April 21                   | Spring Hike - TBA  |
| <b>April 27 (Saturday)</b> | <b>*Spring Dinner</b>                                    |
| 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 25                    | Presentation – WHS 40th Anniversary                      |
| July 6                     | Peony bed and Walpack Center Village clean up            |
| July 21                    | Presentation - Walpack Creameries - Sharon Spangenberg   |
| August 18                  | Presentation - Shapanack Marker - Sharon Spangenberg     |
| September 21               | The Spirits of Lower Walpack Cemetery                    |
| October 13                 | Van Campen Day (Heritage Weekend)                        |
| December 7                 | Walpack Christmas (museum open)                          |
| December 8                 | *Holiday Dinner  |
| December 14 & 15           | Walpack Christmas (museum open)                          |

*All events are subject to change. Current CDC & NPS Covid guidelines may affect events.  
Visit [WalpackHistory.org](http://WalpackHistory.org) and [Facebook.com/WalpackHistory](https://www.facebook.com/WalpackHistory)  
for calendar updates, changes and details.*

*\*Members and their guests.*

## 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](http://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

Jule Girman  
Nick Kohan  
James Mershon  
Kim Parisi  
Rob Reynolds  
Chris Rode  
Rebecca Scheer  
Robert S. Smith  
William Zapic

### New Donations

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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.



# CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN – THE EL DORADO OF MINISINK

by Scott Yashay

*A piece of quartz extracted  
from the crystal mines in  
Ellenville, NY*



*Image courtesy of mindat.org*

Throughout the 16th and 17th Centuries, explorers from all corners of Europe flocked to the New World in search of riches and glory. Tales of a solid gold city called “El Dorado” lured countless men fueled by greed and encouraged by hearsay deep into the jungles of Central and South America. Many succumbed to disease, hunger, and death in their quest to find the fabled city. Several historic civilizations are candidates for having inspired the legend, but only our beloved stretch of the Old Mine Road can lay claim to a mythical mountain made of pure crystal. Despite rumors of its existence appearing far later in history than more familiar tales like El Dorado or the Fountain of Youth, the crystal mountain’s origins are much less clear. However, even the most obscure stories often have their roots in some degree of reality, so one has to wonder how such an absurd legend came to be.

By the early 1600s, Dutch New Amsterdam was already host to rumors that some of its first settlers had discovered rich mines in an area crudely defined as “Minisink Country.” It was said that the Lenape Indians worked these mines long before Europeans ever set foot in the Americas. In 1641, a colonial newspaper called *The Journal of New Netherlands* spoke vaguely of “High mountains exhibiting strong indications of minerals.” Tempted by a potential fortune in copper and iron, the Dutch West India Company launched an investigation in

1645 intending to prove whether these mines existed. The first explicit reference to crystal that we know of came in 1659, when a prospector named Claes de Ruyter (1620-1663) journeyed from the New World to his native Holland and presented the directors of the West India Company with copper samples he claimed to have extracted from the Minisink area. In a letter written to the New Netherland governor Peter Stuyvesant, the directors stated that de Ruyter had also brought “several specimens” from “a crystal mountain” located somewhere between Manhattan and the Delaware River. The directors encouraged the governor to grant land and mining rights to de Ruyter and other men with similar ambitions. Stuyvesant and his fellow officials had been completely unaware of these developments. Nevertheless, they wrote back to the directors the same year saying that they had found de Ruyter to be worthy of their confidence. Furthermore, they appear to have supported his claims, confirming that “a crystal mountain was situate between the Colonie[sic] and the Mannhattans, whereof he himself (de Ruyter) had brought divers[sic] pieces and specimens.” Curiously, the letter also mentioned that no evidence of copper mines had been found along the Delaware, but that crystal, gold, and “quicksilver” (mercury) abounded. Though finding copper had been its initial purpose, the Company’s decision to authorize construction of the Old Mine Road regardless indicates that these other finds were equally promising.

In his book, *The Dutch, the Indians, and the Quest for Copper*, archaeologist and historian Herbert C. Kraft casts considerable suspicion on Claes de Ruyter’s credibility. Although he would later become the governor’s personal interpreter, de Ruyter was a carpenter by trade, and his knowledge of geology was perhaps understandably questionable. The Dutch nobleman and merchant Kiliaen van Rensselaer, who was himself a founder and director of the West India Company, thought de Ruyter was completely untrustworthy. However, it is possible that van Rensselaer’s feelings may have evolved from a grudge held against de Ruyter for renegeing on a contract to build a sawmill on his estate. Though Kraft dedicates much of his book to proving that the Pahaquarry copper mines were little more than folklore, he does provide further context to the rumor of the crystal mountain. He reminds us that there were once crystal mines in Ellenville, New York which is on the road to Esopus (where the Old Mine Road terminates). A determined hiker can still visit the abandoned Ellenville quartz mines today. Based on the beautiful yellow crystals it continues to produce, Ellenville seems like the strongest candidate for what the Dutch thought was the crystal mountain. The presence of visible pyrite, or “fool’s gold,” in the rocks surrounding the mine further suggest that this was the place of crystal and gold referred to in Stuyvesant’s letter. It is also worth mentioning that the surrounding Shawangunk Mountains are rich in “quartzite conglomerate.”

*Continued on pg. 6*



# HOW LIFE WAS IN SUSSEX COUNTY AS SEEN BY CY HARKER

by Sharon Spangenberg

Continued from pg. 1



Walpack, I was as they say today, "Hooked on Sussex County," its people and their way of life. After being layed off Labor Day weekend of the second year, my pardner and I decided to hunt for property and go in ranch business for ourselves. Our friend, Addison Bevans, showed us a vacant, growed up farm, just north of the Walpack Twp. line on the famous "Old Delaware Mine Rd." In the fall of 1937 we moved up here and started to clean it up for the next summer's business, of course by an axe and team of horses. These people I speak of all were glad for us, all helped us in one way or another. In 1940 we were fortunate to get mortgage money after leasing from 1937. We were just beginning to roll along when our numbers came up for the draft of World War II. My pardner's number came first and at that time he wanted to sell the place. However, I did not want to sell, so we made an agreement for me to buy his half interest. We both came back in 1945 and being broke, I never went into dude ranching, but did have to start paying off back interest before the principal and also little by little my pardner. Most of the people who had helped me so much before the war, were still alive and gave me another boost. I worked in lumber woods in winter, raised crops in summer, rented and boarded horses, dug graves in cemeteries, drove school bus, milk truck, and any kind of work available.

In 1948 things began to change in this valley. Utility companies were ordered by the president to run a certain number of miles of power for the people in the country each year. Cutting of the trees back on the one lane country roads began to take away some of the country atmosphere. Farm boys were able to get jobs making more money, so left the farm. Farm tractors began to replace the horses. Then it seemed for a while farmers couldn't keep up with the new techniques. What you bought this year was obsolete in a year or two, so they would have to keep on with the automation as farm labor came increasingly harder to obtain.

About at this stage, I wasn't making it, so decided to get a loan, remodeled the barn and get into dairying. Again I had a lot of help from my farmer friends and neighbors. I farmed with horses, while the others had stepped up to tractors. After a couple years was able to swing into a second hand tractor and tractor equipment.

After ten years of dairying, in 1960 I sold out and was lucky enough to pay all debts even the last of the mortgage. At this point dairying was extremely bad, many farmers sold before me and oodles of them rapidly after I did. The Gov. was paying farmers in this area not to raise corn, paying for retiring land into a soil bank program. When this program ended, then the farmers began to sell land and sometimes whole farms. Gentlemen farmers and speculators began to move in. After stocking a farm, hiring a manager to run it, charging the loss off as a deduction for about five years, they would sell to another gentleman farmer and make a sizable profit on the property.

Then in 1962 out of a clear sky comes a map in the N.J. Herald of a proposed plan for Tocks Island Dam to be built. God only knows how long before 1962 the Army Corp of Engineers and the Sec. of the Interior were planning this before it became public. The Corp claims it necessary for water in the future, for flood control and recreation.

I believe its [sic] wrong to build an earth dam where they want it and back up 37 miles of water. Many years ago mother nature found that to be a weak spot and slowly, little by little, released the water between the Kittatinny range in New Jersey and the Pocono range in Pennsylvania. The limestone ridges on my farm still show the cupped out holes made by the water current rolling stones on them. I believe that in a case of a flash flood, the water could not be released fast enough and the dam would go....."

....."Whether you be a native born in Sussex County or have moved in and adopted Sussex County, I only hope you appreciate it as I do. Every place has advantages and disadvantages and I think Sussex Co.'s advantages far outweigh its disadvantages. So do many other people as they have proven by their stories in "Welcome to North West Jersey," in the Sunday Herald. I have seen many changes in the quality of living in Sussex Co. in my 40 years here. I can also visualize how much better it was in the generation who came here ahead of me, by reading about their entrance here in the obituary column of the New Jersey Herald.

It's really pathetic to see Sussex County, such a beautiful, scenic, natural agriculture county, progress

Continued on pg. 6

# CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN – THE EL DORADO OF MINISINK

by Scott Yashay

Continued from pg. 4



Entrance to a cave at the abandoned Ellenville quartz mines.

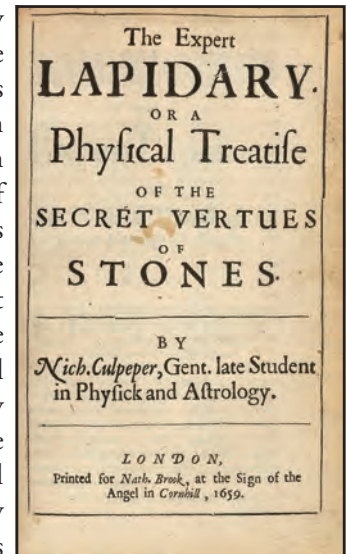
a sedimentary rock composed of quartz and other geological deposits. Though his efforts to debunk the Pahaquarry copper mines may have inadvertently proven the existence of the crystal mountain, Kraft admits that he is at a loss to explain

what economic purpose crystal could possibly have served the Dutch.

The Ellenville mines were dug centuries after de Ruyter's time, when uses for quartz unknown to the early Dutch settlers were discovered. So what commercial appeal did crystal have to the West India Company in the 17th Century? There is evidence to suggest that quartz may have had another appeal even more fantastical than the notion of a crystal mountain. Medieval manuscripts called lapidaries, which continued to appear into the 18th Century, detailed the medicinal properties of individual gemstones, including quartz. Citing biblical references to various precious stones, lapidaries explained how wearing, consuming, or merely looking at certain minerals could bestow magical powers. This was not so unusual a concept in an age where alchemy and astrology still passed for science. The West India Company's aforementioned interest in obtaining "quicksilver" supports this theory, as mercury was a common ingredient in both alchemical experiments and medical potions of the time. It would not be until about one hundred years after the Old Mine Road was built that

lapidary medicine was widely abandoned in favor of more modern remedies. One of its biggest skeptics was Herman Boerhaave (1668-1738), a Dutch physician whose criticism of healing gemstones in 1718 was considered controversial at the time. This would indicate that in the 1650s, the Dutch people still firmly believed in geological cures. The West India Company may very well have viewed the crystal mountain as a potential treasure trove of healing energy that could be sold to Holland's people or offer a powerful advantage to her armies in the ongoing Anglo-Dutch Wars.

A deliberate invention designed to attract commerce to New Amsterdam, or a worthless mineralogical discovery inflated by the delusions of ancient medicine? Do the Ellenville quartz mines explain away a centuries-old mystery, or does a fortune in gemstones still lie hidden beneath the undergrowth of some Walpack ridge? At the very least, the crystal mountain is a curious oddity in the otherwise rich and detailed history of the Delaware Valley. On a grander level, it serves as one of the final examples of an infamous "lost city" to a world that growing exploration was breaking free from the last vestiges of the Dark Ages and sending towards an Age of Enlightenment.



A 17th Century English Lapidary Text. Image courtesy of wikipedia.org

## HOW LIFE WAS IN SUSSEX COUNTY AS SEEN BY CY HARKER

by Sharon Spangenberg

continued from pg. 5

*so rapidly into another city as have all the farmlands in the past 50 – 60 years from Sussex County eastward to the Hudson River and Atlantic Ocean. I hope the citizens here will try to "hold that line" as long as possible to really give something to the future for their children and children's children. You can't have city and country both in the same area. As they say, you can't have your cake and eat it too. What do you want?" - Cy Harker*

According to Cy's niece in an October 15, 2006 Star Ledger news article, "Cy's land meant everything to him and he pledged never to yield his farm to the government. He devoted his whole life to keeping up his place."

**AUCTION SALE**  
AT  
**C Bar H RANCH**  
On the Delaware Mine Road, 7/10 of a mile west of Bevans, and 1½ miles south of Dingmans Bridge,  
**Saturday, August 1, 1942**  
AT 1 O'CLOCK, P. M.  
Seven Head of Good Western Saddle Horses—All young and sound. Four head work and ride, one 16 months old colt, of good blood. Six Western Saddles and Bridles, two sets of harness and collars. About 30 tons of good timothy hay in barn. Seven acres of good corn. Two nice shoats. One all steel farm wagon, new last year; hay rigging, spring wagon, 1-horse farm wagon, two mowing machines, 2-horse walking cultivator, two Oliver E. plows, sleigh, 5 H. P. Hercules gasoline engine, saw, table and belt, corn sheller, three-burner oil stove, wheelbarrow, hay forks, dung forks, shovels, scythes, corn cutters, 4 barrels, lot of beds, mattresses, pillows, pillow cases, sheets and blankets, and many other small items too numerous to mention.  
TERMS—Cash.  
**CY HARKER.**  
WM. P. PARR, Auctioneer. FRED LaBAR, Clerk.  
87-24

# Membership/Donation Form

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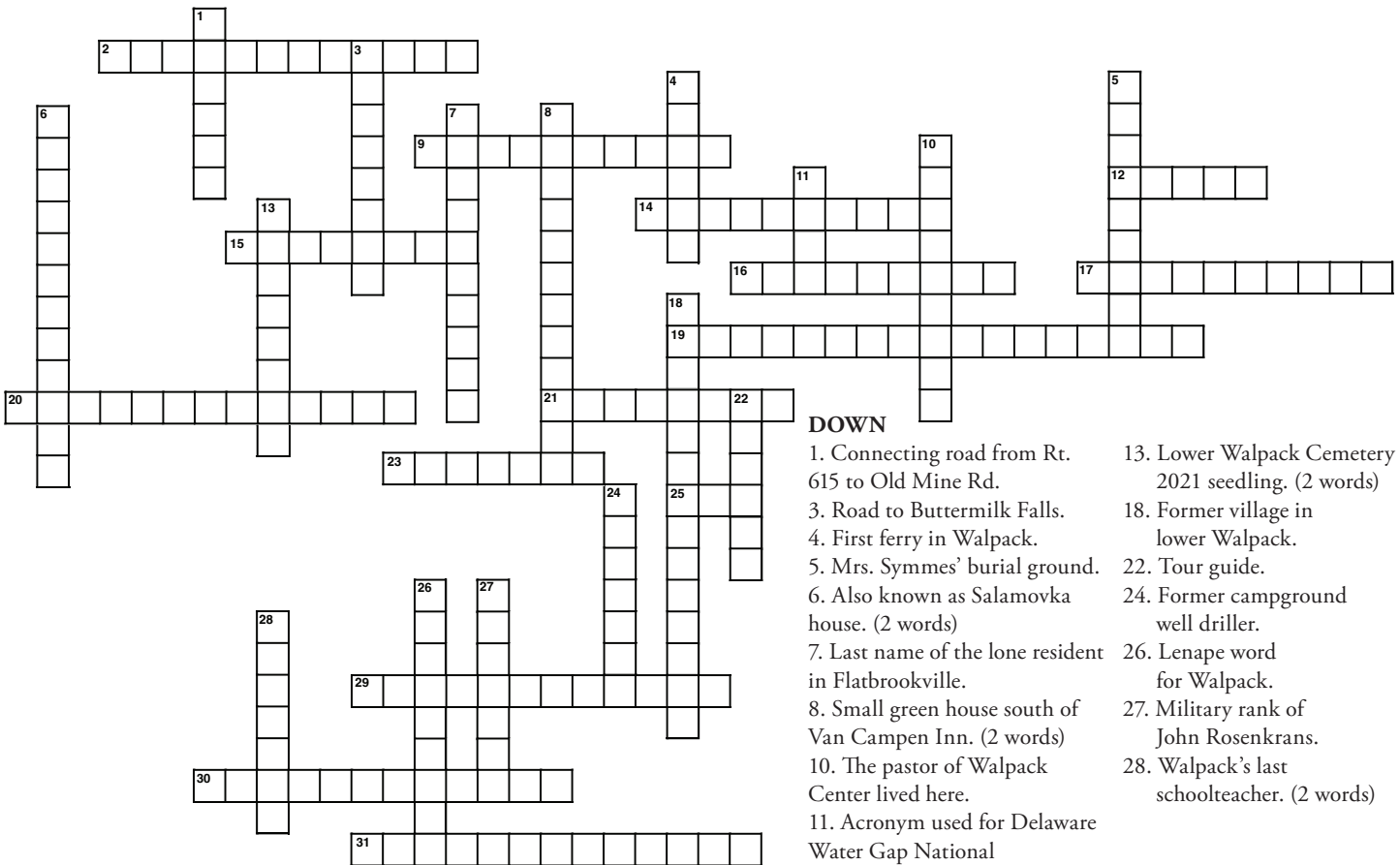
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 The Walpack Historical Society, Inc. is a non-profit, tax exempt organization under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.  
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## WALPACK CROSSWORD PUZZLE

*by Sharon Spangenberg*



### ACROSS

- 2. Camp overlooking Flatbrookville. (2 words)
- 9. It was formerly located within Walpack's General Store.
- 12. Beautiful old summer bed in Walpack Center.
- 14. Quarterly publication.
- 15. Family name of two presidents

- connected with Walpack.
- 16. It empties into the Delaware River.
- 17. Rustic restaurant. (2 words)
- 19. Elevated community in Walpack. (3 words)
- 20. Also known as the 1812 house. (2 words)
- 21. Name given to the Symmes mansion.
- 23. Corner on Flatbrookville/Stillwater Rd.

### DOWN

- 1. Connecting road from Rt. 615 to Old Mine Rd.
- 3. Road to Buttermilk Falls.
- 4. First ferry in Walpack.
- 5. Mrs. Symmes' burial ground.
- 6. Also known as Salamovka house. (2 words)
- 7. Last name of the lone resident in Flatbrookville.
- 8. Small green house south of Van Campen Inn. (2 words)
- 10. The pastor of Walpack Center lived here.
- 11. Acronym used for Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.
- 13. Lower Walpack Cemetery 2021 seedling. (2 words)
- 18. Former village in lower Walpack.
- 22. Tour guide.
- 24. Former campground well driller.
- 26. Lenape word for Walpack.
- 27. Military rank of John Rosenkrans.
- 28. Walpack's last schoolteacher. (2 words)

- 25. Number of active cemeteries in Walpack.
- 29. Never happened rock festival.
- 30. Slave who did not want his freedom. (2 words)
- 31. Walpack's western border. (2 words)



[www.walpackhistory.org](http://www.walpackhistory.org)

**WALPACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S  
SPRING DINNER**

**(MEMBERS ONLY)**

**IS ON  
SATURDAY  
APRIL 27, 2024**

Same place, same time, just a different day.  
Not on Sunday, it is **ON SATURDAY**. That is  
the day you need to mark on your calendar.  
Look for the official announcement to arrive  
in your mailbox as the day gets closer.

## 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/](http://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.