

BEN AVON AREA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Vol. XVIII - Number 3 November, 2002



Gladys Phillips Memorial Plaque

We are please to announce the dedication of a plaque which acknowledges the role of Gladys Phillips in saving the log house and founding this association.

Sunday, December 22, 2002
3:00 PM

at the Log House
12 Western Ave.
(near the Emsworth Locks and Dam)

The plaque is to be mounted on a boulder in the garden beside the Log House and reads:

In Memoriam
Gladys Jones Phillips
Ben Avon Historian
Her Dedication to Local
History Saved this Log House
1984

Following a brief ceremony we will have a reception at Jean Henderson's home.

This dedication will also recognize those who helped Gladys at the beginning. While Gladys was the driving force, she recruited helpers. Bill Trimble, then editor at the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, provided the historical credibility. Founding board members included Bill, Mary Ann Graf, Lou Seifarth, Martha Mitchell and Gladys' husband, Tom Phillips.

Also, key support came from Allan Randolph who owned the house and cooperated in the efforts to save it once its significance came to light.

Since I was not an active part of the effort in the 1980s, please understand if someone has been overlooked.

Annual Report

As of last June 30th, we completed another fiscal year. My thanks to fellow Board members for their dedication and faithful work during the year:

Jean Henderson, Vice President
Trudy File, Secretary
Tracy Ferguson
Ken Jaros
Bob Kiser
Darlene Phillips
B. J. Robertson

This month Trudy File and Dick Herchenroether were elected to new terms running through 2005. Officers will also continue unchanged in the coming year.

Landscaping at the log house continues with the removal of a couple of mulberry trees. It was nice to have the shade but those trees were basically large weeds. We recently planted a serviceberry tree as a replacement. Meanwhile new shrubs have been added. A Pennsylvania grant is funding some of these improvements and also a replacement of the Forest Avenue retaining wall and treatment of the logs.

In the publications department, the "Dear Emsworth" book by Jim Knox has been a big success. Total sales are approaching 500 copies and all sales now are 100% to our benefit. More importantly it has been a source of new memberships and interest in renewing old friendships. Exactly what Jim hoped for, I am sure.

Our financial statement shows we had a successful year.

	<u>6/30/2000</u>	<u>6/30/2001</u>
Cash	\$33.00	\$127.00
Checking	3,741.14	5,060.84
CD	<u>6,095.66</u>	<u>6,479.69</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$ 9,869.80</u>	<u>\$11,667.53</u>

Notes: The former account from the 1992 Ben Avon Centennial Committee has a balance as of \$3,091.83 as of June, 2002.

Ben Avon Area Historical Association
July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002

INCOME/EXPENSE

INCOME

501 Checking Interest	\$ 59.54
508 Certificate Interest	384.03
511 Mailing list dues	485.00
521 Donations	786.50
580 Items for sale	<u>4,898.00</u>

TOTAL INCOME \$6,613.07

EXPENSES

401 Postage and supplies	\$ 398.85
410 Maintenance	266.49
420 Electric service	100.00
430 Publishing	3,556.00
440 Program/Education	93.00
451 Fund Raising items	18.00
471 Property Insurance	333.00
499 Knox Memorial	<u>50.00</u>

TOTAL EXPENSES \$4,815.34

NET INCREASE \$1,797.73

BALANCE SHEET

We want to encourage all residents, young and old, to take an interest in local history so we keep the dues low. That revenue we get when you join our mailing list (\$10 family and \$5 individual) covers the direct costs of copying and mailing. Fortunately for our needs, some of you voluntarily add on an extra donation. We thank you for those donations. All donations are tax deductible if you itemize.

We continued during the year to discuss with Ben Avon Borough the possibility of using a portion of the old "Ferry Electric" building for office and storage space. Ben Avon Borough owns the building and part of it is used by the Fire Department. Or, alternatively we looked into the basement area of the Borough Hall. The Borough Hall space might be more useful than it sounds. A couple of local architects volunteered to help with the design.

Progress is painfully slow, however. I fear the Borough cannot quite decide whether we should be encouraged or not. We are starting to think we may have to rent space. I admit to feeling despair each time I pass these empty spaces.

Getting settled in a spot of our own would significantly help us do the work of organizing our materials. Being responsible to our donors, and posterity, means properly cataloging our items and archiving them securely. The fixed cost of paying rent would dominate our efforts and take away from our time to do this work and produce public meetings. We continue to hope for a low cost location.

All we need is a place (or a patron, or an endowment)! We'll manage the rehab, and find the furnishings, equipment and supplies.

Dick Herchenroether

The following is an excerpt from the Centennial History of Ben Avon 1892-1992 which was edited and mostly written by Gladys Phillips. The true story is told by Mary Jane Totten Dickinson. Collecting this story exemplifies Gladys' work to preserve the human side of local history as well as the physical artifacts.

FLOOD RESCUE

During the St. Patrick's Day flood in 1936 the waters of the Ohio River flooded the area around the Emsworth railroad station. The station, which was located along the railroad tracks at the Emsworth Dam, was a two story building. As the waters rose, the station master was warned to leave the station. However, he insisted that he would be safe on the second floor and would wait out the flood there. When it became apparent that the second floor would be in danger of flooding, efforts were begun to rescue the station master.

The sidewalk going down the hill to the station from the intersection of Forest Avenue and Brighton in Ben Avon was

the command post. With the Ben Avon firemen providing flood lights, it was decided to try to get a line to him through an open second floor window by attaching a heavy metal pin to a line and, using a bow and arrow, shoot it across the water. Then a breeches buoy would be attached to the secured line for transporting the man to safety. This was unsuccessful.

The sidewalk on the hill to the station had a heavy stone fence on one side. So, Scott Dickinson, who was among those watching the rescue attempts, suggested that if his friend, George Dierken would bring his home-made cannon to the scene, tie it to the stone wall, insert the line and metal pin into the cannon in the proper way, the line could be shot across the waters and into the open second floor window.

The station master was instructed to open the bathroom window, get into the bathtub and lie down and wait for the line to get to him. He could then secure it to one of the bathtub feet. This attempt succeeded. A breeches buoy was the sent over for the station master to get into. While he was being brought across the swirling waters to dry land, he was dipped into the water several times making the whole process a real thriller.

**Gladys Phillips
We Thank You!**

Ben Avon Area Historical Association
 c/o 136 Dickson Avenue
 Ben Avon
 Pittsburgh, PA 15202



Copies of Centennial History of Ben Avon are still available at \$8.00 each. We also stock copies of Emsworth Centennial History 1896 - 1996 by Don Presutti and Ron Lawry. These are also \$8.00 each.

Jim Knox' Dear Emsworth is a personal reminiscence of life in Emsworth, but the stories give a flavor of life in the area throughout the 20th century. These are \$10.00 each.

To complete the sales pitch, we have note cards (10 for \$2.00) and Christmas tree ornaments (\$8.00), both featuring a rendering of the Log House.

Please Join Us!

Ben Avon Historical Association c/o 136 Dickson Avenue, Ben Avon PA 15202			
Name:			
Address:			
Boro/Township			
Phone:			
Membership:	Family \$10	Indiv. \$5	Other
I would be interested in helping with:			
Articles for Newsletter			
Short Projects or Jobs			
Log House Maintenance			
Publicity			