



Blue Rock Heritage Center

Washington Boro | Pennsylvania

# 2025 Spring Newsletter

## Archaeology Lab

The Lower Susquehanna Archaeological Society has established an archaeology lab in the basement of the Blue Rock Heritage Center. The field lab allows for the cleaning and cataloguing of excavated artifacts. Debbie and Larry Saylor and Paul Nevin were instrumental in setting up the lab. You can also view the excavation equipment utilized by excavation teams. Tools, shovels, screens and much more will be on display. As noted in the newsletter, you may contact Paul Nevin if you are interested in joining an excavation this summer.



## Mounted Duck Display

Recently, several dozen mounted ducks were donated for display. The family of the late Butch Espenshade, a local hunter, donated his mounts for display. The ducks are all which can be found visiting this area during their migrations. The Susquehanna River and the islands and mud flats near Washington Boro are a major resting stop during migration. They also provided an ideal habitat and feeding grounds for local waterfowl who nest here annually raising their young.



## 2025 Meeting Dates

April 21

May 19

June 16

September 15

October 20

Our meetings are held at the **Blue Rock Heritage Center** @ 7:00 pm  
All meetings are open to the public.

Please use the **Blue Rock Heritage Center** Parking lot which is accessed from Blue Rock Road

## 2025 Important Dates

Annual Open House

June 8 1pm – 4pm

Heritage Day

October 19, 9am—3pm

The **Blue Rock Heritage Center** will also be open the following dates:

May 18

June 8 & 22

July 13 & 27

August 10 & 24

September 14 & 28

October 12

1pm-4pm

Admission is free

Donation appreciated

## Get Involved

We are in need of some volunteers to get things spruced up and ready for the public. We are scheduling a workday for Saturday

**April 5** from 9am to noon.

A few hours from each family in the spring goes a long way to making this facet of our community a better place. Some basic outside cleanup is needed as well as tidying up inside the building. If you plan to help with outdoor cleanup, please bring gloves and weather appropriate clothing. Rakes, trimmers, pruning shears are needed for this task. Interior cleaning will include windows, floors, and exhibit space.



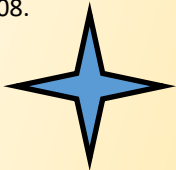
**Blue Rock Heritage Center** is a registered non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and as such, we rely entirely on donations and fees from our members. **Blue Rock Heritage Center** is run by volunteers.

Please know that every dollar of your membership fee goes toward the upkeep of our grounds and buildings. If you know of anybody else that would like to become a member, visit our webpage and click the button at the bottom labeled "BECOME A MEMBER". Donations are always appreciated.

We need help with creating and maintaining displays and exhibits, volunteering to help with the annual Heritage Day, general maintenance and cleaning and miscellaneous other activities.

We desire to have the Center open on a regular schedule and docents are needed to serve.

Please visit our website, or contact Debbie Saylor, Curator [Debbie.saylor1@verizon.net](mailto:Debbie.saylor1@verizon.net) or Paul Hoffer 717-951-0089 or Charlie Douts 717-719-3008.



As the Heritage Center expands into the Wittmer barn we are seeking approximately 50 folding chairs. We recently received folding tables, pa system, and L.E.D. projection camera.

We need funds to purchase display cases to showcase the two Jacob Witmer coverlets which we recently acquired. We desire to place them in a wall mounted case. If you would like to donate toward this acquisition, or have the talent to build cases, please contact us.

We are grateful for the recent donations and please contact Charlie Douts 717-719-3008 or Paul Hoffer 717-951-0089 if you have chairs to donate.

### **Blue Rock Heritage Center Open House June 8th 1pm to 4pm**

The annual Blue Rock Heritage Center Open House is scheduled for Sunday, June 8 from 1-4 pm. The theme for this year's event is local duck decoys. We will have several decoy collectors sharing their collections. We will also have individuals who will describe decoy carvings and the painting of them. We will showcase the decoys within the Blue Rock collection, and if individuals wish to donate local decoys, we are happy to expand the collection. A duck hunting sneak boat will also be on display.

In addition to touring our facility and exhibits, the local chapter of the Society of Pennsylvania Archaeology will be available to help identify artifacts you may have found. Please bring them along to share for the group to help you determine the age and purpose of the artifact.

Circle Legacy will be on hand to share local Native American crafts and cultural practices of local tribes who once inhabited the local area.

### **A Message From the President**

Dear Members and Friends of the **Blue Rock Heritage Center**,

I wish to thank all the members and friends of the Blue Rock Heritage Center for another successful year. Our membership continues to grow, and your financial support enables us to reach out with educational opportunities for our visitors.

Expanded opening dates and requests for group tours have given us the largest number of visitors since our inception. School classes, local social groups have all toured and participated in events at the Center.

Volunteers coupled with funding for materials from LASA have enabled us to continue with renovations at the 1856 Wittmer barn. Work in the basement area will provide a gathering place for groups to meet and space for exhibition space during special events. Many thanks to the volunteers who shared their time and skills to install new windows, doors, masonry repairs and electrical upgrades.

I anxiously look forward to an exciting year for 2025 with our programs and events. I invite you to visit with us, and please let me know if you have skills and talents you wish to share as we continue to move forward with providing an educational experience showcasing our local heritage.

Sincerely, Charlie Douts, President



**Archaeology Center:** By Debbie Saylor, Curator

Blue Rock Excavations will begin early 2025 with Paul Nevin, President leading the continued investigation of the property.

Last year our archaeology team members mapped over 40 test pits, which revealed a multi cultured layer component with associated artifacts.

This year units will be excavated and cataloguing of artifacts will begin.

Please contact Paul Nevin to reserve your space. Phone: 717.578.1358 or email: paulnevin@aol.com

Dates of excavation: Mar.30; April 5; April 19; April 27; May 3; May 10<sup>th</sup>.

Must be a Chapter 28, SPA member to participate. Membership form: [www.spa28.org](http://www.spa28.org)



**Annual Heritage Day**

The 2024 celebration was a big success, and we appreciated all who visited and supported our event. The 2025 celebration is scheduled for October 18. The usual activities such as the hayride, barrel train, wildlife presentation, classic cars and tractors, kids pedal tractor pull, craft vendors and good food are all part of the event. Please support this event as we are a non-profit organization, and this event and membership fees provide our main source of revenue.

The event is held from 9-4 at Washington Boro Park. Please contact Charlie Douts, 717-719-3008 or Doug Kramer, 717-808-4413 if you would like to participate or have any questions.



**Network Partners**

The Blue Rock Heritage Center (BRHC) is pleased to partner with local entities who share common interests. Circle Legacy is a local group who promote the heritage and traditions of Native Americans who once occupied this land. Chapter 28 is a local group of the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology which emphasizes responsible archaeology and how it helps us to understand our past. We urge you to visit the website of these organizations for a full listing of their events, programs and activities for the year. Circle Legacy website, [circlelegacycenter.com](http://circlelegacycenter.com) / Chapter 28, Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology, website, [spa28.org](http://spa28.org),



**Jacob Witmer Coverlet Updates**

We are excited to share with you that the Center purchased at local auction a second coverlet made by Jacob Witmer. This coverlet was made for Mary Ann Oxer of Manor Township and dated 1845. Mary was born in Lancaster County in 1807. In 1845 she was married to James Copeland and living in Manor Township. The 1850 census indicates she had 3 children at this time. We are grateful to Carol Goss who notified us of this item coming up for auction and Kathy Fry for her research on Mary.

As we noted, Jacob Witmer purchased a jacquard loom and in addition to operating his mill, had a cottage industry of making coverlets. The following are a list of known coverlets which he has created, including one on display at the national coverlet museum in Bedford, Pa.

Jacob Witmer coverlet, 1838 / Magdalen Derstler, 1839 / Jacob Hausman, 1839 / Barbara Mann , 1841 / Ann Marie Peters, 1841 / Marie Hostetter, 1841 / Jacob Habecker, 1851



**Mill Stones Donated to Blue Rock Heritage Center**

John and Julia Ament donated two millstones which would have been like those used at the Witmer mill. The stones were salvaged by John Ament from the 1851 Doerstler Mill located along the Little Conestoga Creek near Letort. The mill was last owned and operated by Eli Ament who ceased milling operations in 1914. Harry Ament converted the mill into an automobile repair garage. The mill was destroyed by fire in 1941. John was doing some excavating work at the site in the early 1960's when a relative pointed out the location of the buried stones. He removed the stones and displayed them at his home along Chestnut Grove Road near Creswell.

Mike Landis was able to restore the steel band which encircled the sectional stone. The stones are prominently displayed along the south side of the Heritage Center. We are grateful to John and Julia for this donation and for preserving a piece of our local heritage.



**Witmer Barn Update**

The south basement wall was reconstructed with new windows, doors, and masonry work.



**Board of Directors**

- President: Charlie Douts
- Vice-President: Ed Lyle
- Secretary-Treasurer: Paul Hoffer
- General Members:
- Larry Douts
- Barry Kauffman
- Mike Landis
- Bob Wertz