

HAYCOCK HISTORICAL NEWS

The Newsletter of The Haycock Historical Society • Summer 2010

HAYCOCK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

by Jane Nase

If someone bet you that Haycock had a symphony orchestra in the 1950's would you take the bet or tell him he is crazy? Well, most of the papers at that time thought it was a crazy idea too, but it is a true story. On a hot summer night in August 1958 the Haycock Symphony Orchestra made its debut in the new firehouse.

According to stories in those papers at the time, the appearance at the firehouse was the orchestra's second and last public performance. The first was reported to be at a school for the blind near Paoli, Pa.

The group was lead by Haycock resident George S. Dunn who lived on Roudenbush Road in a house that is now within Lake Towhee County Park property. George, who played the violin, was an amateur musician who met weekly with a group of other amateur musicians at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and occasionally at his Haycock home. The orchestra had about 25 members ranging in age from 20-70 years-old who came from Philadelphia and also the Lehigh Valley. The group played for enjoyment and had enough instrumental balance to perform rather well for its size.

Both the Morning Call and the Free Press reported there were about 200 people in attendance at the firehouse from young to old. The hall was packed and many had to sit outside the building. A variety of music was performed such as Haydn's "Surprise Symphony" and Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" suite. A Rossini overture, selections from Mascagni's

"Cavalleria Rusticana," Brahms "Hungarian Dance No. 7," a Strauss polka and Waldteufel's "Estudiantina Waltz" were all played into the Haycock evening air. The program was well received and the group performed several encores.

George, a native of Philadelphia, gave music lessons in his Haycock home and one of his students was society member and township resident, Pamela Varkony.

"George came to our house every Saturday morning for an hour," Varkony said. "I was undoubtedly the worse student he ever had—the lessons ended after only a few months. He was a lovely gentleman...very dignified with a moustache. He and his wife were frequent guests at our home...even after the violin lessons."

While George enjoyed music and began playing the violin as a very young boy, his main occupation was manufacturing plastic bags, tarps and special covers in a barn on his 30-acre farm.

Another part of his musical interests was collecting sheet music. Throughout his years, he collected more than 500 complete scores for orchestra that were stored in a fireproof vault in the barn. The music was further protected from damage by being stored in the plastic bags he manufactured.

Thanks to Dave Long, township Roadmaster and resident, who shared the articles from the Free Press and The Morning Call.



George Dunn (center wearing tie) and members of the orchestra practicing at his home. Another photo of the group appears on page 2.



George Dunn (center with mustache) and members of the Haycock Symphony Orchestra. On back of the original photo are the members' names and the instruments they played. Dunn's wife, the taller woman standing in front him, has the word "waffles" written after her name instead of an instrument. This was because she used to serve waffles and chipped beef to all the orchestra members.

NEW BOOK TO BE RELEASED ON TOHICKON VALLEY

by Pat DeWald

The second book on Haycock history will be available late summer and is called, "Our Lost Tohickon Valley."

The book brings to life the people and places that once inhabited the area known as Nockamixon State Park. The main focus of the book is to document the area in Haycock Township that was purchased by the state through eminent domain and to preserve the history of the houses, mills, farms and record the stories of the people who lived there. The park has changed the area drastically and little remains to identify where these places were.

The park was opened in 1973, but few realize that this was a vital community of homes. Much of the history of Haycock Township was torn down. Margie Goldthorp Fulp and Pamela Feist Varkony are the main authors and both lived in the area and had their homes condemned.

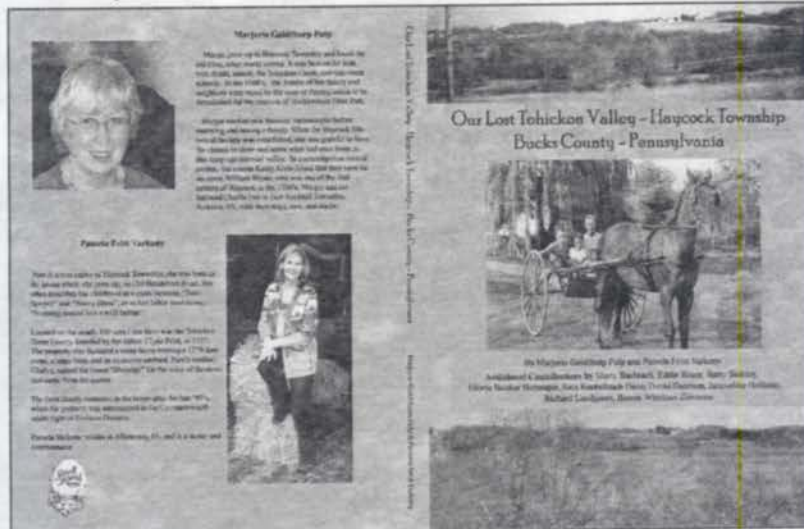
Margie moved to Haycock when she was two years old and Pamela was born in the house where her parents lived on Old Bethlehem Road. Each contacted old friends and relatives, and these in turn contacted others who lived in the area. Margie and Pamela gathered pictures and stories about the era before the park, which resulted in a 340-page book.

Besides its historical perspective, the book may also enhance visits to the park by giving readers mental pictures of life in an area now submerged under the 1,450-acre lake.

So if you sail on the lake or are on the bike path, stories from the book may come to life in the form of hearing the laughter of children playing in the water trough, swimming in Tohickon Creek or exploring the Indian cave. It may also

be seeing the shape of a man plowing with horses, old tractors tilling the fields or an old bulldozer running all night because it was too hard to start on a cold morning.

The Research Committee thanks Margie, Pamela and all who contributed to the book. Margie and Pamela hope you will enjoy the book as much as they did in writing it. Because of their efforts we now have a starting point to do further research on the his-



tory of the mills and farms.

A book signing is scheduled for Labor Day Weekend at the park. The book will sell for \$25 and is available through the society's website, www.haycockhistoricalsociety.org, Sines 5&10 in Quakertown, the Haycock Township Municipal Building, by mail order (see form on page 4) or by calling Pat DeWald at 215-804-0216.

BELGIAN DRAFT HORSES ON MOUNTAIN PRIDE FARM

by Jane Nase

To many Haycock residents, Greg Seifert's Belgian draft horses are a familiar sight, yet some may not be aware of their rich history.

The Belgian draft is a direct descendant of the original black horses of Flanders or "great horses" as they were called during medieval times. These horses once carried armored knights into battle and provided the genetic material from which nearly all modern draft breeds are derived.

Other types of draft horses are Percheron, Shire, Suffolk and what most people know, the Clydesdale, or Annheiser-Bush Beer horses. Draft horses are known as gentle giants, because most have a good temperament and are good around people if properly trained.

They first appeared in this country in the early 1800s and performed heavy tasks such as plowing and transporting freight. Their popularity grew and during the early 1900s, thousands of draft horses were shipped in from Belgium, France, England, and Scotland.

Draft horses also played an important role during World War I to help the military effort. With the innovation of trench warfare, lighter Calvary style horses could not effectively maneuver over the field. However, the draft horses were able to pull artillery with nearly tireless strength, carrying both ammunition and supplies. Of the one million plus horses that went to Europe for World War I, only 200 horses returned home.

The use of horses in farming slowed after World War I when tractors became more available. Small farms consolidated and grew larger, making the horse too slow for farm work. Many breeds became depleted after horses were sold to slaughterhouses for horsemeat.

Today, some smaller farms still employ the draft horse in both the United States and Europe. The Amish and Mennonite farmers, in particular, still harness the power of draft horses to work the fields.

Out of necessity, draft horses must be pretty tall. Most of Greg's horses are 17 hands high. (A hand is the measurement used in measuring horses. It is about 4 inches, the measurement of the side of a hand.) Draft horses also have to have big, strong hooves. The size of the horse is critical so it is easy

to put on a harness but strong enough to do the farming.

Greg started learning about farming on his aunt and uncle's farm where he spent summers during his middle school years. There he helped with the chores as he could.

However, his real passion for horses started when he met Laura DiDonato in 1993. Laura lived on a small farm on Old Bethlehem Road where she raised sheep, chickens, and goats and had a pony. Greg took riding lessons but didn't feel comfortable on the horse. The pony had been a pacer at the track, so Greg bought a cart and harness in Lancaster. By then, he was bitten by the horse bug and decided to do cart riding on a bigger scale.

Meanwhile, at his job at the NJ State Police, he was asked to do a ceremonial horse ride for the 75th anniversary of the state police. So while he had some training with the police force, in actuality he learned mostly by watching the farmers in Lancaster County and through a video he purchased. In addition, Greg had some help from his friend, Tony, who also instructed him.

Greg's ride began with a single-seated, four-wheel buggy. For fun, he used to take it to the Parkway Drive-in parking lot and drive people around. His passion grew and one carriage led to another-one for weddings, a covered wagon and a few others.

In 1998, he and Laura purchased the 36-acre farm on Woodbine Lane, which they named Mountain Pride Farm. Greg decided he wanted to buy a team of horses to do some of the farming. He chose Belgium draft horses since he liked the color combination of the chestnut body with a golden mane. Five years ago, he bought his first two horses, Willie and Whalen, and Jake and Harley were purchased two years ago.

Mountain Pride is the appropriate name for their farm, for the pride in Greg's voice when he describes his team of four Belgian draft horses is enormous. When not working on the farm, the "boys" are giving hayrides in the fall at Trauger's Farm or at Quakertown Alive. Weather permitting they will be at the Kringle Shoppe again this year, maybe even with bells on!



Belgian draft horses Willie, Whalen, Jake and Harley



Greg and team plowing a field this spring

New Book Release!

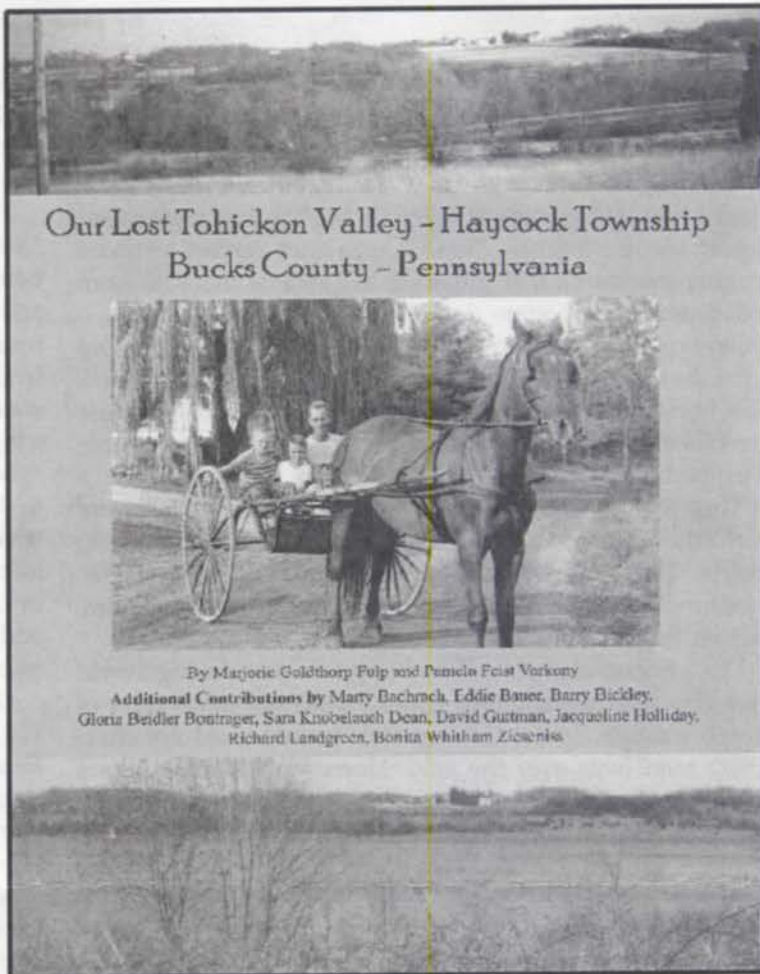
The second book on Haycock history, available late summer of 2010, "Our Lost Tohickon Valley" brings to life the people and places that once inhabited the area known as Nockamixon State Park. The main focus of the book is to document the area in Haycock Township that was purchased by the state through eminent domain. We, of Haycock Historical Society seek to preserve the history of the houses, mills and farms and to tell the people's story. The park has changed the area drastically and little remains to identify where these places were.

The park was opened in 1973. Few people realize that this area was once a vital community of homes. Much of the history of Haycock Township was torn down. The book's focus is mostly on the lost residences. Margie Goldthorp Fulp and Pamela Feist Varkony are the main authors. Both lived in the area and had their homes condemned to make way for the park. Margie moved to Haycock when she was two years old and Pamela was born in the house where her parents lived on Old Bethlehem Road. Each contacted old friends and relatives, and these in turn contacted others who lived in the area. Margie and Pamela gathered pictures and stories about the era before the park and along with their stories and pictures the book grew to 340+ pages of Haycock history.

Through the work of Margie and Pamela and others who contributed to the book, we now have a good understanding of what the area looked like with the mills and farms. So now if you sail on lake Nockamixon or walk the bike path you may hear the laughter of children playing in the water trough, swimming in Tohickon Creek, or exploring the Indian Cave. You might envision the silhouette of a man plowing with horses or old tractors tilling the fields. This was the land before the lake.

Margie and Pamela hope you will enjoy reading this book as much as they enjoyed writing it--so many memories and so much history to be shared!

Haycock Historical Society's Research Committee would like to thank Margie and Pamela and all who contributed to the book. Because of their efforts, we now have a starting point to do further research on the history of our area's mills and farms.



ORDER FORM

Please send me _____ copy(s) at \$25.00 per book plus \$5.00 S & H per book. *Allow 14 days for shipping.*

I have enclosed my check or money order in the amount of _____

Mail check/money order payable to:

Haycock Historical Society Post Office Box 715, Quakertown, PA.

Ship to: Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____



SOCIETY NEWS

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

On July 14, 2010, six members of HHS toured the Peter Wentz Farmstead in Montgomery County. The farm, situated in Worcester Township along Skippack Pike (Route 73), was used as a headquarters for General Washington during the Revolutionary War. It is a fine example of the mixture of German and English influences in the architecture of the house. The farmstead consists of a barn and other outbuildings.

Another trip was taken on July 18, 2010 to the Evans-Mumbower Mill on Swedesford Road, Lower Gwynedd Township, Montgomery County. This mill has now been restored to the point where it is operating one grinding wheel. While we were there the miller was grinding corn. The mill at the present is operated by an electric motor. In the near future the mill organizers plan to pump water over the waterwheel which in turn will power the mill.

The research committee welcomes suggestions for activities and places to visit. Two presently on the list but not firmed up are the Ephrata Cloister in Ephrata and the Hans Herr House in Lancaster. Also, another interesting trip could be to Bethlehem.



The Peter Wentz Farmstead was one of the field trips planned by the research committee this summer

SOCIETY MEETINGS

Thursday, September 16, 2010- Charles Fulp will present "Slides of Old Haycock," many of which will show homes and other places now under Lake Nockamixon.

Thursday, October 21, 2010- Andrew Desko will present "The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission—their history and aquatic resources" with an emphasis on Lake Nockamixon.

Thursday, November 18, 2010- Jim Diamond will present "Domestic Animal Bells from around the World." He will speak about each bell, revealing its story and what it is made of and will even allow our members to ring them. He has traveled extensively and is currently traveling to

South Africa and Swaziland to work on a project. One of his bells was worn by a mule pulling a barge on the Delaware canal system. His book will be for sale, which is titled the same as his presentation. Proceeds help pay for an endowment scholarship to Delaware Valley College.

The Haycock Historical Society is a non-profit organization whose mission is to research and record the history of Haycock Township and the surrounding environs. General meetings are open to society members and the public. Meetings are held six times a year, clustered in the fall: September, October and November; and spring: March, April and May, and usually held at 7 p.m. at St. Paul's Lutheran Church across from the Haycock fire-house in Applebachsville.

The society's newsletter is published four times a year and distributed to members and also available to the public at general meetings, the Haycock Township Building and other public locations in the area.

Officers 2010

President: Chris Handschinchandschin@verizon.net
 Vice-President: Pat DeWald ...wdewald@verizon.net
 Treasurer: Dick Landgreenrjlandgreen@comcast.net
 Secretary: Henry DePue ...hnde57@verizon.net
 Membership: Jane Nasecraftsbymj@verizon.net
 Ad Hoch: Jane Nasecraftsbymj@verizon.net
 Ad Hoch: Paula Laughlinpmlreader@yahoo.com

Officers meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. in the Haycock Township Building.



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