Emmaus 1803 House dig provides both information and questions

BY BEVERLY SPRINGER
Special to The Press

Since 2012, Emmaus’s 1803 House has been the site of an ongoing archaeological dig. Built by Jacob Ehrhardt Jr. in 1803, the house occupies property once part of Ehrhardt’s father’s farm. A large barn and several smaller outbuildings originally accompanied the Georgian style, stone home. Although the barn and other edifices eventually disappeared, the house remained occupied until 1975 when Robert Rodale purchased and donated it to the community as a museum. Seven Generations Charter School teacher Ryan Laughren became interested in the area and an archaeological dig focusing on a stone foundation abutting the right side of the house began in 2012. Laughren and his students initially explored the site.

In 2014, Dr. David Small, a professor at Lehigh University, adopted the project. Since that time, Small’s students and volunteers from the community have systematically excavated the foundation, collected artifacts and recorded their findings. Unearthing of the foundation and collecting numerous artifacts have resulted in some tantalizing questions: Does the excavated foundation predate the existing structure? What purpose did the structure or structures built on this foundation serve? Is there more work to be done in relation to the house proper? Artifacts recovered from the site will be cataloged and studied at Lehigh University and then returned to the board of the 1803 House for permanent storage. In the meantime, Emmaus’s 1803 House remains a delightful example of early 19th century architecture and holds secrets yet to be revealed.