

# BEN AVON AREA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. XXIV - Number 2, November, 2008



### A TALE OF TWO HOMES

By Jean H. Henderson

Wedding bells rang on June 8, 1898

for Nancy Belle Richey and Charles C. Ralph, Jr. Nancy and Charles were married at Nancy's parents' home, 18 Walnut Street, at the corner of Neville Avenue and Walnut Street in Emsworth. Nancy's sister, Ella, played the wedding march as The Rev. L. M. McGuire of the Emsworth Methodist Episcopal Church and The Rev. J. C. Bryson of the Glenfield M.E. Church officiated. Dinner was served to about 50 guests after the ceremony for which the bride wore a handsome gown of white organdy over pink

Thus began our tale of two homes, a tale we would never have known, had it not been for the generosity of Norma Jean Ralph Dalin Gosmer, now of Ashtabula Ohio, the daughter of Nancy Belle Richey and Charles Ralph, Jr. (aka

Charles Ralph, II). Norma, who annually visits Emsworth with her daughter Susan, sent BAAHA a packet of wonderful photos with personal comments. How grateful we are!



Norma's maternal grandfather, Joseph T. Richey was born in 1844 and served as a member of the PA House of Representatives as well as on the staffs of Dixmont State Hospital and Allegheny County as director of the poor.

The Richey House, site of the wedding, was built about 1884 by Harry G. Richey, Norma's uncle. Harry died at age 92, after serving decades as US district civil engineer for 8 southeastern states. At his retirement dinner in Washington DC, Harry said, "Do not take life too seriously for you will not get out of it alive!"



The photo above (top) shows members of the Richey family gathered on the porch in the early 1900s. The next photo shows the house

in June of 2005. The Richey family moved to Ohio in 1914.



The Ralph House, as 42 Hiland Avenue (Emsworth), was the home of Norma's paternal grandparents, Charles Cooke Ralph I and his wife. Mr. Ralph was born in 1843 and served in the Civil War.

Their son, Charles, father of Norma, was a charter member of the Emsworth Volunteer Fire Department.

Norma's grandfather died tragically at age 53 of suspected heart disease while at work as an engineer at the largest engine at Homestead steel works. He had also worked on boats coming up the rivers from New Orleans to Pittsburgh. Norma's grandmother told of going up to the 'lookout' to see her Grandpa's boat coming home. He would blow the whistle, so the family could tell about how long it would be until he would arrive home, riding the train from Pittsburgh to Emsworth.

This page has two photos of the Ralph House. The first, taken in 1949,

shows Norma parking in front of the house. The second was taken in 2005 when Norma visited Emsworth with her daughter.



Norma Jean Ralph Dalin Gosmer is proud of her family's history and most grateful she can visit the gravesite of her great-great-great grandfather, Col.



Abraham Richey (1735-1828) who served three years in the Revolutionary War under Capt. James Sullivan's company of the 13th regiment. She is pictured above at the Hiland United Presbyterian Church Cemetery in Ross Twp on Perry Highway (Rt. 19) at Col. Richey's gravestone.

**Dear Editor for the BAAHA,**

I am from the Bellevue/Avalon area and still have family living there, but I am now living in Dallas, Texas, where it is happily a bit warmer in the winter time than in the good old North Boroughs. However, I do get back to the Pittsburgh area about once a year. I read and enjoyed your newsletter very much.

The way it came into my possession is rather unique. My college best friend, Martha Mallon Gaidos, now of Portland Oregon, received it from a family member who is apparently a member. She was going to file it, but decided I might enjoy reading memories of the old home area, so she sent it from Portland to me, here just north of Dallas. I will probably send it to another friend, who is retired in Erie, but was a lifelong resident of Avalon until she went into a Senior care home in Erie.

I have memories of the Camp Horne area, from the 1930's, though I was only a child at the time. My mother's brother, Joseph Oberle, a mailman from the North Boroughs Post Office, owned a picnic grove off Camp Horne. I recall going there for summer picnics. Their children were very talented dancers, and used to entertain folks at the grove. I think I recall a sort of covered area where they did their tap dances, etc. Their names were Betty, Carol and Agnes Oberle. Joe and Agnes moved to California right after the end of World War II. Agnes died about 25 years ago, but my Uncle Joe lived to almost 100, and died with Alzheimer's, if I got my information right. His daughter, Betty, who was very beautiful as an adult, married a rancher in Ramona, CA. She developed a brain tumor and died about 20 years ago. I have lost track of the rest of their family, though I did visit them in California once with my family.

As kids, my friends and I rode our bikes all over the North Boroughs area, including down to Camp Horne, though we got to it by back roads somehow, which I have now forgotten. Nowadays wise parents would never let their teen and pre-teen girls ride around on the back roads, but we would pack a sandwich and a can of soda (or maybe it was a bottle) and would explore to our heart's content., picking wildflowers in the woods, wading in streams, swinging from wild grape vines.

I recall wading in Camp Horne while visiting my Uncle. My enjoyment was curtailed when I saw a little black snake swimming along the bank and disappearing under a jutting rock. The Oberle house on Camp Horne was a shaped concrete block type, painted white. On our frequent Sunday drives, we enjoyed stopping at Otto's Dairy for a milk shake. I also recall that my Grandfather, Sebastian Oberle, died while living with them in 1938.

Thanks for the nice trip down memory lane.

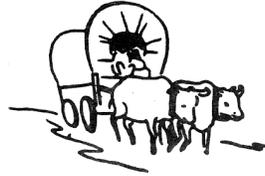
Kathleen Burns Easler  
Flower Mound, Texas  
(from December, 2007)

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Ben Avon Area Historical Association  
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A special thank you to those who provided this issues' content. Without something to print we have nothing to send.

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