

# Hunterdon Historical Newsletter

Volume 48  
No. 3  
Fall 2012



## Hunterdon County Historical Society

www.hunterdonhistory.org

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### Oct 21 - Autumn House Tour

Lambertville, NJ

www.lambertvillehistoricalsociety.org

#### Oct 28 - Final Farmstead Tour

Closing Day and Potluck Dinner

Holcombe-Jimison Farmstead

www.holcombe-jimison.org

#### Nov 10 - Lecture/Book Signing

Lindbergh Kidnapping and Trial

Hunterdon County Courthouse

see page 1148

### SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

#### Nov 11 - Society Fall Meeting

"Peggy Shippen" by Stephen Case

see lead article

#### Doric House Open for Tours

Dec 2, 8, 9, 15, 16

Local Garden Clubs compete for best holiday decorations

#### Library Hours

Open 10 - 4pm these Saturdays:

October 13, 27

November 10, 24

December 8, 22

January 12, 26

February 9, 23

March 9, 23

and

Open 12-4pm every Thursday

except for holidays:

Nov 22 - closed for Thanksgiving

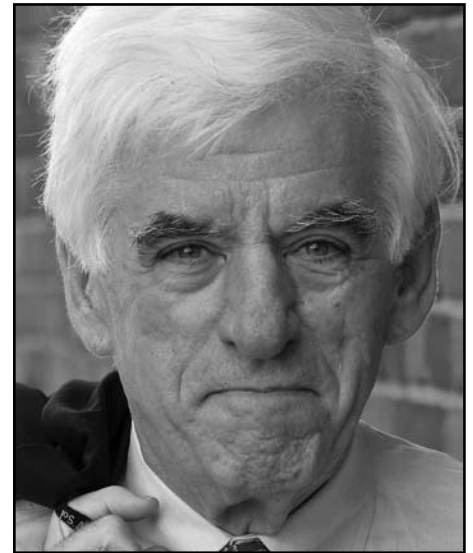
## Society's Fall General Meeting, November 11, 2012

### Flemington Native Stephen Case Tells All About Peggy Shippen Arnold

The Society's fall meeting on Sunday, November 11 features a talk by Stephen H. Case about his new book, *Treacherous Beauty: Peggy Shippen, the Woman behind Benedict Arnold's Plot to Betray America*, written along with Mark Jacob, a deputy metro editor at the *Chicago Tribune*. The public is invited to attend the program, which begins at 2 pm at the Flemington Presbyterian Church, 10 East Main Street. Refreshments will be served; there is no admission charge.

Case, who grew up in Flemington, will tell the story of Margaret "Peggy" Shippen before and after her marriage to Benedict Arnold, including the time in 1776 when she and her parents lived briefly on what is now River Road in Raritan Township. Following a question and answer session, he will sign copies of the book, available for purchase at \$20 with all proceeds benefiting the Society.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote about the book, "Treacherous Beauty is history with all the sex, suspense, knavery, and bravery of a spy thriller." The *Chicago Tribune* praised it as "scrupulously researched and fascinating." The authors were particularly cited for taking "the beautiful, intelligent Peggy Shippen Arnold," the daughter of a distinguished Philadelphia family and adept at getting what she wanted, from her place as a "mere footnote" to the role they believed she played in her husband's infamous deed of treason during the American Revolutionary War. In detailing her, they also portray American upper-class life during the revolution, and record her thoughts on the Flemington area. Benedict Arnold had been considered, until discovery of his treasonous plot, a daring and brave patriot and



Stephen Case

genuine hero. He escaped capture and fled to London. Peggy, assumed innocent by George Washington and other patriots, later followed him. The couple lived out their lives there on stipends from the British government.

Stephen Case, an attorney with a long and distinguished career, is managing director and general counsel of Emerald Development Managers LP, which provides equity capital for start-up businesses. He also is a trustee of the American Revolution Center in Philadelphia and a supporter of our Historical Society. Previously, he was for over 35 years a partner in the international law firm now called Davis Polk LLP; chairman of the board of Motors Liquidation Company, which liquidated and dissolved the original General Motors Corp.; and an adjunct professor at Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C. He served long tenures on the boards of Columbia University and New York Presbyterian Hospital. He was for several years secretary of the board of Glimmerglass Opera Company, Cooperstown, NY.

**HUNTERDON HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER**

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**Library Hours**

Thursday, Noon to 4 p.m.  
 2nd and 4th Saturday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
 and by appointment  
 TELEPHONE: 908-782-1091

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 EMAIL: hunterdonhistory@embarqmail.com  
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**Acquisitions**

Materials representative of the history of Hunterdon County and the families who resided here are welcome additions to the Society's collections. Large collections may not be available for research until they have been processed. To the donors of recent acquisitions, the Society expresses its sincere appreciation.

Aray family, photographs and Bible records. Gift of Les Jackson.

Audiotape cassettes (20) of radio programs featuring interviews about local subjects, 1975-1990. Gift of Rosemarie Doremus.

Deats, Hiram E., correspondence with R. B. Rankin, 1940-1943; Andrew Agans family photographs and other items. Gift of Fred Sisser III.

Fulper bowl no. 564 and pair of candlesticks; local souvenir glasses and mugs, ribbons, pins, photographs, scrapbooks, postcards, stereo cards, etc. Gift of Russ Lamendola.

Hoffman, Mary P., Box encrusted with shells, buttons, etc., containing calling cards, funeral invitations, advertising cards, etc., made by Mary P. Hoffman. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James Bartles.

*Hunterdon County Democrat*, microfilm 1867-1976. Purchased from New Jersey State Archives with funds provided by the Edward Thatcher Astle Memorial Foundation. 29 rolls received to date.

Hunterdon Theater photographs, 1942-1945, 11 items. Gift of Ruth Altamura-Roll.

*Just a Family History: An American Genealogy*, by Glenn L. Bower (2011), including a section on the Trimmer family. Gift of Michael Gesner.

Lindbergh Trial, 1935, notebook with autographs of participants, collected by Daniel Saunders, a "runner" or messenger for the press. Gift of his daughters Marjorie Saunders Billera, Shirley Saunders Zeliff and Betty Saunders Kenny.

Mathews family, collection of children's clothing, photographs, etc. Gift of Martha Koblisch.

New Jersey Highway Department, Plans of New Bridge and Covered Bridge over Wickecheoke Creek, 1961. Gift of Frank Scymanski.

Readington Township Annual Reports, 1860-1875; fans promoting C. Lloyd Fell for county clerk, 1935. Gift of Stephanie Stevens.

Rug, braided, 8 foot round. Gift of Elizabeth Schmid.

Rural Hill Cemetery Association, White House, N.J., minutes and records, 1853-1921, 3 v. Gift of Stephanie Stevens.

Sheppard, Mary Elizabeth, Large collection of books, photographs, family papers, etc., including Case family reunion records. Gift of her estate.

Shoemaker's tools that belonged to Jacob Jordy (1823-1913), 38 items. Gift of James Field.

*The Williams Families of New Jersey (Descendants of Matthew Williams of Wethersfield, Connecticut)*, by Lyle Keith Williams (1998). Gift of Fred Sisser III.

**Membership Report**

A warm welcome is extended to those members who have recently joined the Hunterdon County Historical Society.

Reported by Harold O. Van Fleet, Membership Chair

Margaret and William Browne, Flemington, NJ

Robert M. Castagna, Milford, NJ

Darryl Daum, Pittstown, NJ

Carolyn Davis, Dallas, TX

Melissa Gaffney, Milford, NJ

Elizabeth Ann Burd Goetz, Christiansburg, VA

Daryl Hoffman, Hampton, NJ

Henry Y. Kuhl and family, Flemington, NJ

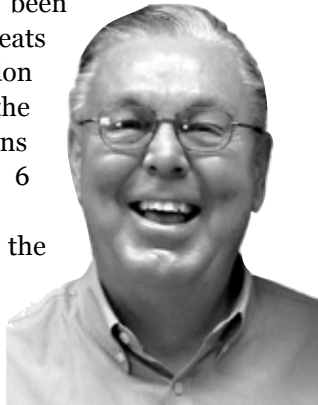
Wendy McNitt, Kansas City, MO

Ruth Otey, Morris Plains, NJ

Jerry Rotella, Flemington, NJ

## SOCIETY'S LONGEST LIBRARY VOLUNTEER RETIRES

Fred Sisser III – who has been a volunteer at the Hiram E. Deats Memorial Library of the Hunterdon County Historical Society since the 1960s – assisted library patrons for the last time on Thursday, 6 September 2012.



Fred Sisser III

Fred's association with the Society dates back to the late 1950s, when, while still a teenager, he became interested in his family history. At present, aside from one other member (Douglas Martin), Fred also has the distinction of being the second longest continuous member of the Society, having officially joined in 1965.

By way of his paternal grandmother, who was a Rockefeller from Readington Township, and his maternal grandfather, who was a Hoffman from old Lebanon Township, Fred has numerous German and Dutch ancestors who resided at an early period in Hunterdon County. Among the local families from whom he descends, his ancestry includes members of the Emery, Schenck, Young, Voorhees, Huff, Swackhamer, Van Doren, Schomp and Van Fleet families.

Subsequent to joining the Society, Fred began to volunteer at the Society's library when it was still located over the present Flemington Public Library, and after 1970 aside the Doric House. His day to volunteer was on the first Thursday of the month, as well as on the occasional fifth Thursday of the month. He is proud to note that he volunteered twice in the month of February in 1968 and again in February 1996, in which years there was a fifth Thursday in the shortest month. He also has the distinction of having served the most patrons on a given day: seventeen individuals on Thursday, 6 April 1995.

Down through the years Fred had many interesting experiences in his role as a library volunteer. Having kept a journal of his daily activities since he was a teenager has enabled him to recall many of these instances. One of the more exciting occurred on Thursday, 3 June 1993 in which he noted:

*My volunteer day at the HCHS, and after the usual a.m. work at the [Historical Society] Library and [County] Clerk's Office, Phyllis [D'Autrechy] and I dined alone at the [Union] Hotel as Carol [Haines] resigned and Roxanne [Carkhuff] was away. The two hours open to the public proved to be my busiest yet, for, in addition to the regulars (Harold V.F. [Van Fleet], Donald W. [Wallace] and Edna McI. [McIntyre]) there were over 10 patrons. There was no room at the tables. Among the people: Hiram Deats' great-grandson – young H. E. [Hiram E. Deats] reincarnated! Surveyors from Philadelphia looking for A. F. Williamson who owned property in the 1870s – every one thought A. F. was a man; she was a woman! Young girl researching the home of Peter Dilts, who is one of my ancestors! Never sat once...*

Fred's greatest reward as a volunteer has been in the many friends and acquaintances he has made over the years among the numerous individuals who visited the library to do historical research and/or trace their ancestry, which often times was in common with his own Hunterdon County heritage. He is especially pleased to know that many current members of the Society met Fred first in their initial visit to the Society Library, three of whom went on to become members of the Board of Trustees.

## HOW TO JOIN

Hunterdon County Historical Society  
114 Main Street  
Flemington, NJ 08822

Please enroll me as a member of your Society.

Annual	\$20 per year
Family	\$25 per year
Contributing	\$50 per year
Sustaining	\$100 per year
Institutional	\$100 and up per year
Life	\$400
Patron	\$1000 or more
Student	\$5 per year (up to 18 yrs old)

Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

ph # \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

I want to volunteer!  Yes

# MEMORIES OF HIRAM DEATS'S MINNEAKONING FARM

*A collection of childhood memories about a time, a place, and a way of life, that have all long since vanished*

By William M. Curtis

William M. Curtis (1932-2012) grandson of William Stothoff was raised across the street from the Deats' Estate in his grandfather's house. William Stothoff was a good friend and frequent traveling companion of Hiram Deats. William Curtis graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design and many of his designs still appear on Corning dishware. Locally, you see his work in the restoration of the Great Freight Station on Stangl Road.

-Society President Richard Stothoff

### Who, What, Why, and When

The extraordinary Hiram E. Deats, and the once grand Minneakoning Farm he inherited, are long gone – as are most of the people with any memories of them. Recently, I was reminiscing about my childhood – a large part of which was spent playing on the Deats Estate in the Depression Era 1930s and World War II 1940s. I began to realize that I was remembering some life-styles that are not only quite extinct in themselves, but included many practices, tools and places that dated back several generations earlier. Reconstructing these memories, I became increasingly aware of how privileged I was to have the Deats Farm as my playground. Uniquely enough, I decided to justify creating this record for the benefit of those with an interest in Hunterdon County's history.

First, a bit of explanation. I grew up in the house across Route 523 from Deats's which is still standing in front of the William Stothoff Co. well drilling business at Flemington Junction. The only other kids in the neighborhood were Hiram's grandchildren, Eddie and June Abegg, and the Pickell kids who lived in his tenant house – so much of my play time was spent with them on their home turf. Thus I had much free-rein access to the entire 100-acre Deats

Farm. I never realized it at the time, but in retrospect, this was like having a bit of Old Sturbridge Village, a dude ranch, and a sometime amusement park as one's everyday playground!

Next, though I have many memories of the Deats Estate, I must confess to very limited memories of the man, Hiram Deats. Most of what I know about him I have learned since his passing. My recollections of him are of a thin, older man with a very distinctive walrus mustache, typically dressed in baggy worn-out old business clothes (while on his farm), which looked as if he might have bartered them from some railroad hobo. He was a quiet, reclusive, unhurried man who appeared always to be deep in thought about one of his many intellectual or business pursuits. It was clear early on that Hiram's cerebral preoccupations afforded him little time, nor inclination, for passing the time of day with mere rugrats. So, while he was most often somewhere around when we kids were, interaction with him was extremely rare.

The following sketches, therefore, will be mostly about the Deats Estate – not so much about the man himself. I shall attempt to "walk" the reader around the estate, describing the various highlights as we go – with a few old stories thrown in just because.

### Hobos

Having mentioned hobos, I'll digress and write a bit about them, as they are a remembrance from my childhood that has passed into history. Contrary to the stuff of comedy, which they were frequently portrayed as in the movies, hobos, or tramps, were, for the most part, basically good men who had been financially ruined by the Depression. Desperately trying to find some kind of work and a new start in life, they were hopping freight trains all across the country. As kids, no one attempted to explain any of that to us. We were simply told that they were

men to be pitied but avoided, as some of them might be dangerous.

My home was close to the railroad and I remember these men coming to the back door asking if they could do some chores for food or simply begging for a cup of coffee. My parents didn't want to encourage them to stay around so never hired them, but they almost always got a cup of coffee handed to them outside the back door. They were never allowed in – no matter how cold it might be. Staying away from them was no problem for us kids as they were mostly dour, broken, and sad men who offered little interest or attraction.

Whether it's true or not, legend has it that these hobos marked the tracks with a code to let each other know which houses were good for a handout. Once fortified with a hot cup of coffee from our house, a hobo could walk the quarter mile or so up the tracks to the hobo "camp." This was located in a wooded hollow that sheltered them from the prevailing winds, kept them out of public view, and was close to a semi-potable stream. It was also a convenient boarding point for those planning to hop a freight train heading west.



Deats Farm. Hunterdon County Historical Society. Px214.

It was the Lehigh Valley Railroad's practice in those days of steam locomotives to stop west-bound freight  
*(cont'd page 1148)*



# Give A Gift of History

Give a gift with real meaning this holiday season - give a book about local history! We're selling several new titles at bargain prices. Several items were donated by the *Hunterdon County Democrat* weekly newspaper. Stop by our library to pick up your copy! For mail orders: Include \$5 for the first book and \$1 for each additional book (unless otherwise specified); maps and posters add \$10 shipping for up to 4 items. Out-of-country checks, add \$5. \*\*For these items if 2 or more are mailed in one tube, shipping is still \$10.

## Address on the Dissolution of Nations

William Paterson (HCHS 1997). Essay on political science written about 1770 by a future Governor of NJ and US Supreme Court Justice. 25 pp., soft cover. \$1

## Atlas of Hunterdon

Beers, Comstock and Cline (1873, reprinted by HCHS 1987). Contains maps of 14 townships and 32 towns. 77 pp., 13"x16", hard cover, \$40

## Baptists in Kingwood, NJ

Stephen Zdepski (1974). A History of the Kingwood Baptist Church at Baptistown and Locktown and the present Baptistown Baptist Church. 37 pp., illus., soft cover. \$5

## Beneath These Waters

Stephanie Stevens (2009). Chronicles the colorful history of Round Valley from its geological formation and Lenape habitat to summer refuge for early Revolutionary Patriots, rich fields farmed by some of Hunterdon's oldest families, and the reservoir that took the land for drinking water and recreation. 70 pp., illus., maps, index, soft cover. \$7

## The Centre Bridge

Elmer Roberson (1928). History of the Centre Bridge Company and the covered bridge over the Delaware River that burned in 1923. 10 pp., soft cover. \$3

## The Choyce Compendium

Betty Choyce Sheehan (2006). The Choyces were part of an English migration to Flemington in 1785, along with the Capners, Peter Howard, Isaac Passand, and others. 907 pp., indexed, illus., family charts, hard cover. \$85 plus \$10 shipping.

## Ye Colonial Kinsmen From Plymouth Rock to York Towne

Joseph N. Kearney, 1978. Genealogical study documenting about 200 immigrants of Plymouth, MA and New Amsterdam (present day NYC) and tracing their families through 6 generations. Over 3000 names. 8 24"x36" charts. \$30 non-members, \$20 members. Plus \$10 for shipping.

## Facts and Fantasies of Franklin Township

J. Edward Stout (1995). Traces Franklin Township's geographic, political and social roots over the 150 years from 1845-1995 when the rural community moved from "the combine to the commuter." The author's account of The Peak in Franklin speaks to the fantasies of the title, offering history with a sense of humor. 448 pp., indexed, illus., maps, soft cover. \$20.

## The First 275 Years of Hunterdon County, 1714-1989

Hunterdon Co. Cultural and Heritage Commission (1990). Local history by local experts. 125 pp., illus., maps, soft cover. \$3.50

## Flemington, NJ Map

O.H. Bailey and Co. Reprint of 1883 bird's-eye view map of Flemington. Approx. 20"x25". \$10. Plus \$10 for shipping\*\*

## The Flemington Fair Story

Kenneth V. Myers (1978). 95 pp., illus., soft cover. \$5

## Flemington Fair Poster

Russell & Morgan Printing Co. Reprint of 1885 Hunterdon County Fair poster. Approx. 24"x33". \$30. Plus \$10 for shipping\*\*

## Flemington Fire Department 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

140th Anniversary Parade Committee (1982). Includes the early history of the department, list of chiefs, photos of men and equipment from 1842 to 1982. 118 pp., illus., soft cover. \$5

## The Ghosts of Hopewell

Jim Fisher (2006). The professor's back! In his second review of the Lindbergh kidnapping, he examines many of the wild new claims about whodunit, how, and why. 200 pp., illus., hard cover. \$20

## History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, NJ

James P. Snell (1881, reprinted by HCHS 2008). The standard classic county history. 2 vols., 864 pp., illus., maps, hard cover. \$89.50 non-members, \$85 members. Plus \$10 for shipping.

## Hunterdon County, NJ Map

Lloyd Van Derveer & S.C. Cornell. Reprint of 1851 map. Approx. 24"x31". \$25. Plus \$10 for shipping\*\*

## Hunterdon County New Jersey Fisheries 1819-1820

Phyllis B. D'Autrechy (1993). Historical background on shad fishing and the names and locations of fisheries in the county. 44 pp., indexed, illus., maps, soft cover. \$7.50

## Hunterdon County New Jersey Militia, 1792

Hiram E. Deats (1936, reprinted by HCHS 1994). Alphabetical listings by township of "free and able-bodied white male citizens" between 18 and 45 yrs. 37 pp., soft cover. \$12

## Hunterdon County's Forgotten Lime Industry

Frank A. Curcio (2006). Winner of the NJ Author's Award. History of the lime kiln industry in Hunterdon, including background on the process of quarrying, the uses of lime and the major sites of mining in the county. 132 pp., illus., maps, soft cover. \$5

## Hunterdon Gazette Weekly Newspaper

Digital photographic images of the *Gazette* newspaper pages as well as typed and formatted text of the newspaper items containing people's names and events of Hunterdon County, with an overall name and key word index. Covers 1825-1866. DVD format works on both PCs and Macs. Also contains text of book *Hunterdon Place Names*. \$25 non-members, \$20 members and includes shipping.

**Hunterdon's Role in the Revolution**

*Hunterdon County Democrat* (1976). This large format booklet describes scores of brave local men and women who fought to found a free nation. Many rare old illustrations. 88 pp., illus., maps, soft cover. \$3

**I Remember**

Gloria Sipes Paleveda (1997). What if Tom Sawyer had been a girl? A Frenchtown matron tells 14 more tales of life along the Delaware early in the 20th century. 78 pp., illus., \$8

**In Defence of Her Honor**

By Dennis Sullivan (2000) – The New York press went wild in 1886 at the lurid rape and murder of Tillie Smith. An innocent man was set to hang. This real-life mystery occurred in Hackettstown, on the Centenary College campus. 169 pp., illus., soft cover. \$10 for non-members, \$8 for members.

**In the Grip of the Expert**

Egbert T. Bush (1904). Novel by noted Hunterdon County newspaper writer. 277 pp., hard cover. \$7 non-members, \$5 members.

**The Jerseyman: A Quarterly Magazine of Local History**

Hiram E. Deats, ed. (1893-1905). Local history and genealogy, primarily of Hunterdon County. Vols. 2-11, 376+ unbound pages, with added table of contents compiled by Roxanne K. Carkhuff. Some early issues may be supplied through photocopies. \$100

**Lindbergh Kidnapping**

Lost for 65 years! Found in a NJ barn! Original cartoon drama traces the "The Crime of the Century." Fully colorized computer-repaired panels with footnotes. 36 pp., soft cover. \$5 non-members, \$4 members.

**Lindbergh Newspapers**

Time travel in a box! This set of 11 reprinted local newspapers covers the "Trial of the Century." Rare photos. Depression-era ads are priceless! Great gift for students, history buffs, senior citizens and legal eagles. \$25 non-members, \$20 members.

**Marriage Records of Hunterdon Co, NJ, 1795-1875**

Hiram E. Deats (1918, reprinted with additions and corrections, 1986) 348 pp., hard cover. \$25

**More Records of Old Hunterdon County, Volume I**

Compiled by Phyllis B. D'Autrechy (HCHS 1998). Includes division of lands 1795-1876; Orphans Court Minutes 1785-1797; Naturalizations 1803-1876; and much more. 276 pp., full index, illus., maps, hard cover. \$25

**More Records of Old Hunterdon County, Volume II**

Compiled by Phyllis B. D'Autrechy, edited by Roxanne K. Carkhuff (HCHS 2000). Includes abstracts of wills; letters of administration and inventories, 1818-1825; bastardy cases, 1761-1890; and more. 331 pp., full index, maps, hard cover. \$25

**Old Stones at Oak Summit**

Kenneth V. Myers (1985). Kingwood Presbyterian Church at Oak

Summit, Kingwood Township. 20 pp., index, soft cover. \$3

**A Precious Place**

By Don Freiday (1997) – A local naturalist spins his favorite tales. An engaging flock of stories, whether you're home by the hearth or out on the trail. 161 pp., illus., soft cover. \$10 for non-members, \$8 for members.

**Raritan Township, NJ Map**

J.C. Sidney. Reprint of 1850 map. Approx. 24"x33". \$25

**Records of the Kingwood Monthly Meeting of Friends**

James W. Moore (1900). 42 pp., soft cover. \$12.50 non-members, \$10 members.

**The Ride to Pleasant Grove**

By Sal Vuocolo (1999) – A modern couple, repairing their Lebanon Township home, Hance Farm, follow clues to find the early-1800s family that worked this same land. 160 pp., illus., soft cover. \$8 for non-members, \$6 for members.

**When Leaves Grow Old and Other Poems**

Egbert T. Bush (1916). 32 pp., hard cover. \$6 non-members, \$4 members.

**The Trial of the Century**

Harry Kazman, Famous Trials Theater (2010). Video recording of the final showing of the two-hour drama that recounts the 1935 trial of Bruno Hauptmann who was charged in the 1932 disappearance of the Lindbergh baby. Filmed in the historic county courthouse, site of the actual trial. \$25

**The Vought Family, Loyalists in the American Revolution**

Donald E. Sherblom (2009). Explores the background of the historic Vought House in Clinton Township that contains rare plaster ceilings and was saved at the last moment from demolition. Also delves into the prominent family that built it, planned raids against neighbors and plotted disruptions of Revolutionary activities. 63 pp., illus, maps, soft cover. \$5

**SMALL PAMPHLETS****Postage Only \$1 Per Item****General Washington at Coryell's Ferry**

Hannah Coryell Anderson (1928, reprinted 1969). 24 pp., illus. \$2.50 non-members, \$2 members.

**Historical and Genealogical Sketch of James Sterling**

Edward Boker Sterling (1893). Hunterdon Historical Series, no. 3. 27 pp., illus., soft cover. \$2.50 non-members, \$2 members

**History of the Readington School, Formerly Called Holland Brook, 1804-1897**

John Fleming (1898). Hunterdon Historical Series, no. 4. 15 pp., soft cover. \$2.50 non-members, \$2 members.

**Tucca-Ramma-Hacking**

E. Vosseller (1901). Hunterdon Historical Series, no. 5. Tales and traditions from the area where the branches of the Raritan River meet. 21 pp., soft cover. \$2.50 non-members, \$2 members.

## HISTORY OF SCHOOLS IN HUNTERDON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY, PART 2

By Cornelius S. Conkling, County Superintendent

**D**istrict Number Five is known as the Mount Airy School. The district clerk of number five appears to have put forth an honest endeavor to collect the history of his district. But only from the tradition of his elders, even whilst he himself is no longer reckoned among the juniors of his neighborhood, has he been able to gather up any satisfactory account of the school proceedings in the years that have past.

The District Clerk of Mount Airy has however succeeded in obtaining some clear knowledge: he has ascertained that the first school house and indeed the only one erected in the district before the present house was built, stood about three quarters of a mile west of the spot occupied by the present building.

The first building appears to have been a very modest affair being built of logs about 16 feet square, and was probably put up by the Thopsons in the year 1800, and was erected more especially for the accommodation of the children whose parents were employed in the iron works of the said Thopsons.

The first school house of Mount Airy school district probably stood a little outside of the present boundaries of the district, in a part of the same now included in the Changewater district.

The present school house in this district is still a building of very moderate dimensions, was erected in the year 1835 at moderate cost, and although some small repairs have been quite recently put up on the building, it is by no means adequate in its interior arrangements to the comfort and proficiency of the pupils.

The names of the first board of trustees has not been ascertained by the district clerk. The present trustees of the school are Joseph B. Fritts, Jacob F. Smith, and William Cleman. The first teacher who taught in the present building was Richard Weaver, and the teacher now in the employ of the district is David Butler.

*District Number Six* is known as the White Hall district, and is on the border of the village. The clerk of the district has furnished a succinct and clear history of the school buildings.

**I**n this district there have been three school houses. The first house was built of logs, was 18 by 20 feet and was erected by Frederick Felver in the year 1801, and stood in the village of White Hall.

The second school building for the use of the district, was erected of stone, and was built by Benjamin Fritts in 1820, near the present residence of John S. Apgar, one mile east of the village, the dilapidated walls of which are still standing.

The third and present school house was built by Peter C. Apgar, is of stone and was erected in the year 1848. The building now occupied by district number six although not large is nevertheless comfortable and adequate to the wants of the district.

The names of the first board of trustees in White Hall has

not been obtained. The present trustees are Joseph Bonnell, A.B. Fritts and Thomas L. Anderson.

The first teacher in this district was Samuel Anderson, the present incumbent is Oliver Van Billiard.

*District Number Seven* or Spruce Run district. This district can boast antiquity much beyond either of those already mentioned. The clerk has succeeded in gaining access to the papers of late Rev. Richard Collier who during his pastorate of the Lutheran Church at Spruce Run, was township school superintendent. Mr. Collier it would seem had taken some pains in collecting the school history of Lebanon Township.

There have been three school houses in the Spruce Run School District. These have all stood on the same spot of ground in close proximity to the Church edifice. The first of these buildings was a small frame house erected in the year 1766, one hundred and ten years ago. It is a matter of profound regret that nothing of the history has come down to us.

**A**ll that has been transmitted to the present inhabitants of the district respecting their first school building is the simple fact of its erection, that having accomplished its mission as a place for the education of the children of the region one hundred years ago, when at length it grew old it was converted to a shop for the use of the farrier of the region.

After the first school house of this district had become unfit for comfortable occupancy, it appears that no school was kept therein for some time.

In 1825 the inhabitants of Spruce Run proceeded to build the second house for the accommodation of a school. This was a small stone structure and stood firmly in its place for half a century, when having fulfilled its place it gave way in 1874 to the present neat and well furnished building.

The names of the trustees of Spruce Run of a hundred years ago are not in our possession, but the name of the teacher who taught their school 81 years ago is given as Master William Brown. The trustees of number seven are Christopher Martenis, Hiram Force and Jacob Hipp for the present time. The name of teacher Charles H. Banghart.

*District Number Eight* is New Hampton in Lebanon Township.

The clerk of this district has not been able to obtain any thing very clearly of the early history, but is impressed with the conviction that the school at New Hampton was one of the first to be established in Hunterdon County.

The date of erection of the first school house in the district is not known, but it is known to have been a small log building 16 feet by 18 feet, and to have stood on the spot now occupied by John S. Prall and Sons cabinet establishment.

The building now occupied by the New Hampton School was erected in 1823, is a good substantial stone edifice two stories rough cast, and having been very thoroughly

(cont'd page 1149)

*(Memories cont'd from page 1144)*  
 trains – some nearly a mile long – just north of the Flemington Junction station. This was to allow an additional “pusher” locomotive to be attached to the rear of the train to help it up the several-mile-long grade to Jugtown Mountain. With a long stretch of overgrown woods next to the tracks by the camp, it was fairly easy for a hobo to enter an empty box-car without being detected.

The closest we kids ever got to the hobo camp was when we sometimes dawdled on the road bridge that crossed the tracks a few hundred yards from - and out of sight of - the camp. If a train was approaching the bridge, we'd gather up some stones and try to see who could throw a stone down into the smokestack of the locomotive as it went under the bridge – without getting engulfed in the smoke. I don't recall any of us ever succeeding – but we didn't always avoid the smoke.

**Deats' Farm Layout**

Returning to the subject of the Deats Farm, let me first try to orient the reader as to its size and location in terms of what is there today. If one starts heading east on Minnealoning Road from Highway Route 31 and looks north to the back boundaries of the properties to the south (also the north boundary of the old Fairgrounds), one has framed the western end of

the farm. Continue viewing these back boundaries as you head east the whole length of Minneakoning Road to Route 523 and you have viewed the 100-acre rectangular area that was Minneakoning Farm.



Deats Farm. Hunterdon County Historical Society. Px215.

Carved out of the middle of the fields along the Route 523 border was about a four- to six-acre fenced-off enclosure for the “manor house.” This included an acre or two of front lawn, an acre for the manor house and its ancillary structures, and an acre of two of gardens. Immediately west of the back-garden fence was another acre or two containing the main barns, chicken coops, pig pens and equipment storage buildings of the farm. The tenant farmer's house and attached carriage shed were built into the fence line at the northwest corner of the garden. (This, by the way, is one structure from

the farm that one can still see today. It was disassembled and rebuilt as a part of the Liberty Village shopping complex and for a long time housed the complex's administrative offices.)

I'm told the original part of the manor house was built in 1780 by John Reid Reading, the grandson of New Jersey's Governor John Reading. (Governor John Reading's brick mansion overlooking the South Branch of the Raritan River still stands as a private residence about a mile to the southeast.) My limited research indicates that the farm, as I knew it, was largely built in the late 1800s by Hiram's father as a place to retire. Hiram's grandfather, John, invented the first practical steel plow and his father, Hiram, manufactured and successfully sold it as the Deats plow, bringing about a major transformation in American agriculture. His father also successfully manufactured other farm equipment and school desks. It becomes easy to see why such a man would build a residence for genteel living surrounded by a state-of-the-art farm for that still horse-dominated era.

By the late 1930s, however, much of the estate's grandeur was in memory only. To my knowledge, not one of the gray-brown buildings on the property, including the manor house itself, ever received a coat of paint in my lifetime.

*To be continued next newsletter...*

**FLEMINGTON'S STARRING ROLE  
 IN THE LINDBERGH TRIAL**

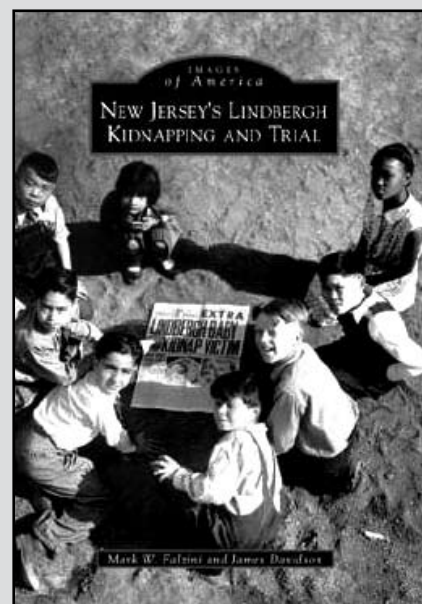
**Join James Davidson and Mark W. Falzini for an author presentation celebrating the release of their new book, *New Jersey's Lindbergh Kidnapping and Trial.***

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10 AT 2:00 PM  
 at the historic Hunterdon County Courthouse**

**Book signing and reception immediately follows at the  
 Hunterdon County Historical Society**

**HOSTED BY: Hunterdon County Cultural and Heritage Commission and  
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## FROM THE DESK OF DONALD CORNELIUS, HCHS MANUSCRIPT CURATOR

The staff of the HCHS Archives has been extremely active this past summer, working our way through the Society's wonderful holdings and making more of them available to the public for research. As mentioned in the last newsletter, we have completed a grant funded (Thank You, Hunterdon County Cultural and Heritage Commission!) project that enabled us to preserve and make available to researchers over 150 of our historic maps. So far, researchers don't seem to realize we have this resource available, so take a look next time you come in!

The volunteer staff also helped the Curator to put together a nice display of photographs for our annual booth at the Hunterdon County Agricultural Fair. The display was entitled "Temptation and Salvation," and it featured historic photographs from our collections of some Hunterdon County churches and taverns that were located closely together.

On the collections front, our hard working crew has definitely increased the amount of material open to public research. Since our last newsletter, we have added several new collections, including No. 109, the Boileau-Blane collection, processed by archival volunteer Linda Hahola. This collection, which is mostly comprised of photographs, documents the Boileau, Blane, and Burdick families of Hunterdon County from 1846 to 1940. Also added was collection No. 111, Records of the Hunterdon County Park Service. The collection comprises certain papers of the Hunterdon County Park System from 1954 - 1992, including forms and promotional material relating to park events, acquisitions of land for the Sourland Mountain Reservation, Union Forge, and the Teetertown Ravine. The collection also includes photographs of George Bloomer, who owned the nursery property that eventually became part of the county park system, as well as park properties and events, and racing magazines. Archival volunteer Erin Brennan processed this collection.

Also added was collection No.

101, The Jack Shepard Papers. This collection is comprised mainly of an assortment of memorabilia saved by Jack Shepard during his time as an engineer in WWI. His activities in the civic life of Flemington, NJ and the operation of the Flemington Fair are



Eleanor Long Boileau, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1902. Hunterdon County Historical Society, Manuscript Collection No. 109. Px6440.

included. There is also a handwritten travel journal by Milton Shepard dated 1877.

Besides manuscript collections, we have also added a number of interesting items to our collection of bound manuscripts. Bound Manuscripts are records in book format, such as diaries, ledgers and accounts, and notebooks. Recently added items include three account books of John Fisher, a merchant of Ringoes, Prallsville, and Sergeantsville from 1831-1842. Other merchants

represented in our new offerings are Bergun Brokaw and John W. Brokaw, who operated a general store in Readington. We have added two of their day books from 1816-1821. Not all of the bound manuscripts are from merchants, of course. Also added to the collection are some records of the Rural Hill Cemetery Association, including the minutes from 1853-1897, a burial record book from 1903, and a plot maintenance accounting from 1921 to 1939.

As fall continues, our archival volunteers will not slow down! We have started several new ambitious projects. Archival volunteer Dan Leechan is working on arranging a collection of county aerial photographs that was donated to the Society some years ago. The series seems to be from the 1950s and we are going to have to get some help from an expert in aerial photography to fully describe the collection. Pam Bush is arranging a comprehensive collection of material that concerns Hunterdon County Cemeteries that was left to us by my predecessor, Ron Schultzel. Also, based on the recent upswing of interest in clocks and clock making in Hunterdon County, Erin is tackling a collection of research materials left to the Society by John Schenck concerning that very subject.

As always, thanks to our fantastic volunteers, and don't forget to stop by the Doric House and find out what new things we have added to help preserve and share our County's history!

*(History cont'd from page 1147)*

repaired, remodeled and refurnished with the best seating in 1874 at large expense, is every way commensurate to the wants of the neighborhood.

The names of the early trustee of New Hampton have not been preserved. The present board consist of Hamilton Bowlby, Samuel Rinehart and Peter Cramer. Among the early teachers of the district were a Master Bullis and McConnell. The present teacher is Albert H. Skinner.

# Images from the Past



Hunterdon County Historical Society. Photographic Collection.

High Bridge Boy Scouts displaying birdhouses that they made, dated "Bird Day, April 1st, 1916." An inscription adds, "Photo taken school hill between trestle & old foundry Pond, now Forge Field. Samuel Buck, Scout Master." From the collection recently received from the estate of Mary Elizabeth Sheppard. Photographer unknown.

Hunterdon County  
 Historical Society  
 114 Main Street  
 Flemington, NJ  
 08822

 An illustration of the Hunterdon County Historical Society building. It is a two-story, classical-style building with a prominent portico supported by several columns. The building is surrounded by trees and shrubbery. The illustration is positioned at the bottom of a box that contains the society's name and address.