

# BEN AVON AREA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. XXV - Number 2, November, 2009



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As many of you know we have been setting up our office space to provide better access to our materials. Even though we are receiving new materials, we are not only keeping up but also making real progress. Thanks to Darlene Phillips for many hours and also to Keith Johnston who donated a "stack" of map drawers we had on our wish list.

Current research concerns the Hamilton Motor Company. The company first occupied a building on the north curb of the 7200 block of Church Avenue, then moved to a larger structure across Church. Many of you remember the second building housing Lyons Ford or Ferry Electric. Several years ago the borough purchased the property and the Ben Avon Volunteer Fire Company moved in. The firemen use about half the structure. The Northwest Ambulance organization uses a small area to garage some of their vans.

This month, a coffee shop opened in the remaining corner of the building. (at Dalzell & Church) Named The Fire Escape, excited local residents call it a welcome addition to community life.

We want to locate photos, flyers and other documents concerning Hamilton Motors and local business generally to be displayed in the coffee shop. Contact us if you have something to share.

Specifically we are looking for copies of the Ben Avon Forum. This magazine was published 1928 and 1929 with this masthead;

### The Ben Avon Forum

Henry Russell Miller    Supervising Editor  
Edmund W. Arthur        Contributing Editor  
D. A. Findlay             Business Manager  
6911 Sturgeon Street  
Telephone Linden 2264

Issued monthly and mailed to every home in  
Ben Avon and Ben Avon Heights  
SUBSCRIPTION \$1.00 THE YEAR

The subscription was voluntary and issues seem to run 16 to 24 pages. We have eight of the 24 possible issues. They each have something of interest. Check the boxes of "stuff" your parents and grandparents put away.

This issue of our newsletter reprints articles found in the 1929 January and October issues of the Ben Avon Forum. Two pieces concern Vinegar Hollow. On reading them the story of what happened during 1929 seems incomplete. Perhaps the missing issues would explain. The "Country Rambler" referred to was a pen name for Edmund Arthur.

The third short article illustrates how some issues are long standing. It concerns the relationship between businesses on Neville Island and residences in the North Boroughs.

## **The Log Cabin Ben Avon Forum**

October, 1929  
by Mary Elizabeth Henry

There is always a fascination about a log cabin. It is associated in our minds with the dangers of the wilderness and the courage of pioneers, who combined the imagination of the poet and the virility of the hardy woodsman; with wide spaces and freedom of thought and action; with living in close contact with earth while eyes are fixed on heaven; with hard work and bountiful living.

And most of us, descendants of Anglo-Saxon, Briton and Celt, have an inborn love for the forest, inherited perhaps from our Druid ancestors. Its deep glades are full of mystery, its trees provide shelter, build our homes and warm them, its nuts and berries and wild life furnish food and clothing, the wind in the tree tops murmurs a lullaby or shrieks a warning of approaching storm.

So the Boy Scouts' cabin calls to us and we take our way through the narrow winding valley, thankful that the path has been widened, the brook bridged and that we don't have to crawl under a barbed wire fence as aforetime.

We stop to admire the scarlet fruit in a little thicket of hawthorn trees and a little farther on note that our favorite blackberry patch is still there.

The trees, like the humans, are beginning to put on their fall attire and a little later will be gorgeous in crimson, bronze and gold. We catch a glimpse of a bright red patch up on Crawford's hill. Can't tell what it is but it looks like furze sounds. (Never did know what furze was, but we like that word.)

The path winds on, and suddenly through the trees appears the object of

our trip, the Boy Scouts' log cabin, in its beautiful setting of oaks and maples. A peek-through an open window at the back reveals a spacious interior, with a stone and brick fireplace at one end. And a loft. What would log cabin be without a loft?

As I stand beside the cabin and look out on the green hills and valley, my thoughts go back to the early days when Chief Kill Buck and his braves roved over these hills in search of game and hostile Indians crept through the woods intent on destruction -- when men carried their rifles to field and meeting house and women carefully barred the cabin door before leaving their children to go to the spring for water.

What is that rustling in the bushes? It has a sinister sound. I see a tawny form -- it can't be wolf in daylight. And that strange sound overhead?

With a start I come back to the twentieth century, as an airplane zooms through the air above me. The tawny form comes bounding up to me, ears cocked and tail waving -- no wolf, but my big collie, his red-gold hair all matted with Spanish needles, beggars' lice and what not. While regretfully leaving the eighteenth century, I feel grateful to Mr. Hodgdon for making it possible for the Boy Scouts to retrace their steps a hundred and fifty years in imagination and fancy themselves real pioneers.

It would be difficult to find a better location for the camp than Vinegar Hollow, whose conformation almost precludes its being used for dwelling houses, although it would be hard to imagine anything much more enticing than to live in that same log cabin --- to be wakened by bird songs in the morning and look up through the green leaves to the sun rising over the hilltops --- to sit in front of the log fire on cool evenings, or

around a campfire in the moonlight -- to go nutting -- to drowse in the sunshine and watch the seasons as they come and go in this sylvan nook, where muted sounds of this machine age's activities are almost drowned by the sighing of the wind in the trees and the eye sees nothing but hill and valley clothed with forests, trees everywhere -- in their spring green, their gay fall garments or white mantle of snow.

Mr. Hodgdon has shown a fine public spirit, as has also Mr. Herbert Cahoon, who has given of his time and talents in designing the log cabin and overseeing its construction, also H. Lee Moore and F. S. Stow and several others, not forgetting the Duquesne Light Company's donation of logs.

Dwellers in prosperous Ben Avon will surely take pleasure in making up what is still lacking to complete this camp, which means so much not only to the Boy Scouts but to the future of the Community, for in such camps do boys acquire something of the resourcefulness and hardy manhood which distinguished our forefathers, as well as Christian courtesy and kindness.

**Ben Avon to Have a Park?  
Ben Avon Forum**

January, 1929

There is a very likely possibility that Vinegar Hollow (how did that sour title ever attach itself to this valley wonderland!), made famous by the Country Rambler columnist in the old Pittsburgh Sun, may shortly be known as the Ben Avon Public Park.

The Dr. Hanna farm, consisting of about 51 acres, has as boundaries Church avenue on the south, Emsworth on the west, Horne's Camp on the north and the Wilson and Crawford lines, more

or less accurate, will serve to locate the property purchased by Thomas G. Hodgdon of Forest avenue for a high class real estate development.

Vinegar Hollow is the valley crossed by Church avenue at the Ben Avon -- Emsworth borough line. This valley widens out as it reaches toward the hilltop, and the lower end, through which flows a little stream fed by springs, is the place we have heard of so often from the Country Rambler.

There are about twelve acres in this hollow which Mr. Hodgdon offers to deed to the Borough to have and to hold for all time as a Public Park. No strings or conditions are attached to this most generous offer other than to give Mr. Hodgdon an outlet to his hill property, which would likely be a furnace slag roadway.

As one citizen expressed it, "The best way to improve this place would be to leave it as it is -- simply clean up a bit." This valley is an ideally beautiful spot. Birds in great variety find haven the year 'round. The little stream of water could be easily dammed so as to form a shallow lake which could be stocked with gold fish and used as wading pool and a skating pond and perhaps a swimming pool later on.

It has also been suggested that the local Boy Scout organization be allowed to erect a log cabin as headquarters for their activities, which would be extremely useful in a place of this kind.

All of this, however, is conditional on the action of the borough dads. We understand Mr. Hodgdon's splendid proposition will come up in the next meeting of Council and we shall see what we shall see. Here's hoping.

## The Dust Nuisance Ben Avon Forum

October, 1929

Following the complaints that have for some time been coming to Council regarding the increase of dust and dirt since the Davison Coke and Iron Co. plant has been operating on Neville Island, steps have been taken to make a thorough investigation of the situation to determine the source and cause with a view to cooperating in an effort to eliminate it, if cooperation is accepted, otherwise to take such steps as may become necessary to procure an abatement of the nuisance.

At its meeting in September, Council listened to complaints of various members and to the conciliatory advice of Mr. J. I. Thompson. Since then, the solicitors and committees of councils of the several boroughs affected have had a number of meetings and a committee of our own borough Council had an interview with Mr. Davison, the head of the Company. He assured the committee that it was not the intention of his company to create any nuisance affecting the northside residential districts, that he had every

assurance of his engineers that the difficulty would be remedied within a short time and that every effort would be made to get it under control. Meanwhile Council is pursuing its investigation systematically with a view to determining what its course should be in event of failure of the Company to accomplish the results promised.

## Avonworth in 1959

by B.J. Robertson and John Warren

Picking up where we left off in our August newsletter story:

POP QUIZ #1: Avonworth's head majorette in the class of 1959? *ANS: Sandy Vodvarka was the Avonworth majorette who twirled two fire batons during the band's halftime show at the Montour football game.*

POP QUIZ #2: Below is the photograph of the boys' basketball team from the 1959 yearbook. How many members of this championship team can you identify? We'll get you started by telling you that the coach was Boyd Stroup. In front of him is team manager Bill Bell; the other manager is Don Krey.



Try naming the players. One went on to play for the University of Pittsburgh. Stop ----- Don't ===== Look ----- Stop

*Back: Coach Boyd Stroup, Creig Hoyt, Jack Schneider, Dave Sauer, Doug Weis, Fred Stephens, Mgr Don Krey.*

*Front Row: Manager Bill Bell, Al Smallwood, George Edmunds, Dave Theophilus, Bob Smallwood, Bob Reilly.*

*ANS: Dave Sauer was the Avonworth basketball player who went on to be a starter at Pitt, and played in the NCAA and NIT tournaments.*

A check for information on the girls' basketball team reminds us of how greatly things have changed in 50 years. In the 1959 yearbook girls' basketball consists of this sentence only: "A varsity basketball team played against other school varsity teams in the vicinity." That sentence is contained within the yearbook's coverage of the Girls' Athletic Association (GAA), which also organized intramural programs of volleyball, basketball, and bowling. The girls basketball program today produces competitive, often tournament teams. When did parity in yearbook coverage arrive?

We did find another photo interesting. We

are told it is a prank. Still, there is a story of why and how in addition to who and inquiring minds want to know!

### Presbyterian Punch

Ben Avon Presbyterian Church  
Women's Association Cookbook "food testament"  
(a cookbook for ecclesiastical tastes)

**Guaranteed to put everyone in a good mood**

**Mix** 6 oz. frozen orange juice, 6 oz. frozen lemonade, 28 oz. club soda and a fifth of bourbon.

**Pour** into punch bowl over dry ice

**Garnish** with orange slices and cherries

### Renewing Members – THANK YOU!

William & Mildred Johnston	Farmingdale NY
Brian Jensen	BA
Paula Templeton	BA
Midge & Bob Seelhorst	Indiana PA
Rita K Neilson	BA
Elizabeth M Kern	BA
Marjorie Jones	Ohio Twp
Edward F Birkholtz Sr	BA
George & Roberta Maruschock	BA
Elizabeth Gaertner	EMS
Al Hart	Bay Village OH
Elizabeth Powers	Owensboro KY
John Warren	BA



Avonworth's All-American girls' football team gets ready for the opening play. Front row: L. Turner, I. Boyd, C. Rozday, M. Sauer, A. Taylor, B. Hoyt, S. Hendershaw. Second row: S. Deane, J. Deringer, B. Stoner, G. Murdock.

Tom & Darlene Hessong

EMS

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 Ben Avon  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15202



**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Renewing Members – THANK YOU!**

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Norma Sappie Grooms	LaVale MD
Henry Herchenroether	Cranberry PA
John & Lou Seifarth	Aleppo PA
Dan & Lisa Benacquisto	BA
Robert & Brett	Avalon PA
Thomas L Phillips	Aleppo PA
Bill & Shirley Sample	Georgetown PA
Jean Ackerman	EMS
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Kathleen Miller	Northfield IL
Jane Marsell Morgan	Jacksonville FL
Irene Main	Willoughby OH
Dave & Mary Ellen Davisson	BA
Warren & Verna Kuhlber	Aleppo
Nelson & Carol Craige	BA
G Jay Schaffner III	Pittsburgh PA
Allen & Johanna Schaffner	BA.

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