

GENERAL STORE AND POST OFFICE *continued from page 7*

AWAITING A NEW VISION by Audrey Schwab



Photo B - The rear of the cellar, looking toward Main Street

the fieldstone walls. The photo (B), taken from the rear of the cellar, looking toward Main Street may reveal clues to those with a sharper eye or better knowledge as to how much damage the cellar may have sustained IF the fire, which burned fiercely enough to scorch the paint on the house next door, imploded into the dug foundation.

Over the decades, the Walpack General Store adjusted to accommodate more modern demands and endured until the 1970s. Sadly, the slow demise of many small town general stores with their in-house post offices began as early as the late 19th Century when the U.S. Postal Service began to offer Rural Free Delivery directly to personal roadside postal boxes; thusly eliminating the need for frequent trips to town to post or gather the mail

and shop for incidentals in the process. The new era also ushered in the beginning of mail order catalogs such as Montgomery Ward and Sears. The struggle to survive was further threatened by “automobility” and better road ways built to accommodate a populace on mechanized wheels, allowing them access to more distant and centralized hubs. By the mid-twentieth century, the Mom and Pop local store was often no longer financially viable and many of their businesses went the way of our fondest memories.

It is hoped that the structural renovations The Park Service continues to pursue, will usher in a renaissance of sorts and a bright new future for this key Walpack Center structure.

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. We also maintain a small museum and book store.

www.walpackhistory.org

WALPACK historical society

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Newsletter of the
Walpack Historical Society

*“Preserving a Fine
Tradition of Caring”*

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THE WALPACK GENERAL STORE AND POST OFFICE

AWAITING A NEW VISION by Audrey Schwab



We may be able to conjure the warmth of a pot bellied stove or the sounds of country commerce and camaraderie. It is likely we might imagine the tangy wafts from a garlicky pickle barrel or even the more subtle scents of new leather and tobacco. However we care to imagine it, the patient essence of the Walpack Center General Store and Post Office waits in abeyance as continued restoration ushers it into an as yet undetermined future.

The National Park Service installed a new EcoStar faux slate roof during 2016, and this year has begun the task of rebuilding the front porch. As we ponder the possibilities of what may lie ahead for this key structure, it is likewise interesting to revisit its past.

The General Store of the mid-nineteenth century was often born of the entrepreneurial ambitions of a local inhabitant who recognized the need for a central mercantile location to service a nascent farming community and its near outliers. These small communities were often restrained by geographical boundaries that would greatly benefit from the ability to buy and sell in a near central location. Walpack Center became that pivotal place when Jasper Rundle purchased a fifteen acre tract in 1850 on

which he and his brother Isaac built and established a General Store. In time, a post office became part of the store and the nexus of the village’s growth began.

Warren C. Hursh, in his series of 1889 Articles, “A Tramp On His Travels”, notes “the store is kept by Mr. Adin Van Sickle, who is doing a thriving business. The Post Office is kept here with Jacob Roe as Postmaster and Mr. Van Sickle as deputy”. Hursh presents a chronology of the storekeepers from the Rundles to Van Sickle noting other prominent Walpack family names of Rosenkrans, Losey, Snook, and Knight as they wove their way into the fabric of local history.

In 1912, William Ellett bought the store and what we now refer to as The Rosenkrans Museum from Elmer Roe. William and his wife Mary moved their young family to Walpack Center where they lived and operated the general store until 1922. In 1990, former Walpack Historical Society President, Robert Williams interviewed a then 82 year old Julia Ellett Lewis who was four years old when her parents became proprietors of the store and residents of the neighboring home. Bob Williams chronicled Julia’s memories in a special 1991 edition of The Walpack

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WALPACK
historical society
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WHS TRUSTEE - JEN WYCALEK

DEWA 2017 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



Jennifer Kavanaugh of the NPS and Don Stieh present Jen Wycalek with the award on Sept. 17, 2017.



Walpack Historical Society Trustee, Jen Wycalek was honored for her extraordinary service to The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area at the DEWA annual luncheon for volunteers in the park. The event was held at The Shawnee Inn in Bushkill, PA on Sunday, August 27th to recognize all park volunteers. Jen received the singular honor of "Volunteer of The Year" for her hundreds of annual hours of dedicated service to The Walpack Historical Society and to the park.

As a valued member of our society, Jen serves as an area history ambassador through her involvement with school groups, old Walpack families and friends and other park partners. Her first love is her dedication to making The Van Campen Inn available to visitors. Dressed in period attire, she lends an aspect of this cherished building's past that goes beyond its history; she brings it to life! Jen is also instrumental in researching and organizing WHS guided hikes within DEWA and spends many hours at book selling events throughout the area that financially support the WHS. Through her tireless enthusiasm and significant knowledge, Jen has nurtured many friendships with people interested in area history and furthered the mission of the WHS on many levels.

Jen has been a face and helping hand of our society practically from its inception. Her many hundreds of annual hours of volunteer service over several decades has laid a firm foundation for our society's endeavors. She is a priceless asset to us all.

The Walpack Historical Society would like to acknowledge and appreciate all of our many Lifetime Members for their generous support.

GENERAL STORE AND POST OFFICE *continued*

Historical Society newsletter, providing us with a vivid snapshot of her time spent here.

Julia recalls that "my mother was postmistress in Walpack Center and the post office was always open; no special hours and the same with the store. When you entered the original store building, the post office with its wooden cubby holes where the mail was sorted was off to the right. Next to this was the candy counter and I was considered a fortunate girl by all the other children as I could have all of the candy I wanted. Across from the post office area was the notions counter and next to that area, going back in the store was kept material of all kind. Next to that, in the back corner were the dry goods and the shoes and boots. In the front of the store, near the notions was one of the few telephones in Walpack. It was a party line and each party had its own number of rings. In the center of the store was an old pot belly stove and near that was a bench where the men would come and sit every night and talk."

Julia's memories color in the details of what we know to be common features of the general stores of the mid to late 19th and early 20th Centuries. As we see in Walpack Center and in Peters Valley, the store usually had a raised front porch deck to facilitate loading and unloading of merchandise and products from farm and delivery wagons. Tin advertising signs and more durable goods would beckon from the front porch with more elaborate product displays artfully arranged behind the large plate glass windows flanking the double entry doors. Inside the store was a long, windowless wonder of floor to ceiling shelves and wall space consumed by goods and colorful advertising; surely a feast for the eyes and easy to imagine the enticement that shoppers would experience.

Tragically, in February 1915, the original structure was consumed in less than an hour by a predawn fire of undetermined origin. The February 11, 1915 issue of The New Jersey Herald noted "the loss to be estimated at about \$3,000, partly covered by insurance". The February 18, 1915 issue of the same newspaper said "the insurance on

the building and contents is \$2,200. Anyone owing bills will do Mr. Ellett a good favor by paying the same as soon as possible, as he will need his money for rebuilding".

Julia recalled that "the new store was built by Decker and Sons and all of the lumber was carted in from Branchville. The store was put back into business in thirty days." This was a pretty remarkable feat considering the time of year and the distance the materials needed to travel, presumably by horse drawn cartage. The store seen today differs from the original structure in that it is a story and a half versus the original two storied structure. It was said the new structure was built on the same footprint as the old. As time would eventually tell, that may not have been entirely accurate.

When the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area team of carpentry experts recently dismantled the 1915 front porch deck in order to replace it and stabilize the overhanging roof structure, it was determined that the main structure was not built upon its original foundation but supported by beams and set back from the front rubble stone foundation wall (Photo A).



Photo A - Newer support beams, under the front porch

The porch joists were thereby supported by the cellar foundation walls rather than appended to the main store front on grade. It leaves one to wonder if the main 1915 structure may have been slightly smaller than the original. Another of history's mysteries is that upon peering into the newly revealed cellar, the untrained eye cannot determine burn evidence of the fire on

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THE HISTORY OF FREE RURAL DELIVERY By Len Peck
Originally published June 2008



John Wanamaker
Postmaster General 1889-1893

Rural Free Delivery (RFD) was officially established by Congress on October 1, 1896, although the first Postmaster General to champion this cause was John Wanamaker - seven years earlier in 1889. His motives in his initial effort to establish such a system were widely questioned by many of the small merchants in the rural areas. Although they knew such a service would benefit the farmers in outer areas, they accused Wanamaker of attempting to crush the small country store owners while creating a greater market for his large Wanamaker store in Philadelphia via its catalog mail-order business.

In the larger cities, mail delivery had been in effect since 1863, and by 1890 the farmers in the rural areas were asking the question; "why should the cities have fancy delivery mail service while the old colonial service still prevails in the country districts?"

Thus, it was that between February 1 and September 3, 1891, Wanamaker experimented with an RFD system in communities with populations of 800 to 4000 people, and received favorable comments from both rural postmasters as well as the recipients.

In New Jersey, James Harold, postmaster at the Dunellen Post Office wrote, "I am pleased to state that the experimental free delivery system is working very satisfactorily.

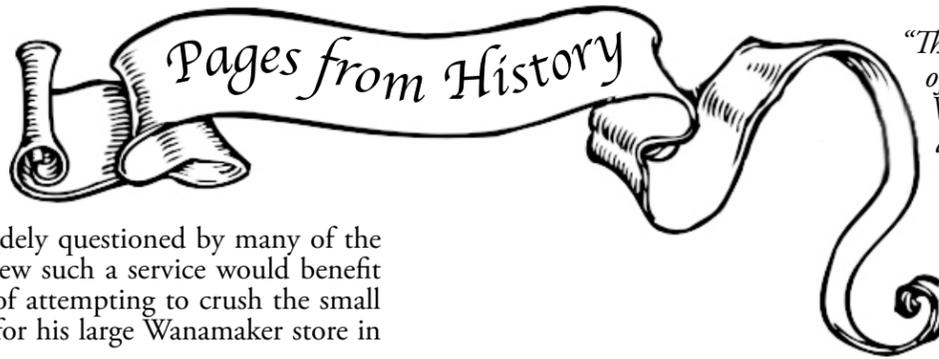
As anticipated the box rent has and will no doubt continue to fall off but this is considered secondary to the benefits delivered by patrons of this office."

To the farmer, it would be impossible to over emphasize the importance of RFD. It meant he could receive daily market reports that were so important to selling his crops. It meant receiving daily weather reports which are also important to planting and harvesting his crops. It also meant the saving of many valuable hours and traveling to the post office to pick up his mail, and it would bring to his door the delivery of newspapers with news of the world. It also meant they would no longer be short changed in the service they received by having to pay the same postage as city folks without the advantage of home delivery.

But all Wanamaker's efforts would be short-lived, as his term as postmaster general would end in 1893 and President Grover Cleveland would replace him with Wilson Bissell, who did not favor Rural Free Delivery.

During the next three years, much debate took place between Congress, Postmaster General Bissell, and the rural public. Finally, on June 9, 1896, Congress, under pressure, appropriated \$10,000 to be added to a previous appropriation of \$30,000, and authorized rural delivery. But PMG Bissell, who had all along opposed rural delivery, resigned his position rather than put it into effect.

President Cleveland then appointed William L Wilson as Postmaster General. He promised to begin experimental rural deliveries even though he disagreed with the concept. Wilson set up 44 widely diversified experimental routes in 26 states. One of the routes he established was in his hometown of Charles Town, West Virginia. The reports received from all experimental routes were so overwhelmingly in favor of the new system that on September 29, 1896, Wilson issued the following letter inaugurating RFD.



"The success of the experiment of Rural Free Delivery of mail, now being tried in the vicinity of Uvilla, West Virginia, will depend largely upon the speed and promptness with which the letter carriers will make deliveries to patrons on their routes. This will be insured if patrons erect at the roadside boxes in which carriers may deposit the mail as they pass. The time otherwise consumed by carriers in reaching residences some distance back from the main roads will thus be saved, the service rendered efficient and it's cost limited to a reasonable figure. It is hoped

the Department will receive the cooperation of those who will be benefited by RFD in order that it may be able to satisfactorily demonstrate by this test the usefulness of the service."



William L. Wilson
Postmaster General 1895-1897

With the experiment a complete success, October 1, 1896 is considered the official date RFD went into effect.

Not only was RFD a boon to the farmer but it also went a long way in development of the mail order business. Sears Roebuck and Company which started their mail order business in 1888, after only one year of limited RFD service reported that they were selling "4 suits and a watch every minute, a buggy every 10 minutes and a revolver every two minutes."

Because of the deplorable conditions of certain roads, the post office department had to turn down hundreds of petitions for the service. This caused local governments and the farmers to get involved with grading and developing a better highway system.

But once RFD became a fact, request for the service multiplied rapidly. Each new route established usually brought immediate request for additional routes from surrounding areas. By June 30, 1900 there were 1,214 rural routes established in 42 States and Territories, with some 2,100 additional routes pending.

To be eligible for a rural route at the turn of the century, 100 families or more along the proposed route had to sign a petition, which was then sent to their Congressman or Senator. Upon their recommendation to the Post Office Department, the request was put on the waiting list until the postal agent was available to assess and lay out the route. Road quality, year around usability, and true rural use were the principal request requisites for route to be established, with assurance by the patrons on the route that certain road standards would be maintained. The length of all routes was restricted in length so the carrier could complete all deliveries and return home in one day.

Images courtesy of Wikipedia.com

THUNDER MOUNTAIN RANCH by Mike Orlowski
JULY 16, 2017



THE VICTORIAN LADY by Lydia Chiappini
SEPT. 17, 2017



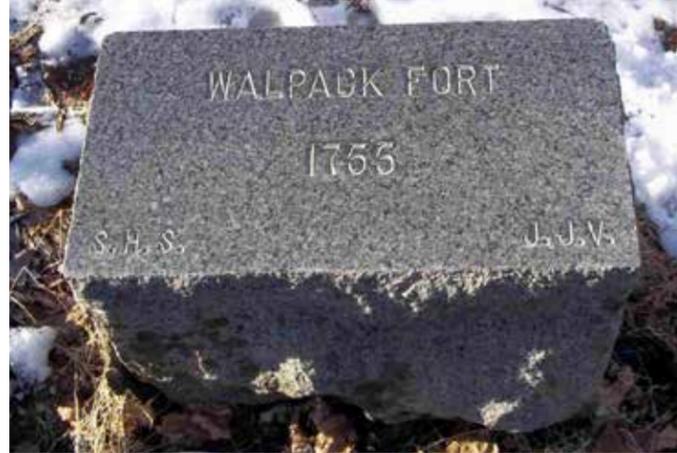
FALL HIKES - TWO CHANCES TO EXPLORE HISTORY



DESTINATION: THE RICHARD LAYTON HOUSE
DATE: SUN. OCT. 29, 2017

The Walpack Historical Society will be leading a hike to the Richard Layton House in Walpack on Sunday, October 29th. We will meet in Walpack Center at 11:AM and carpool to the property driveway off of Pompey's Ridge Road. WHS President, Don Stieh will be leading the hike up to the beautiful c.1812 stone house, outbuildings and barns where we will be met by Mr. John Spooner, a former resident of the house who will share his memories of the property he knew as a young boy.

This is a hike of a very modest distance (approximately two miles round trip) with a moderate elevation change to one of The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area's most lovely properties. We hope you will join us!



DESTINATION: THE WALPACK BEND
DATE: SUN. NOV. 5, 2017

Join the Walpack Historical Society on Sunday November 5th as we explore the area around the Walpack Bend. The hike will be an easy 2 mile round trip. Meet at the Rosenkrans Museum in Walpack at 11:00 a.m. We will car pool to the Old Mine Road and start on the driveway leading to the Decker Ferry House.

After visiting the Decker Ferry House, we'll continue down the trail to our destination, a granite monument inscribed "Walpack Fort 1755". This was one of 9 monuments donated by John J. Van Sickle in 1913. There is a foundation hole near the marker. The location of this marker is curious, since it is generally believed that the Walpack Fort was on the Old Mine Road at the site of the Dutch Reformed Church, near the Lower Walpack Cemetery. Some believe it was moved from it's original location.



THANK YOU!

The Walpack Historical Society would like to offer a most gracious THANK YOU to the following members and friends who have so generously donated to our Rosenkrans Museum Paint Project and to our General Fund.

Curtis Engesser
Michael Shulman
Sylvia Rosenkrans
Arlene Cohen

Sandi and Jim Kron
Connie Burton
Anthony & Ann Webster

OBITUARIES

Robert Chervy

Longtime member, Robert Chervy died August 31, 2017, he leaves his sister Mrs. Barber Rock.

Alice H. Heater

Alice was formerly of Walpack township, died August 8, 2017. Alice, her husband Bill and children were the last family to live in the Van Campen Inn, where Bill Heater was a tenant farmer for the Beislars. An interview with Alice appears in our book "A Place Called Home... A History of the Van Campen Inn and the Families Who Lived There."

Alice was predeceased by her husband Bill, and leaves three children Susan, Eva and Bill.

Our deepest sympathy to all the families.

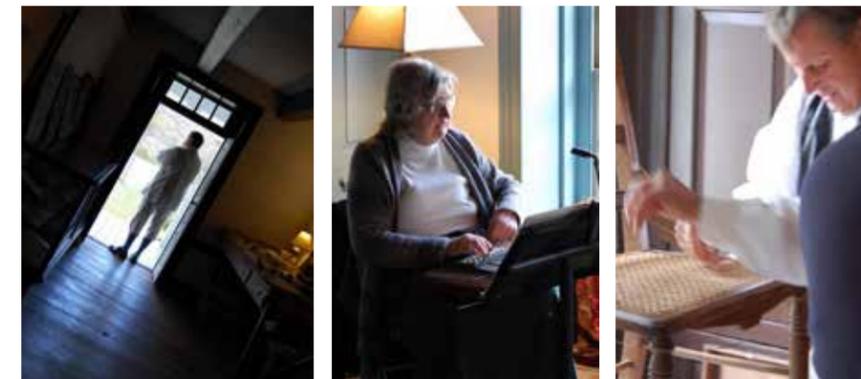
VISIT WALPACK FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Visiting the country this holiday season? Don't forget to visit Walpack. On the weekends of December 2 & 3, 9 & 10, both the WHS Museum and the Church will be open and decorated.



Holiday Dinner at The Walpack Inn
Dec. 10 at 1pm

WE NEED YOU! DOCENTS & VOLUNTEERS



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.

2017 CALENDAR

February	Black History Month
April 2	Spring Hike
April 23	Spring Dinner at <i>The Walpack Inn</i>
May 21	Civil War Program
June 25	The Van Scorder Knight House
July 16	Thunder Mountain Ranch
Aug. 20	See Who is Buried Here?
Sept. 17	The Victorian Lady
Oct. 15	Van Campen Day
Oct. 29	Fall Hike: Layton House
Nov. 5	Fall Hike: Walpack Bend
Dec. 2 & 3	Walpack Christmas
Dec. 9 & 10	Walpack Christmas
Dec. 10	Holiday Dinner

Visit Walpackhistory.org for updates, changes and details.

NEW MEMBERS

Belvidere Elementary -
5th Grade Class
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Margaret Whiting
Connie Burton
Doug Hosney
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