Welcome to a Walk Through Time……..

Welsh Mountain

Welsh Mountain, located in southeastern Pennsylvania and bordering on Berks, Chester, and Lancaster Counties is part of the Blue Ridge Mountains that extends from Georgia to Pennsylvania. The highest point of this range, in our area of Chester County in Honey Brook Township, is 1071 ft (about the height of the Empire State Building). One of the ridges helps form the Twin Valley where Berks and Chester Counties meet near Morgantown.

The Conestoga Indians (Susquehanna) inhabited the region for thousands of years. The name Susquehanna is an Algonquin name meaning, "People of the Muddy River". They were also referred to by the early settlers using the Lenape name Miqua meaning "Stealthy". These tribes didn't have a concept of borders, or land ownership and moved around freely. Diseases and attacks by settlers caused a dramatic decrease in numbers to the Native American families. Although William Penn had a fondness for the Indians, he did not allow land to be set aside for them. Europeans had control and although their Native Ancestors lived there for thousands of years; they had no ownership of the land. Slaves escaping from the Southern States were assisted by the Natives who had no concept of slavery or owning another human being. Indentured servants fleeing from abuse were also welcomed, making this a mix that made up the Tri-Racial inhabitants. This area became a refuge for escaped slaves, free African Americans, and Native Americans who wanted to avoid deportation to reservations. That mix made this into a community.

As in every community there were good and bad people. The Buzzard brothers lived there from 1880 to 1925 and terrorized the community. Born on Welsh Mountain, the six boys whose father died during the Civil War, were raised by their single mother. Abe, the ringleader, along with Isaac and Jacob, spent more time in prison than out. Gun battles, robberies, and a string of thefts that were too numerous to count. The bounty for Abe was larger than for the outlaw Jesse James. Although he had been shot several times in gun battle, he died in 1945 in his home in Reading, PA.

In 1880 there was a supposed sighting of Big Foot on Welsh Mountain. Stories of "The Wild Man of the Woods" started in 1881. This was a very hairy shrieking man, waving his arms and scaring men and women. These are just some of the tales told and passed on regarding this mountain.

In 1900, 125 people lived on the mountain and the population jumped to about 300 in 1963. In 1963, a Social Worker was murdered (Lancaster County). The subsequent press coverage and rumors made people avoid the mountain as its reputation spiraled down. Gentrification started which displaced many of the residents that lived there but didn't own their homes.

Today, the Welsh Mountain has been tamed. The outlaws are gone, their huts have been replaced with comfortable housing and paved roads across the ridge that once was dense forest, making it a serene place to live with beautiful views.

Unique West Nantmeal gifts!

Looking for affordable local gifts? West Nantmeal Historical Commission has some unique items. (Limited quantities) Available during office hours or call 610-286-9722 ext. 12.

West Nantmeal mugs, green & cream with a local scene	$2.00
8 pack notecards with local scenes	$4.00
Black and white historical calendar photos	$2.00

Interested in learning more about West Nantmeal Township? We'd love to have you join us! Please visit our website, westnantmealhc.org, or come to one of our monthly meetings which are held at the Township Building on the second Wednesday of each month at 3:00 PM. (Subject to change; please check our website)

Trivia…. How well do you know West Nantmeal Township? (answers on second page)

1. What year was West Nantmeal Township incorporated?
2. Where did the Township get its name?
3. What is Pennsylvania's state bird and flower?
4. How many states border Pennsylvania?
5. What word on the Liberty Bell is misspelled?
6. What 2 townships split off from West Nantmeal?
7. What Native American tribe was settled in Eastern Pennsylvania at the time of William Penn's arrival?
8. Who sits 945 feet atop the Comcast building in Philadelphia?
9. Where did Chester County get its name?
10. Where were the first settlers in West Nantmeal from?
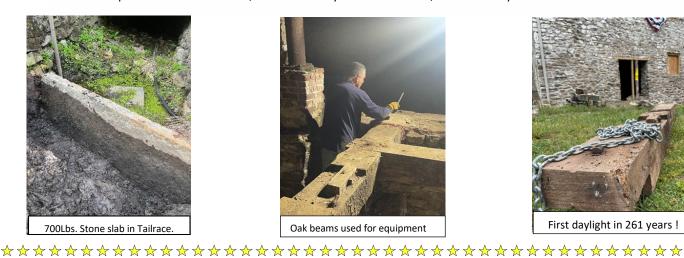
Once upon a Gristmill,
Lewis Mill, Circa 1762

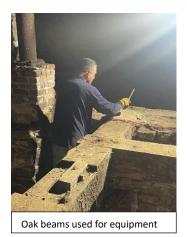**A Glimpse into History**

     Bread was a staple of the colonial diet and Pennsylvania was known as the breadbasket of America during the American Revolution. Gristmills, such as the Lewis Mill in West Nantmeal township, played a vital role in the early development of rural communities. Mills helped determine in many instances where a settlement would begin. Roads were constructed to get to the mill, and in many cases, some roads were named after the Mills. During the Revolutionary war, the importance of Mills was demonstrated through the order of General George Washington, Commander of the Continental Army, to remove grist millstones in proximity to the British troops. The Continental Army took steps to deprive the enemy of potential supplies. It is not known whether Lewis Mill in our Township was subject to this order. General George Washington and his troops did retreat to Reading Furnace in Warwick Township, only 7 miles north-east of the Lewis Mill, to have their muskets repaired in September 1777.

Rescue Journey

     We are thrilled to share the exciting journey of rescuing the Lewis Mill building to prevent further deterioration and to repurpose the historic site that has stood the test of time. Over the past year, our focus was on stabilizing the 261 year old stone walls, performing emergency roof repairs and clearing the basement of water damaged wood beams and floor boards. It's a labor of love that teaches us a wealth of history while peeling through the layers of centuries. The craftsmanship of the trades involved in building and operating the Mill are still very evident in all areas of the property.

     Recently, while cleaning out the tailrace (channel for water exiting the mill), a huge stone slab was discovered buried halfway in the mud just outside the building. The 700 pound, 6'x2' stone slab, formed part of the tailrace construction. We are also optimistic of recently discovering a possible stone bottom floor of the tailrace, that sent the water gushing towards the Brandywine Creek, after their job was done turning the heavy wooded water wheel used to grind the wheat and other grains. Saving the main foundation wood beams for future repurposing in the building was a mammoth task on its own. We will make sure it is preserved for the future, to tell the story of the Lewis Mill, where history can come alive.

700Lbs. Stone slab in Tailrace.

Oak beams used for equipment

First daylight in 261 years !

Trivia Answers…..

1. 1740
2. Nantmil in Radnorshire, Wales
3. Ruffed grouse, mountain laurel
4. Six states
5. Pensylvania (missing "n")
6. Honey Brook and Wallace Townships
7. Lenni Lenape
8. William Penn
9. Chester, England
10. Wales or England