

## **Fombell History Day Photos Oct 29-30 2011 By George L. Ball III**

I was given a tour of the Fombell area which included the Ball Hereford Farms as they are today. I have the Fombell History Group members to thank for this. They included Curt and Barbara Peffer, Ed Boots, Duane Stuck, and Beth Hazen. I was able to take some pictures and the purpose of this discussion is to explain what those photos represent. The photos are contained in my web site under memories, Chapter 9. They follow the photos used in my presentation given on October 30.

First in order to relate the new photos to the historical record which I have and had presented on October 30<sup>th</sup> at the Lillyville Church of God, I have interspersed the old pictures next to the new ones. Let's take a look at the pictures.

First is the Burry Farm (which was Ball Hereford Farm #3) which today is the Red Barn Theatre. The house, barn, and silo are still there, however the barn has been rebuilt and is the theater. I was told that the silo had never been used. The farm is located on State Rt. 288 just past Church Rd. going north.

Second is the BHF #2 which can be recognized by the stone wall containing the letter B in its center. In the old picture Lillian Ball and her Granddaughter Ann Ball were shown standing behind the wall. The new picture shows me and my wife, Shirley Ball, standing behind the wall (compare the trees). These pictures were taken about 75 years apart. The house is shown from the front which is on Church Road. Note how the trees have grown there also. Next I show George L. Ball Sr taking a picture with a very sophisticated camera. He is facing the house standing on Church Rd. Note the pillar to his right which is still there and has a stone etched with the year 1930 on it. I tried to get my picture standing in about the same position. The barn and silo are still there to the rear of the house.

Next are pictures at BHF #1 which is now Hereford Manor Lake. The lake is shown along with the dam which has created it. There is a paved road on the top of the dam. It is at the other end of the road shown that the barn, out buildings, silo, house and garage existed. Interjected here are signs showing that the property is now owned by the State of Pennsylvania. Included in pictures, taken at the Old Cabin Inn, are Barb Peffer, Edna Scheidemantle, and Curt Peffer with Shirley Ball.

I'm shown standing in front of the dam and lake. I've also attempted to get some panoramic shots of the lake (each picture contains 4 or 5 pictures stitched together). One reason I took these pictures is that in the months following my visit the lake was to be drained and the dam removed. Thus this area will be undergoing a major change and such pictures can never be taken.

The above pictures were taken by me on Oct 29<sup>th</sup>. The following day we returned to the Peffer's. Their house is shown along with the fog on that morning (the day before there had been snow in the morning). This day Curt and Ed Boots took me back to BHF #1 in a 4-wheel vehicle so we could explore the house and barn site. It was very wet.

The entrance to the remains of the BHF #1 is at the spot where it was in the picture post card showing three men holding cattle. It is on a curve so it is best to turn in to the right just past the lake going north on State Rt. 288. Turning left going south is hazardous since you can't see traffic around the bend. The first picture is the one showing the tree with yellow leaves above some nice green grass. A roof is shown on the ground. This apparently was a water well housing.

After turning in, we drove straight up the road and through the site where the big red barn was (since the road had turned in front of it). We continued back to where a cut had been made in the earth to release water from the lake. I've shown this cut in the pictures. Most interestingly to me, especially, was the seam of coal made visible by this cut. I think the seam was supposed to be about 3 ft. thick. My understanding is that there is a second similar seam of coal down about another 15 ft. These seams have well defined names which I can't remember. Obviously they represent what is left of the coal strip mined from the area of the farm which ended up being turned in to a lake. The area of the farm where the buildings existed was intentionally not stripped. (I had previously assumed, incorrectly, that they had been taken down at that time and that was why they didn't exist today.)

The building shown next to the lake was not part of the farm. It was added after the lake was made and was basically a bait shop supporting the fishing aspect of the lake.

There are two buildings remaining on the site. One is the office/lab/garage of George L. Ball and the other a potting shed which probably supported Lillian Ball's flower gardens. The office has had a second garage added to it by the Fish and Game Commission who have been operating the site. The original building was constructed of a yellow glazed brick. The addition is also made from a yellow brick but it is not a perfect match. The building as it was in the early '40's and as it looks today are shown in the pictures. Again the outstanding differences are in the trees which have grown from 5 ft. to over 50 ft.

My memories include the French doors which mark the entrance to "Cowboys" office. They are still there although in very poor shape. At best the hardware may be salvageable. I had a picture taken of me entering the office through these French doors. This was the first time in 67 years and importantly the first time ever without my Grandfather's permission or escort. The building is probably stable but needs a new roof, windows and doors.

The "potting shed" is shown to be in decent shape. Not really a living space, especially in the winter time. There were concrete streets and curbs. Most of them are still there although covered with dirt in many places. Finally is the flag pole which is shown many years back and is still there today towering above the driveway. The Red barn Theatre and the house of the original Burry farm are shown again since we passed them on the return from BHF #1.

The Annual Fombell History Day was held at the Lillyville Church of God on 408 Hickernell Rd, Ellwood City. My photos show the massive collection of very large pictures and albums filling the basketball arena sized facility. Many of the Hiram Ball archived photos were blown up to a size of about 3 ft. X 2 ft. The resolution of these pictures was amazing. Included were pictures of the Ball Hereford Farm #1 when it was owned by the Wilson's prior to the purchase

by George L. Ball. Importantly, the glassed in porch on the driveway side which contained the large fireplace did not exist at that time. The Wilson's are in the pictures with their work horses. There were many other pictures from the Fombell's past.

The History Day event itself was attended by over 200 people. They viewed the many pictures and documents. I had the pleasure of giving the feature presentation "The Ball Hereford Farm" during which Shirley took a few pictures of me. I was preceded by Duane Stuck and Edna Scheidemantle discussing the purpose of the Society and by Ed Boots who presented the history of the Ball Farm property going back to early U.S. history when a land grant was issued. Beth Hazen followed up my presentation by giving my biography.

The Fombell History Group have an artist make block prints of the year's feature which are sold throughout the year to raise money for the Group. This year the block was the Ball Hereford Farm barn created by David Kennedy. They gave me one as well as a print of the original artwork. It was presented by Kennedy, himself. The presentation is shown in the pictures.

The day before the Event I stopped by Baldinger's to see Betty Sabo (and her sister Thelma LaFebvre). That is Betty and myself in the picture. It turns out her Uncle and Aunt lived in the house behind the main house on the farm. They were William (Bill) and Estelle Hendry. He was the Farm Manager who had the prime responsibility for the cattle. Betty remembers visiting there often. Bill had moved from Texas to take this job. He is in the Post Card picture at the entrance to the farm and in many pictures shown holding the cattle. The picture with the cattle in front of the barn was given to me by someone from the audience. It has the name George L Ball and his Fulton Bldg address stamped on the back.

When I toured the BHF #1 site (with Curt and Ed) I had a GPS in my pocket which tracked our path. I'm afraid the GPS signals were blocked some when I was in the truck, but generally the track is good. I entered the track on Google Earth and took pictures of that. This is what is shown in the next 3 pictures. I also cropped the house and barn out of an early photo (shown), adjusted their size and position, and placed them on the Google Earth map to show where they were located.

The next photos show the snow outside our room in Gibsonia when we woke Saturday morning 10/29. This snowfall broke many records and put many in the dark for weeks. Fortunately, there was only 3-4 inches where we were.

Another attendee gave me the newspaper clipping which reported on the Old Furnace polo team's loss. Henry Ball was injured in the game and Hiram Ball scored 1 of the 3 goals racked up by the team. These were G. L. Ball's sons (my uncles).

The next pictures show the BHF barn artwork done by David Kennedy, as well as the documentation given to me. Then follow pictures of the pieces of boards taken from the BHF fences as well as a piece of the French door from GLB's office. These were presented to me by Curt Peffer.

The Fombell History Group also creates a 12 month calendar which is sold as a money maker. The cover and back pages are shown and were taken from the Hiram Ball archived pictures of the Hereford cattle.

The final pictures were given to me by Betty Sabo and are of her aunt and uncle Bill and Estelle Hendry. The final picture shows the farm in its glory probably in the 30's.

Over all a wonderful day and a most appreciative audience. Here's hoping the Historical Society will continue to preserve the history and artifacts of Ball Hereford Farm.

George L. Ball III  
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