



Cedar Grove Historical Society

Where the Past is Present

Canfield-Morgan House - Home of the Morgan Museum
908 Pompton Avenue P.O. Box 461 Cedar Grove, New Jersey
973-239-5414 - www.cedargrovehistoricalsociety.org

If a meeting is cancelled there will be a recorded message at 973-239-5414.

September 2011

General Meeting

September 28, 2011

7:30 p.m.

Cedar Grove Public Library

The Life and Times of Ernest De Baun

**Presented by Cedar Grove Historical
Society Trustee, Phil Jaeger**

**Come learn about Ernest De Baun, one of
the last farmers in Cedar Grove, and what
Cedar Grove was like during his lifetime.**

In Memoriam



Nelson Woome, a former trustee of the Cedar Grove Historical Society, passed away on Sunday, August 28, 2011. Nelson was a resident of Cedar Grove for 73 years. He had recently completed transcribing notes about Cedar Grove's history that were left to the society by Ernest De Baun. Nelson so enjoyed the project that he did further research into the De Baun family. His dedication to the society will be missed.

The Cedar Grove Historical Society extends its deepest sympathies to his wife Cheryl and the rest of his family.

Society Happenings



Summer at Morgan's Farm

The Master Gardeners of Essex County visited Morgan's Farm on the last stop of their tour held on July 30. Linda Dye, a master gardener and trustee of the Cedar Grove Historical Society, explains a map of the grounds and gardens to some of those in attendance. About twenty members visited the farm.



The Cedar Grove Municipal Alliance sponsored a farmers' market at Morgan's Farm each Wednesday during July, August and September. The museum was open on each Wednesday and many new visitors were welcomed. Members of the society volunteered to be docents and provide guided tours of the museum.

Cedar Grove: Then and Now



A Neighborhood Vanishes

A century ago, on the east side of Pompton Avenue between Ridge Road and what would later be the site of Cinema 23, there existed a neighborhood consisting of homes, barns, and other outbuildings. At the rear of these structures and extending to the crest of First Mountain were many acres of land used for farming, pastureland and recreation. The southern portion of the land consisted of a barn and pond owned by Beno Levy of New York City while the northern portion nearer to Ridge Road was owned by Abraham and Mary De Baun. A pond, created by a stream originating in the area of today's Pilgrim Shopping Plaza, was used for swimming, fishing, and ice-skating as well as a source of ice in the colder months. For the De Bauns, the stream provided water for irrigating their crops and for use by their livestock. A small dam constructed by the De Bauns ensured a constant supply of water for these purposes. Today the stream, Taylor's Brook, still flows through this area before passing the Cedar Grove Library and then emptying into the Peckman River.

The De Baun residence, at 117 Pompton Avenue when houses were later given street numbers, was an eight-room house constructed in the mid-1800s. In this house, Abraham was born as well as his three sons, Charles, Albert and Ernest. Ernest, the youngest, born in 1892, would live almost his entire life at 117 Pompton Avenue.

Ernest never married nor did his brother Charles. After their father's death they both maintained the family farm growing both vegetables and flowers which for the most part they sold locally. After Charles's death in 1950, Ernest continued to grow flowers and sell them at roadside off Pompton Avenue adjacent to his home.

In 1960, Ernest, then nearly 70, moved to the Ward Homestead, a retirement village in Maplewood. Eight years later he was invited to the founding meeting of the Cedar Grove Historical Society. In the ensuing years Ernest would devote much of his time to writing a detailed history of Cedar Grove. His topics were far ranging and included the fire department, early homes, streets, mills, schools and town government.

Ernest's home on Pompton Avenue as well as the others in that neighborhood cluster were demolished in the early 1960s. The houses no longer conformed to a recently enacted Cedar Grove Housing Code. By that time Ernest had already moved to the Ward Homestead. Ernest died in 1976. He and his brother Charles are interred in Laurel Grove Cemetery in Totowa.

It has been a half-century since the homes in the neighborhood where Ernest De Baun lived almost his entire life were razed. Over those decades a forest has matured where homes, buildings and farmland once existed. Few northbound drivers on Pompton Avenue waiting for a green light so they can turn onto Ridge Road realize that for more than a century a neighborhood once existed just on the other side of the guardrail. Only the dam remains.

Learn more about [The Life and Times of Ernest De Baun](#) at our September meeting.

Remembering Courtenay Morgan

The Farmers' Market brought many new visitors into the museum this summer. Several of our visitors related to us that they had worked for Courtenay Morgan in their youth. Below are the remembrances of Steve Marks, who worked on the farm and was hired to do some work the summer of Mr. Morgan's death.

“ Many boys worked for Mr. Morgan in the summer. He had a reputation for being a tough employer. Most boys did not work for long and certainly not more than 1 summer. I worked for Mr. Morgan from the time I was 11 until 16. That is from 1970-1976. The first couple of years I worked in the summer. We worked from 8-5 mostly weeding the crops with hoes early in the season and picked crops later in the season.

During this time Mr. Morgan grew tomatoes, green peppers, eggplant, and zucchini. He was somewhat of a master of deception. He had peaches and corn shipped in during the summer and apples and cider shipped in over the fall and winter. In the fall he did grow pumpkins. He also had Christmas trees shipped in.

During my years on the farm I helped Mr. Morgan plant, weed and pick crops. He planted both his lower fields and the Canfield fields across the street. After several years of working very hard, he kept me on during the winter and I sold cider and Christmas trees. You had to be trusted to sell at the farm because you often had large sums of money in your pocket.

I started working for \$.75/hr and ended @ \$1:50/hr. Over Christmas I made tips for helping customers with their trees.

Mr. Morgan was tough, but fair. If you worked hard he liked you. He primarily drove around the farm in his Jeep. He taught me to drive the Jeep when I was 13. There were always gullies due to erosion and if you hit a gully and dumped the vegetables he would be mad. He worked harder than anyone he ever hired. He would work along side the boys every day. I also had to help maintain the clay tennis courts. We weeded it, raked it and rolled.

Mr. Morgan had Irish Setters as pets. His last one was Casey. They went everywhere with him. They are all buried on the property.

I also helped him clear the sleigh run before winter. The tow rope worked for several years until it broke down.

Mr. Morgan had lots of stories that involved tennis, his mother, gypsy's (sic) that tried to rob him but he chased them off with his luger from the war. He loved his mother and tennis. He was a true gentleman farmer. He claimed to have the first tennis racket brought to America by his mother. He was a savvy business man and convinced the town that the tennis court under the bubble was for his recreation. He rented the court every hour of every day.

I learned much from Mr. Morgan and had a group of 3 or 4 friends that worked most summers with me. We rode our bikes there and back. We ate lunch on the porch. In winter he let me sit in the house. He sat at the dining room table and I sat at the piano.

I was at veterinary school and came home for the summer when Mr. Morgan passed away. I went to the viewing and no one was there except me and an attorney for his estate. We spoke and he hired me for that summer. Mr. Morgan had already planted tomatoes that summer and I was hired to pick the tomatoes and also go through the house and log the contents.

I have a picture of me selling tomatoes that summer from the Cedar Grove Verona times. I did everything the way he taught me. I picked the tomatoes, brought them up from the field in his Jeep and graded them in the barn, sold them on the porch. I also went through the entire house and found many interesting pieces of his family history.

He was a remarkable man.”

MEET OUR MEMBERS

By Peggy O'Connor



Matt Wilson has been serving the Cedar Grove Historical Society for many years, going about his work quietly and efficiently. His range of talents has been invaluable to the Morgan Farm: Matt has refinished pieces of furniture for display, has made many repairs to the house, and he both wired and refinished the walls of the upstairs room of the barn.

Born in Pennsylvania, Matt lived there until 1936 when his family moved to New Jersey. A lifelong association with the firefighters began at age 16, when Matt started work with Co. 2 Fire Equipment Company of Newark. In October of 1942, he joined the US Navy and served as a machinist during the war.

Matt and his wife Louise moved their family to Cedar Grove in 1959 because Matt's employer had relocated to Industrial Village. In town, Matt became involved in his children's activities. With his son Tom, he joined the Indian Guides, taking the name "Big Fire" and his son, "Little Fire." (Note: "little Fire" is the Tech Rescue Lieutenant of Cedar Grove's Center Fire Company #1!) Matt later served as Assistant Cub Master and eventually Scout Master of Troop #65.

In addition to work and his family's activities, Matt volunteered for the town Ambulance Squad. After completing EMT training, Matt became a training officer. He taught CPR to town residents and ran a class at the high school. Matt fondly recalls the town parades, in which he and Louise marched with the Ambulance Squad, and the annual Christmas tree sightings.

At the Community Church, Matt worked on the annual auction for at least a dozen years. He joined Tom Jenkins in this effort, and the two continue to collaborate on repairs at the Morgan Farm. His hobbies include "ships and other things in bottles," clocks and gardening. Among Matt's many talents is one much appreciated by Wednesday volunteers, to whom Matt often brings home-baked cookies!.

Future Events

September 28: The Life and Times of Ernest De Baun

October 8-16: Pumpkin/Apple Sale

October 26: Remember When?

December 11: Holiday Open House

Did You Know?

Bill "Big Bill" Bogan was Cedar Grove's first salaried police chief. He served the town from 1924 to 1929. Bogan was quite a sight riding a small brown mare and sporting an exposed pearl-handled revolver. Legend has it that after Chief Bogan was bitten by a rabid dog, the town's muzzling ordinance was immediately enforced.

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Canfield/Morgan House - Home of the Morgan Museum
Open Each Wednesday from 10-12 a.m. or by reservation.
Call 973-239-5414 or email jeanjaeger@optonline.net to arrange a tour for your group.

General Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month except for November, December, January, June, July and August. The meetings are held at the Cedar Grove Library on Pompton Avenue and begin at 7:30 p.m.

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Comments and story suggestions gratefully accepted.