



Blue Rock Heritage Center

Washington Boro | Pennsylvania

2026 Spring Newsletter

A Message From the President

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

We have completed our best year to date regarding visitors at the Center. We have been able to be open more frequently and have hosted numerous groups. Group tours are available by appointment, and we encourage your group to contact us to schedule a tour.

New and updated exhibits such as the duck display at the Wittmer barn which includes newly donated boats, and mounted ducks and geese are now available to view. The Lower Susquehanna Archaeological Society has created and expanded their lab for processing, cleaning and cataloguing artifacts in the basement of the Center. They continue to excavate the farmhouse foundation of the Wittmer home and are enlisting volunteers to learn how to excavate and catalogue artifacts.

One of the primary projects on our wish list is to create a pathway which connects with the existing path to the basement area of the Wittmer barn. We are soliciting donations and contributions to this project. The project cost is estimated to be \$10,000.

Annual membership dues are vital to our annual budget and operating cost. Subscribing to our website does not make you a member. You must download the membership form from the website or complete the membership form which is available at the Heritage Center. The minimum membership fee is \$20, so please join or renew your membership.

I look forward to meeting you at one of our events, and we are excited to host the new Waterfowl event this year on October 3rd. Please join us, and if you would like to volunteer to help us host any of our activities, please contact me or one of our Directors.

Sincerely, Charlie Douts, President

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 4 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.

2026 Meeting Dates

April 20

May 18

June 15

September 14

October 19

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

2026 Important Dates

Annual Open House

June 7, 1pm – 4pm

Waterfowl Celebration

October 3, 8am-3pm

Heritage Day

October 17, 9am—3pm

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

May 17

June 7 & 28

July 12 & 26

August 9 & 23

September 13 & 27

October 11

1pm-4pm

Admission is free

Donation appreciated

The Center is open by appt by large groups – please contact Charlie Douts at 684-9542 or



Blue Rock Heritage Center Open House June 7th 1pm to 4pm

On **Sunday, June 7th from 1-4 pm**, Blue Rock Heritage Center will be hosting our annual open house event. The theme for the event is railroading. Brian Abramo, a Washington Boro resident and local railroad historian, will speak at 2 pm. He will focus on the history of the railroad lines which pass through our area.

He will note the passenger station which was located near Rockfish Street and River Road and the sidings to Wertz's and Shultz's coal yards. Does anyone recall the Eshelman feed car which would take orders and deliver feed? The railroad car would be parked at the current parking area for the Methodist church. Farmers would arrive in their trucks to pick up their orders of grain and feed shipped out from Lancaster on a railcar. The orange railroad car would also show up near Christmas loaded with oranges and grapefruit for the locals to purchase.

We encourage anyone with railroad memorabilia or photos to bring to the event to share. We currently have railroad photos and some items on display.

The open house will also showcase the new exhibit related to duck and geese hunting and the new mounts of waterfowl.



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.saylor3504@gmail.com or Paul Hoffer 717-951-0089 or Charlie Douts 717-719-3008.

Annual Heritage Day

The annual River Heritage Day will take place on **October 17 from 9 am to 3 pm** at the Washington Boro Park. 2025 Heritage Day was a big success with warm fall weather. The event features many free family activities. Hayrides, wildlife presentations, craft vendors, Indian artifact displays/demonstrations, classic cars/trucks and good food are some of the events.

Heritage Day occurs in conjunction with the Penn Manor chapter of the Future Farmers of America tractor pull. The tractor pull is held in the adjoining field with a hayride to shuttle people between both events. Bring your family for a day of fun.

Potluck Gathering

A potluck social for all current members of Blue Rock Heritage Center and the Lower Susquehanna Archaeological Society is scheduled for **Saturday, September 19th at 4 pm** with the meal at 5pm. We invite all members to join us and share a dish or dessert.

A campfire, hotdog roasting and smores, drinks and home-made ice cream are provided.

Please bring a lawn chair and join us for a pleasant evening watching the sunset along the river and getting to know other members.



Waterfowl Exhibit

A new exhibit located in the basement level of the Wittmer barn has been completed and will be open for visitors this year. The exhibit features a large mural and mounted duck in the background and overhead. A roll-over sneak boat is featured in the foreground filled with decoys and hunting gear. The boat was donated by an anonymous donor, and the mounts were donated by Doug Hilton. We are grateful for these donations which gives us the opportunity to showcase this traditional method of hunting.

A roll over sneak boat resembles a canoe and is designed to tilt on its side which allows the hunter to hide. Most likely this technique was first used by Native Americans. The boat gently flows with the flow of the river and when a hunter comes upon ducks, he tilts the boat into the full upright position. The exhibit demonstrates how this technique is used for hunting waterfowl.



Boat and Waterfowl Donations

Blue Rock is the proud recipient of a third duck hunting boat. This boat was donated by Jeff Van Brookhoven. It was made by Perry Helder of York County in the 1930's and used to hunt in the local area. His father, Solly Helder had a dance hall along the riverbank where the Long Level Marina is currently located. The boat was restored by Chuck Stetter of Columbia in 2016. The boat is called a Susquehanna rollover canoe. The hunter would tilt the canoe on its side as he hunted and would put it upright when he was ready to shoot at his prey. We are very fortunate to add this to our waterfowl hunting boats since all three boats are specifically indigenous to our area of the river and used locally. These hunting techniques and types of boats are rarely used today.

To round off our recent waterfowl donations, we are grateful to Doug Hinton for his donations of mounted ducks and geese. Specifically, we have a mounted tundra swan which is one of the largest waterfowl to frequent our area. It is no longer possible to hunt them, but you can see it on display.

Doug also donated a double barrel shotgun which was used to hunt waterfowl. It is a percussion cap gun from the 1880's. This is an outstanding example of a firearm common to its day and used to hunt ducks and small game.

If you have any local hunting or fishing gear, we are always looking for donations to help showcase our connection and dependency upon the river for a livelihood and recreation. Decoys, boat oars, and fishing gear which were used or made locally would be of interest.





Waterfowl Heritage Celebration at Blue Rock

We are planning a new event in 2026 which will focus and highlight waterfowl activities of the Conejoholo Flats, a Native American name for the broad expanse of the river and islands between Lancaster and York Counties in the Washington Boro area. The area is part of the North Atlantic flyway for migrating ducks and geese. As a result, the area is a popular hunting ground.

The event will be held on **October 3rd, from 8am to 3 pm** at the Wittmer barn, constructed in 1856 and recently rehabilitated.

Vendors will be present with items to sell/buy and trade. We plan to feature a carver who will demonstrate decoy carving. Judging of decoys is planned along with the display of antique and vintage decoys.

Food trucks will be on-site.

We are anticipating a dog retriever demonstration at the river access and Witmer stream.

Other activities planned for the event include duck and goose call makers, a display of waterfowl boating, taxidermy of duck and goose mounts, waterfowl artists and photographers, and raptor and wildlife rehabilitation.

Water and boating safety will be featured as well as the impact of lead used by some hunters on the local raptors.

Reservations for tables are \$30 per table. If you would like to participate or have questions about the event, please contact us at bluerockheritage.org website or Charlie Douts at cdoutsjr@yahoo.com. Volunteers are needed to help with the planning and execution of the event.



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 / Chapter 28, Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology, website, spa28.org,

Board of Directors

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



Lower Susquehanna Archaeological Society

Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology Chapter 28

The Lower Susquehanna Archaeological Society, Chapter 28 of the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology (S.P.A.) is a volunteer organization that promotes the advancement of scientific research, investigation, collection, and preservation of archaeological remains and materials in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, with a focus on York and Lancaster Counties.

Our Chapter emphasizes the importance of public education and involvement in understanding, preserving, and protecting the prehistoric and historic archaeological legacy of the area encompassing the lower Susquehanna River and its surroundings.

We encourage you to join us as our membership engages in archaeological research, excavations, documenting sites, cataloging artifacts, sharing ideas, and networking with professionals in the field.



A Message from the Chapter 28, SPA President: Paul Nevin



“As we look forward to our 2026 programs and projects, I’m energized by what lies ahead for the Lower Susquehanna Archaeological Society! For the “armchair archaeologist” or history buff, we have a great lineup of speakers, and for those who want to get their hands dirty, we’re offering the opportunity to join in on our ongoing archaeological investigations on the amazing property where Blue Rock Heritage Center is located. The lower Susquehanna is one of the most archaeologically-rich areas in Pennsylvania, and we’re excited to learn and share the stories of the peoples who over the course of thousands (yes, THOUSANDS!), called this area their home.”

2026 Spring Excavation Sessions

Join us this Spring as we continue to uncover the story of the grounds surrounding the Blue Rock Heritage Center. Society President Paul Nevin will lead our investigation of the homestead area of the property.

Excavation Dates: April 18, April 26,
May 9, May 16, & May 30.

Two sessions will be offered each day:
10:00am – 1:00pm & 1:00pm – 4:00pm

To RSVP, please contact Paul Nevin at
717.578.1358 or email:
paulnevin@aol.com

You must be a member of Chapter 28,
SPA to participate. To join, please
download our membership form at
www.spa28.org



2026 Chapter 28, SPA Events

Our Chapter meetings are free and open to the public. Come and hear our guest speakers share their knowledge & answer your questions.

Chapter Meeting Dates: April 19, June 14,
July 19, August 16, & October 18.

Chapter meeting time is 2:00 – 4:00 PM
at the Blue Rock Heritage Center.
Check our Facebook page for program details.

June 7, 1 - 4pm:
Blue Rock & Chapter 28 Open House.

September 19: Chapter 28 Members Picnic

October 17, 9am - 3pm: Heritage Day at
Washington Boro Community Park.
Free event. See our displays and bring
your artifacts for us to ID.

Lower Susquehanna Archaeological Society's archaeology team continues its multi-year project to uncover the history and pre-history of the land surrounding the Blue Rock Heritage Center



Last year our archaeology team located and began exposing the foundation walls of one of the "lost" structures here on what was once the home, mill, and farm of Jacob E. Witmer. Who knows what discoveries we'll make this year!

Work on a real archaeological site and learn proper excavation techniques as you gain experience alongside our archaeology team. Experience the excitement of finding historic and prehistoric artifacts!



Help in our lab to clean, identify, and catalog the artifacts we recover, and use our hands-on study collections to refine your identification skills.



Have fun while uncovering local history with us!

 [Lower Susquehanna Archaeological Society @ Facebook](#)