

Rotary



Club of Washington

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

May 4, 2021

The Rotary Club of Washington met by Zoom

Present were: **Brad Montgomery, Tom Drewitz, Rachel Gladden, Dave and Shirley Moore, Dorothy and John Tecklenburg, Bill and Susan Price, Dave Hart, Angeline East, Mary Jo and Rich Podgurski, Ken Baker, John Quayle, Lars Lange, Andy Goudy, Joe Marsh, John Hopper, Joe Piszczor, Joe Manning, Tom Northrop, and Susan Priest.** Our guest was our speaker, **Rea Andrew Redd.**

Pre-Meeting

Rich Podgurski asked a question of anyone who used Amazon. He had ordered Quaker Oats oatmeal from Amazon, since he could not find any in local stores. On Sunday he discovered a plastic bag with two apparently unopened boxes but without the usual Amazon box. He checked online and was told that the package had not been delivered yet, and now he is wondering if he should use the oatmeal.

Rachel Gladden suggested he contact Amazon Customer Service. She has done so in the past and said it was easy to talk to a person.

Susan Priest said that she often finds packages for other units in the apartment complex (there are 8 buildings) tend to be dropped off at her building, building A. If they are small, she will take them to the appropriate building. If they are large or heavy she calls the complex manager and if he is not there she will leave a note at the appropriate apartment about where they can find their package. This does not happen if the Postal Service does the delivering. Fed Ex is also guilty of doing this.

Dorothy Tecklenburg had the topper for delivery stories. She and a fellow horse owner were told by a trainer about a supplement which is good for horses. She investigated it but did not place an order. Three months later her friend thanked her for the gift of the supplement, which bewildered Dorothy. In the end she contacted the company, which had no record of the order or the delivery, and there had never been a bill sent. Dorothy said that the trainer who had recommended the supplement had died about that time, and she wondered if it had been a spiritual gift. Several said that this was a good ghost story.

Bill and Susan Price joined us with a warning. Anyone who has registered to vote by mail should carefully examine the ballot they receive. When Susan received her ballot she discovered on inspection that it did not have the candidates running in her municipality, but for those running in Roscoe, Smith Township. Two other friends called her to ask why **Bill's** name was not on the ballot for the school board and upon examination learned that they, too, had the wrong ballot. Bill called and left a message at the election office, but had not received a response as of noon Tuesday. Someone suggested the Prices contact Mike Jones at the Observer Reporter, since he covers this beat.

In regard to the mail-in ballots, **Susan Priest** warned that her ballot weighed in at 2 ounces, so that a single stamp would be insufficient postage, and would be returned to the sender. She used multiple stamps to be sure her ballot went in.

On a new subject, **Mary Jo Podgurski** said that the teens at the center are putting in a garden on May 15, which she hopes is not too late. The teens discussed what to plant in the garden, with one demanding: NO KALE. Apparently, kale was planted a few years ago and they disliked it.

Susan Price said that she has a great kale recipe which includes beans. She triples the garlic called for and says it is delicious. To which **Rich Podgurski** replied that even though he loves garlic, he hates kale and beans; so include him out on this dish.

Getting Started

At this point **President Brad** rang the bell and we began the meeting with an invocation by **Dave Hart**, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. This week he had no flag and relied on the **Prices** to display the one they keep near their computer. He said that after 44 meetings where he had a flag, he figured that that would do.

President Brad said that all this week he was thinking about the Beach Boys. This was not a non sequitur, he explained. The Beach Boys had several successful albums and then recorded one called Pet Sounds, which was not released for some time because it was not what the company or even some of the group liked. It was different. He has been thinking of this because, he said: ♦ We are the Beach Boys of Rotary. ♦ We have been successful, but now we need to look for new ways to do Rotary. He reminded us of what **Joe Piszczor** has told us about changing how the club works to reach potential younger members. **President Brad** also told us that **Lars Lange** is interested in a purpose driven club with emphasis on the environment. **President Brad** encourages us to engage in an open discussion on ways we can grow.

Brad intends to share with us a list of all the ways club members have impacted the community and the world this past Rotary year. He held up a list and told us that it would be in the newsletter, or that he would be sending it out as a separate communication to all members.

Finally, **President Brad** said that our meeting next week will be at the Kiwanis Pavilion at Washington Park. It will be BYOL (Bring Your Own Lunch) and we will be asked to socially distance and wear masks. **Joe Manning** asked if the club had formally booked the pavilion, and **President Brad** said that **John Hopper** had done so. Joe then said that he would be asking his colleagues at city hall to donate use of the main pavilion so we can use it for our President's Night (or Day).

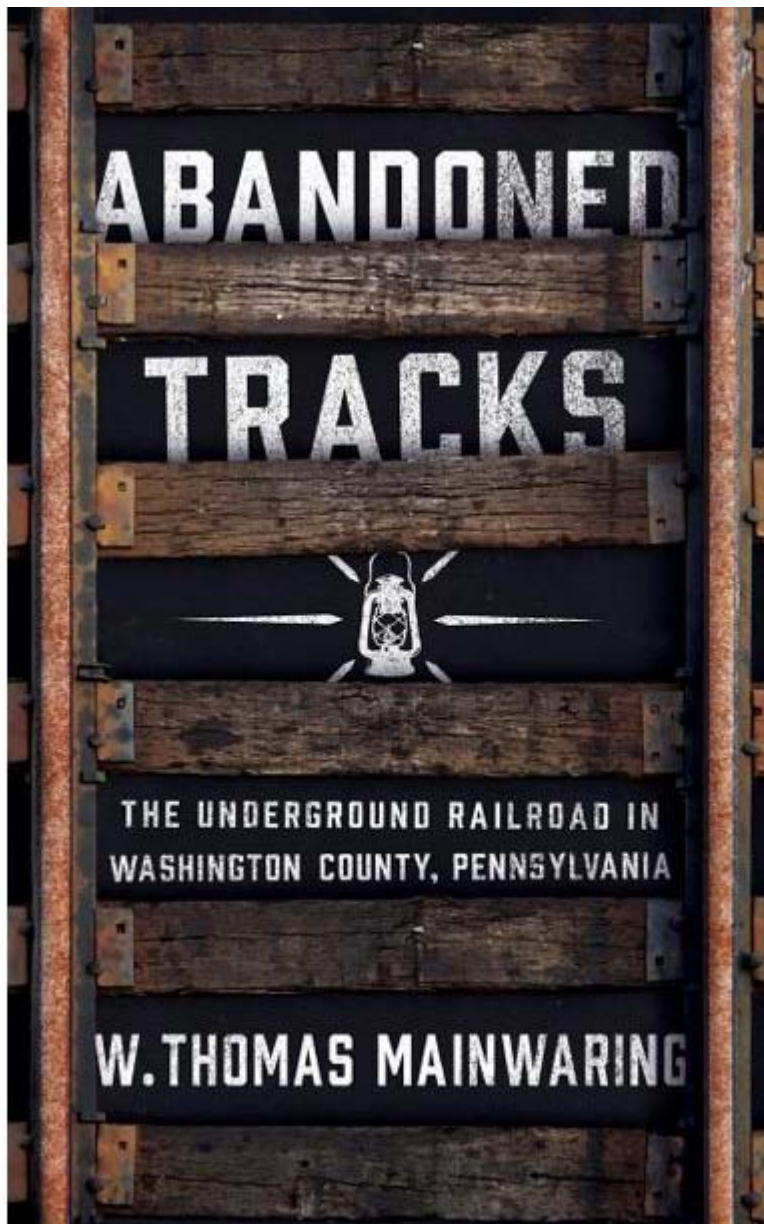
Dave Hart told us he has recently visited the Community Circle Food Pantry. Only 12 of our personal care packets are left and people have been grateful for them. He said that a young lady of his acquaintance began to worry about birthdays and has started preparing birthday kits with a cake mix, icing, and candles.

Program: Rea Redd- Underground Railroad

At this point, **President Brad** asked **Susan Priest** to introduce our speaker, **Rea Redd**. **Susan** began by saying that **Rea** was an old friend, a member of her church. In fact, when the church celebrated 150 years of the construction of its building in 1844, **Rea** provided his farm as the location for a celebratory pig roast picnic. An added attraction, especially for **Susan's** mother was the inclusion of several uninvited but welcomed farm kittens. **Rea** is a graduate of Trinity High School and received his degree from Waynesburg University. He went on to attend Indiana University of Pennsylvania and received his Masters in Library Science from the University of Pittsburgh. He is a real western Pennsylvanian, and is the librarian at Waynesburg University. He is also a Civil War reenactor.

Rea began by saying that **Susan** had brought back memories of the picnic. He had only recently acquired the farm at that time and had not named it yet. After the picnic the farm got a name: Flaming Hog Acres. (At one point at the picnic the pig burst into flames.)

He then began his talk, which was based on the work of W. Thomas Mainwaring, a history professor at W&J. Professor Mainwaring has published a book: *Abandoned Tracks: the Underground Railroad in Washington County, Pennsylvania*.



The first thing to know about the Underground Railroad is that much of what we think we know is not in fact true. After the Civil War people began to inflate what they did in the aid of abolition, and oral traditions grew. It was accepted as fact that people from the North went into the South and encouraged slaves to flee under the Northerners protection. Tales of local stations on the railroad sprang up. In one case a building on the W&J campus was believed to have been a station. That building was constructed in 1939. We all love

a good story, and there were a lot of them around.

In 1961 Larry Gary published a book, *The Liberty Line: the Legend of the Underground Railroad*. In it, he examined the historical record and came to several conclusions. In the first place, the slaves were not passive recipients of help from the North. Oral tradition was that a powerful secret organization stole thousands of slaves away from the South. This rose in part from postwar reminiscences by fame-hungry abolitionists. In the words of Frederick Douglass: I stole myself. Slaves set out with the goal of going North. Those in the North were coordinators, not conductors. Once the slaves got out of the slave states, they received aid from abolitionist sympathizers. Before that they stole themselves. While they made it to the free states, they were still in danger of being apprehended and returned to their masters. The Underground Railroad was the loose group of abolitionists who helped them evade recapture. In some ways the term Underground Railroad is also an invention, since this process was in place well before the railroads reached western Pennsylvania and the term railroad became common.

Pennsylvania was the first state to introduce gradual emancipation. In 1781 a law was passed that said that slaves born after the act would become free when they reached their twentieth birthday. It is important to remember that southwestern Pennsylvania was once a part of Virginia. In 1781 there were 12 townships in Washington County. Six of them had 0-25 slaves, two had 26-50 slaves, two had 51-75 slaves, and one had over 75 slaves. The area around the Monongahela River had the most slaves.

In Washington County we had the nationally known abolitionist, Julius Lemoyne. While his house is one of only a very few honored by a historical marker because of the Underground Railroad, it is doubtful that it ever housed runaway slaves. Because of Dr. Lemoyne's notoriety in the slave-catching community, his home was one of those most under watch and suspicion. What Dr. Lemoyne did was to receive slaves and redirect them to others to shelter on their journey.

What they were in league against were hired slave-hunters, eager to obtain a bounty on returned slaves. The hunters would offer rewards for information on slaves, describing them in detail: how tall, overall appearance, limps or other distinguishing physical descriptions.

What Dr. Mainwaring has done is to look for solid evidence of participation in the Underground Railroad. His book has maps and includes evaluations of supposed stops, from zero stars (no evidence that this was a stop) to five stars (clear from the evidence that this was a stop). He identifies 37 sites in Washington County.

Overall, the rule of thumb is that Quakers, Free Black Churches such as the AME, and Cumberland Presbyterian Churches provided many of the people who sheltered slaves and helped them on their journey. All of these religious institutions were actively opposed to slavery. In 1850 in Washington there were 3 AME churches in Washington, 1 in Canonsburg, 1 in Monongahela, and 1 in Centerville. The main route for slaves was the National Road, then heading North.

Washington and Greene Counties bordered 8 counties in Virginia (later West Virginia.) That meant that many slaves first entered a free state by crossing over to these two counties. Professor Redd shared the story of the Clarksburg nine. Most slaves escaped and travelled in very small groups or alone, but the Clarksburg nine were a large group. They entered Pennsylvania at Blacksville in Greene County. From there they went to Waynesburg and then Carmichaels. Facing danger from slave-hunters, they retreated and went from Carmichaels to Rogersville, then West Alexander, West Middleton, and then to Pittsburgh. They then went through Butler, Mercer, and Meadville before reaching Erie. They went by boat from there to Cleveland, then to Detroit and finally to Windsor Canada. Descendants still live in Canada.

This illustrates the following facts about the Underground Railroad. Routes were not predetermined, occasionally slaves had to back track or take other ways. The escapes were decentralized and there was no fixed route. There were hubs within communities of free African-Americans, especially in Uniontown, Brownsville, Washington, and Pittsburgh. In 1860 there were 217 African-Americans in the city of Washington. One quarter of them had been born south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

In particular, Tower Adams, perhaps the first free African-American in Washington in 1815, was a key participant. He was a gunsmith who lived on Chestnut Street. He would often have received persons sent on by Dr. Lemoyne or others. The West Middleton, Cross Creek, and West Alexander areas also had many people who sheltered slaves. Among others: Thomas and Matthew McKeever, James McElroy, senior and his son James McElroy, junior, Samuel McFarland, John and Samuel Atkinson, John Gilmore, Mayes Bell, Kenneth McCoy, Samuel McKeenan.

Professor Redd made a brief mention of the story which rose several years ago about Underground Railroad quilts. This is a new folklore. The concept of slaves having to learn a secret code to interpret the quilts is not accepted by historians.

He ended by saying that he would be happy to supply copies of the maps from Professor Mainwaring's book. People can reach him at his work email: red@waynesburg.edu.

Questions

- **Bill Allison** asked if Dr. Lemoyne's house would have been under surveillance by slave-hunters, making it not a railroad stop for that reason.
 - **Professor Redd** affirmed that that is most likely.
 - **Professor Redd** then spoke of an incident which took place at Christiana in Lancaster County Pennsylvania. A free Black man was sheltering escaped slaves when their master and his son came with guns to reclaim his property. The home owner came out with a gun and said that the slaves were not coming out. The master went away and returned with law enforcement. Shots were fired and the master was killed. The rest ran away. At the trial it was declared that the master had a gun and was threatening. It was ruled self-defense.
- **Dave Hart** told of visiting a house in West Middletown which he was told had been a stop on the railroad.
 - **Professor Redd** said that it was more than likely that it had been.
- **John Hopper** asked about how to learn about which were the slave-holding farms in Washington County.
 - **Susan Priest** answered this. Citizens Library has a published copy of the 1790 census of Pennsylvania. For each county the head of household is listed by name, along with the numbers of various persons in the household, including slaves.
- **John Hopper** also asked if Professor Redd was aware of a PBS drama series, *Mercy Street*, about two nurses in Alexandria, Virginia, during the Civil War.
 - **Professor Redd** is familiar with the series and says it is quite accurate. He does reenactment as a practitioner of Civil War medicine and the show is very authentic. There is actually a manufacturer of prosthetic devices, Hanger Corporation, founded during the Civil War, which is still in business today, being listed on the NYSE. Amputation saved lives in the war, shown in the fact that Mississippi's budget after war spent 80% on Hanger artificial limbs.

President Brad said that he wished 1:00 didn't come so fast, and thanked Professor Redd for a most informative meeting.

The meeting ended with the Four Way Test, led by **President Brad**.

Speakers

May 11th
Betsy West
Main Street Farmers Market

June 1st
Susan Priest
D plus 19 years: Normandy in 1963

May 18th
Club Members
Memories of Mothers

May 25th
Brad Montgomery
Club Assembly

Events

No Events found

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Vocational Service Chair

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[William J. Mesler](#)
Membership Chair

[Angeline Anyango East](#)
Community Service Chair

Club Meeting

Washington
Meets at W & J College, The Commons
60 S. Lincoln St.
Washington, PA 15301
Time: Tuesday at 12:00 PM