



Armar J. Bordner

November 1, 1904 - November 20, 1994.
2.6.2006, by Jo Ellen Litz (updated 9.13.2014)



Per an April 9, 1990 Lebanon Daily News article by Pat Seaman, “Huddled against the hillside next to a waterfall and amidst a forest of hemlocks, sequestered in the mountains of Bethel Township, stands a rustic hand-hewn log cabin.... Off the beaten path..., the primitive structure sitting on a parcel in the Blue Mountains of Swatara State Park is totally hidden from passerby.”

“So how did Bordner ever find such a secluded spot? ‘I wanted to build a weekend shack in the mountains...I came out here and saw the waterfall and decided I’m not going to build a weekend shack—I’m going to build a home.... Bordner spent 2 ½ years building his dream.” Armar J. Bordner was a retired woodshop and drafting teacher in the Northern Lebanon School District.

Armor and Margaret (Peg), his wife, were the parents of one daughter, Linda. Reportedly, in 1939 he and his students finished the cabin by hand using materials found on the site--logs and stone. “...His uncle cut down all the trees used to make the hand-hewn logs comprising the cabin. The corners were all fit together by hand, he notes, adding that he built the mammoth stone fireplace in the living room himself.... And that picturesque view, accompanied by its own symphony, is what Bordner wakes up to every morning. Bordner is quick to point out the name, “ACRIGGS” inscribed on one of the rocks by the falls is in memory of Colonel Benjamin, chief engineer of the old Union Canal.” Aycrigg (correct spelling) once owned the parcel of land on which the cabin sits. Inside is a raftered ceiling.



“Bordner is the first to admit that building his home was a lot of hard work and that he “ probably would never go through it again’ But then maybe the agony is worth it just to enjoy the ecstasy of Bordner’s tranquil wilderness. After all, how many people fall asleep to the sound of water cascading down the mountain? How many people are awakened by the chopping of a woodpecker looking for shelter or have chickadees eating out of their hands?”

In the 1970’s, when the homes were taken by eminent domain for Swatara State Park, he resisted, and was awarded a lease that allowed him to stay in the cabin for a nominal annual rental fee until he died. Upon his death, the Boy Scouts rented the cabin for about \$1 per year. They eventually turned the lease back to the State Park. In 2005-06, Swatara Watershed Association successfully petitioned Governor Rendell, Senator



Brightbill, and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for a 10-year lease, which must be renewed.

We all have a sentimental attachment as well as a respect for the pioneering endeavor and "last stand" effort against eminent domain made by Armar Bordner. Todd Tyrpin provided copies of the original blueprints for the Armar Bordner cabin. Gary Wolfe forwarded a scan of a picture of Armar, complete with Armar's initials, from his Northern Lebanon HS

yearbook. Currently, Mike Willeman has secured new blueprints to meet Labor and Industry standards, and developed a project list itemizing needed materials. Window bars were installed, but concrete work—bases to hold additional posts under the floor and porch piers, which washed out and must be replaced prior to adding decking to the porch—must be completed; a fence extending 25' in either direction along Rattling Run; a handicap ramp.... Both financial and volunteer sponsors for this work are being sought.

In addition to community volunteers who helped, thanks to a suggestion by Denise Donmoyer, the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps (PCC) crew working at Sweet Arrow Lake helped to replace the roof, which had numerous large holes in it.

The Bordner Cabin is currently a **"point of interest"** on both the Heritage and Swatara Water Trails; a place for artists to **paint** nature; a **rest stop**; a **picnic pavilion**; a **platform** for people to sit and gaze at the falls; and finally, an **interpretive site**. Pennsylvania timber products were used to build the cabin. In fact, in the fashion of Rustic Architecture created and used by the National Park Service to have buildings blend into nature, **Armar used lumber and stone found on the site.**

Using the criteria of workmanship, engineering, location, and age, in 2009, this site qualified for the National Register of Historic Places. Local history is important to us. All State and National historic registers start with local history. Therefore, SWA is pleased to have played a small part in preserving this cabin.

