

Point Pleasant Historical Society

September 9, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: President Jim Malone opened the meeting at 7:31 PM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Old Business: Rich Morris, Museum Administrator, noted the Bennett Cabin has been open the first and third Saturdays of the month since May and that last Saturday (9/7/19) would be the last Saturday open as it is time to prepare the Cabin for Christmas. He also noted that the Kickoff to the 100th Anniversary of Point Pleasant on August 23, 2019 at Riverfront Park brought a number of people to the Cabin.

Vice President Len Ludovico reminded attendees to pay their \$10 dues (which includes 7 meetings with 7 speakers and 7 newsletters) if they haven't done so already. Point Pleasant History DVDs are available for \$20. He also brought several issues of pertinent magazines for member to take if interested.

New Business: None

Program: Joseph G. Bilby presented the night's program titled "The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in New Jersey," based upon his book. Bilby has authored, co-authored, and/or edited 22 books and over 400 papers about the history of the State of New Jersey and has received numerous awards for his work. He is the part-time Assistant Curator of the National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey located in Sea Girt.

Bilby explained how New Jersey was not a great place for the Klan to start because of the high number of immigrants in the state (in 1920, 20% of the people living in New Jersey were born outside of the state). The image on his book's cover is of a Klan wedding on the beach in Point Pleasant Beach. Bilby explained the terminology used by the Klan for various positions within the organization. No governmental official would get involved with the Klan in New Jersey. It is believed that the Klan greatly exaggerated their numbers of members and of supporters at rallies and the like.

During the 1920s, there were documented Klan populations in Zarephath (Somerset County) and in the central rural part of New Jersey including Ocean and Monmouth Counties. The Point Pleasant Klan had at least one meeting at what is now known as Harvey Memorial United Methodist Church in 1923. At least three scandals involving high-ranking member of the Klan led to more members walking away from the group. The Klan owned what was known as the Elkwood Park property in Belmar and the Red Bank Klan participated in the Red Bank Armistice Parade in 1925. Eventually the Point Pleasant Klan relocated to the Marconi Hotel in Wall Township which then became the headquarters of the New Jersey Klan. A dispute over the Hotel between the two groups led to the New Jersey Klan throwing out the Point Pleasant Klan.

The Klan's numbers in New Jersey continued to decline in the early 1930s, and many groups reorganized with different names such as the "White Band Chapter." The term "Ku Klux" means nothing. It was selected by William Joseph Simmons, founder of the Ku Klux Klan, because he began the group to be similar to a fraternal society and thought the term mimicked similar societies.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM with refreshments. 42 members attended

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Ocone, Secretary