

BEN AVON AREA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Vol. XXV - Number 4, May, 2010



www.benavon.com/BAAHA/
mailto: baaha@benavon.org

Memorial Day -- May 25th

Many of you know we open the Log House (Western Avenue at the Emsworth Lock and Dam) to the public for a couple of hours following the service at Kenny field. For those of you who did not know, or forgot, here is your official notice. **The Dickson Log House will be open to the public until 1:30 PM**, following the services at Lance Cpl. Patrick B. Kenny Field.

History is not all dusty boxes and crumbling pieces of paper with strange smells. It is also memories passed down rather than personally experienced. This institutional memory might be helped along by records and artifacts. Memorial Day memories are particularly somber because we recall the deaths of some defending the liberty enjoyed by all.

Not all won medals or awards but all were heroes whose service allowed our experiment in self-government to continue.

Clover Farm Market - Part 2 by Ralph Stroyne

In 1960 Joe Combs owned the Clover Farm Market on the car line (*ed.* Center Avenue) in Emsworth. He hired me as his delivery boy for \$1.25 an hour to drive his 1951 Ford Delivery truck. I worked Tuesdays after school and all day

Always Learning A Lifetime of Stained Glass

John W. Kelly (Kelly Art Glass Co. of Millvale) will talk and show pictures from his long experience as a stained glass artisan. Inspired by windows in church as a child, "One day maybe I could learn to do that," he has broad experience throughout Western Pennsylvania with liturgical and residential restorations as well as, original art design and fabrication. Yet his craft is one of endless, and interesting, variations to continue the learning. Hear and see for yourself!

Sunday -- May 16th -- 2:00PM
Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon
7501 Church Avenue

Saturdays. I just got my driver's license and felt I had the best job in the world, getting paid to drive. I still have many fond memories of those days.

Jim Combs, Joe's son, worked as the butcher and was a very easygoing, happy guy. He had a habit of keeping an eye on Shirley, Joe's check out girl. Shirley was a pretty young lady that always seemed to be wearing tight skirts and tops.

My delivery route took me through Emsworth and Ben Avon and we had many very nice customers. Most would tip me for bringing their groceries in and putting them on their kitchen table; however, one older couple in their 80's lived on Huntington Road and would always offer me a fresh made biscuit. I hated biscuits. They would both watch me unload their groceries then smile and uncover my treat. I was expected to eat it in front of them as they smiled watching me. This was pure torture. I still don't eat biscuits today.

Another customer in Emsworth, on Terrace Avenue, had their yard fenced in with Charlie, a big, mean watchdog. At first, I couldn't enter their property until one of them held Charlie back. When I told Jim Combs the story he had the solution. Next Saturday, when Charlie came running toward my truck with fire in his eyes, I opened the window and tossed him some sliced bologna and then a large bone. As time went on, that customer's grocery box always had a brown bag on top with "Charlie" written on it. Although Charlie had a terrible reputation as a mean dog, he would run toward my truck on Saturdays with his tail wagging. I loved dogs so Charlie and I became good friends.

There was another attractive young lady, a customer in Ben Avon, that didn't wake up on Saturdays until around 10:00 AM. If I got there earlier, I would have to return later in the day when she was up. I noticed that if I got there shortly after 10:00 she would answer the door in a lose fitting bathrobe and let me in. My heart always started beating faster at her house, so - - - I planned her grocery delivery around 10:15 AM. Instead of setting the box of groceries on the kitchen table I would pull out one of the chairs

and set the box on the chair. With her beautiful blonde hair hanging over her shoulders she would lean over, smile and help me unload the groceries. She was this young boy's thrill for the day..

Back at the store there was always something happening. As I walked through the front door there was always that very pleasant grocery store aroma. Joe was always busy doing something and Jim was always busy cutting meat. Shirley treated me like her favorite son and I can still remember the light scent of her perfume. Lunch was free and Jim always let me choose the lunch meat for my sandwich. I loved the chipped ham with bottle of soda and Twinkie.

As I look back, I can remember their storefront would rattle as the Street Cars went by. It was my job to help stock the shelves, sweep up and burn the trash in the back yard. Back then you could burn outside. There was saw dust sprinkled on the floor behind the meat counter and I scraped the butcher-block cutting table with a stiff wire brush. The customers coming in the store always seemed happy. Joe demanded that everything be in order and clean before we closed. These were good times.

Log House Repair

This association was formed in 1984 to take ownership of the Dickson Log House and provide for its care. At that time it was a portion of a larger structure that was demolished to make way for a new building. The Log House was moved (a dozen yards give or take) closer to the river and placed on a subdivided triangle of land taken from the property.

A picture board in the Log House tells the story in photos showing the

disassembly and reassembly of the logs. All original logs were retained except the bottom log in the front which was too damaged by rot over the nearly two centuries of its use up until then.

Many recent visitors to the Log House have pointed to a gap between the log ends and the chimney stones. This gap has existed for a few years. It

A temporary support of rock and timber was placed under the rear corner nearest the chimney to stop the movement and keep everything stable until plans for more permanent repair could be made.

In addition to age, this log was exposed to a great deal more water after the move than before. The small triangle



The manufactured beam in place supporting the rear logs with a trial veneer.

seemed obvious some settling had occurred. We were not particularly concerned until the fall of 2009 when the gap started to expand, indicating new movement. The bottom log across the rear was failing after more than 210 years of reliable support.

of land was leveled by constructing a retaining wall to hold up Forest Avenue. This provided enough space on which to place the reconstructed Log House.

Storm water runoff from Forest Avenue and sometimes through the wall ended up at the rear of the house. The area was a natural windless dead spot

and leaves collected there holding the moisture and silt.

Permanent repairs were executed this past March. The remaining logs were temporarily scabbed together and house jacked up. Several inches of accumulated dirt and debris was removed. The three stone pads remained solid as a foundation. The



Finished look, so far. Color matching will be considered after existing materials weather and settle.

movement had been from the log rotting away, not the foundation settling.

A manufactured beam, (Parallam is the brand name), which tolerates moist locations, was placed on the stone foundation. Since that lower log held floor joist ends, those had to be structurally attached to the new beam. [To those wondering, yes, there needed to be a temporary support structure in the crawl space for those joists.] And finally, a heavy piece of rough sawn oak was added as a "veneer" to hide the manufactured beam. Chinking the space to the next log higher completed the work.

As the bottom log at the rear in a space barely wide enough to walk between the house and retaining wall I assure you the final appearance is quite in keeping with the original. Even though we plan to be more diligent in removing accumulated debris and dig out new silt, the leaves are what is most noticeable on that side of the house. Actually, the absence of the gap at the chimney is the most noticeable change.

Major Maintenance

This replacement

project cost us \$5,575 in total which covers the labor to stabilize last fall and install the

new beam this spring, plus purchase of the high-tech (that spells expensive) beam. We also had to research various ideas to protect the remaining structure, not harm the historical character and provide a long term solution.

Some of that work will help keep costs down for the next log replacement. The lower log on the river side is definitely rotting. But it is not as exposed to water, is shorter and is supporting only the wall itself, not involving support to the floor. All those things point to a less expensive repair. What may be more difficult is matching materials to keep the authentic look we want.

The roof of cedar shakes is showing it is close to the end of its useful life. The side toward Western Avenue is especially open to weather extremes of wind, temperature and precipitation. Both projects will probably be worked on in the next two to three years.

Financial Resources

Our August newsletter is the usual issue for a full accounting of our finances. But spending roughly a third of our current fund balance begs the question of how are we doing? Optimistically, fine. We have known we needed to keep funds available for such contingencies. We have some time to explore government grants and institutional funding sources for the next major items. Interest in our work continues to be strong and members who support us have always been generous.

Total assets have hovered in the \$15,000 to \$18,000 range. Costs of rent, program and archiving supplies have about equaled new contributions each

year. Current account balances total nearly \$10,000. We still can handle an emergency. At the same time we must not be complacent by putting off planning for restoring and growing our financial strength.



Birthday Party 1931 Camp Horne

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



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Renewing Members – THANK YOU!

Jean Dittman	Kilbuck
J M Earles	Geneva FL
Jim & Bonnie Bass	Ross Twp PA
Jane & John Angelini	BA
Lanis Liggett	Coraopolis PA
William & Janice Sharpe	BA
Barbara & Harvey Hinch	Moon Twp PA
Martha Huddy	Williamsport PA
Marie Hamilton	Kilbuck
Carolyn a& Phil Wodzinski	BA
Albert Keller	Towsend MD
Millie Jones	Cedar Park TX
Jim & Barb Meehan	BA
Susan Pross	Kilbuck
Frank & Rose Meacci	BA
Marlene Otto Morrell	Ross Twp PA
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Joyce Brown Dodge	Pittsburgh PA
Betty Jane Robertson	EMS
Tracy & Jack Ferguson	Kilbuck
Lloyd & Patty Corder	BA

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 Thank you for supporting BAAHA

