

Spanning the Gap



A Guide to Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area ■ Summer 2007 ■ Vol. 29 No. 1 ■ www.nps.gov/dewa

Living Treasure Interview: A Life in History

Len Peck

by John J. Donahue

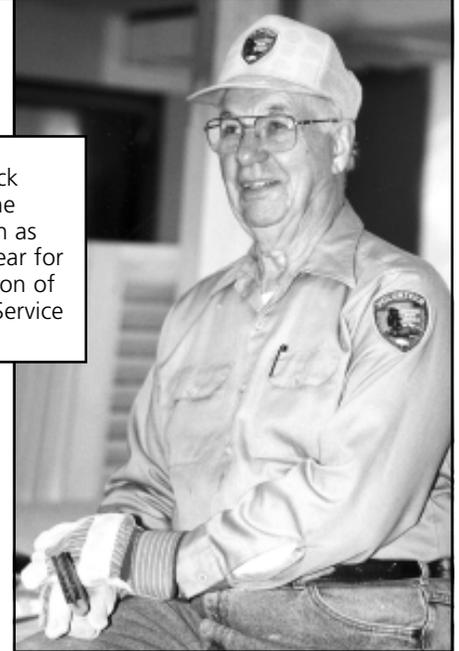
In the four decade history of Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DEWA), there is one individual that has always personified volunteerism. That man is Len Peck. Len Peck is the penultimate volunteer. Mr. Peck turned ninety seven, on April 10, 2007, as I penned this tome in his honor. At such a respectable age, Len would qualify as a national treasure in any culture simply for his longevity. He could certainly rest on his well deserved laurels for his past efforts without criticism. However, it is not his past efforts that we celebrate at DEWA as much as his present activities and his future plan.

Born in New York City, Len's family was in the shipping business operating from the Manhattan street known as Peck's Slip. From that dock on the East River Len's family operated their seven sloops making round trips to London and Boston. He started enjoying this area around our fair park as a young man in 1928. He describes visiting with friends at Lake Hopatcong that year and delivering an electric refrigerator to their cottage, a very rare item at the time. It was a resort environment and it was the roaring twenties. People were hard at work enjoying themselves in their summer retreats.

In 1970, Len relocated to New Jersey permanently, but his association with Walpack went way back to his youth. An avid stamp collector since 1924, Len began delving into postal history in 1928. His love of that history brought him to Walpack, New Jersey where a post office had been located since 1812. The original building was closer to Flatbrookville, but it was also known as Walpack at that time. The post office in Walpack center opened in 1855 with the postmaster being Issac Wendall. In between these two locations there was another one near what many people now call the Silver Spray Farm.

This great love of history and our rich local area is what inspired Len to follow what became his avocation, protecting and preserving the history and culture of this exceptional river valley. Working with park staff and other retired or semi-retired volunteers, he learned how to inlay and restore Dutch windows, doors, floors and anything historical that could be restored, replaced or rehabilitated. His efforts took him from the Black Farm to Montague and Sandystown and from the Rosencranz

Len Peck at Walpack Church in 1996, the year he was chosen as Volunteer of the Year for the Northeast Region of the National Park Service



House to the Zimmerman estate on the Pennsylvania side of the park. After all of these years, Len Peck is still a stalwart volunteer. He persistently appears for work, attends public meetings and advocates for the historical and cultural resources with fervor that inspires all. Len's consistent presence provides an iconic image of the value of volunteerism.

However, Len never shrinks from expressing his concerns or his dissatisfaction with the National Park Service on various projects. Even after reading a letter from Len outlining the short comings of our preservation efforts, I know that I can count on him to be there in the park contributing his time and efforts. Len Peck always shows up. We at DEWA count on seeing this living treasure often in our daily routines. His well honed skills in historic preservation and his unfailing dedication to protecting our historical buildings and educating the next generations regarding the critical lessons of the past make Len Peck a "Living Treasure" beyond compare. You may see Len inspecting some of the buildings in Walpack Center or elsewhere, that he provides a life line for every week. Let him know how much you appreciate all of his efforts to protect your legacy and your national heritage. We at DEWA are honored to have people like Len join us in the never ending battle for conservation. With volunteers like him on our side things can only get better. ■