

Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy

Muncy Farms Set as Site for Spring Event

In May 2010 the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy held a Spring outing at Lochabar. Ted and Judee Lyon opened their property along Antes Creek to NPC for a fun Sunday afternoon, filled with geology, wild flowers, local history, music and great food.

And, since one great event encourages another, a NPC committee is already at work on 2011's event. This year, siblings Malcolm Barlow and Sheila Barlow O'Brien will be hosting NPC members at Muncy Farms, their 800-acre farm along the West Branch Susquehanna at Hall's Station.

The Muncy Farms property has a long and unique history. The property was warranted to John Jarvis, Jr. and known as the "Jarvis tracts" before being owned by Samuel Wallis. Wallis came to the area as a surveyor in 1768, and in 1769 he built a stone house on Muncy Farms. This house is still standing, and is the oldest house in Lycoming County. Since it was built from stone,



the house survived the raids and burnings during the "Great Runaway" in 1778 (settlers to the region withdrew to Sunbury and points south while war parties came through burning crops and buildings).

By the late 1780s Wallis owned more than five square miles of land. After the Revolutionary War, Wallis worked as a land agent for the Holland Land Company. The Company, a group of capitalists in the United Netherlands, provided funds to Robert Morris (financier of

the Revolution), and was re-paid with large tracts of land in western New York and Pennsylvania. Wallis's financial affairs became complicated and he over-extended himself. He died from yellow fever on October 14, 1798.

John Meginness's 1892 *History of Lycoming County*, details that Wallis's land holdings were heavily encumbered and forced to be sold at sheriff's sale in Williamsport on May 3 and 4, 1802. Although Wallis's sons had worked to settle with creditors, they

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Conserving working farms and forests



Spring Fundraiser...

(Continued from front page)



were unsuccessful. The 5,766 acres sold over the two day period raised \$19,188.67 (about \$3.33 per acre).

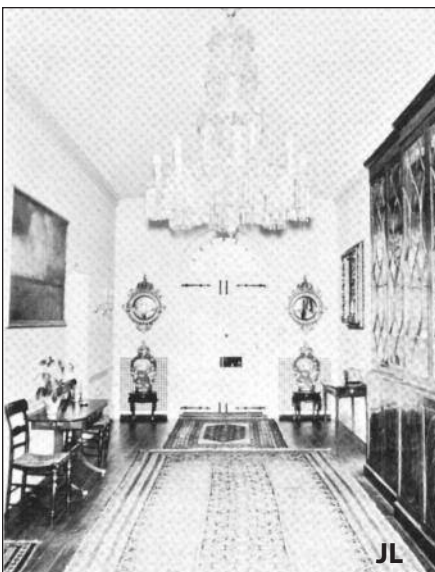
The tract with the main house was bought by Thomas Grant on behalf of Henry Drinker. On November 18, 1805 Drinker sold the tract to Robert Coleman who gave the property as a gift to his daughter, Elizabeth, when she wed Charles Hall, a Sunbury attorney.

In 1820 construction on the house's east wing began. Owners Charles and Elizabeth Hall hired the contractor who was doing the state capitol in Harrisburg. However, Charles died in 1821, prior to the work being completed. Four years later, Elizabeth and her younger children moved to Lancaster. She left her son, Robert Coleman Hall, to manage Muncy Farms.

Robert Coleman Hall married Sarah Ann Watts. The couple had six children. Their daughter Julia Watts Hall,

eventually married John Penn Brock. John Penn Brock's descendent, Col. Robert Coleman Hall Brock and his wife, Alice, had a son, Henry Gibson Brock.

Henry Gibson Brock graduated from the University of Pennsylvania before traveling to France and driving



an ambulance during World War I, prior to the United States entering the War. Once the United States entered the War, he transferred to the Army and became a liaison officer. He returned to Philadelphia working in his family's banks until 1923. He married Margaret Burgwin on June 30, 1926 and moved to Muncy Farms.

The last ownership change, from Brock to Barlow, began during the London Blitz in World War II. Malcolm and Sheila, with their twin siblings Brian and Susan, were part of an evacuation of children from the United Kingdom. The British government worked with the United States Committee for Care of European Children to remove children to the United States.

In the summer of 1940 Mr. and Mrs. Henry Brock agreed to host a family of up to five evacuated children at Muncy Farms. Mr. Brock died on October 9, 1940, but Mrs. Brock continued with her plans to host a family, and the Barlow children arrived at the farm on November 3, 1940. During the war, the children's widowed mother allowed Mrs. Brock, Aunt Peg, to begin the adoption process of the children.



The house itself is just as interesting as its ownership history. A south wing was added in the 1880s, but removed during a major renovation in 1926. All that remains of this wing is the "mother-in-law door." The second floor door had connected the 1820 wing to the Victorian wing; now the mother-in-law door opens to the empty space above a patio.

During the 1926 renovation, a west wing was added. Partitions in the 1769 portion of the home were removed to create a great room. This room contains American chestnut beams hewn before the blight decimated the species. During the 1936 and 1972 floods, three feet of water came into the first floor. The

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Spring Fundraiser...

(Continued from page 2)

oak floors in the great room were warped so much that several of the boards split and had to be replaced.

The property has had a role in shaping and building the greater Williamsport region

Michael Ross arrived at Muncy Farms in 1772. He served Samuel Wallis as an indentured servant until 1779, learning farming and surveying skills during those nine years. At the end of his service, Wallis presented him with 109 acres, an uncommon practice in that day. Ross went on to own land on both sides of the West Branch Susquehanna River. He laid out the City of Williamsport and sold the first lots on July 4, 1796.

During the Revolutionary War, Samuel Wallis was a captain of the Sixth Company of the Second Battalion of the Northumberland County Associated Militia, serving with his neighbors for the protection of the frontier. James Potter was the Colonel of this colonial militia. However, at the same time, Wallis was known to the British as "the Gentleman from Philadelphia" and worked with Benedict Arnold to provide the British generals with intelligence. This espionage was hidden until 1946 when documents were uncovered in England upon the opening of the British archives of the American Revolution thus providing details of Wallis's double dealings.

On March 24, 1828 the State Legislature passed a bill authorizing a board of canal commissioners "to



locate and contract for making canals, locks, and other works necessary" for a canal from Northumberland, up the West Branch Susquehanna to Bald Eagle. The canal passed through Muncy Farms, paralleling the River for the length of the property. The canal bed and towpaths are still visible and maintained on the property.

The railroading era quickly followed the canals. Rail lines were laid alongside the canals and the canals went almost entirely out of use. The property is at the junction of what had been the Williamsport and North Branch Railroad and the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. An active rail line still runs through the property paralleling Old Route 220, and the driveway for Muncy Farms crosses the tracks using a bridge. The bridge across the railroad line is the third oldest (1847) cast iron truss bridge in the United States. Engineering and bridge societies frequently request permission to visit the bridge during conferences and workshops.



Join NPC at Muncy Farms!

**In order to capture the property's
gardens at their height,
Sunday, June 12
has been set as the date.**

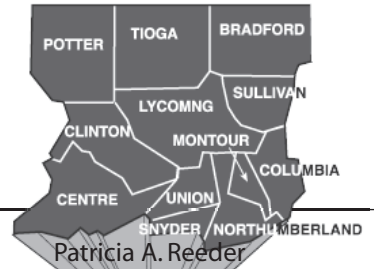
**For more information, or to be added
to the event mailing list, please
contact the office at
570-323-6222.**

*The main house was included in the Junior League of Williamsport's 1968 publication **Homes and Heritage of the West Branch Valley**. The accompanying photos with a "JL" on them are from that publication and used with the Junior League's permission.*

Thank You To Everyone Who Helped NPC Map Its Future

The 2010 Year End Appeal was a success! Thank you to everyone who received that "topo-lope" and responded. Below is a list of all the donors to the Appeal. If you have any questions, please call the office (570-323-6222).

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MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITY • November 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010

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Many thanks to our corporate members for their support of NPC's mission. Please take note of those businesses which have shown they care about the future of our communities with their corporate memberships and show YOUR support to them.

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***Thank You...to all those who continue to support the work of the
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Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy

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Stream Projects Will Focus On Impaired Streams In 2011

Looking for an excuse to “play” in a stream this summer? NPC received a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection’s Growing Greener Grant Program to continue stream restoration work in the northcentral region.

The new grant will focus projects on streams that are impaired and listed on the 303d list. The EPA explains the 303d list as being, “the list of impaired waters (stream segments, lakes) that the Clean Water Act requires all states to submit for EPA approval every two years (even-numbered years). The states identify all waters where required pollution controls are not sufficient to attain or maintain applicable water quality standards and rank the waters taking into account the uses of the water and severity of the pollution problem.”

NPC staff will begin working with our partners, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to

implement the grant this summer. If you’re interested in volunteering by helping “in stream” contact the office.

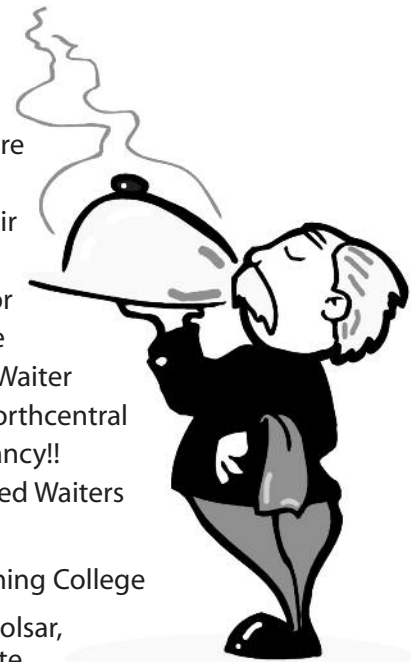


Peter Herdic House To Host Celebrity Waiter Night

Local “celebrities” are dusting off their black ties, and practicing their tray balancing skills! That’s right, it’s time for the Peter Herdic House Restaurant’s Celebrity Waiter Night to benefit the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy!!

This year’s confirmed Waiters include:

- Jerry Allen, Lycoming College
- Rosanne Casale Bolsar, Fish Real Estate
- Rick Mason, PennDOT
- Tony Nardi, Fish Real Estate
- Judge Tom Raup, Attorney
- Amy Shotwell, Verizon
- Mark Shuman, Clear Channel Communications
- Jerry Walls, Community Planning Consultant
- Greg Zeitler, Sit Happens & Special Olympics Coach



Make your dinner reservations for Friday, March 11, 2011 by calling the Peter Herdic House at 570-322-0165.