

# der Wetterhahn

Volume 4 Number 1

The Newsletter of Renfrew Museum

Spring 1991

## Museum House to get Climate Control

The next time you visit Renfrew Museum to take a tour, you will notice a different look and feel about the place. During this spring and early summer, Renfrew will be installing a climate control system in the museum house. Adding climate control to the museum is not for personal comfort. Instead, it's directly tied to the responsibility held by the board and staff of Renfrew to care for and maintain the museum's collections as part of the obligations of serving in the public trust.

With the addition of climate control, there will be physical changes that affect the museum house. On the outside you will see windows and doors as Daniel Royer built them and used them in the early 1800s. You won't have to look at or look through aluminum framed storm windows and doors any more. And for the first time since the early 1940s, the shutters on the house will be able to function as shutters. They will open and close without bumping into storm windows or screens.

As you enter the museum, the air inside will not feel or smell the same as you last remembered. For some of you who find comfort in the memories of damp and mold, you

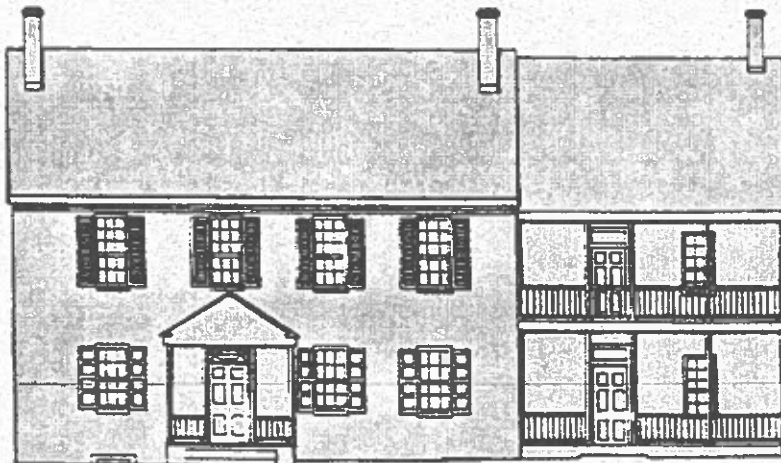
will be disappointed. In the summer the air will smell fresh and feel less damp; in the winter the air will smell fresh and feel less dry. The most important feature of climate control is its ability to maintain the inside temperature and humidity at a constant level year round – the less fluctuation the better the environment for the care of organic materials such as furniture and textiles.

As you proceed on your tour, the rooms of the museum will appear larger and more spacious than you probably recalled from your last visit. Have we changed the furnishings, maybe moved some items around? No, it's not so much what we have moved that's given the rooms more space; instead it's what we have removed – 21 radiators in all, gone the way of the aluminum storm windows and doors. In place of the radiators you will now see wooden grills, mounted flush with the floorboards, on the first floor, and metal grills, mounted flush with the plasterwork of the ceiling, on the second floor.

In addition to the change in their appearance on the outside, the windows will have a new look on the inside, though you may have to look closely to notice any differences from before. Clear acrylic sheets will be set into each window well, spaced two inches from the inside of the sashes. The acrylic provides two advantages over the old aluminum storm windows: it serves as a much better insulator (at least 60 percent more efficient) and it comes with an embedded UV filter that blocks out nearly all the ultraviolet rays produced by sunlight (the primary cause of light damage to textiles and other organic materials).

The cost of the climate control equipment and its installation in the museum house will be expensive. We

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## Was this the Royer Family Privy?

If you walk behind the museum house this spring, you will see a pile of freshly dug earth and a sheet of black plastic. The dirt pile and the black plastic are telltale signs of archaeologists at work. The excavations, started in February of this year, are being done to determine why a sink hole developed in Renfrew's backyard. From a map drawn by Dennis Good in 1943 at the time the Nicodemuses bought the property, a privy or out house is shown in this area. Emery Minnick, who was born in the house in 1916, also recalls a privy standing within the same location.

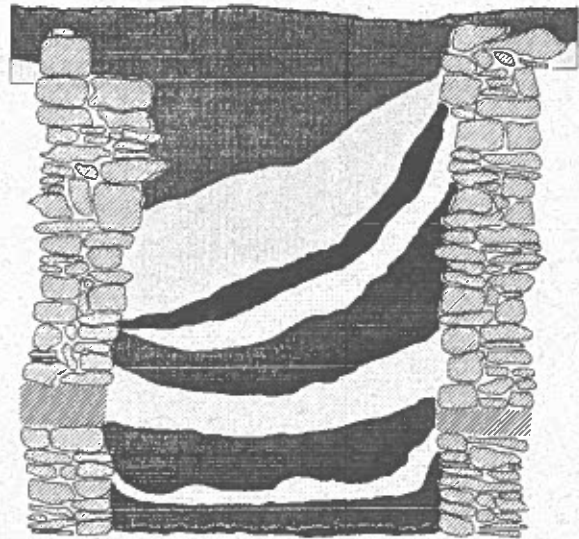
To date the excavations have uncovered a small, square, stone-lined pit, that extends seven feet below the present ground level. The fill within the pit is consistent with the type of fill found associated with abandoned privy sites.

There is one notable problem with describing this backyard feature as a privy pit. A privy, especially one from the turn of the century, was a temporary structure set over a hole in the yard that was used for the disposal of human waste. When the privy pit became filled or was no longer usable, a new hole was dug and the privy moved. The feature discovered at Renfrew, with its seven feet of stone foundation work, was not built as a temporary structure.

Several small soil lenses and the remains of a wooden floor near the base of the stonework tentatively date the construction of the feature to the mid-1800s. Most of the material found in the remainder of the fill dates to the first half of the 1900s, when the property was rented to tenants by the Strickler family. This material includes pressed glassware, ceramics, pieces of cloth, glass and bone buttons, lamp chimneys, a porcelain doll, a toy pistol and faunal remains from cows, pigs, chickens, muskrats or squirrels and fish. Other evidence related to diet includes peach pits, apple and tomato seeds and walnut shells.

This feature's construction suggests two possible explanations for its unusual use of stonework; it was built as a privy pit, though not in a typical fashion, or it was originally built for another purpose and then used later as a privy.

The stone construction raises an additional question. Our research on the Royer family suggests a cultural pattern that places Royers within a general, rural Pennsylvania German context. One of the attributes of



*Cross-section drawing of a privy pit found in the backyard of the Royer-Nicodemus house. The limestone foundations and nine soil layers of interior fill extend seven feet below ground surface. The feature is square in plan; the interior of each wall measures 4.5 feet in length. Drawing by William J. Sheppard.*

this pattern for a family such as the Royers, defines rural Pennsylvania Germans as unlikely to spend very much energy or money on their own domestic needs or comforts. Their energy and money went into the farmstead and any other means of livelihood they possessed, which in the Royers' case meant the tannery and gristmill. If the Royers' attitude toward material life and domestic goods falls into this pattern, then why did they put so much work into lining a privy pit with stone? Given what we know so far, we don't have a very good answer – yet.

As we uncover more information, we will be able to develop a clearer picture of the Royers, their backyard and their fit within the Pennsylvania German cultural pattern. We will keep you posted on the progress of our research.

**William J. Sheppard & James M. Smith**

*Schedule of research and restoration work on the Royer farmstead slated for spring of 1991:*

- April – complete excavation of backyard privy pit
  - begin excavation of lime kiln
  - complete restoration of smokehouse
- May – complete excavation of lime kiln
  - begin excavations of Fahnestock house
  - complete restoration of milkhouse
  - begin restoration of Fahnestock house
- June – continue excavations of Fahnestock house
  - continue restoration of Fahnestock house

## "The Wonders and Woes of Lace"

Renfrew's 1991 exhibit to open this summer

Lace is much more than a beautiful adornment for clothing and household accessories. Since the 15th Century, lace has affected the lives of those who made it and those who wore it, sometimes with dire consequences.

"The Wonders and Woes of Lace," Renfrew Museum's first exhibit of the 1991 season in the Changing Gallery, will illustrate the history of lace which, over the years, has brought as much unhappiness as happiness to those who made it ... and those who wore it.

The exhibit will feature a number of items, including dolls dressed in lace, garments, purses, home furnishings and other items embellished with vintage laces. One highlight will be an early sample of English lace, wrapped in brown paper, which was taken door-to-door to solicit business for an individual lace-maker.

Research shows that lace can be divided into four classes: needlepoint, bobbin, other handmade lace and machine lace.

"Purists insist that there are only two genuine laces — needlepoint and bobbin," said Shirley Baker, director of visitor services at Renfrew and curator of the exhibit. Needlepoint is made with an ordinary sewing needle and a single thread; bobbin lace is made by twisting and plaiting large numbers of threads together, winding the threads separately onto individual bobbins and working the lace over a pattern on a hard pillow.

Both Italy and Flanders claim to have invented lace in the 15th Century, Baker said, although lace has been produced in locations such as France, Brussels, Spain, Holland, Germany, Scandinavia, Sweden, Russia and the United States.

Baker said nuns created most early lace for church vestments and altar cloths, so lace-making often was called "nun's work" and the flax thread was referred to as "nun's thread" or "sister's thread."

As lace's popularity grew, it could be found most often on garments worn by men, not women, including collars, night caps, cuffs and handkerchiefs. Lace rapidly gained acceptance and was considered proper for weddings, funerals and christenings.

Baker said history shows that an abundance of lace led to tragedy at one christening. The infant, sponsored by



*Print, dating from the mid-1800s, shows bobbin lace being made following a pattern on a hard pillow.*

George III and Queen Charlotte, was gowned in layers of lace and was so well-behaved that the Archbishop of Canterbury commented favorably when he returned the child to his nurse. What the archbishop didn't know was that there was a reason the baby had endured the service so quietly. He had smothered in the lace.

Lace played a role in more personal hardship on a much larger scale. Young girls usually were employed to make Valenciennes lace because their hands were smooth and their eyesight was keen, but the work had to be performed in underground cellars where the damp air was better for lace-making. As a result, Baker said, many of these workers were almost blind and suffered from rheumatism, arthritis and other ailments by the time they were 30 years old.

Lace also added to economic decline in France when the country's inferior lace prompted the importation of a large amount of Venetian lace. The French invited the Venitians to teach them how to create high-quality lace and, while the lace makers were in France, their economy suffered at home. The government of Venice reacted to the economic woes by enacting a strict law which carried harsh punishments for any artist or craftsman who practiced his art in a foreign country to the detriment of his homeland.

Today, we take for granted the lace edging on a pillow or garment and lace's availability in any fabric shop. But, as "The Wonders and Woes of Lace" will illustrate, the beauty of early lace translated into hardship for many.

Bonnie Martin



# 1991 Calendar of Events

## BIRDWALKS AT RENFREW

**Saturdays in April & May, 7 - 9 a.m.**

Each Saturday morning during April and May, Willard Rahn will lead birdwalks along the hiking trails at Renfrew. The walks will begin at Renfrew's lower parking lot off Welty Road; participants are asked to bring identification books, binoculars and comfortable walking shoes.

## SPRINGFEST WEEKEND

**Saturday & Sunday, April 27 & 28**

**Noon - 4:30 p.m. Saturday, 1 - 5 p.m. Sunday**

Renfrew opens officially for the 1991 season with two days of festivities featuring craft demonstrations, musical entertainment and special activities, including: hayrides, free tours of the museum, games, herb sale by Alloway Gardens, face painting, cake walk and Maypole dance. Renfrew Institute's celebration of Earth Day 1991 will be held in conjunction with Springfest on Sunday. Admission is free.

**FOLKLORE OF FLOWERS: A lesson in social botany with conversation in the language of flowers**

**Saturday, May 11, 1 - 4 p.m.**

Nan Keenan will lead a lecture and workshop on a woman's link to her garden. Activities include translations of floral and birth emblems and participation in floral parlor games of the Victorian era. Registration is required; a \$5 fee will be charged to cover the cost of materials.

## BLACKSMITH WORKSHOP

**Saturday, May 18, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

Nick Vincent, founder and owner of Nathan's Forge in Uniontown, Maryland, will discuss and demonstrate traditional blacksmithing techniques used during the 1700s and 1800s. The workshop is designed for beginners and will concentrate on basic blacksmithing tools and skills. Participants will have the opportunity to make their own hand wrought nails and hooks. Registration is required; a \$15 fee will be charged to cover the cost of materials.

**YOUTH FESTIVAL - "Fly Into Summer"**

**Saturday, June 1, 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.**

A day-long celebration of youth built on the theme of flight. Morning workshops will include orienteering, kites, falconry, streamwalk, fly tying, peace ribbon, old-fashioned

toys, birds, rocketry and flight. Other demonstrations and displays to be held throughout the day will also include paper airplanes, Lego™ challenge, skateboarding, stunt kites, flying machines, storytelling, YMCA gymnastics, Chincoteague ponies, Wayneaires, Beckie's Dance Studio, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Youth Are Our Concern and TriState Astronomers. Cliff Sunflower and his bees will be on hand in the afternoon and Jerri Liszcz and will present an evening performance of her *Recyclemania*. (Sandy Beaumont, chair, Youth Festival Committee) *Underwritten by a grant from Mr. & Mrs. Robert P. King.*

## LANGUAGE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GERMANS

**Thursday, June 6, 7 p.m.**

Dr. Marion Huffines will present a program entitled, "Losing Pennsylvania German: How does a language die?" Huffines' lecture is sponsored through a grant from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council. Admission is free.

## SHAKESPEARE ON WHEELS - *The Tempest*

**Friday, July 19 & Saturday, July 20, 7:30 p.m.**

Players from UMBC return to Renfrew this summer with their 1991 production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The performances, underwritten by a grant from First National Bank & Trust Co. of Waynesboro, will be presented on the lawn behind the museum house. Bring lawn chairs and blankets. Picnic suppers will be on sale with proceeds going to Renfrew Institute. Performances are free and open to the public.

## CIVIL WAR ENCAMPMENT

**Friday, Saturday & Sunday, Aug. 10, 11 & 12**

Confederate and Union soldiers will set up camp at Renfrew for the weekend. The encampment will be open all day Saturday and until 4 p.m. Sunday, highlighted by a Sunday afternoon skirmish. Admission is free.

## ARTS & CRAFTS MARKET

**Saturday, Aug. 31, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

Members of the Cumberland Valley Craftsmen will display and sell their wares during the annual show. Admission is free.

**FARMSTEAD DAY**

**Saturday, Sept. 28, 1 - 5 p.m.**

Renfrew will celebrate its agricultural heritage with the annual observance of Farmstead Day. Special events will focus on the development of the museum's Royer Farmstead and will include the second annual barn dance in the Fahnestock barn. Admission is free.

**GUIDE APPRECIATION TRIP**

**Tuesday, Oct. 8**

Volunteer guides will visit Falling Waters and Linden Hall in western Pennsylvania.

**TEXTILE WORKSHOP**

**Saturday, Oct. 19**

Ruth McCuthson will lead a workshop on penny rugs. Registration is required; a fee will be charged to cover the cost of materials.

**PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN OPEN HEARTH COOKING**

**Saturday, Oct. 26, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

Shirley Baker, director of visitor services at Renfrew, will demonstrate traditional Pennsylvania German methods of food preparation.

**STORYTELLING**

**Thursday, Nov. 7**

Mickie Sager-Warner will tell stories to entertain all ages.

**OPEN HEARTH THANKSGIVING**

**Saturday, Nov. 23, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

Shirley Baker will discuss and demonstrate the preparation of a Pennsylvania German Thanksgiving meal during the program in the museum's kitchen. The number of participants will be limited to 15, registration is required and a fee will be charged.

**ANNUAL YULETIDE CELEBRATION**

**Friday, Saturday & Sunday, Dec. 6, 7 & 8**

Renfrew Museum will welcome the holiday season with its annual celebration which will open Friday evening with a reception for members of the Renfrew Museum and Park Board of Directors, museum volunteers and members of the area garden clubs who decorate the house for the season. The museum will be open to the public from 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday and 5 to 8:30 p.m. Sunday. Although all are welcome, Saturday's hours are set aside especially for senior citizens and people with special needs. The festivities will include musical entertainment, homemade refreshments and free tours of the museum house. Entries in Renfrew's annual amateur photography competition will be displayed. Admission is free.

**Programming - Shirley Baker  
Calendar of Events - Bonnie Martin**

(Editor's note: This issue of *der Wetterhahn* marks the last time Bonnie Martin's byline will appear on these pages. Martin is leaving Renfrew in order to devote more time to her position in public relations and journalism at Penn State Mont Alto. As she advances in her career, our best wishes go with her for continued success.)

**Renfrew Museum and Park**

1010 East Main Street, Waynesboro, PA 17268 (717) 762-4723

**Friends of Renfrew - Application for Annual Membership**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Categories - Life \$500 \_\_\_\_\_

Sustaining \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

Family \$50 \_\_\_\_\_

Patron \$35 \_\_\_\_\_

Donor \$25 \_\_\_\_\_

Individual \$10 \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to Renfrew Museum**



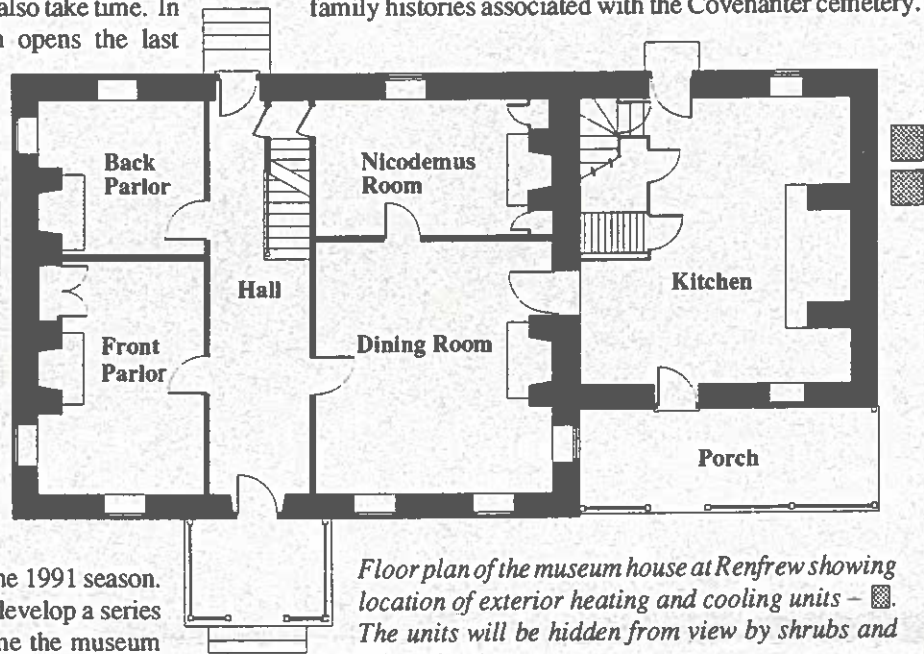
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estimate that by the time the work is done the heating and cooling system will represent an investment on Renfrew's part of \$30,000 to \$40,000. Funds for the project will be drawn from Renfrew's budget, extending over a 5 year period.

To install the equipment will also take time. In a normal season the museum opens the last weekend of April with our Springfest weekend and remains open until the end of October. This year we will again celebrate Springfest (April 27 - 28). After Springfest the museum house will be closed until the climate control work is completed. We estimate this work will last through the spring and into early summer. Once an accurate date has been set for its completion, we will send announcements concerning the museum's schedule for the remainder of the 1991 season.

Plans are now underway to develop a series of walking tours during the time the museum house is closed. Possible topics for the tours

would include the grounds and plantings around the museum house, the restored outbuildings of the Royer farmstead, the archaeology of tannery and gristmill sites, the ongoing excavations of the Fahnestock house and lime kiln and the family histories associated with the Covenanter cemetery.



*Floor plan of the museum house at Renfrew showing location of exterior heating and cooling units - [grid symbol]. The units will be hidden from view by shrubs and other plantings.*

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Renfrew Museum 1010 East Main St. Waynesboro, PA 17268

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