

When I Decided to Join The Tredyffrin Easttown History Club

Jim Brazel

After moving to Berwyn in 1976, I had seen occasional references to meetings of The Tredyffrin Easttown History Club, mainly in *The Suburban and Wayne Times* and, just as often, I missed them. Then, in early December 1995, I read an article in that newspaper; an appreciation of a recently deceased man's life that motivated me to join that organization.

I remember in particular reading that he had been curious about the Phoenixville Branch of The Pennsylvania Railroad. From that 1995 appreciation by Helen Cooper, "The walking encyclopedia, Bob Goshorn, walks no more:"

Once he was asked about the rumor of a burial ground occupied by Chinese laborers hired to build the railroad. A dreadful epidemic of smallpox had felled them. Nobody but some nuns would even bury them, memory recalls Bob recounting. "Want to see it?"

He knew exactly where it was. After pointing it out at the north end of Malvern Borough beside the railroad, he was off to follow more tracks. He wanted to find out exactly where the track bed which once paralleled Route 29 really wound up.

I am a railfan, in particular, a fan of local railroad history. For many years, I had wanted to get around to tracing all of that roadbed from Fraser to Phoenixville, and had done some of it from Devault to Phoenixville, where the tracks are still in. In the years since reading that article, I have traced most of that line and other branches and spurs now reduced to "track beds" in our area. I have also benefited from the high quality local railroad and industry history that has been published, some of it by our Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society. But I had missed knowing this man who did so many of these things with so much accumulated knowledge and joy of life.

I joined the Club shortly after. Under the leadership of other men and women, the Club has grown in membership, became the Society, incorporated, and its *Tredyffrin Easttown History Quarterly* has evolved through several generations of improving content and innovations in publication technology. I had some part via participation in the digitization project of 2008-2010 wherein the *Quarterlies* from the first year of publication in 1937 through 2005 were digitally scanned, to be made available online. In our proofreading efforts on the digital scans, I encountered and read some of the many articles contributed by Bob Goshorn.

"In Memoriam: Robert Musselwhite Goshorn" appeared in the *Quarterly* in January 1996, and is reproduced opposite. Reading it during the digitization project reminded me of that longer appreciation newspaper article that I read in 1995. But I could not recall which newspaper - the *Inquirer* or the *Suburban*? Intermittent and completely ineffective online searches over two or three years (if it isn't online, you can't find it there), followed by several phone calls this past summer led me to the Radnor Library in Wayne, where merely asking resulted in being handed the bound paper copies of *The Suburban and Wayne Times* for 1995. A few minutes of search and a few twenty-five cent pieces later at the copying machine (again aided by the kind lady librarians) and I had a clean copy of the page with both the appreciation and the formal obituary from the Thursday, November 30, 1995 issue. Both of these are reproduced on page 116 with the permission of the successor publisher, Main Line Media News. Read them and appreciate the man.

In retrospect, fifteen years' membership in the Society has put a finer edge on some of the details in the excerpt above from the appreciation article. For example, we now know more about the ethnicity and burial place of the "Chinese laborers" from a TEHS program given in February 2007 entitled "The Ghosts of Duffy's Cut", a summary of which can be found on the society website at: <http://www.tehistory.org/news/2007/news200702.html>

Jim Brazel serves on the board of the Historical Society and is chair of the Program Committee.

in Memoriam

ROBERT MUSSELWHITE GOSHORN

The History Club has lost its guiding light, Robert M. "Bob" Goshorn, who died on November 21, 1995, following a stroke.

Bob was born on March 22, 1919, and grew up in this area. He graduated from Radnor High School and, as he put it, "from Swarthmore College many, many years ago." He was an infantry captain in World War II, was a prisoner of war in Europe and was awarded the Purple Heart. He worked in the magazine publishing business from 1946 until 1977, when he retired to pursue more actively his diverse interests.

Many of these interests brought him public acclaim. He served on the local school board for more than 27 years and for 15 years on the county board. He was past chairman of the Greater Main Line Branch of the American Red Cross. We especially knew him as an acknowledged authority on local history and a former president of the Chester County Historical Society and of our own History Club, having also edited and published 70 issues of the quarterly publication of the Club over 17 years commencing in 1978.

He had an extensive collection of political campaign memorabilia which he shared publicly in presidential election years. He contributed a column to the Great Valley News. He taught a School Night class at Conestoga High School. He played tennis, golf and one-on-one basketball as often as time would allow. He had innumerable other interests and he was, it seemed, into everything. Bob had lost his beloved wife Elizabeth just last year after 52 years of marriage. Earlier his father, his son and his grandson each died under tragic circumstances. He is survived by one daughter, two granddaughters and two greatgrandsons. He was of positive and gracious demeanor, and he never failed to share a humorous anecdote with his associates. We remember him also for his selection of attire -- loud sweater or shirt for dress-up, bright red jacket in winter and tennis shorts year round. A ray of sunshine has gone out of our lives. He cannot be replaced and will not soon be forgot.

The walking encyclopedia, Bob Goshorn, walks no more

By Helen Cooper
Staff writer

Bob Goshorn once said he and his wife, Elizabeth, were both so desirous of that famous Sunday crossword puzzle that neither attacked it on Sunday – they waited until he made a copy so each could work it.

Problem-solving was his forte. Too many claiming reservations for the limited number of tennis courts at the Upper Main Line YMCA in Berwyn? – then how about doubles on a Sunday morning?

These are among the small graces of a very large and genial man. Problem-solving while the most enduring member of the Tredyffrin/Easttown school board meant listening sympathetically equably through hours of rage from residents roused by his committee's recommendation that Paoli and Strafford schools be mothballed. His response was always positive, gracious.

Eventually, the board did dump the district's oldest buildings, but Bob Goshorn stayed on until it was done. He served longer than any other school director, retired Superintendent George Garwood recalled Saturday at a tribute at the Chester County Historical Society – 28 years. The board needed a representative on the county Intermediate Unit; he went.

Bob Goshorn was a quiet fighter – usually – for what he believed was right. There are some people half his age around Paoli who knew the contents of the trunk of his MG convertible. A tennis racket and a can of balls shared space with a basketball and football, and those who would pick up a game of half-court basketball quaked when they saw him coming. One said, "He thinks it's all right to tackle the opposition!"

His knowledge of local history is legendary. His collections of memorabilia are awesome. *The Suburban* needed a Valentine's Day piece. Sure he had an assortment of Victorian cards. Come on out to Paoli.

Politics? – drawers full of campaign buttons and placards, all neatly mounted and filed. The Devon fireworks factory explosion? – he had already written that up for the *Tredyffrin/Easttown History Club Quarterly*, which he edited for years.

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Local historian Bob Goshorn displays some relics in this 1986 photo.

rumor of a burial ground occupied by Chinese laborers hired to build the railroad. A dreadful epidemic of smallpox had felled them. Nobody except some nuns would even bury them, memory recalls Bob recounting. "Want to see it?"

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Dauntless in all weather, he tramped around in the well known red shorts even through the bitter winter of 1993, changing to a multi-colored pair for the Radnor Memorial Day parade, hoisting the American Red Cross banner, smiling all the way.

He was in the midst of organizing next year's Berwyn Fourth of July celebration when he was struck down. He had a diary full of upcoming lecture dates and events – Main Line School Night, Valley Forge Historical Society, Radnor Historical Society functions. He played tennis almost to the end.

A lot of people will miss Bob Goshorn. He won't be leaving some requested research or clipping – or crossword puzzle – on the unlocked sun porch of his Russell Road home anymore. The walking encyclopedia walks no more.

See adjacent obituary.

Robert M. Goshorn

Community leader, historian

Robert "Bob" M. Goshorn, 76, of Berwyn, died Tuesday, Nov. 21, 1995, widower of Elizabeth Dawson Taylor, whom he married Sept. 14, 1939.

He was born March 22, 1919, to the late Gladys M. and Clarence B. Goshorn, of Malvern. He graduated from Radnor High School in 1935 and Swarthmore College in 1939. He attended the University of Pennsylvania School of Law.

A veteran of World War II, he was a prisoner of war in the European Theater.

He was employed by Curtis Publishing Co. in Philadelphia between 1946 and 1965 and the Magazine Publisher's Association from 1965 to 1972.

He was known for his active community service, including his years on the Tredyffrin/Easttown and the Chester County Intermediate Unit school boards, the Chester County Historical Society, the Tredyffrin/Easttown History Club, the American Red Cross and the Radnor and Chester County library boards. He was a pre-eminent authority on local history, an avid sports enthusiast and renowned collector on a wide range of interests.

He is survived by a daughter, Megan Fruchter, of Vista, Calif.; two granddaughters, Kimberly Goshorn Clarkson and Jessamyn Goshorn, both of Greenbelt, Md.; and a great-grandson, Kenneth Clarkson, of Greenbelt, Md.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Elizabeth; his son, Kenneth; his brother, William; and his grandson, Thor Goshorn Fruchter.

Service is 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 25, at the Chester County Historical Society in West Chester. Friends may call at the house from 4 to 6 p.m. Private interment is in St. Peter's in the Valley Episcopal Church in Malvern.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Swarthmore College Development Office or to the Chester County Historical Society.