

JANUARY 2014 NEWSLETTER

WALLENPAUPACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY



“Keeping the history of Lake Wallenpaupack alive and accessible for present and future generations”



December Meeting:

WAHS Chamber Choir and Show Choir, a Lovely Holiday Performance!

The Wallenpaupack Area High School Chamber Choir and Show Choir gave a lovely holiday performance during December's monthly Society meeting. Despite snowy weather and a late school start, the choirs were able to arrive at the ELC for a 12:00 noon meeting time and stayed after their singing to share a few holiday cookies with WHS. The Chamber Choir sang in perfect a cappella harmony the holiday carols of 'Sweet Day,' 'Silent Night,' 'Deck the Halls,' 'Carol of the Bells,' and 'I Got a Key.' The Show Choir followed the Chamber Choir with singing and dancing to upbeat Christmas songs including 'Jazzy Old St Nicholas' and a contemporary rendition of 'Little Drummer Boy.'



from left to right: the Chamber Choir sings a cappella carols; WAHS Choir Members Jack Tobey and Heather Rice enjoy holiday cookies; Emilia Miller with grandmother Vera Moyer before the concert

In Case of Inclement Weather, Meeting Cancellations

If Wallenpaupack Area School District cancels or delays school on a meeting day due to inclement weather, the meeting will be cancelled, except for January's reorganization meeting which will be rescheduled for the same time and place on the following day.

If anyone would like to be included on a call tree for notification of last minute changes to programs, please leave your name and phone number on the Society's answering machine: (570) 226-8980. We will not share phone numbers with any other organization, and we will only use the number for program notifications.

Next Meeting:

1:00 p.m., January 15th, Environmental Learning Center

January's meeting will consist of business matters such as budget approval, submitting ballots for elections, and brainstorming about solutions to the Williams House repairs and needs. A detailed discussion regarding the Williams House will be held in March; January's meeting will be a starting point for further discussion and plans of action which will be the focus of the March meeting.



2014 Programs

Wallenpaupack Historical Society

Refreshment Committee

January
Budget Approval, Reorganization, and
Williams House Brainstorming

January
Barbara Briden
Jane Pellington

February
'Rutherford on Wilson,' a DVD Presentation

February
Bruce Taylor

March
Williams House Discussion

March
Bob Essex
Audrey Graybill

April
Dr Alberta Weber, Guest Speaker

April
Gert Schleiker
Ann Wiedenman

May
Spring Dinner

June
Picnic and Civil War Re-enactors'
Encampment at Palmyra Township Park

July
'Town Under the Lake,' a Saturday Evening
Program

August
'The Lenape' by John Kraft

August
Nancy Gumble
Beatrice Martin

September
Annual Awards Dinner

October
'Crafts of Old,' Exhibits and Demonstrations

October
Janet Murphy
Ethel Pattison
Marie Beauchery

November
'Not Frail Flowers,' a Veterans' Program about
Pennsylvania's Civil War nurses

November
Rolf Moeller

December
Concert by the WAHS Choir and
Holiday Party

The Williams House - A Historically Significant Home of Lake Wallenpaupack

The 19th century home known as the Williams House is one of the original houses of Palmyra Township, Pike County. Like other homes of its age, the house has the privilege of a long and detailed history. Preserving this history is very important to WHS.

The preservation of historical structures such as the Williams House leads to many positive outcomes for its community; it displays not only historical character, providing a sense of and a link to past eras, but also historic craftsmanship in its decoration and architectural details that contemporary buildings do not provide. The case for preservation of historic buildings is one that concerned community members across the country frequently make to municipalities and fellow residents. For example, Historic Hawai'i Foundation, a preservation organization located in Honolulu, Hawaii, presents the following reasons for why historic preservation is important to our communities:

“Why Historic Preservation?”

The history of a community contributes to its personality. Preserving the history of a place through its significant historic resources gives a community its unique character. Historic preservation provides a link to the roots of the community and its people. Overall, historic preservation adds to the quality of life making for a more livable community. Historic preservation involves much more than simply saving and restoring old buildings and sites of historic importance; there are economic, cultural, environmental, and educational benefits of historic preservation, all of which are inextricably connected to one another and to the living memory of involved communities. Historic preservation is beneficial to the community in the following ways:

† **Culturally** a community is richer for having the tangible presence of past eras and historic styles.

† **Economically** a community benefits from increased property values and tax revenues when historic buildings are protected and made the focal point of revitalization and when the community is attractive to visitors seeking heritage tourism opportunities.

† **Socially** a community benefits when citizens take pride in its history and mutual concern for the protection of the historic building fabric.

† **Developmentally** a community benefits from having a concerted and well-defined planning approach for the protection of historic buildings while accommodating healthy growth.

† **Environmentally** a community benefits when historic buildings are restored or rehabilitated rather than demolished and disposed of in the community landfill.

† **Educationally** a community benefits through teaching local heritage and the understanding of the past and the resultant cultural respect by its citizens.”

Source: www.historichawaii.org

What makes preservation of historic buildings such as the Williams House difficult, for WHS or any historical society, is the rendering of needed repairs and general upkeep for an aging structure. However, the significance of the home's history and its individual contribution to the countryside character of the Lake Wallenpaupack area are so great that the disrepair of such a building would greatly impact the living history of the community. In the upcoming months, WHS will be deciding the best way to proceed with future and currently needed restoration of the house.

A detailed history of the historic home is outlined below. Audrey Graybill's WHS publication *Historic Homes of Palmyra Township, Pike County, Pennsylvania* provides a concise history, named here as the Killam-Williams home:

“Lot 25 was surveyed for Uriah Chapman, one of the first settlers. He was an elderly man at the time of the survey, and with his death in 1816, his lands passed to his son, William, and William's wife Rachel Willis. William lived some years on Lot 25. Wishing to move to Ohio, William sold his land to one of the settlement's wealthiest landowners, Moses Killam, Jr. Moses and his wife had a large family of five sons and ten daughters. He was a large land owner and a partner in the Atkinson sawmill on Mill Brook. He was able to provide tracts of land to his five sons. Lot 25 he gave to his eldest, Dan D., and his wife Margaret Rohrbaker, who took up residence there when they first married in 1835. The oldest portion rests on a dry stone foundation. Its second floor may well have been a loft over a common room.

“Dan D.'s family grew to eleven and the structure needed to be expanded. A two-story addition was added in the mid-nineteenth century. Dan D. died in 1876; his widow died in 1881. Moses, the eldest son, inherited the property (250 acres) but he sold it to three of his siblings for \$4,000. The house was further modernized in the 1880s when the daughter, Lucy, and her husband Charles Williams, moved in with their family. Lucy's brother, Clay, sold his share to Lucy and their sister, Hellen, for \$2,000 worth of timber. Hellen eventually ceded her rights to her sister.

“The Williams operated a farm on the location. A large barn and several outbuildings completed the holdings. Upon Lucy's death, the house passed to her husband and two of their three children who remained unmarried. Marion, the married daughter, was to receive a cash settlement. The Williams farm extended to the river and the family received a sizeable settlement when the lower section was sold to the lake developers [PP&L]. With this added cash, the family made extensive renovations to the house. These included removing a small room in the front of the house to make room for a distinctive wrap-around porch, relocating an interior staircase in the main section, and opening the downstairs into two large rooms. Central heating was installed and windows were added to the front room- all of which changed the farmhouse into a distinctive landmark.

“The property remained in the family until the death of Ralph in 1967. It passed to a great-nephew who, after several years, sold it to the CWDJS Associates for a housing development. In 2001, the developers donated the house and two acres of land to the fledgling Wallenpaupack Historical Society for use as a museum/house.

“Since accepting ownership, WHS has been painstakingly stabilizing and restoring the house through the generous donations of its supporters. A new roof was installed and some drainage problems were resolved. The windows in the main rooms were stripped and stained. The ceiling was replaced and the walls were painted. Recently, a small bathroom was modified to accommodate the handicapped, and renovations were made to the small kitchen. Handicapped parking, driveways, entrances and stair railings were installed.

“Today, three rooms downstairs contain local donated artifacts, photographs, and examples of furnishings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many donated articles are stored for future exhibits; a large collection of local photographs is being maintained. The house is open to visitors in the summer.”

Historic Homes of Palmyra Township, Pike County, Pennsylvania is available as an 8”x10” paperback book for a purchase of \$20.00 through WHS. The book describes the histories of 22 of the oldest homes in Palmyra and includes photos of the homes.

Another detailed history of the Williams House appears in the April 2002 WHS Newsletter, written by Carol Haase:

Before 1681 - prior to 1681 the Minisink, Lenape, and Paupack native Americans lived along the Wallenpaupack Creek. Wallenpaupack, a Lenape or Delaware Indian word, means ‘*stream of swift and slow water.*’

March 4, 1681 - King Charles II of England granted William Penn the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to repay and cancel the King’s debt to Penn’s father, Sir Admiral William Penn. The property was then part of Bucks County, one of the three original counties.

1748-1751 - On November 5, 1748, Pennsylvania’s Proprietary Government issued a warrant for 12,000 acres, called the Manor of Wallenpaupack; the Williams’ property was part of this Manor tract along the Wallenpaupack Creek. The Manor tract was surveyed three years later on October 22, 1751.

Spring 1774 - The first group of settlers moved in from Connecticut. Among these settlers were Uriah Chapman, Sr and his family.

1793 - The Manor of Wallenpaupack, then in Northampton County, was conveyed by John Penn the Elder and John Penn the Younger to James Wilson, an attorney from Philadelphia, signer of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. In a short time, Wilson’s finances were completely destroyed by land speculation in NY and PA. Wilsonville was named after James Wilson.

1798-1805 - After Wilson’s death, Connecticut’s settlers’ land ownership came into question in court proceedings from 1799-1805. Per court order, George Palmer surveyed the Tract in 1805 to define the settlers’ land boundaries and set the fair market value of the land minus improvements; bonds were executed at the same time.

May 6, 1806 - Samuel Sitgreaves, an attorney from Easton, purchased the Manor Tract in a sale as recorded in the Wayne County Mortgage Book No. 1, page 286.

June 6, 1808 - Clear land title ownership was finally established after Samuel Sitgreaves executed Deeds to the Connecticut settlers. Among them was Uriah Chapman, Sr, who became the owner of two lots which included the location of the Williams’ property.

1817-1876 - Uriah Chapman died in 1816. In 1817, William Chapman, his son, and wife Rachel Willis moved to Ohio. William sold 250 acres (Lot No. 25) to Moses Killam, Jr for \$1,000 (Pike Co. Deed Book #3, page 95). At the time Moses, Jr was 32 years old, married to Lucy Kimble and the owner of other local land. Their eldest son, Daniel D., was born in 1811. We assume that Dan inherited Lot No. 25 upon his father’s death in 1861. Dan married Margaret Rohrbacker around 1830. He constructed a homestead on the land during his lifetime (1830-1876); the exact date is still to be determined.

October 28, 1881 - Per Margaret Killam’s will, her eldest son, Moses K. Killam, of Jersey City, NJ was paid \$4,000 for the 250 acres by his siblings, namely H. Clay Killam, Hellen W. Killam, and Lucy A. Williams, wife of Charles E. Williams, originally from Brooklyn, NY (Deed Book #39, page 71). According to Ephraim Killam’s 1887 account, the land (Lot 25) was also the location of the family homestead, meaning a house existed prior to Margaret’s death.

October 31, 1883 - H. Clay Killam and his wife, Grace B., sold his share of the land to Hellen W. Killam and Lucy A. Williams for \$2,000. In a second deed, dated the same day, Hellen W. Killam and Lucy A. Williams paid H. Clay Killam the sum of \$2,000 in the form of timber trees. Specific sizes of lumber were listed (Deed Book #40, page 424).

1924 - Upon Lucy’s death the land and home were bequeathed to her husband, Charles E., and her two younger children, Isobel Williams and Ralph J. Williams (Will dated 5/16/1921 registered at Milford in Will Book #43, page 33).

1931-1951 - Isobel and Ralph owned the property after their father’s death on March 3, 1931. Ralph was the sole heir after Isobel’s death on May 7, 1951 (Will book #71, page 76).

1967 - Ralph Williams’ Estate Administrator, Warner M. DePuy, sold about 104 acres and buildings to CWDJS Associates/Schrenk Properties, a partnership in Holland, PA for \$498,000 (Deed Book #460, page 63).

December 30, 2001 - Property was donated to the Palmyra/Pike Wallenpaupack Historical Society.

