

## JCWA History Corner The Alliance Furnace – history and legend



Alliance Furnace 2010

Jacobs Creek Watershed has a very unique piece of history still standing within its boundaries. Down along the banks of Jacobs Creek in Perry Township, Fayette County stands the historic remains of the Alliance Furnace – the 1st iron furnace west of the Alleghenies. The furnace was “blown in” in 1789 and “blown” or taken out of service in 1802. It was only in use for 13 years, but during those 13 years it was a major contributor to the economy and helped make Fayette County the center of the iron industry during that era.

The majestic remains of the hive-shaped furnace are still standing, although engulfed by trees, ferns and moss. Some of the inner lining remains intact, scorched from years of use. On the hillside just above the furnace are the sturdy stone walls of the charcoal house. This massive building could hold 20,000 tons of charcoal for use in the smelting of iron ore. A trestle ran from the charcoal house to the furnace, where charcoal was wheeled to the top of the furnace and dumped in by hearty workers. The fact that parts of these stone structures are still standing after 200 years of idle is a tribute to the quality work done by the skilled stone masons.

The Alliance Furnace was owned by Turnbull, Marmie and Co., comprised of William Turnbull, silent partner Colonel John Holder and Peter Marmie. Peter Marmie was a Frenchman who married a settler’s daughter and lived nearby – and became a legend in his own right, which will be mentioned later in this article. The company employed over 200 men to dig the iron ore, cut trees for charcoal and make the iron. Iron ore was dug from nearby hills in Westmoreland County just across Jacobs Creek and charcoal was made from trees cut all around the area. The iron was made into pots and kettles, some for evaporating brine into salt or maple tree sap into sugar. Historical documents also state that the Alliance Furnace made cannon balls for General Mad Anthony Wayne’s expedition against the Native Americans in the late 1700’s.

The Alliance Furnace was located on the property adjacent to Valentine Sechrist’s property, a German immigrant who settled in the area in 1772. Legend has it that the Sechrist family supplied food and water for the workers at the furnace. Valentine Sechrist is an ancestor of Don Sechrist, a JCWA member who lives in Scottdale with his wife Cheryl. Don Sechrist is an avid historian who has many historical photographs from the era. Don remembers his grandfather’s stories about the Alliance Furnace area, especially his tales of growing up near a local Native American village close to the furnace. JCWA thanks Don for supplying much of the historical information for this article.

And now for the most famous tale of the Alliance Furnace – the legend of the ghost hounds! Folklore tells the story of Peter Marmie, one of the owners of the Alliance Furnace, being so despondent over financial losses that he drove his hound dogs into the furnace and then threw himself into the fiery grave! Although exciting, the story was actually created by the author Robert P. Nevin to make his 1888 book “Les Trois Rois” more exciting. It has been documented that Peter Marmie died naturally at an old age and is buried in a Rostraver cemetery. But folklore still insists that if you go down to the woods near the furnace on stormy nights, you can still hear the howling hounds and the sounds of the hunting bugle Peter Marmie used to drive his faithful dogs into the Alliance Furnace.

Next issue: Jacobs Creek Bridge, the 1st suspension bridge.

***This newsletter was funded by a grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation.***

# From the Ridge to the River

Jacobs Creek Watershed Association



Winter 2010

## JCWA Receives Award From Pa. Fish And Boat Commission

On a warm evening this summer, the JCWA Board members were called to meet with Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Waterways Conservation Officer Ron Evancho at Greenlick Lake. JCWA was not given a reason for the meeting, but was pleasantly surprised when Officer Evancho presented JCWA with an award for 10 years of outstanding service! Officer Evancho noted that JCWA has been an excellent steward of the watershed and has completed numerous projects including stream bank stabilization, habitat improvement, wetlands interpretive areas, clean-ups and much, much more.

The plaque presented to JCWA President Michael Barrick reads: This plaque is presented to Jacobs Creek Watershed Association in recognition of your continued successes in identifying areas of concern in the Jacobs Creek Watershed and your hard work and relentless efforts in carrying out your mission. The Jacobs Creek Watershed Association stands out as a leader in the community in making a beautiful watershed better. The PA Fish and Boat Commission thanks you for all your efforts over the past ten years.

The plaque was presented to JCWA at Greenlick Lake, the site of two shoreline stabilization projects completed this year by a partnership of JCWA and the Fish and Boat Commission. Next spring, JCWA will partner again with the Fish and Boat Commission to stabilize the severely eroded banks of Shupe Run as it flows through Willows Park in Mt. Pleasant.

Officer Evancho presented this award to JCWA on his last day of work in this region, after accepting another position with the Fish and Boat Commission in the eastern part of the state. Officer Evancho has worked with JCWA on many projects and events over the years and will be missed by JCWA. JCWA is truly appreciative of the assistance and dedication of the Fish and Boat Commission in helping us to complete past, current and future projects. Without the help of partners like the Fish and Boat Commission, JCWA would be unable to complete its many watershed improvement projects.

But JCWA also needs partners like you to help us make improvements to our watershed. Gandhi once said “Be the change you want to see in the world”. Think about this quote for a minute. Gandhi said this a long time ago, but its message is timeless. Do you want the streams to be clean for future generations? Do you want our youth to have clean lakes, wetlands and recreational areas to enjoy outdoors? You can be the difference. You can help JCWA complete a project, clean a stream or educate our young people. Become a member, volunteer your time or make a donation. Every action helps us keep moving ahead. We can’t do it alone. Be the change.



Mike Barrick and Patty Miller accept award from Officer Ron Evancho



1st Place Winners - Black Snappers IV

## JCWA’s 9th Annual Riffle Run Scramble

On September 17th, JCWA held its 9th Annual Riffle Run Scramble at the Donegal Highlands Golf Course. This year’s event was a two-fold success: JCWA raised critical funds necessary to complete valuable watershed improvement projects in 2011 and the participants had a great day of golf! There was stiff competition between the 67 golfers, but the reigning champions, the Black Snappers IV, prevailed once again and took home the coveted Riffle Run trophy. The Chad Fenstermaker Foursome was a close second and the Lennon, Smith, Souleret Engineering team placed third. The most interestingly-dressed golfer prize was awarded to Dave Ames. For photos of Dave’s outfit and the event, please visit our website at [www.jacobs creek watershed.org](http://www.jacobs creek watershed.org) and click on Partners and Fun. If you would like to participate or be a sponsor for next year’s 10 year anniversary golf extravaganza, please send an email to [jcwa@juno.com](mailto:jcwa@juno.com) and we’ll add you to the mailing list.

JCWA would like to thank the generous sponsors of the Riffle Run Scramble. Without these sponsors, the event could not have been possible. Tee sponsors for the event included Westmoreland County Commissioner Tom Balya, Westmoreland County Commissioner Ted Kopas, Blazosky Associates, Inc., Cavanaugh Trucking, Inc., Civil and Environmental Engineers, Inc., Hedin Environmental, Jacobs Creek Outfitters, Lennon, Smith Souleret Engineering, Inc. and The Uber Company. Prize sponsors for the event included Cavanaugh Trucking, Inc., Donegal Highlands Golf Course, Fayette County Conservation District, Stefano’s Printing, Herbalicious, Lennon, Smith Souleret Engineering, Inc., Levin’s Furniture, Mark IV Office Supply, Inc., Ms. Cecilia McGough, Mr. Nick Pinizzotto, Mr. Ed Ritzer, Mr. Rick Spear, Mr. Jack Crislip, Mt. Pleasant Polish Falcons Nest No. 147, Texas Roadhouse, Washington County Chamber of Commerce and Westmoreland Conservation District



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**Mission**

Jacobs Creek Watershed Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of our natural resources, rehabilitation of the creek and watershed, environmental education and recreation.

**For More Information**

P.O. Box 1071  
Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666  
Phone (724) 887-8220, ext. 3  
Fax (724) 887-0195  
Email [jcwa@juno.com](mailto:jcwa@juno.com)  
[www.jacobs creek watershed.org](http://www.jacobs creek watershed.org)

**Jacobs Creek Tour Bus**  
*Highlighting interesting places in our watershed*  
**Greenlick Lake at Jacobs Creek Park**

Did you know that there is a place in your backyard where you can fish, kayak, picnic, bird-watch and even go geocaching? Greenlick Lake at Jacobs Creek Park is that place. Greenlick Lake, which is also known as Greenlick Reservoir or Greenlick Dam, is a 100+ acre lake nestled within the borders of Jacobs Creek Park. Greenlick Lake was actually built in 1972 when Greenlick Run was impounded as part of a large flood-control project initiated by the founding members of the Jacobs Creek Watershed Association. Although it still functions as a flood control dam, Greenlick Lake has become a great resource for outdoor recreational activities.



*JCWA board member Sharyn Kmiecik kayaks on Greenlick Lake*

Greenlick Lake is owned by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and maintained by Fayette County for public fishing, boating and recreation. The lake is classified as a warm-water fishery and stocked with walleye and channel catfish fingerling by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. These stocking efforts are evidenced by the many people seen fishing the lake year-round. Even in the midst of winter, you will find people ice fishing on the ice-covered lake. The fish habitat of Greenlick Lake was enhanced this past year by two JCWA projects, which stabilized several hundred feet of eroded shoreline and created fish habitat and spawning areas near the shoreline. These projects were detailed in JCWA's past two newsletters, which are available on the home page of JCWA's website at [www.jacobs creek watershed.org](http://www.jacobs creek watershed.org)

Boating on Greenlick Lake is limited to boats with electronic motors or non-powered boats, so it's a great site for flat water kayaking and canoeing. JCWA held its 2010 annual members picnic at Greenlick Lake and boating novices in kayaks and canoes were able to navigate the calm waters with ease.

Plan a picnic of your own at one of the several pavilions around the lake. Your children will enjoy playing on the swings and walking along the lake, looking for a jumping fish or a heron trying to catch its dinner. Fayette County is upgrading and rebuilding the handicap restrooms on both sides of the park. Relax on one of the many park benches in the spring or fall to watch the migratory waterfowl stop to refuel. Visiting swans have been seen frequently at the lake.

Greenlick Lake has also become a place known far and wide for its geocaching sites. Geocaching is a high-tech treasure hunt played by people of all ages all over the world. Adventurers use GPS devices to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, placed in the outdoors by other geocachers. JCWA will be hosting a geocaching event combined with a park clean-up, called a 'Cache In Trash Out' event this summer at the park. More details on the geocaching event will be in the Spring 2011 JCWA newsletter and at [www.jacobs creek watershed.org](http://www.jacobs creek watershed.org).

Please visit Greenlick Lake at Jacobs Creek Park throughout the year to see what surprises nature has waiting for you. The park has two entrances, both which can be accessed from Mud School Road. Directions: Main entrance: From Connellsville, take Rt. 119 to Rt. 982. Go 5 miles and turn left onto Mud School Road. The main entrance is 0.7 miles on the left. From Mt. Pleasant, take Rt. 31 and turn onto Bridgeport Street. Go 1.3 miles and go straight through stop sign. Cross bridge and make immediate left. Go 1 mile and turn left onto Mud School Road. Park entrance is 0.3 miles on the right. The second entrance can be accessed by taking Mud School Road and turning on to Greenlick Road just 0.1 miles from Rt. 982.

**Watershed Words: Rain Garden**

Did you ever wonder what you personally could do to help prevent flooding and stream bank erosion in your neighborhood? The answer could be something both beautiful and functional – a rain garden. Rain gardens are specially constructed plant and flower gardens that collect rain water from homes and businesses. The collected water is used by the plants and flowers to grow, keeping this rain water on your property and out of our storm sewers where it can cause flooding and scour stream banks, causing erosion.

Rain gardens can be of any size and are usually oval in shape. The exact size and shape of your rain garden will depend on the specifics of your property. Rain gardens can be planted with perennial flowers, shrubs and trees and native species are highly recommended, as they are hardy and need less maintenance. Rain gardens have an unseen trough that lies beneath the plants. Rain water from your home's roof drains is conveyed to this trough and the plants use this water to grow. Any excess water is gradually absorbed into the ground. Water does not pond in a rain garden, so there's no worry about attracting mosquitoes. Rain gardens need little maintenance and attract native butterflies to your yard, while helping to protect our streams from erosion and flooding.

Scottdale Borough received a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to address storm water problems within the borough. As part of this grant, Scottdale Borough will be building rain gardens in certain residential areas with the assistance of JCWA. An informational public meeting on this rain garden project will be held in the spring of 2011.

For more information on rain gardens, please visit JCWA's website@ [www.jacobs creek watershed.org](http://www.jacobs creek watershed.org) or the Westmoreland Conservation District's website at [www.wcdpa.com](http://www.wcdpa.com).

*Visit JCWA at [www.jacobs creek watershed.org](http://www.jacobs creek watershed.org)*

**Paddle at the Point: A Guinness World Record attempt**



*Paddlers congregate to set world record*

The "Paddle at the Point" event was a joint effort organized by Venture Outdoors and more than 30 outdoor recreation retailers and non-profit groups. As the host city for the United Nations World Environmental Day 2010, The City of Pittsburgh sanctioned the World Record event to highlight Pittsburgh's revitalized watershed. Groups of paddlers were invited to meet on the morning of June 5th at designated areas either at Heinz Field or the Mon Warf. Around 11AM all of the boats were to launch and by noon the flotilla was to form on the Ohio River near Point State Park. By Guinness rules, a flotilla is a free-floating interlinked group of canoes and kayaks that has to hold together for 30 seconds.

Our group was designated to meet at Heinz Field where we registered and were to enter the river via the access known as the Heinz Quay. We met with two reporters from the Allegheny Front Radio Show who had previously asked for a canoe to use for recording the event. After launching the reporters, we proceeded to make our way to the water. The rain had stopped but the sun had not come out, and the day was warm and damp. The seven paddlers took three canoes and the Tandem kayak onto the Ohio River. The water was calm, the people were friendly, and the paddling was easy.

Event staff waved off the first couple of attempts at forming the flotilla, as some boats closest to shore had made landfall at The Point. For the flotilla to count, it had to be free floating. The canoes and kayaks could not touch land so we all paddled away from shore and regrouped. Paddlers were asked to hold onto the nearest boat with one hand and raise their paddle with the other hand with sufficiently linked. A sea of canoes and kayaks with paddlers holding their blades skyward backdropped by the Pittsburgh skyline was something to behold. It was hard to hear the count-down but when it got to ten, the flotilla counted en masse "5, 4, 3, 2, 1" and then uproarious cheering and the flotilla began to break up. At this point the heavens opened up like a faucet and a downpour/exodus ensued. You could hardly see the paddler next to you, let alone Heinz Field, but we were all laughing and smiling as we paddled our way to shore. The rains quit as abruptly as they had begun and it was no time before we were all on our way home from "The Paddle at the Point." Those who backed out at the last minute would later express their regrets for missing such a cool event.

A final count of boats will be made using event records and Gigapan hi-resolution photographs. This process may take several months to complete so we do not know for sure yet if we broke the record. All indications are that the record was broken handily even with the rain keeping many paddlers away. The Allegheny Front segment about the event aired on June 9, 2010 and included a thank you to the JCWA for helping with the canoe. The radio report can be heard at the Allegheny Front website's archive and much more information including links to pictures and video of the event can be seen at [paddleatthepoint.com](http://paddleatthepoint.com).

Article submitted by Frank Romeo, JCWA board member, avid paddler and founder of the Jacobs Creek Paddling Club.

**JCWA receives Watershed Mini Grant**

JCWA was one of 37 non-profit organizations that received a 2010 Watershed Mini Grant from the Dominion Foundation and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. JCWA will use this \$500.00 mini grant to place an educational sign at the site of the Greenlick Dam Shoreline Stabilization Project. Financial support for the grant was provided by the Dominion Foundation which is dedicated to the economic, physical and social health of the communities served by Dominion companies. The grant was administered by Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in commitment to its core mission of conserving Pennsylvania's diverse ecosystems through science-based strategy, leadership and collaboration. JCWA is grateful for the support of the Dominion Foundation and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in helping JCWA educate the public on the importance of the Greenlick Dam Shoreline Stabilization Project.

On a rainy morning in June, a group of recreational paddlers including members of JCWA found themselves standing at Yough River Park in Connellsville. As the rain came down, some of the people who had planned on going on the trip began to leave. "I don't want to be wet all day!" was heard as one person drove away. The more resilient of the bunch remained, and seven Southwestern Pennsylvanian paddlers began their journey to Pittsburgh. Our little caravan consisted of two cars and a truck hauling a trailer with seven canoes and a tandem kayak. Our destination was the Point in Pittsburgh where thousands of paddlers were planning to meet, paddle out into the Ohio River, join up, and break the Guinness World Record for the largest canoe and kayak flotilla in history. The record of 1104 boats was held by Inlet, New York, and according to all estimates the Pittsburgh event was going to shatter the record.



**Be The Change You Want To See In The World -- Gandhi**

Members and volunteer efforts help the JCWA to continue our mission. Without them the strength of our voice and the power of our actions is diminished.

**Please become a MEMBER today.**  
**You'll be glad you did!**

*Yes! I want to help preserve and protect the Jacobs Creek Watershed*

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Annual Memberships**

- \_\_\_ \$ 5 Student
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Make checks payable to:  
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P.O. Box 1071  
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Phone (724) 887-8220, ext. 3

**Spring Tree Sale**

*Fayette County Conservation District will again hold its annual Spring Tree sale in 2011. Enhance your property with fruit trees and native deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs. Trees available will include White Pine, Red Pine, Hemlock, Rhododendrons, Winterberry, Holly, Serviceberry, Oaks, Maples and many more. Bluebird boxes will also be available. Orders are due by March 23rd, 2011 and tree pick up is on April 2nd at the Fayette County Fairgrounds. You can find a full list of trees and price list in the FCCD's winter newsletter, by visiting [www.fayettedcd.org](http://www.fayettedcd.org) or by calling 724-437-2914.*