

MINUTES OF THE NEWLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING

NOVEMBER 9, 2019

KOA Campgrounds Liberty Lodge.

Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m. by RoseLynn Malarek.

AGENDA:

Guest Speaker: Todd Babcock, a land surveyor, spoke about the history of the Mason and Dixon Line. He also spoke about how Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon came to be involved with the survey of the boundary line that now bears their name and the lives of Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon while in Newlin Township during the years 1763 to 1769. Mason and Dixon were surveyors, astronomers, scientists and geodesists (who understand the Earth's geometric shape, orientation in space and gravity field). They accurately measure the coordinates of points using Earth-based surveying tools, such as a Zenith Sucker, an Equal Altitude Instrument, and a Regulator/grandfather clock, to measure the distances between two points.

He discussed the time that Mason and Dixon spent in the "Forks of ye Brandywine" where they worked and lived for a significant part of their five years in the colonies. They made many nighttime astronomical observations, performed experiments, and conducted scientific studies. They also spent the winter season lodging with the John Harlan family where they spent the day performing experiments and weather observations and the evenings warming themselves by the stone hearth of a fireplace that still survives.

Mr. Babcock also spoke about the location of the "Stargazers' Stone," which was believed to be where Mason and Dixon constructed their observatory to take astronomical observations. Through study of Mason and Dixon's Journal and a bit of forensic retracement surveying the line surveyed 250 years prior by Mason and Dixon, he discovered that the observatory was in fact located adjacent to the Harlan house in the middle of Stargazer Road as it exists today.

Mr. Babcock concluded his presentation with a quote from Dr. Thomas Cope, who writes: "If there be favored spots on earth where the Great Dead are wont to hold reunion surely the Stargazers' Stone marks one of them. Here perhaps may gather at times the shades of Isaac Newton, Christian Huyghens, Richer, Picard, the three Cassinis, the academicians of Lapland and those of Peru, the mathematicians whose theory gave meaning to the work, the Fathers Boscovich and La Maire, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, Nevil Maskelyne, John Bird and a host of others. Here they renew old campaigns and review great issues fought out on the battlefields of science. And perhaps they rejoice together that man still strives even as they strove, with transit and pendulum, in heat and frost, through swamp and forest, over mountain ranges and at peril of the seas better to know and to comprehend the earth on which he lives."

Mr. Babcock spoke for about 1 ½ hours.

After a short break for refreshments, members, attendees and Mr. Babcock discussed diverse topics that were referenced in his earlier discussion.

NEXT EXECUTIVE MEETING: January 6, 2020 at 2 p.m. at Sandy Reber's home.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Made at 9:15 p.m. seconded and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Diane McGowan