

DURHAM

P E N N S Y L V A N I A

Historical Society

DURHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

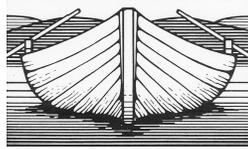
The year 2020 was a momentous one for the Durham Historical Society. Not only did we enter the year with an ambitious agenda but our efforts were soon blunted by the COVID pandemic. Some of our goals were to continue our lecture series, expand the workshops offered to the community, and take a leading role in the planning for Durham Day (celebrating the 200th anniversary of the mill). All these efforts were put in abeyance due to the restrictions placed on public gatherings. However, we decided to concentrate on projects that would not necessitate the large group gatherings and still allow us to make progress in achieving the goals of the Society.

We completed the plantings of native species into the tail race of the mill. This was the final step in the completion of our project documents submitted for the Delaware Wild and Scenic grant. In addition to the 93 shrubs and trees previously planted, the Society with the assistance of the Cooks Creek Watershed Association planted an additional 250 plugs of native perennial pollinator plants for color and to provide food sources for native pollinators. Speaking of plantings, the large planter box in front of the Post Office has received many favorable comments from the public. During the year, three harvests were made from the box. The first was an oat crop which had been planted early in the year. From the relatively small surface area of the box, a little over 2 quarts of oats were realized. Immediately after that harvest, Indian Mountain Painted Corn and native beans were planted. Harvest took place recently with some beautifully colored ears of corn (a type grown by the Native Americans) being displayed at the box and harvested for further processing. The bean harvest was extremely meager possibly due to the lateness of planting and the flooding that took place in early August. Periodic changes were made to the information offered in the small display box mounted on a post in the corner of the planter box ensuring that historical information of interest is always on display for the public.

The ADA project for the mill continues with a significant amount of work completed by our Township's crew installing a new bathroom (more work needed for completion). Plans have been made for the installation of ramps to assist individuals to enter the mill and to observe the wheel.

Several projects continued from the previous two years. We are still searching for the gravesite of Mr. Stevens who died during the typhoid epidemic in Durham and we received the report (unfortunately non-decisive) from Lehigh University concerning our search for Captain George Heinlein's grave. The Society's Vice Chairperson, Bea Von Watzdorf, researched and delivered a study on the history of the mill centering attention on its owners.

Although the pandemic caused the Passport to History group to cut back on its plans, we decided to have representatives stationed outside the mill and offered visitors the opportunity



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to find out about Durham by walking around the mill and the Durham boat and listening to comments made by our members concentrating on a hand out compiled by the Society which described the Durham environs along with a brief history.

Board member, Jim Walter, continued working on the LIDAR project where he took the results of a drone survey of the area where the iron company used to be located. Matching these results with old pictures of the area, Jim intends to recreate a three-dimensional model of the complex.

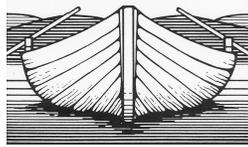
The information garnered from documents created by the Bucks County Conservancy back in 1995 has been scanned and will be uploaded to the Historical Society's website. This information will be used to create an updated listing of the historical properties and houses in the township.

A major project the Society took on was to create a virtual tour of the area surrounding the Durham iron mines. For the past several years, we have participated in a state-wide event called Penn's Woods, where interested groups are guided through some of the spectacular areas in the Commonwealth. This year's event was cancelled by many groups because of the pandemic but the Society under the guidance of Kathleen Connally and her son, Isaac Danuloff, created a virtual tour. Several members of the Society undertook three hikes up to the mines and members offered their expertise in narrating the history surrounding the mines and the flora and fauna found in the immediate area. The video will be placed on the Society's website with links to the Penn's Woods, Cooks Creek Watershed Association, Penn State, and Heritage Foundation websites.

Mr. Unangst, an 89 year old lifetime resident, hosted a delegation of Society members early in the year and regaled them with stories of his past. Mr. Unangst grew up in the former hotel here in Durham and served in several positions for the township. He was the police chief when Durham had its own force (1 person) and was also a supervisor for the township. His delightful reminiscences were captured on video and this too will be found on the DHS website.

The generosity of our residents and friends can't be over-estimated. Linda Czeck and Ronny Riegel each made substantial artistic gifts to the Society with Linda donating her print of a Durham scene and Ronny donating an original oil painting by Paul (Papa) Horning. Ronny's gift is on display at the township building on an on-loan basis from the Society. Linda's will be displayed in a prominent place in the mill.

The Society engaged the services of a local painter to paint the sashes recently purchased by the township to replace the badly weathered windows in the mill's warehouse. In addition, we hosted a Lehigh University professor and two Ph.D. candidates as they toured the mill to give us some input on what would have to be done to bring the water wheel back into operation.



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We also have not been negligent in our search for old equipment that would augment what the mill currently has. We were able to acquire from Bucks County a grain cleaner and separator. This hand operated machinery would have been found in any mill of our mill's vintage. The second acquisition was a grain bin. Again, this would have been a part of a grain mill such as ours. In fact, our mill did have some grain bins but they are obvious replacements since they are built of plywood and served the purpose of storing everything from grain to dog food. The bin we took possession of is of early 19th century construction and matches very well with the mill's antiquity.

Nathan Thoman, an Eagle Scout candidate completed his Eagle project by leading a group of scouts and volunteers in a thorough cleaning of the mill. As the third Eagle candidate to use the mill as a backdrop for his project, he also produced placards describing the operation of some of the mill's old machinery. The display was carefully done to match the displays done by his predecessors. The Society now has a collection of these placards which are of museum quality to explain facets of things that occurred during the past two hundred years at our mill.

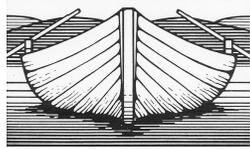
Thanks go to Tim Koplín who repaired some masonry damage discovered during Nathan Thoman's project. Tim was able to professionally repair the masonry which stabilized the integrity of one of the walls of the mill. Water had crept under a rotting window casement and subsequent freezing and thawing weakened the structure.

Jim Walter brought to the Society's attention that he had many books of historical significance for which he personally had no further use. Since the Society does not have the ability to store these books ourselves we made an agreement with the Riegelsville library that these books could be housed at the library and could be held in the reference section where individuals could use them. Books owned by other Society members may be added to this collection in the future.

Jeff Heehs has done an outstanding job in updating the Society's website. It has been completely revised and we have started to add a lot of material. Articles are being written concerning the important people who lived in the township along with reprints of pertinent information concerning the area's history. I welcome one and all to go to the website and take a look at what is being offered.

When members of the Society spotted that the steering oar of the Durham boat was snapped off (probably by some youngster swinging on it), we lost no time in contacting George Mason who quickly performed an emergency repair.

A former resident of the township, Jennifer Keating, has expressed interest in donating a significant amount of historical research material to the Society. As soon as the threats from the pandemic are over, we plan on meeting with her to take possession of the material.



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Three additional projects that have just been started are: a photographic study of root cellars that still can be found in the township, a study of the lime kilns that still exist, and most importantly, working with the EAC and the township in landscaping and decorating the area around the township building recently improved for ADA purposes.

It would be totally inappropriate to end this report without mentioning the unfortunate passing of three people who contributed greatly to the Society from volunteerism to leadership and financial assistance. Gary Litschauer volunteered many hours to the Society in its infancy, making use of his personal knowledge of the mill and passed down knowledge from his father and uncle who both worked there. Manfred and Frieda Marchewski were both Board members emeritus. Manfred served as Vice Chairman for many years and took an active role in many of our endeavors. Freda would always happily provide a guiding hand and work tirelessly in providing tasty food for our various functions especially Durham Day. All three of these people will be missed by the Society and by all who worked with them

The pandemic has slowed down several of our efforts but hopefully this report establishes that the Society is still hale and hearty and has positioned itself well for the future.

Thank you,

David Oleksa, President