



Local history scene is a busy one

By JAMES McCLURE
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York County has a historical community with hustle.

A new Saturday morning -- specifically Second Saturday morning -- lecture series is meeting monthly at the York County Heritage Trust.

Local architecture authority Scott Butcher is turning out a book seemingly every other month.

Scott Mingus' detailed book on the Confederate invasion of York County in 1863 is due out next year, and his university press book about the famed rebel unit Louisiana Tigers' role in that invasion is forthcoming.

Young folks are in the act.

Nine area students won awards in an essay contest about our nation's founders at a recent observance at the Colonial Courthouse on the anniversary of the adoption of the Articles of Confederation.

And there are new museums.

Some folks at southeastern York County's Old Line Museum are rehabbing Welsh miners'

cottages in Coulsontown near Delta.

Dallastown opened a museum earlier this year, and New Freedom is organizing such a building to house its treasures.

All this action comes in the real world.

In the virtual world -- specifically on the Web at Yorkblog.com -- four local historians are regularly posting bits of their own research and news about the work of others.

In their respective blogs, June Lloyd and the Scotts -- Mingus and Butcher -- join me in putting up stories and photos, receiving comments and responding to readers.

It's a busy -- and we hope informative -- interchange designed to help local readers and those across the world better understand York/Adams' past and present as they prepare for the future.

In my own part of Yorkblog -- local history blog York Town Square -- I've written more than 1,200 stories, called posts.

The number of York Town Square pages viewed by readers recently topped a half million in the past three years. On the Web, you can actually tell how many eyes are reading your stuff.

You can also tell their ages.

According to one counting service, 35 percent of my blog's readers are younger than 17 years in

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age. That means students are using my blog's searchable features to garner resource material in writing papers.

And female viewership of the blog outpaces male readership by 53-47. This informally confirms what I've observed on the speaking circuit: Women are more interested in history than guys.

Some blogs contain mainly off-the-cuff musings. The four York Blog history writers use sourced material in their posts.

The content is not dry facts and figures.

We'll sometimes dig into local historical controversies. Is York the nation's first capital? Is York Fair the nation's oldest? Was York really the Detroit of the East? Why is racism such an issue around here?

I take a special interest in exploring the myths and realities that help define York County.

Clearly, I'm not alone in this endeavor.

And our community conversation about its past and its impact on the present is rich because so many researchers are asking why we are the way we are.

Those questions are important whether dealt with in the real or the virtual world.

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Record/ Sunday News. He has writ ten five books on York County history and blogs daily at yorktownsqua re.com. To contact him, call 771-2000, or e-mail jem@ydr.com .

FROM THE HISTORY BLOGS

A sampling of posts adapted from York Town Square blog:

War bailed out nation, factories: Some news accounts say that the current down economy is pushing up the sale of safes.

The idea is that when the stock market is down, people want gold and other valuables in "safe" places.

According to a recent York Daily Record story, safe business locally is steady but not explosive.

Steady business was not the case in the Great Depression, at least not for York Safe and Lock.

Poor business prompted York Safe and Lock's S. Forry Laucks to seek government aid in the form of defense contracts in the buildup to World War II. That lobbying morphed into the York Plan as World War II evolved.

In those days, many York manufacturing magnates fell on the Republican side, eschewing government handouts.

A bad economy changed things then -- and now.

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Tech enjoyed sunlight: Should perennial loser York County Technical School continue to field sports teams?

York Daily Record/Sunday News sports writer Frank Bodani probed that question as part of his 22-part Greatest Athletes series.

Tech athletic director Rob Caruso seemed to settle the question:

"If you don't have athletics, a lot of other things are going to be gone. Is it really a school anymore?"

A lack of athletics would have cost Tech's football team one bright moment in the sun in 1991.

"Never to be Forgotten" tells that story:

"Valerie Fryberger and Renee Houseal are thought to be the first girls to play prep football in the county. They are members of the York County Vocational-Technical School team. Coach Darryl Markley supports the girls' decision to play on the gridiron."

Another name for the list: The e-mailer was blunt.

On your list of firsts, why have you skipped the name of Vilma Garcia-Jones, the first Latina to serve on the York City School Board?

First off, Vilma Garcia-Jones, who died in February 2002, was the major proponent in York County for the Latino community in the 1990s.

That was a time of great growth in the Spanish-speaking population in York, particularly those coming from Puerto Rico. And as the forceful exec at the Spanish American Center, Vilma Garcia-Jones was in the right position to serve as community spokeswoman for that community.

Second, our list of firsts is a work in progress. As researchers -- or readers -- reveal additional firsts, we'll add their names.

When Garcia-Jones gained appointment to the school board in October 1989, newspaper reports hedged, saying she might be the first Latino to sit on the board.

Thomas Hall, board president at the time of the appointment, said no Latinos had served since he arrived on the scene in 1985.

Luther B. Sowers, longtime assistant superintendent of city schools, also cannot recall any Latino board members before Garcia-Jones. Nor can Doris Sweeney, the first black woman to serve on the board. So Vilma Garcia-Jones will be added to the list of firsts.

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