

BEN AVON AREA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Vol. XXIII - Number 2, March, 2008



BAAHA gets Email!

*Maybe you tried to email us and were unable to find an address. Now you can! Our address is baaha@benavon.org and it will reach me. I forward as necessary depending on what your message is about. If you visit our web site, <http://benavon.com/BAAHA/> it now has several **Email us!** reminders that put our address in your mail program at a click.*

Ellie Brennan of Binghamton, NY actually jumped the gun a little. The web gurus were adding email to the Ben Avon site and planning for the BAAHA upgrade when this message from Ellie was forwarded to me by our webmaster.

I am directing this to you since this was the only email I could find on your website or the Historical Association. My mother and her family were from Ben Avon. My great grandfather (Robert Hamilton) built the house at the corner of Breeding Ave. and Church Ave. (305 Breeding Ave.) I lived there until I was 5 years old when my father, who worked for IBM, was transferred to Binghamton, NY. The house remained in the family until a few years ago when it was sold by my cousins Bob and Jane Espy. My grandfather (W L Hamilton, who at one time served as the Justice of the Peace for the borough) was a prolific saver and his collection of historical items regarding Ben Avon have passed down to me. I

continued on page 2

Emsworth Summers in the 50's

by Ralph Stroyne

Back in 1950 my father owned his own butcher shop, Stroyne's Market, on Beaver Ave in Manchester and was a successful businessman. When he purchased our new home in Emsworth and we moved there from the North Side to 370 Beaver Road (now 8370 Ohio River Blvd.) we felt like we were moving into heaven. Our biggest surprise was how much better West View Water tasted then the Pittsburgh City water. In Emsworth the air was fresh, there were trees and flowers and the neighbors were warm and friendly.

In 1950, at 370 Beaver Road [the western side of Emsworth] the "Boulevard" was a two lane brick road. I think it was widened in 1953. Construction took about 30 feet of our property and our front yard became too steep to use. We accessed our driveway using Hunt Way, a narrow alley connecting our house and 3 other houses to Huntington Road. When the widening was complete, they changed it's name from Beaver Road to Ohio River Boulevard.

There were several houses moved. One was the first white frame house on the left on Walliston Ave that adjoins Frew Plumbing's parking lot. Emsworth's current Mayor, George Rossi, lived in it

continued on page 4

BAAHA gets EMAIL continued from page one
have photographs, papers, etc. I would like to share this wealth of historical information with the community. Can you direct me to someone who would be interested in this material?

After I wrote back Ellie sent some photos. Some I think are new to our collection. Thanks for working to find us and also for thinking of history! I selected these examples:



Robert Hamilton home at 305 Breeding (1895)



The "New" Hamilton Garage
[currently used by Volunteer Fire Co.]



St Patrick's Day Flood (1936) looking west on Ohio River Boulevard
[the flooded flat area to the center, right is now a football/soccer/baseball field]



Sunday School Class – Ben Avon Presbyterian Church (1899)

Emsworth Summers continued from page 1
after it was moved.

The construction of the boulevard was dramatic for me, a 9 year old at the time. The contractor used a lot of dynamite and enormous steam shovels loading large rock bodied dump trucks. The dump trucks hauled the rock and dirt up Huntington Road and filled in the deep Dixmont valley where our Emsworth Commons Building [formerly Cammarata] currently sits. The rest of the rock and dirt was dumped along Toms Run Road, most where Tom Tomaro has his landscaping business.

Our beautiful house and property were changed forever. Our front yard became a cliff, the dynamite shook our house daily, the trucks woke us up in the morning and dust was everywhere. Before the road was widened we would sit on a large log alongside the road and try to name the makes of the cars driving by. It wasn't unusual to have no cars pass by for a long time. After the boulevard was completed it seemed the cars and trucks came from everywhere. Our quiet country house was forever changed.

Growing up in the 50's seemed so much simpler. We walked or rode our bikes everywhere, without helmets. Our parents taught us to look both ways before crossing the street because cars, trucks and streetcars had the right-of-way. We drank water from the outside hose bib. We ate cheeseburgers, hotdogs and lunchmeat regularly. We drank Kool-Aid and added lots of real sugar. We would run to Nieri's Market [see November, 2006 newsletter] at the Emsworth Loop when we had a few pennies and buy candy. We always used salt, ate real butter, eggs, bacon,

cupcakes and cookies. We fell out of trees, got cuts, broke bones and there were no lawsuits. We would leave home in the morning and play outside all day and had to be home when the streetlights came on. We didn't have Playstations, Nintendo, video games, 150-channel cable TV, cell phones or personal computers. Our cars didn't have seatbelts, air bags or child seats not to mention the risks we took hitchhiking. We got BB Guns on our tenth birthday and were taught to respect guns. And - - - We all survived!!!

As a young boy we filled our summer days with bike riding, swimming in the river and sometimes a little mischief. We would take a bar of soap and smear it all over the streetcar tracks in the Emsworth Loop. When the streetcar pulled in the loop and tried to stop, the greased tracks would cause it to slide backwards. Needless to say, when the conductor tried to move forward it proved to be impossible. We sat on the ledge outside Nieri's Market and laughed ourselves silly.

We had our campsite back in the woods alongside Dixmont's vegetable field. When the sweet corn was ripe we would go to Nieri's Market, buy little salt containers and some butter and swipe some of Dixmont's sweet corn. We cooked it on our campfire and thought we were in heaven. We would help ourselves and eat raw beans, tomatoes, radishes, lettuce and whatever else they grew. Late in the summer we would pick apples, peaches and pears. If my mother would have put raw beans or radishes on my plate at home I wouldn't have touched them but getting them for free out of Dixmont's fields made them taste so much better.

It was common to sit on our back porch and hear gun shots coming from the Dixmont woods. I remember going to Harry Layland's Hardware store at 12 or 13 years old and buying 22 cal bullets for my single shot rifle then sneaking, without my parents knowing, up to Dixmont and shooting squirrels and groundhogs.

Most adults smoked cigarettes in the 50's. We started smoking early by picking tobys from what we called "The Indian Toby Tree". We would cut the dry tobys in 2" long pieces, poke a small hole down the center and light up. They tasted terrible beyond belief. Later we would buy Lucky Strikes at Nieri's for a quarter and they would come with 2 or 3 pennies in change packed under the cellophane. Marijuana wasn't known back then; however, if it was available I'm sure we would have tried some.

My buddy's uncle lived on Walliston Ave and kept his case of beer on the back porch when the weather was cool. We would take our church key and sneak two bottles, then sit on the cliff overlooking the river and enjoy the beer along with a few cigarettes. When we were done we would always put the empties back in the case.

As the 60's came around I looked back at how much fun we had in Emsworth in the 50's. We smoked, drank beer, drag raced on the streets and dated wild girls. Upon graduating from Avonworth all my friends moved away. They went to college, military service or found jobs out of state. I choose to stay and try to make a living in the North Boroughs. We purchased the old Schneider farm in Kilbuck Township and raised beef cattle, chickens and horses. Then I started a small construction company. We purchased the old Boron

gas station and turned it into Maggies Laundromat & Car Wash. We purchased the old Otto's Dairy and turned it into offices and retail. We purchased the old 407-acre Dixmont Hospital property and sold a parcel to Wal-Mart. My banker often reminds me of how serious I was when I complained to him, several years ago, about how hard it is to write seven numbers before the decimal point in the balance space of my checkbook. Try it.

Emsworth, Kilbuck Township and the Avonworth School District were a great place to be in the 50's. I wouldn't have had it any other way.

Membership Expansion

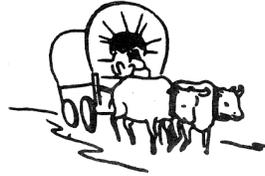
One good way to introduce a new neighbor is to sign them up on our mailing list. We welcome new members and if you "recommend" someone – newly arrived or not – we are happy to send them a few newsletters, FREE!, to introduce ourselves.

If you want us to, we will let them know who signed them up. Of course if you prefer anonymity (no name, no blame), we will keep mum!

Renewing Members – THANK YOU!

Carol Christman Spencer	Bethesda MD
Henry & Nell Herchenroether	Cranberry Twp PA
Thelma Woelfel	BA
Bill & Mildred Johnston	Farmingdale NY
James D Little	McCandless Twp PA
Lois Delany	Ross Twp PA
Guiseppe & Josephine Coletti	BA
Marie Hamilton	Kilbuck
Margaret Williams	BA
Jean Dittman	Kilbuck
Warren & Verna Kuhlber	Sewickley PA
Ed & Alma Fincke	EMS
Dan & Wendy Herchenroether	BA
Tracy & Jack Ferguson	Kilbuck
Allen & Johanna Schaffner	BA
Gloria Hamilton	BA

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



Renewing Members – THANK YOU!

Jean Buckman	BA
Frank & Rose Meacci	BA
Gene L McBride	Aleppo Twp PA
Jack & Penny Nieri	Columbia SC
Thomas Hessong	BA
Raymond & Jan Bruno	BA
Albert Keller	Towson MD
Rosemary & John McNelis	BA
Mary Ann & Ed Graf	Pittsburgh PA
Thomas Phillips	Aleppo Twp PA
Len & Barbara Barcoucky	BA
Sandra A Smith	BA
Betty Jane Robertson	EMS
Marlene Ott Morrell	Ross Twp PA
Lawrence & Jeanette Snively	Rockville MD
Betty Haughin	Zelienople PA
Richard Batchelor	Nipomo CA
Nathan & Megan Troxell	BA
Albert Keller	Towsen MD
Marilyn Simon	Kilbuck
Patricia Cramer	BA
Jim & Pat Reid	Ohio Twp
Elizabeth Gaertner	EMS
Jane & Bob Winter	Kilbuck

Ben Avon Area Historical Association c/o 136 Dickson Avenue, Ben Avon, PA 15202		
Name:		
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City, State, Zip:		
Local Municipality:		
Membership:	Single \$10	Family \$20:
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