

NORTH DOCK

MOMENTS FROM THE PAST
BY: ED ZIEMBA – CHARTER MEMBER

The FPS Club had its origin on the North Dock in Hudson in the year 1938. I call your attention to a painting on the wall by an artist given to Arthur Martin who in turn donated to the club. Also a photo of the North Dock put on canvas given to me as a birthday present and later presented to the FPS. The North Dock was made up of boathouses and fishing shacks to store equipment for duck hunting, fishing and recreation on the river.

A group from the Polsains Club of which I was a member came down to the dock. The Polsains was a club in the Sacred Heart Church which had a disagreement of the purchase of new uniforms for its softball team one of the best in the county. Incidentally I served as its basketball coach.

They talked with us about forming another club to carry on with athletic sports. After much discussion, we being mostly hunters and fishermen finally convinced them to form a hunting and fishing club. Realizing that we needed larger and heated facilities, we approached the Polish National Alliance Organization. Their club was on the corner of South Front and Warren Street, across from Washington Hose Company. We asked them if we could hold a meeting in their cellar. They agreed and we held our first real meeting there. The first order of business was to elect our officers. Our original officers were all former members of the Polsains Club. They were Ed Mazure President - Walter First Secretary - Theodore Newbauer Treasurer. I would like to mention that Walter First was the primary mover in the formation of the F.P.S. Club. The next order of business was to establish the dues. We settled on 20 cents a month with an agreement with the Polish National Alliance for the use of their cellar. Ten cents went to our treasury and ten cents was given to them for each member and month.

While we were located in the PNA cellar we held numerous Polish Hops in their hall upstairs and had people from all over the Capital District attend thus allowing our treasury to increase. We also held many a clambake in their backyard next to Promenade Park put on by Frank Keller. We also made a lot of money for the PNA Club as we hung out there on Saturday nights when the bartender was on duty.

While we were in the PNA Hall, we maintained a trap shoot station down on the North Dock. We saved a lot of missed clay pigeons that fell in the water and then picked up at low tide for other shoots. Those that fell on roofs of shacks were broken. We held a big trap shoot on the old brickyard property north of Hudson and had shooters from all over making a nice profit.

After about three years World War Two arrived and most of us younger members had to leave for service. For four years of the war I have no knowledge of the events in the FPS but I give great credit for keeping the club going to Ed Mazure and Walter "Fudge" First. By the way Ed Mazure was a brother of well know member Joseph Turek's wife.

Now after the war and a new president, John Zlomek, we had thoughts of expanding and started looking to acquire our own property. We looked at

property on the old brickyard above Hudson but were lucky not to consider it. Then we looked at property on Mt. Merino before there were houses located there. We only had $1200 dollars in our treasury so things looked bleak until we came across Boyd Draffin who offered to sell 35 acres of his dairy farm. Our present location 30 acres on our club side of Newman Road and 5 acres across the road for parking. We used all of our money $1200 to buy this property.

Now that we had land, our efforts were directed to clear the property. Talk about a forest, cedars and pine trees covered every inch of our property. In those days we had no chainsaws just plain axes and handsaws. We saved the trunks and large branches of the trees to be used in the construction of our first pavilion, beer bar, and hot dog stand. What bonfires we had burning the brush, flames reaching at 100 feet high. We finally got to use modern machinery, a bulldozer operated by Frank Leck. We tried twice to dynamite the knoll in our bake parking lot but failed as we needed more dynamiting. The Dozer and Frank were provided by the Atlas Cement Co. anytime we had to use it. Frank even tried to form a lake by damming the swamp over the hill of the bake grounds. It was a rainy day and the mud kept sliding back down. Frank also dug our pond by the club which in later years was enlarged.

The building of our own club was next in our plans to develop our property. Since we spent all our money in the treasury, some members like Gordon Kelly, Fumzy Jahns, Stanley Witko and a few others made financial aid out of their own pockets to get started. It took some time but we eventually paid some of it back. We were fortunate to have many members experienced in the trades, masons, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, iron workers. I would like to say that we had plenty of help with everybody pitching in, which sometimes is lacking today. To show the spirit and dedication that was put in the construction of our club, many days and hours were spent there, often neglecting our own families. We worked nights after work and every Saturday and Sunday. We provided the refreshments from our own pockets, chipping in for cold cuts and buying quart bottles of beer from Stan Witko and Gordon Kelly donating a half keg of beer numerous times. We begged "borrowed" and received plenty of help from the outside like use of trucks and material. When pouring the foundation if we needed sand or other material, we would call Supt. of Highways John Otty even on

Sundays and he would leave his home to deliver it. Here I would like to mention that we had one of the worst snow blizzards ever and we did not know whether to hold our annual banquet. John Otty told us if we were to hold our banquet, he would keep plowing Newman Road until everybody left for home and so we did have the annual dinner.

Did we have problems building the club, yes we did. There were no architects, or blue prints, just go along as best we could. We eventually had to strengthen the roof and add the small entrance addition to support that wall.

Pirate Magee and Bernie Conine volunteered to put in the fireplace. Our furniture was four 16 foot benches. The floor was made of shiplap boards but we were able to hold Saturday Nite Polish Hops on it. Joseph Turek and John Leck eventually put knotty pine boards on the inside walls. Bob Almstead took over paneling the kitchen and tiling the floor later reconditioned by Vaughn Grener. Our bathrooms were outhouses for the ladies by the picnic grounds and for the men just across Newman Road. A few years later we made an addition to the club for bathrooms and a shower in the cellar for us to clean up after the picnics and bakes.

Next we turned to get the bake grounds for use. Everything was out in the open no roofs. We then laid down a concrete floor for dancing. To protect us from the weather it was decided to build a pavilion. It was supported by cedar post, a wood roof covered with tar paper. Similar to the bar building and ticket building still standing there. But alas, the pavilion was no more collapsing one Friday Nite in a raging snow storm.

We used outhouses for many years on the bake grounds for men at the present location and for women on top of the hill toward the swamp. For water we had wells driven at the clubhouse, later deepened, also at the bake grounds. Tony Anelle brought a well digger from the old Lone Star Cement Co. and we ourselves drilled another well on the bake grounds and a well on the picnic grounds. While drilling we almost lost the drill bit in the well with hemp coming down like snow. The brand new three inch rope had slipped off the pulley without our knowledge and we kept drilling. Luckily Tony noticed the hemp falling on his head and we stopped as the rope was ready to part. We had to get somebody to splice the rope to finish the job and return the

driller to Lone Star.

Now the big job came to clear the wreckage of the wood pavilion and replace it with the present steel building. Led by Vince Winig the iron workers took over the job with a lot of help from others. New holes had to be dug for bigger piers. We bought the iron from the contractor remodeling the Lone Star and slipped extra pieces on the trucks without their knowledge. The old wood pavilion was the same size in width as the present one but we bought more land from Draffin to extend the steel pavilion another twenty feet. For the new dance floor over the concrete old one the members tore down an old corn silo. They used the wood slats from its sides and laid the dance floor, sanded and painted it ready for dancing.

The next big project was put up the building to house our new ladies and men's rooms. We dug and made our own septic tank. This was a big improvement and convenience for us and customers of our bake grounds and to satisfy the health laws.

For many years, clambakes were our main money makers. Frank Keller put his low pressure steam boiler mounted on wheels on our grounds and as a member catered the bakes for us. In those days chickens did not come clean like today. On Friday nites before a weekend bake the members would gather at the club with their wives and clean the chickens. The chickens came whole and had to be split in half, guts taken out then washed in tubs of water. Then Saturday morning Frank would dip them in hot grease to brown them and they were ready to be steamed the day of the bake. Talk about washing fifty bushels of clams in that cold well water. Barbecued chicken came in style so we put up a pit made from corrugated tin roofing material and served 500 people one day. To improve this we put up the present steel building and using concrete blocks lined the inside with fire brick we got from the old Stottville Mills.

Now came the last big project on the bake grounds, the food bar. The V & O Press Company gave us the roof section of a shed used to protect their employees bicycles. Kaiser Drilling lent us their low bed tractor and we proceeded to transport the rood towards our club on a Saturday. To move a large load on the highways you need a permit and that is only for a weekdays never on Saturdays. We did not even have a permit and as we were nearing

the Greenport Firehouse a State Trooper stopped us asking where the hell we were going with our load. After we told him we were going to the FPS and him reprimanding us he told us to hurry up and get the hell off this main highway. We later learned our member Sam Kilmer who lived near that area called the State Police for a joke. The roof laid on the ground below the restrooms for a few years. We did not want to cut down any more trees where the food bar now is located for they provided shade from the sun. How were we going to get that roof up there? After long thought and little luck we arrived at a solution. We poured the floor and put up the concrete blocks for supports. Smig Jarmoska and George Koren working on construction nearby got a crane operator and his crane to come over. The crane picked that whole roof over the top of the trees and set it on the blocks prepared for it. All the major projects were now done on the bakegrounds.

Now came one of our largest projects, the lengthening of our old club hall and adding a large addition on the back side of the building. This took a lot of work and the skilled efforts of some of our best members. We all owe them many, many and many more thanks. Not to slight all the help on this job, but I would like to single out Puffer Wolfe, John Kopec and Dave Reinkens who were the prime movers in pushing this construction. Knowing they better can give the details, problems and finances on this project, I hope they will add their memories and thoughts to complete the story of the FPS Club. To remember all the details and fun we had on these events would fill a book and me, not a writer, I will stop now. Ed Ziemba.

