

In Emmaus, Eagle Scout Project Provides Hands-on Lesson in Colonial Fence Building

By MARGIE PETERSON | SPECIAL TO THE MORNING CALL | SEP 14, 2015 | 5:28 AM

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Jason Kleckner II of Emmaus built a historically accurate buck fence for the 1803 House in Emmaus for his Eagle Scout project with Troop 31 in Old Zionsville. (Alan Hawman CONTRIBUTED BY)

The Friends of the 1803 House in Emmaus weren't sure how to proceed with construction of a historically accurate fence between the Federal-style home and the railroad tracks. Then an old picture showed them the way.

It turns out an 1847 panoramic sketch of the house and property featuring a "buck fence" or "jack fence" was right under their noses, according to Alan Hawman, a member of the 1803 House Friends group.

"We struggled for quite a while before we realized that the fence style was hanging on the wall in the house," Hawman told Emmaus Borough Council last week.

The house, at 55 S. Keystone Ave., is owned by the borough but maintained as a museum by the nonprofit Friends group. It was put on the National Register of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 2003.

Once the Friends group decided what kind of fence was appropriate, it was up to Jason Kleckner II of Emmaus to build it for his Eagle Scout project with Troop 31 in Old Zionsville.

Because of the nature of the fence, getting the lumber didn't mean a quick trip to Home Depot. Kleckner, his father, Jason Sr., and friends made four trips to the wooded property of Douglas Miller in Delps, Northampton County, where Miller — who made the rank of Eagle Scout as a young man — let them cut down about 200 saplings needed for the project.

Dries Do it center in Lower Macungie donated a pail full of structural wood screws called LedgerLOKs, which the Kleckner's used to connect the saplings. Kristine Kleckner, Jason's mom, took photos documenting the project.

"The very first night was the hardest because they had to figure out exactly how to do it," she recalls. Doing all that hard labor in the summer heat gave Jason, a junior at Emmaus High who attends the Lehigh Career and Technical Institute half a day for automotive technology, a new appreciation for the lives of early Americans. Organizing friends and other Scouts to help with the project made him a better leader, he said.

"I feel accomplished," Jason said. "I'm glad I got it done. I didn't think I would get it done. Me and my dad thought we were going to get it done later in the fall." The more than 200-foot buck fence provides a safety function as a barrier against the railroad tracks for when the 1803 House hosts community events and school groups, according to Richard Farmer, president of the Friends group. "We now have a safe barrier that is compatible with our Colonial setting," he said.

The Friends of the 1803 House plan to dedicate the fence at its "A Very Merrie Halloween" celebration 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 3. The event will include a juried craft show, bake sale, basket raffle and a pulled pork dinner.

That day the group will also honor Jason for the more than 180 hours he put in to construct it. "He has donated this magnificent project to the community," Farmer said.

The 1803 House was designed by Jason Ehrenhardt Jr., whose father, along with Sebastian Knauss, contributed about 100 acres to the Bethlehem Moravian Church to create a settlement in Emmaus, according to the Friends website.

Jacob Jr. fought in the Revolutionary War and returned to Emmaus, building the Federal-style house in 1803 at age 43. He and his first wife, Susanna, had four daughters. He died in 1825 and is buried in God's Acre, the old cemetery just down the street at Third and Adrian streets.