

Our Visit to the Hoff-Vannatta Farmstead

By Jack

Today we went to the Hoff-Vannatta Farm fund raising day, where the volunteers restoring the old house, barn and other buildings got to show us around the place. We started with a tour of the farmhouse. The house really is an amazing place, and must have looked beautiful when it was first built, although it fell into disrepair many years ago. Right now, they have just finished making the house safe, so the house is still in disrepair. But I am confident that they will, one day, get it back to its original state.

Anyway, the house is quite large, but the volunteers had a fire burning in the main room, which warmed us up. The basement was large and could only be accessed from the outside, although it looked like there was once a stairway going down to it from the next level. We were given a tour through the house by a very nice volunteer, and also met Mike, their resident architect, who told us some more about the place. We learned that the house had been used as a farm, over the years, by two families, the Hoff and the Vannatta family. When restoring it, they decided to put the two names together, although the two were probably not connected.

We also learned some of the techniques being used to restore the house. Because of structural problems, many parts of the foundation are being taken apart, the stones numbered to keep them in the right order, and then rebuilt using the same stones. We learned about the battle fought to keep it from being bulldozed. Back in Trenton, where no one knew what a valuable historical building it was, it was slated for demolition. When some people in the area volunteered to restore it, and brought some of the people down from Trenton to see it, they realized how important it was to protect and restore it.

After we toured the house, we had a look at the summer kitchen, where two of the volunteers were actually preparing some of the food people would have eaten when the farmstead was built. The food smelled very good, I have to say! After that, we had a look at the outhouse and the smokehouse, neither of which was in use.

Next, we headed up to the barn and found our guide from earlier up there. He decided to share with us some of the more interesting facts about the barn and show us around. The beams in the basement level are massive, and because there are no seams, each must have come from an enormous tree. Also, he showed us how all of the different parts were numbered. That meant that the whole barn was assembled piece by piece from separate components, like a giant jigsaw puzzle. Upstairs, the barn was cavernous, with a ceiling that stretched high above our heads. It really was impressive to see a building so large.

Lastly, we went to see a good friend of ours, Andy Drysdale, who was dressed in French and Indian War gear and was happy to fire his replica musket for people coming by. Dad also learned how to throw knives, and we had a chat with Andy, but then, sadly, we had to go. I really enjoyed our tour of the Hoff-Vannatta farmstead.