

BEN AVON AREA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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Commitment Built This House

by Tracy Ferguson

Most of us probably shake our heads as we pass the former Green Valley Golf Course and watch the greens and fairways turn into overgrown meadows. The multitude of hours and backbreaking work that kept it in golfing shape for so many years is quickly being overshadowed by nature's endless attempts to reproduce, multiply and conquer! But how many of us can remember that property even before it was a golf course? The Pat and Vaughn Martin family of Ben Avon can remember it well.

Pat's parents, the late Hugh (Hoot) and Dorothy Martin, Sr. lived in a log cabin in the middle of the property, a home built by Hugh's parents. Hoot and Dorothy Martin were married on November 24, 1926. At first they lived in a tiny four-room house on Norwood Avenue where on August 31, 1927, Pat was born. A few years later, they moved to the Martin homestead, a log cabin, barn and surrounding fields and woods that would later become Green Valley Golf Course. The family continued to grow as did Hoot's reputation as a brick mason. His artistry adorns many homes and businesses in the North Hills. In August of 1939, Hoot and Dorothy purchased twelve acres in Ohio Township on what is now Nicholson Road to build their dream house, a three-bedroom brick

home to raise their five sons and three daughters.

As luck would have it, work was being done on the Ohio River Boulevard near Dixmont State Hospital at that time. Bricks were being removed and discarded. Hoot Martin arranged to have the bricks hauled and dumped on his property, a bonanza for his family and a discarding solution for the Boulevard

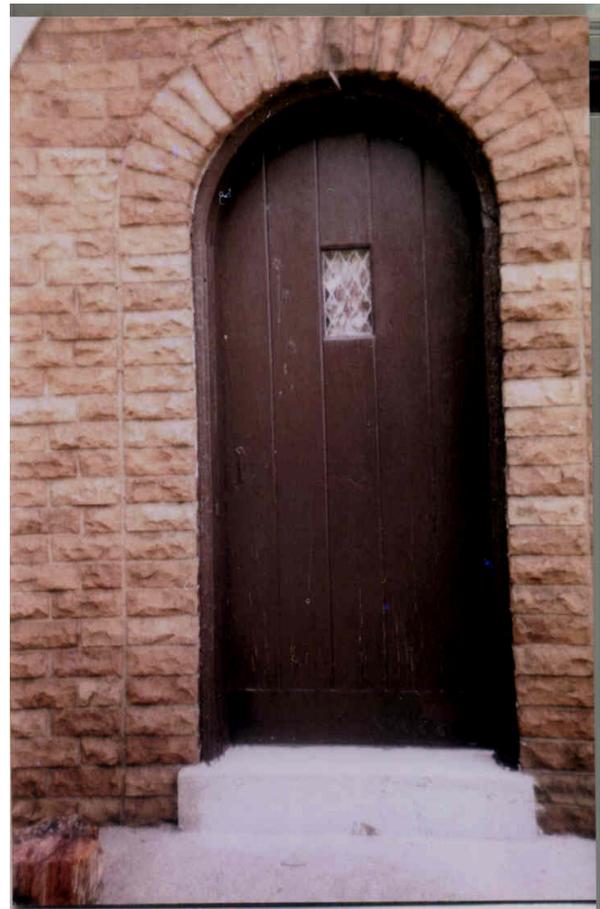


Figure 1 "Stones" from brick

construction project. Hoot had plans to turn the used brick into a lovely home, but it would take many arduous months of hard work and commitment. Pat Martin can remember his mother, Dorothy, hand-chipping each brick with a hammer

was hauled in for a front yard and a stone wall lined the driveway. Hoot and Dorothy Martin lived there for many years, and their daughter, Mary Lou, lives there now. The house and property are now considered a part of Franklin Park,



Figure 2 After completion (undated)

and chisel to make it look like stone. As she lovingly labored with each brick and minded the children, Hoot used his expertise to lay the bricks. They also bought a house next to the former Otto Dairy on Camp Horne Road to use the wood infrastructure in the home they were building. They were able to live in the house while it was being constructed. Eventually, it was finished and the land became home to cattle, chickens and horses, too. A row of poplar trees was planted at the edge of the property. Dirt

rather than Ohio Township. What a special family legacy!

You may be wondering about the Martin family homestead. That property was eventually purchased by Hoot's brother, Ralph, who turned it into Green Valley Golf Course. The log cabin was torn down, but the barn became the clubhouse. Wish I had known this history as I learned the game of golf at Green Valley; it would have added to the richness of my experiences there.

New Membership Rates and Donor Clubs

At our February meeting, the BAAHA board approved an increase in annual membership dues to \$20 (family) and \$10 (single) per year. This the first increase since our founding in 1984 when the rates of \$10 and \$5 were established.

In addition, to gain support for our rental expense and purchase of archival supplies and associated furnishings (shelving, cabinets, etc.) we are establishing donor recognition clubs. We will track contributions, including membership payments, in each BAAHA fiscal year (July through June) and list our supporters by club in our annual report newsletter. The official kickoff will be July 1, 2007 and the first donor recognition issue will be in the fall of 2008 based on contributions through June 30, 2008.

Supporters whose annual giving is \$50 or more join the **Subscribers** club. At \$200 or more you move up to the **Patrons** and at \$500 you join the **Benefactors**. You do not need to pay the full amount in a single check. Monthly or every three months or any schedule that suits you is OK with us. We will add all the pieces in each year. The total will determine the club under which your name will appear.

To encourage a fast start, charter members will be based on all contributions received between now and June 30, 2008. Like they say in public radio fund raising, \$15 each quarter (\$60 per year) lets you join Subscribers. As little as \$20 per month qualifies you as a Patron! Talk yourself into joining one!

WPA Survey of Homes

In 1936 and 1937 the WPA employed architects, surveyors, draftsmen and

other skilled persons to compile basic information on every home in Allegheny County. This included both top and side view sketches of the building with dimensions.

Information included on most homes is: number and street address, owner, height, building type, construction material, age, size, condition, number of rooms baths and floors. Enhancements are noted about plumbing, plaster, interior trim, workmanship, basement size, laundry and sewer. Notes include rent value, garage, paved street, lot size, topography and tillable acreage. Amenities such as transportation, school district and trends may be noted.

The Western PA Genealogical Society will photocopy the reports for three addresses for just \$5.00. Send a check, a self addressed #10 envelope and the addresses you want to: W.P.G.S., 4400 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh PA 15213-4080, Attention: Archives Committee,

Unfortunately for our local readers, the reports for Kilbuck, Ohio, Glenfield, Franklin, Marshall, and McCandless are all still missing. Note also that, like any mass collection of data, some information will be wrong. That said, these reports usually provide useful or at least interesting information about your home.

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



Renewing Members – THANK YOU!

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The month/year on your mailing label indicates the last time we received a contribution from you.
 Thank you for supporting BAAHA