



Welcome to a Walk Through Time.....

Farming

The history of West Nantmeal Township is mainly farming and agricultural. Many farm deeds trace their origin to sons of William Penn. The first settlers in our township were from Wales and farming was their primary pursuit. Without much in the way of fertilizer and little sophisticated techniques, historians connect farming for this time period as small scale self-sufficient or nonmarket agriculture. Much of the farm work didn't involve raising crops or livestock during this time period. Clearing, plowing and fencing had to be done prior to planting. Early fencing laws put the onus for fencing the crops rather than animals. Felling massive trees, cutting them into logs, pulling stumps were all done without machinery. Even larger acreage farms were only tilling about half of their farm. Jethro Tull in 1701 invented the seed drill, which sowed seed in a straight line. He also invented the horse drawn hoe which hoed the land and destroyed weeds between crops. In 1790, the first Federal Census, more than 90 percent of all Americans were farmers and Pennsylvania led the nation in food production with the majority of Pennsylvanians living on farms.

Farmers were always in pursuit of a better harvest. The 19th century witnessed a revolution in farming technology. New machinery changed the way farmers planted and harvested their crops. Farmers grew corn, wheat, barley, oats, buckwheat and rye. Even with the invention of new machinery, horse, oxen and people still provided most of the power that operated the machinery. Farmers could now produce crops for sale and trade for nearly everything their families required.

In the early twentieth century, life on the farm was challenging but families were very self-sufficient. Farmers were able to grow their own food including fruits, vegetables, eggs, and meat. Summer produce was canned in order to feed the family during the winter months.

We are fortunate that we have many farms in our township. Many of our large farms have sold their development rights and that assures that these properties will be able to continue to farm without the threat of pressure from developers, or being taxed out of existence. How resilient the farmers have been throughout the centuries, adapting to whatever Mother Nature or other forces has thrown their way.

In our fall issue of our newsletter, we will highlight some of our farms that started centuries ago but are still active today. We will tell you how some of the farms used German POW's during WWII and how hardships like death and disease didn't stop our farmers. All of this grit and determination of the farming community has only strengthened this area in making it a wonderful place to live .

History Treasure Drive (Road Rally) - May 21, 2022

This is a challenging, fun, discovery drive through West Nantmeal and Wallace Townships. Your travel will include visiting 5 historic sites in each township and ending at a surprise location! This is a great way to learn some of your local history while enjoying the back roads of our beautiful community. This event is limited to 20 cars and you must call 610-286-9722 ext. 12 by May 15 to preregister. We will need your name, phone number, and number of people that will be traveling in your vehicle. There is a \$20.00 fee that will be collected at the beginning of the drive.



Tidbit (answer on second page)

Where, in West Nantmeal Township, was the home of the relative of renowned stained-glass artist, Lawrence Bradford Saint?



Welcome to the West Nantmeal Historical Commission's Library

The West Nantmeal Historical Commission's Library has 122 books, DVD'S and magazines that range from Covered Bridges of Chester County, to Toys and Games from Times Past. This is a lending library and anyone is welcome to come to the township building during regular office hours (Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday from 9 to 2) to look at our collection and to borrow a book.

WHAT TO DO TO BORROW A BOOK

- In each book, there is a library card in a pocket. Take out the card.
- Fill in your name, phone number and the date the book was borrowed
- Put the completed library card in the box on the library shelf labeled "West Nantmeal Historical Committee Library Books"
- Return the book in a timely manner, take out the library card from the box, write the date that the book was returned and place back in book and return the book to the shelf.

The library is on the honor system so, PLEASE return the book in a timely amount of time.

One of our books, "Jewels of Light-The Stained Glass of the Washington National Cathedral" by Elodi R. Crimi and Diane Ney, has a connection to West Nantmeal Township. What is this connection? Lawrence Bradford Saint lived in Bucks County, but a relative of Lawrence Bradford Saint was a former resident of West Nantmeal. Some of you may even remember this relative walking on Route 82 to and from his job at Graco when the company was in Elverson.

Another interesting fact is that Lawrence Bradford Saint was also a renowned stained-glass artist and, at the height of his career, head of the stained-glass department at the Washington Cathedral, Washington, D.C.. He discovered a process to make his own stained glass in his backyard studio. This was necessary because the finest quality glass was not available on the commercial market at the time. At the National Cathedral, Mr. Saint's first assignment was the three parable windows in St. Mary's Chapel north of the choir. His next assignment was the four miracle windows in St. John's Chapel, south of the choir. In the northern transept, Mr. Saint created the large rose window. In Bryn Athyn Cathedral, located in Bryn Athyn, Pa., is another example of Mr. Saint's stained-glass creation. Check out "Jewels of Light" and you will see examples of Mr. Saint's artwork.

If you are interested in barns, dry stone walls, iron furnaces, iron and steel, old houses and railroads, the West Nantmeal Library is the place for YOU!

Mark your calendar!

What's in Your Backyard?? July 11, 2022, 2 PM, St. Mary of Providence Community Room

This exciting presentative by Steve Somers will highlight Native American artifacts that were found in the West Nantmeal area. Do you have any local Native American artifacts that you are willing to share with the group? Please bring them along!

Tidbit answer.... Manor Road, just south of ERB Trucking.