

THE LANDMARK

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Newsletter of the Friends of Old Annville
P.O. Box 99, Annville, PA 17003

Celebrating the Life & Legacy of V. Carl Gacono (1929-2019) • Annual Dinner Recap

President's Message, by Michael Schroeder

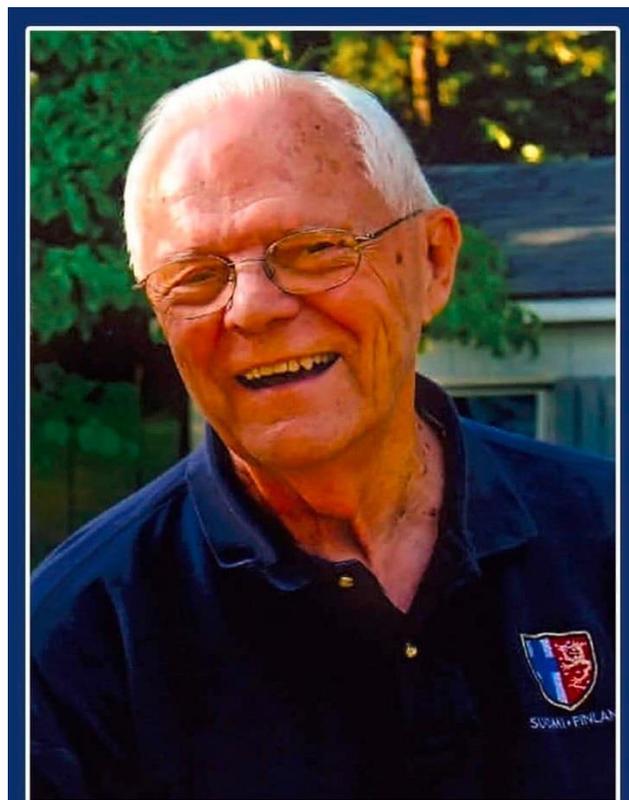
On the afternoon of Saturday, November 9, the banquet room of the Connor-Streicher American Legion on South Manheim St. in Annville was the site of a Celebration of Life hosted by the family of V. Carl Gacono, longtime pillar of the Annville community, who had passed away eight days before. Later that evening, the same banquet room was the site of the Friends of Old Annville's Annual Dinner Meeting.

We turn this issue of *The Landmark* over to these two sequential events, held in the same space, separated by only a few hours, and both given over to celebrating Annville's past and looking to its future. We begin with a memorial tribute to Carl Gacono, penned by his daughter Becky and read by his granddaughter at his funeral, which offers a set of rich and textured reminiscences that cannot be found in this grace-filled man's obituary. We then turn to a recap of the highlights of our Annual Dinner meeting.

In Memory of V. Carl Gacono. "We didn't say goodbye. We said I love you! As I think about life, my life, and the part you played in it I realize I'm smiling. I think about shining your shoes sitting next to Jeff on the Breezeway – we are little, but somehow we knew it was a privilege because they were your shoes. Even then we knew they were filled with greatness. I think about driving to Wildwood (your hometown) and you announcing the Rio Grande bridge was in sight, so it was time to sing the Wildwood High School Warriors fight song, which we all still know to this day. You taught us the love of traveling by taking your family on business trips - which most businesspeople didn't do. You and mom didn't open the door of your home to others – you removed your door, so everyone knew they were always welcome.

"We met people from around the world and they became part of our family. The world became our neighborhood instead of a vast open space of unknowns.

"Your heart had a kindness like I have never experienced in others. Never an unkind word and an understanding of empathy like I have never seen before. You were never better than anyone. You saw everyone as your equal – no matter color, education, finances, or upbringing, never speaking above or below anyone - just speaking to them. And as we all know –



V Carl Gacono

June 6, 1929 - November 1, 2019

Well done, good and faithful servant.

Matthew 25:23

the gift of speaking was your greatest gift. I would often say to people,

“After mom died on March 10, 2019, we expected dad to go soon after. He was lost without her and his heart was giving out. We were blessed and thankful to be given eight more months with him. The only thing that came close to the love he had for his Mary Jane was the love he had for his family. He was torn about leaving us to be with her and Jeff again because of missing all of us too. Last week as we knew his time to go was coming we gathered around him those final days and filled his house with all the voices and laughter he

loved and at 1:13am on November 1st, as his house filled with quiet and he knew we were all going to be okay, he peacefully went to see his Mary Jane, his son, Jeffrey and so many others that went before him. We know he had quite the reunion and we are pretty sure there was a parade involved. As our tears flowed as we said our goodbyes, we saw a tear in the corner of his eye, and we knew he was going to miss us too. Dad and Mom – V Carl and Mary Jane Gacono – Thank you for sharing your amazing life with all of us. It truly was a life well lived!”

* * * * *

Annual Dinner Recap. Soon after the celebration of V. Carl Gacono’s life and legacy in the banquet hall of the Connor-Streicher American Legion had ended, another celebration began with the arrival of nearly fifty FOOA members and special guests for our Annual Dinner Meeting. We are especially grateful to our featured speaker, Dr. Leroy Hopkins, President of the African American Historical Society of South-Central Pennsylvania, who delivered a stirring talk on “In Search of Lebanon County’s African American Heritage.” Below we reproduce excerpts from Dr. Hopkins’ talk, which is available in its entirety on the FOOA website.

“In Search of Lebanon County’s African American Heritage,” by Dr. Leroy Hopkins.

In 2005 I had the opportunity to present a short essay at Lebanon’s HACC campus titled “Researching Lebanon County’s African American History.” Tonight, I would like to share with you what I have learned since 2005. In the few weeks since I received this invitation to talk I have been able to use two important tools which were not at my disposal in 2005: Ancestry.com and Newspapers.com, which have given me access to topics which I hope some earnest researcher in Lebanon County will seize upon.

As elsewhere in the Commonwealth, African American history here in Lebanon begins in slavery. Who those slaveholders were can be gleaned from the tax lists and especially the returns to the Gradual Abolition Act of 1780 and its amended version of 1788. Most likely out of fear of slave insurrection Pennsylvania authorities decided to supplant chattel slavery with a system of indenture servitude which would not harm the economic interests of the slave owning elites. Africans born before 1780 were slaves for life; their children born after March 1, 1780 were to be registered at the county courthouses or in Philadelphia as indentured servants, i.e. persons liable



Dr. Leroy Hopkins delivering his remarks at FOOA’s Annual Dinner Meeting on Sat. Nov. 9.

to serve until they reached 28 years of age. Thus, a significant source of labor was secured.

A loophole in the law allowed slave masters to transport pregnant slaves to nearby slave states (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey) and bring mother and child back as slaves for life. In York County, this loophole reportedly led to a doubling of the number of enslaved Africans by 1783. The amended law closed that loophole but did not address one aspect not considered by the law. Not only the children of enslaved Africans were made indentured servants, but also their grandchildren. As a consequence, the State Supreme Court intervened in 1830 to end the practice, noting that it was not the intent of the original law to create a class of servants in perpetuity.

Back in 2005, I consulted a brochure published by the Lebanon County Commissioners and the Lebanon County Historical Society entitled *Three Hundred Years of Pennsylvania 1683-1983. Lebanon County. In Old Words and Pictures.* As I noted then, the 96-page booklet had beautiful illustrations but no information

on Lebanon's African American residents. No reference was made to slavery or to important African-American institutions such as the church. . . .

Lebanon's newspapers are similar to those in Lancaster in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Racial epithets are common. One reference to Andrew R. Johnson stated that he was a "husky colored" lad. In 1912, the graduating class of Lebanon Valley College presented two dramas: "Nigger in a Woodpile" and "Klu Klux-Klan". It was also reported from Fredericksburg on March 11 of that year that "the Klu Klux Klan Club will hold their weekly meeting at the home of Mrs. John Sherk on Wednesday evening March 13, a fine program will be rendered." On January 24, 25, and 26, 1916, D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* was presented at the Academy of Music in Lebanon. On October 1, 1923 one hundred and twenty-five men and women attended a Klan meeting in the Red Men's Building at Ninth and Wilbur Streets. On September 3, 1924 the South Lebanon Literary Society debated whether the Klan is 100% American. Finally, Rev. Charles Hartranft of Harrisburg, a Kleagle of his district, spoke to a large audience in Jonestown at the Sons of America Hall.

These troubling announcements are juxtaposed with an almost fawning attention paid to individual members of the Black community. For James Milberrie I found 121 matches in Lebanon newspapers between 1900-1940. Everything from the death of his daughter in 1917 to the handsome gifts and dinner he received on his 64th birthday in 1915 as well as his activity in St. John's A.M.E. Church and the Lebanon Heights Lodge No. 8944 of Grand United Order of Odd Fellows was dutifully reported in the newspapers. . . .

St. John's A.M.E. Church was organized during World War I, but it was not the oldest Black church in the County. On September 2, 1886 it was reported the search for a colored church was reported in the newspaper. This may be a reference to the eventual A.M.E. Zion Church reported in Lebanon in 1886. . . . Besides the military, church, and civic organizations Black residents of Lebanon County were also engaged in fun pursuits.

As elsewhere baseball was a fan favorite among the Black resident of Lebanon County. On May 17, 1916 a team called the Lebanon Colts was organized. A year later the Lebanon Valley Colored Giants was also organized. In 1922 a colored baseball league was formed and perennial opponent was the Royal Blue Giants of New York with African American and Cuban players. This was from the beginning of the golden age of the Negro Baseball League and deserves further research.

As should be obvious from the myriad information which I have already offered, it is impossible to present a history of African Americans in Lebanon in 30 minutes or even 30 days. Two items which I mentioned in 2005 I would like to use to conclude my talk. In "Stories of old Stumptown" published by the Lebanon County Historical Society reference is made to Billy Downey, who worked with the merchant Levi Bickel and in John Light's tannery. Downey was a faith healer and probably conversant in Pennsylvania German. In other words, he was probably a "pow wow doctor." His modus operandi was so special that the narrator had to mention it:

"As Sampson's strength lay in his long hair, so Billy's occult powers were supposed to

Be inherent in the blackness of his African complexion. There was no surer cure for

The whooping cough than Bill Downey's kiss implanted full on the mouth of the sufferer."



The patent nonsense of this statement has surprising historical precedence. In 1793, when Yellow Fever ravaged Philadelphia, Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, leaders of Black Philadelphia, were hired to treat the patients. It was widely believed that Africans being from a tropical climate were immune to the diseases of that region. Apparently, it was forgotten that African genes had probably changed after several centuries of forced residence in the moderate climates. Yet, in the Spanish American War of 1898, so-called immune units of Southern Blacks were recruited for combat in Cuba.

Despite the barely concealed racist innuendoes of descriptions such as that of Billy Downey, the close proximity of whites and blacks in 19th century Lebanon County should be researched. Of special interest to me as a retired professor of German is the interaction of Pennsylvania Germans and Africans in

our region. And that leads me to my final comments on African Americans in Lebanon.

Cornwall was founded by Iron master Curtis Grubb in 1734. Like other businessmen of that era, Grubb purchased Africans to use as laborers. He eventually sold his holdings to Robert Coleman. Coleman's son William had a waiter named Edward Millen who lived with him in 1860. Millen was born on December 2, 1836 and according to his death certificate reported by his son Edward, Jr. , his parents were John Millen and Charlotte Butler, German natives. That was probably untrue since in 1850 John Millen lived in South Lebanon and both he and his wife Charlotte are identified as natives of Maryland. John was a hostler and that profession would be taken up by his son Edward, who in 1870 lived in Lancaster's 3rd Ward. His profession was coachman. The Pennsylvania Negro Business Directory of 1910 identifies him as:

"A native of Lebanon County, being one of the only colored families that for many years lived at Cornwall. Mr. Millin [sic] lived with one family in Lancaster as a coachman for twenty-eight years. He now lives a retired life and is the largest individual property owner of the colored race in Lancaster County."

From my own research I can augment the information with the following. Edward Millen was likely a pall bearer of Lydia Hamilton Smith. His son, Edward Clarence Millen, was the first African American hired by the Lancaster Police department. He was their chauffeur. Edward, Sr. was a member of Lancaster's Bethel A.M.E. Church. When the church's



cemetery reached its limit in 1905-06, Millen help organize Stevens Greenland Memorial Cemetery, the last cemetery created solely for the internment of African Americans in Lancaster County. My grandparents and maternal uncle are buried there. Edward Millen's son, John, married Mary Stumpf my grandmother's sister. Their son Herbert E. Millen was Pennsylvania's 1st African American Superior Court judge and only the 13th in the country. Edward Millen's daughter, Susan, married George Patterson. Their son, George, married my mother's sister, Edna Lucy Peaco. So, I have a personal interest in the Millen family.

In conclusion, Lebanon's has a rich and varied African American history that requires some effort to unearth but the search is definitely worthwhile and also very interesting.

Additional Highlights from the Annual Dinner Meeting

Slate of Candidates Elected to the Board of Directors. The following individuals were elected to serve two-year terms on the Board. We are also grateful to outgoing Board members Liz Lingle, Jim Gill, and Interim Treasurer Kathy Moe. Thank you for your service, past, present, and future!

**ELECTED TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF FRIENDS OF OLD ANNVILLE, INC.
FOR THE 2020-2022 TERM AT THE ANNUAL DINNER MEETING OF SAT. 9 NOV. 2019**

Treasurer Megan Ball
Member at Large Melissa Barlow
Member at Large Mark Leshner
Member at Large Jill Palanzo
Member at Large Rachel Noll

Historic Building Award. We are delighted to announce the recipient of the 2019 Historic Building Award: St. Anthony Coptic Church at 118 West Main St. Pictured at right is Deacon John Borland, who received the award on behalf of the Church.



Property Pride Awards. We were also delighted to offer two 2019 Property Pride Awards: to Charles and Lorie Gonzalez for all their hard work on their lovely home at 52 South Manheim St., and to Scott and Crystal Aungst, for taking such exquisite care of their historic home at 327 East Main St. Congratulations and thank you to Charles, Lorie, Scott, and Crystal!



*Home of Charles and Lorie Gonzalez,
52 South Manheim Street.*

*Home of Scott and Crystal Aungst,
327 East Main Street.*





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Please note that your MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DATE can be found in the line above your name and address on this issue of *The Landmark*. Please send your dues and address change to Rachel Noll, 1673 Louser Road, Annville, PA, 17003-8856. Questions? Call Rachel at (717) 867-2137.

Individual & Student \$ 5.00 Family (2+ persons) \$ 10.00 Business \$ 25.00 Friend of FOOA \$ 50.00 ★
Benefactor \$ 100.00 § Founder \$ 250 ❖

RENEWALS

M/M Randall Aungst
Melissa Barlow
M/M Bernard Bell
Philip & Sue Billings
Stephanie Boeshore
Mr. James K. Brandt
Pat Buchmoyer
Ms. Nicole A. Emrich
Dr/M Arthur Ford
M/M Dennis George
Francis & Adrienne Glynn
Mr. Walter Haber
Julie L. Hess ★
Mrs. Evelyn Hoffsmith

Bob & Diane Horlacher
Sylvia & Darlene Hurlbert
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Scott & Karen Mailen
Mrs. Gladys Martin
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Jean Noll
Douglas & Rosalind Nyce §
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M/M Carlin R. Rhine
Lydia A. Schiavoni

M/M James Scott
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M/M Thomas Shott §
Lee & Sally Smedley §
Betty Smith
Dr. Alice J. Strange
George Struble
Mrs. Carole Werni
Bob & Barb Wilson

NEW MEMBERS

Steve & Terri Falzone
Dianna Gossard
Douglas W. Russell – Edward Jones