



Blue Rock Heritage Center

Washington Boro | Pennsylvania

# 2024 Spring Newsletter

## A Message From the President

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

I would first like to thank our members for your annual membership fee. In 2023 we received our largest membership fees since our inception. Your fees are vital to the support and success of our mission to provide an educational opportunity for visitors to experience local Native American and early history of the Washington Boro area.

As noted in the newsletter, volunteers continue to transform the Wittmer Barn into a structure which preserves its integrity, but also provides an adaptive reuse for our mission. Early agricultural equipment is displayed on the first floor, and this area is adaptable for special events. A portion of the basement is being set aside for storage and for the new gathering space for visitors.

A new display at the Heritage Center this year is a collection of photos and newspaper articles. Many of the articles highlight the excavations of Indian sites which have occurred in the past. Also, duck hunting photographs, flood photos and railroad photos are on display. One of the highlights are photos of the railroad station located in Washington Boro and the water towers to fill steam locomotives at the Creswell station.

Many visitors have toured our facility, and we are looking to extend the hours we are open. This year will be opened more frequently and look forward to hosting you. Please stop in for a tour and to see what is new and thank you for your support.

Sincerely, Charlie Douts, President

## 2024 Meeting Dates

April 15

May 20

June 17

September 16

October 21

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

## 2024 Important Dates

Annual Open House

June 2nd 1pm – 4pm

Heritage Day

October 19th 9am—3pm

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

May 19

June 2 & 23

July 14 & 28

August 11 & 25

September 8 & 22

October 13

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 6** 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.

### Witmer Coverlets

Since our first discovery of a coverlet which was woven on a loom and made by Jacob Witmer in in 1838, we have been surprised to find others. Rae Newhouse purchased one at a public auction near Quarryville which was made in 1839 for Barbara Mann. A gentleman from Highville purchased one in Virginia which was made in 1841 for Marie Hostetter. A fourth coverlet made by Jacob Witmer has been mentioned in our research and we are attempting to verify the date and name of the person for whom it was made. We are told it was made for a Peters of Manor Township. Stay tuned, and our goal is to



have these four coverlets displayed at the Open House on June 2.

### Blue Rock Heritage Center Open House June 2nd 1pm to 4pm

The annual special open house event for the Heritage Center will occur on Sunday, June 2 from 1-4 pm. The event will showcase the exhibits at the Heritage Center and Wittmer Barn. Chapter 28 of the Lower Susquehanna Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology will be present to identify artifacts for visitors to bring along. The Heritage Center Curator, Debbie Saylor, will provide tours and share her knowledge of the local Indian culture. Circle Legacy will also have displays and share information about traditional Native America lifestyles.

At 2:00 p.m., Rae Newhouse, a local weaver and collector of antique coverlets will give a presentation. She will have a four-harness loom and share how coverlets and other early materials were made. In addition, she will share another coverlet she purchased at a public auction made by Jacob Witmer in 1839 for Barbara Mann of Manor Township.

Admission is free and we encourage you to visit and learn more about our local history.



### Annual Heritage Day

The annual Heritage Day is scheduled for Saturday, October 19, at the Washington Boro Community Park. The event is free and includes activities, presentations and food for all ages. Activities include educational booths highlighting our network partners. Barrel train and hayrides, special entertainment, and local church sponsored activities. Craft and flea market vendors are present as well as farm tractors and classic cars. The event begins at 9 am and ends at 3 pm. Please contact Charlie Douts at 717-719-3008 or Doug Kramer at 717-808-4413 to reserve a booth or for information concerning the event. The local Penn Manor Chapter of the FFA hold a tractor pull on the property adjoining the Park on the same date.



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

Lower Susquehanna Archaeological Society, Chapter 28, SPA is offering an opportunity to join an archaeology excavation on the Blue Rock Heritage Center property located in Washington Boro. Last year’s excavation yielded many artifacts both historic and prehistoric, plus many of the excited participants stated, “they learned so much about local history while having fun.” Paul Nevin, President is the lead investigator and Debbie Saylor, Curator responsible for educational components involving various learning modules, workshops, and field experience to qualify in joining the archaeological excavation. The team will learn how to identify and date artifacts, proper excavation techniques, cataloging, plus a summation of the cultural & physical impacts on the footprint of the land.

The goal of this round of our archaeological work will be to better define the boundaries of the recorded archaeological site. We will begin by concentrating on gathering evidence by systematically excavating, mapping, and documenting a larger number of smaller “test units”, commonly called shovel test pits (STP’s), implementing excavation by trowel as necessary.

Blue Rock Spring Excavation Dates (morning session 10:00 am - 1:00pm, afternoon session 1:00pm - 4 pm)

April 27 (Rain Date 28th) May 4 (Rain Date 5th) May 18 (Rain Date 19th) June 1 (Rain Date 2nd?)

To sign up – Contact excavation leader Paul Nevin (email [paul-nevin@aol.com](mailto:paul-nevin@aol.com), text 717.578.1358) with the dates/sessions you would like to participate. You must be a member of Chapter 28 to participate. Membership form: [www.spa28.org](http://www.spa28.org)

**Witmer Barn Update**

Work continues in the basement of the barn to create a space for training and gathering of small groups. We anticipate the area could be utilized for school or tour groups to assemble prior to or after a tour to eat a snack or lunch. We can assemble the people in a protected space from elements and share information about the Blue Rock area.

Electrical lighting and outlets are currently being installed and new windows, door and masonry repair will also occur. The goal is to complete most of the work in this area by spring. Work is being done by volunteers and LASA is purchasing supplies and materials.



**Three Sister Garden**

This past summer a traditional Native America garden was planted in the fertile floodplain of the Susquehanna River near the Heritage Center. This garden was in the same area which would have been used to grow crops for several hundred years by local Indian groups.

A three-sister garden consists of corn (maize), beans, and squash. These crops are all planted together. The beans climb the corn stalks, and the squash are given some shade. Our garden was very successful and provided a good yield. The corn and beans would be dried for use during the winter months. The three crops helped to provide a balanced diet



**Network Partners**

The Blue Rock Heritage Center (BRHC) is pleased to partner will 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),

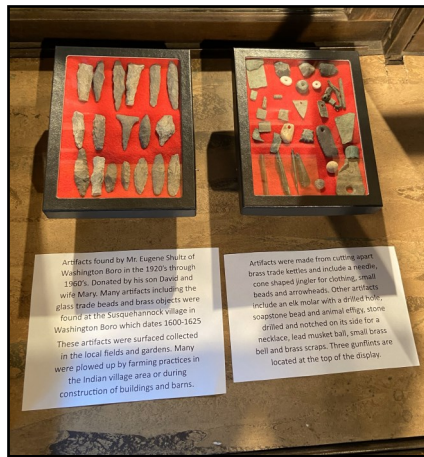




### **Eugene Shultz Collection**

David, the son of Eugene Shultz and his wife, Mary, have donated an Indian artifact collection to the Heritage Center. This collection consists of many Susquehannock artifacts which were collected by his father Eugene Shultz from the 1930's through 1960's. Eugene lived in Washington Boro and collected artifacts in nearby fields and gardens. Many items date to the occupation of the Washington Boro Village 1600-1625. In addition to stone tools and arrowheads, brass items and glass trade beads are included. In total several hundred arrowheads and some unique trade items such as a large brass needle which the Indians crafted from a trade kettle are on display.

We are grateful for this donation and fortunate that these items have remained in the local area for display.



### **Sneak Boat Donated to Blue Rock Heritage Center**

The broad expanse of the Susquehanna River with its islands, shallow waters and rock outcrops is a perfect habitat for ducks and geese. Since the times of early Native Americans, this area has been a prime hunting spot for migratory fowl.

A sneak boat was used to hunt in the open water or to be anchored near a small island. The boat could be camouflaged, and many times it was rowed and not propelled by a motor. In addition to the traditional oars located on either side of the boat, a special oar was in the rear of the boat. This oar would project from the rear of the boat and would allow the hunters to sneak closer to their prey. The duck and geese could not see the movement of the rear oar.

In the fall of 2023, a long-time duck hunter Alan Dinkel of Columbia donated his sneak boat for display. He owned the boat for 42 years after purchasing it from the widow of Jake Mowery. The boat was one of three made in the 1940's or early 1950's by Charlie Lucas of Columbia. It is the last surviving boat made by Mr. Lucas. As a side note, Alan's grandfather August Dinkel operated a butcher shop in Washington Boro, and Alan's father Ed was the last to operate it until its closing in the mid 1970's.

The boat is on display at the Wittmer Barn, and we are grateful to Alan for his generosity allowing us to display a boat used in the traditional way of hunting for waterfowl.

