



Port Norris

Be a Part of History Today

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Port Norris Historical Society is dedicated to preserving the history of our unique village, located in Commercial Township in Cumberland County, NJ.

Current Happenings:

PNHS Next meeting: December 13, 2016 • 7:00 pm • 1723 Main Street
No November Meeting. Legends Dinner November 13. See page 2 for information.



SMALL TOWN - BIG DECISION

By Carol Saul Gromer

The news came long before first light. It was just after 4:30 in the morning when the bells of the Port Norris Methodist Church rang out. They were soon joined by the bells of the other churches in town and those in neighboring villages as they chimed out Victory. The war to end all wars was over.

Before the sun had risen, the celebration in Port Norris was started by four girls with sleigh bells and flags. Soon a parade swelled to a size that would have astounded many large cities.

"All over town every shade was rolled to the top and a light shone brightly from every window." It was a beautiful sight as the parade marched through the streets with four mounted marshals leading. Ladies left their kitchens, men on their way to work made a quick turn away from the oyster wharves and fell in line with the decorated automobiles, grocery wagons, milk wagons and scores of children who followed a brass band that seemed to appear out of nowhere. A truck load of people from Dividing Creek went through Port Norris streets cheering and singing. Spectators gathered from other near-by towns to wave and to cheer. At the corner of Market and Chestnut the Kaiser was burned in effigy.

Later that morning "The Advertiser" hurried to get out programs for an evening Victory Sing. The spontaneous outburst of patriotism continued to be fueled by the continuous ringing of the church bells, the band, Red Men, Boy Scouts, Red Cross members and the fire department with all its gleaming apparatus. There were several hastily made floats. One was of the Kaiser in his coffin and John Barleycorn¹. Another was the embalmed body of the "clown prince."² There was a wagon trimmed with flags followed by other gaily trimmed vehicles. When the parade was over, the Kaiser once again was burned in effigy. That evening it



A very young
Ruth Sockwell.
August 12, 1912
Photo courtesy of
Carol Saul Gromer

was on to the Victory Sing and nearly endless cheers for our country, our flag, our President, our Allies, our Boys and our Victory. The terrible, terrible dark days of war were finally over.

The above paraphrased descriptions from a *Bridgeton Evening News* article dated November 12, 1918, gives us an idea of the jubilation felt by the citizens and the sense of relief that came with knowing their sacrifices had not been in vain.

Even the darkest events have tiny points of light that shine far into the future. This war was no exception. One little girl from North Port Norris didn't fully understand the unrest and upheaval, but in the midst of it she made a decision. She was not yet four years old when the war started, and she had turned eight only three weeks before the great day of victory arrived in 1918. During those years, she saw mothers crying as their sons left home to face an unknown fate. She heard her family and their neighbors read the welcome letters from their boys overseas. On November 11, 1918 the war was over, but for some the misery continued.

She watched the wounded return home on canes and crutches and with their heads bandaged and their arms in slings.

Somehow she just knew she had to become a nurse and help the soldier boys who were injured and suffering. Years passed, but her resolve to succeed with her mission never wavered even when her father told her he couldn't help her with schooling. If she wanted to be a nurse, she would have to do it on her own. When her boyfriend asked her to marry him, she didn't hesitate to tell him that she was going to be a nurse. If he wanted to wait for her to finish school she would marry him, but first things first. Married women couldn't enroll in nursing school back then so he would have to wait.

She graduated with her coveted RN degree in June of 1931. From then until she retired on the eve of her 80th birthday, she practiced her profession with compassion for those in need. She was never able to help her precious soldier boys directly. There was no war in progress when she finished nursing school. By the time WWII was raging, she had accepted her sweetheart's proposal and was a young wife and mother. Her name had changed from Ruth Sockwell to Ruth Saul, but her devotion to nursing remained the same.

Even if life didn't exactly follow her plan, the war that was so horrible left soft furrows of caring in the mind of that little girl. The seeds of compassion and concern took root there and flowered into a life of service to others. In a way, she did get to help the soldier boys. While practicing her profession for more than 50 years, her patients were often aging veterans or their children and grandchildren. She loved being a nurse and her patients loved her. Ruth Sockwell Saul's career on earth ended on August 1, 2011, at the age of 100 years 9 months and 2 days.

A life well lived and a job well done.

1John Barleycorn is an autobiographical novel by Jack London dealing with his enjoyment of drinking and struggles with alcoholism. It was published in 1913. The title is taken from the British folksong "John Barleycorn".

2An idiot. A person who is royalty when it comes to fools. Often someone who says they can do something and fails the task.

Editor Note: Thank you Carol for sharing this story with us.



Ruth Sockwell Saul
on her 100th Birthday,
October 29, 2010.

Ruth died August 1, 2011.
She was a Port Norris
High School graduate
with the Class of 1928
and Bridgeton
Hospital School
of Nursing in 1931.

Photo courtesy of
Carol Saul Gromer

Annual Fundraiser *Legends of Port Norris Dinner*

In 2008, the Port Norris Historical Society began a yearly tradition of honoring those who have made a significant impact on our community. Honorees come from three categories: 19th Century, 20th Century, and Living Legends. Be they business owners, community leaders, or simply great citizens, they represent what is great about Port Norris. [See Past List](#)

WHEN: Sunday, November 13, 2016
Program starts at 3:45

Woman's Club of Millville . 300 E Street
(corner of 3rd and E St.)

Dinner prepared by the Runaway Chefs
Tickets are \$40.00 each

Please visit our website
for more details [Click Here](#).

2016 Legends to be Honored

LEGENDS IN HISTORY • Samuel Shinn

20TH CENTURY

Willis Robbins, Jr • Joseph N. Fowler • Vera B. Sockwell

LIVING LEGENDS

Barbara Adams • O'Connell Brown



Barbara Adams & Lady



O'Connell Brown

Membership and Renew for 2017

We would love to add your name to our growing list of members. Please give some thought to joining the PNHS. Membership fees are for Individual - \$10, Family - \$15, Benefactor - \$50 and over, and Student - \$1 (no voting privileges) and entitles you to discounts on our merchandise. Click here to renew or join, historicportnorris.org/membership.htm

Or mail your check to: Port Norris Historical Society, PO Box 187, Port Norris, NJ 08349.

Thank you for your support. Membership is key to applying for grants as well as your dollars help us continue with all of our endeavours.

See us on Facebook and our website
historicportnorris.org

If you are getting this email from a friend and would like to be added to our list, please [click here](#) and we will add you. If we received your email at one of our events and you do not wish to receive this newsletter, click here web@historicportnorris.org, we will remove you from the list. We do not sell or share your email with anyone!



The man on the far right leaning over the cadaver is Samuel T. "Doc" Day Jr. He was born March 24, 1891 in Port Norris. He attended Millville public schools, then two years at Dickinson College at Carlisle, PA. He went on to study medicine at The Medical College of Virginia in Richmond, followed by an internship at Northwestern General Hospital in Philadelphia. Photo Date: 1916. Doc Day was a PNHS Legend in 2008. [Click here to read more.](#) Photo Courtesy of Gloria Corson

Picking of the Month October 6, 1888

Joseph Garrison came very near drowning yesterday. He was in the act of pushing a scow away from one of the piers when the pole he was pushing with slipped and he fell into the river. Jack O'Brien who was near made a grab for him but got only his hat. The next time he got a hold of him and succeeded in getting him out. When he fell in he was very warm and after he was taken out was taken severely with the cramp.



NORRIS ASKS

HOW DO YOU PRESERVE A JACK-O-LANTERN?

To keep a pumpkin from drying out, cover it with a damp towel when it is not on display. To make your pumpkin last longer, wait for half an hour after you finish carving, then rub the cut areas and inside with a dry cloth and apply a protective coating such as petroleum jelly, clear furniture wax, or vegetable oil painted on with a brush. Some expert pumpkin carvers use several coats of lacquer or hair spray, which gives it a nice glossy finish. Source: thepumpkinfarm.com



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HAPPY FALL!

