

BEN AVON AREA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Vol. XXII - Number 1 November, 2006



Annual Report

Another year has gone by as the BAAHA fiscal year ends June 30th. This first newsletter of the fiscal year July, 2006 to June, 2007 is late, but we wanted to announce good news. This report will include events through October. One big project we worked on during the year came to fruition just recently. And new Dixmont material has been published.

First though, I thank my fellow Board members. The success of BAAHA depends on their generous contribution of time, ideas and, yes, money. All continue to serve and 2007 looks to be one with lots of opportunity.

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

Also we very much enjoy the services of Jeff Cieslak who writes the code for our web pages. Thank him if you like the little slider control which lets you adjust the font size for easy reading. Lloyd Corder manages the Ben Avon website of which our pages are only a part. We are allowed to post these pages without charge! Thanks to them and unnamed helpers! Take advantage of their work at <http://benavon.com/BAAHA>.

BAAHA Office and Archive

We signed a lease for about 425 square feet of office space effective October 1, 2006. There is even a historical connection. The space is in the Emsworth Commons building which is the former Cammarata Building of the Dixmont Hospital campus.

Mail should continue to be addressed to 136 Dickson Avenue.

We intend to use the space to properly store our collection of papers, photos and artifacts. One room is perfect for this as it has no windows, but is climate controlled and dry. We also have a small room where newly received materials can be stored. The third room will be used to catalogue, index and clean or repair (if appropriate) materials before they are boxed and put in the archive room. A few years ago a Pitt graduate student prepared a binder with procedures and protocols for us to follow. We can now put this into practice. The work space may serve for board meetings as well.

Of course, we also must pay rent. The three year lease is for \$3,600 a year. We chose three years because we can fund that with currently available funds. We wanted enough time to really get our backlog of work caught up. And we felt we needed time for you to increase your donations and others to join our group of supporters. The board has discussed how to increase revenue. Although

decisions are still to be made let me just note that dues of \$10 family & \$5 individual have not changed since BAAHA was formed in 1984. I should also note that the Consumer Price Index has doubled since then. This basic charge funds the newsletter, log house expenses and most public gathering costs.

We have only a few more than 100 contributors a year and these nominal dues will not cover the rent expense. We are considering a new class of donor recognition for those who have an interest in - and can afford - sustaining our improved ability to meet our purpose: To preserve and promote local history.

Academic institutions have obvious names for this type of sustaining donor such as Deans List. We need to recognize those who provide greater support for our expanded effort. Let us know if you have ideas for naming our sustaining donors.

Dixmont Documentary Premiers

The first public showing of the film on the story of Dixmont hospital's role in the history of care for the mentally ill was held at Heinz History Center on July 19, 2006. Attendance (over 350) exceeded expectations and the program's start was briefly delayed as more chairs were brought to the room.

BAAHA helped film director and producer Kate Guerriero with her research and introduced her to people who were part of Dixmont's history. We publicized the premiere and exhibited selected items recovered from the time capsule of Reed Hall's cornerstone at the premiere event.

Now we have a supply of the film in DVD format. Order your copy by sending

\$15.00 (\$12.00 plus \$3.00 S&H) to us. The film runs just over 90 minutes and was well received by the knowledgeable audience who attended the premiere.

Dixmont Book Published

Then in September Arcadia Publishing brought out a new book in its "Images of America" series. Titled Dixmont State Hospital, it is over 120 pages of photos collected by Mark Berton. Mark's text weaves these together into a fascinating telling of the Dixmont story right up to the demolition of the well known smoke stack beside Ohio River Boulevard.

We have supply of this book available for \$18.00 (\$15.00 plus \$3.00 S&H). Order this if you want to browse slowly or still prefer holding paper over watching the TV.

Back to the Annual Report

Our finances are solid. We applied for and received support from the Avon Club Foundation toward our collection of oral histories. An interview does not take too much time (60 to 90 minutes) and most people find it more fun than they anticipated. We then get a draft transcription and review that with the interviewee to make corrections or additions. Let us know if you want to participate or can suggest who to include.

We purchased a couple small dictation recorders to be used for this ongoing project.

Your support means someone "out there" is paying attention to our effort, which we much appreciate *almost* more than the money. Thanks to all of you. Those of you who send brief notes of encouragement or appreciation provide a finishing touch to the positive feedback. A "cherry on top" if you will.

Ben Avon Area Historical Association
July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006

INCOME/EXPENSE

INCOME

Checking Interest	\$117.09
Certificate Interest	217.92
Mailing list dues	700.00
Donations	930.00
Items for sale	<u>173.00</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u>\$2,138.01</u>

EXPENSES

Postage and supplies	\$ 503.35
Maintenance	0.00
Electric service	100.00
Publishing	158.00
Program/Education	255.00
Preservation	787.50
Property Insurance	<u>525.00</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>\$2,328.85</u>

NET INCREASE \$ (190.84)

BALANCE SHEET

	<u>6/30/2005</u>	<u>6/30/2006</u>
Cash	\$127.00	\$127.00
Checking	7,992.86	7,583.90
CD	<u>7,112.29</u>	<u>7,330.21</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$15,231.92</u>	<u>\$15,041.11</u>

Notes: The former account from the 1992 Ben Avon Centennial Committee has a balance as of \$3,225.49 as of June, 2006.

2005-2006 Review

We continue to hand out newsletters and participate in community events such as Avon Club's Fall Festival to make our neighbors aware of our organization.

We held two public programs. Both went well. The first was on the subject of the Lincoln Highway. Then on March 18th we held a roundtable discussion with eye witnesses of the 1936 flood. It was the seventieth anniversary of the high water in Pittsburgh

Nieri's Market

John Nieri ran a small grocery for nearly 20 years in Emsworth. His son, Jack, sent in this family history. Hope it sparks some good memories.

The first grocery store was located in a building owned by the Giovengo Family. My father leased the one store room from Giovengo who previously owned and operated a small grocery store. This store room which was located next to Sam's Tavern was remodeled by John and Lydia Nieri in 1949, establishing a new and thriving grocery business on Hazelwood Avenue at the trolley loop.

The store was a family business. Our family lived a 244 Hazelwood Avenue; father John, mother Lydia, sister Joan, brother Walter and myself, Jack.

John Nieri was a very unique business man. He grew up in the city area of Pittsburgh at the Duquesne Bluff. He married Lydia Gianni, also from Pittsburgh, in 1936 and moved to Sewickley at the age of 31. From a very young age John had worked in the produce yards of Pittsburgh and then got a job at a well known grocery store in Sewickley (George K. Stevenson) as a produce manager. What my father told me about the job was that he served many of the well known families of the Pittsburgh industrialists who lived in

Sewickley Heights. Back in the 1930's and 1940's many of them entertained in their homes and needed the best fruits and vegetables available for their dinner parties, which John was able to obtain.

By 1939 my parents wanted to build their own home and found a very nice location in the town of Emsworth. My mother loved living in this beautiful town. Her brother, Mal, was an architect who planned and built their home. That is where I spent 22 years of my life.

By 1949 my father was ready for his own business. A few may still remember John for his unique style of running a business. He was known as "Good Time John" -- always had a smile and was willing to do anything for his customers. "May I help you" was his typical salutation.

I will always remember he wanted to offer things in his place that other grocers in the town did not have. For example, when sugar, milk, bread and local newspapers were not available for long periods of the 1950s due to labor strikes, John would import these items from other

areas. Milk was transported from the country farms in five gallon milk cans and rebottled in our store by us. On one occasion I remember riding to West Virginia in a rented truck with a driver at night to buy a truck load of bread to haul back to Emsworth. In 1950 sugar was scarce and my dad found a way to get 100# bags from out of state and my sister and I transferred the sugar into 2# bags for counter sales.

Newspaper strikes were very common. As high school kids my sister and I would hop on the #13 Emsworth trolley after school and ride to the Northside and back peddling Philadelphia newspapers.

Dad wanted all his customers to have what they were accustomed to on a daily basis. I remember many folks coming

from neighboring communities as far as Bellevue and Sewickley to buy the staple items.

John was very active in the Emsworth community. He was well liked by the police force and the officers all made daily stops to say "hello." You may remember Judd Hare,



Figure 1 Hazelwood Avenue 1949 - 1957

the chief, Tony Giovengo, George McNeill and Red Pappert. John was a member of the Volunteer Fire Department. On many occasions he would leave the store to attend the call to the fire house. John was a very trusting person and would leave his store unlocked. If you came by while he was out on fire duty it was understood that you could help yourself on the honor system. Now, that is an example of a dedicated small town citizen!

John also took phone orders and delivered groceries to his customers. He helped those that could not pay with a weekly or monthly charge account. All of this was long before the innovation of the credit card. I remember that many never could pay their debt entirely and he was quick to forgive the debt to those in need.

In 1958 Nieri's Market was relocated to Ohio River Boulevard near Camp Horne Road into the building once known as the Vogel Market.

John died in March of 1966 at the age of 61. He will always be remembered by me as my loving Father whom I so dearly loved to work beside.

Son – Jack Nieri

Donated Items Received

Plan of Ben Avon Heights	Howard Fischer
Various Ben Avon school and church materials	
	Vaughn Martin
Dixmont photos, news articles, and miscellaneous items	Tracy Ferguson and Mark Berton
Elizabeth Robb painting	Jean Kratzert



Figure 2 Ohio River Boulevard 1958 – 1968

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



Renewing Members – THANK YOU!

Carl A Weitz	BA
Lawrence W Snively Jr	Rockville MD
Bob & Marlis Kiser	Kilbuck
Henry & Nell Herchenroether	Cranberry Twp
Carol Christman Spencer	Bethesda MD
Mr. & Mrs. Frederick Duda	BA
Martha H Mitchell	Patchogue NY
Megan Mitchell	Lakewood OH
Leo Stember	Baldwin Boro PA
Beatrice George	BA
Jeb Geiser	Triadelphia WV
Jean S Kratzert	Aliquippa PA
J Kirk & Barbara Hughes	Sarasota FL
Mary Ann Porter	Newport Beach CA
Mary Witul	Kilbuck Twp
Rogers & Marie Hamilton	Kilbuck Twp
Tom Hessong	EMS
Lynn McGrath	BAH
Jennie-Lynn Knox	EMS
Robert & Marlene Morrell	Ross Twp
Joyce Brown Dodge	Pittsburgh PA
Bill & Mildred Johnston	Farmingdale NY
Bob & Jane Winter	Kilbuck Twp

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			