

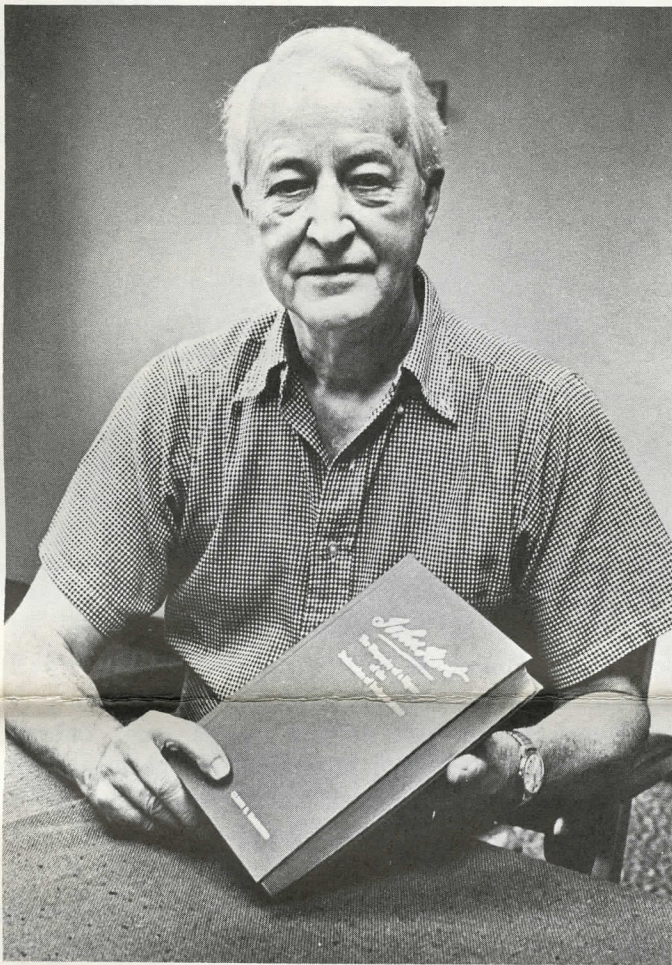


Hunterdon Historical Newsletter

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Published by Hunterdon County Historical Society

FALL 1977



Hopewell Signer JOHN HART will be subject of our Nov. 20th meeting

JOHN HART – THE BIOGRAPHY OF A SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, Cleon E. Hammond, 357 pages, photographs, maps, index. Available from the Society \$14.95 plus \$1 for mailing charges.

In the years following the end of the hostilities between the United States and Great Britain, the men who were instrumental in the formation of the nation became the subject of much public interest. Biographies of these men were written by authors eager to create a pantheon of national heroes for the new republic. The framers of the Declaration of Independence were of particular interest. Those who were still living and participating in the affairs of state were naturally most thoroughly recorded. The others, whose public careers had been ended by death or old age, were virtually ignored. However, their lives were no less interesting and Cleon Hammond has provided ample evidence of this in his new book that is the culmination of twenty-five years research into the lives of John Hart and his family.

John Hart, farmer and statesman from Hopewell, was in his sixties when he was chosen to be one of New Jersey's delegates to the Continental Congress in 1776, thereby becoming a signer of the Declaration of Independence. This was certainly a crowning event to a long life of public service, however, as Mr. Hammond points out:

"A Signer of the Declaration holds a permanent niche in American history. But emphasis upon this moment in Mr. Hart's life has eclipsed his vastly more substantive role as the first Speaker of the New Jersey Assembly. Hardly can the significance of his role be over-emphasized, for never before or since has there been a time in New Jersey when the masterful leadership of a Speaker was more urgently necessary to press his colleagues into cooperation and agreement."

(continued)

Colonel Cleon E. Hammond will speak at Fall Meeting

The Society's Fall Meeting, scheduled for Sunday, November 20, 1977, at 2 p.m., will be held in the Meeting Room of the Flemington Methodist Church. Colonel Cleon E. Hammond, author of *John Hart – The Biography of a Signer of the Declaration of Independence* will be our guest speaker.

In 1955, after purchasing the Hart homestead, located in the borough of Hopewell, Colonel Hammond set out to learn as much as possible about John Hart. It soon became apparent that a good biography was needed and Hammond began research that, after twenty-two years, ended last year with the publication of the first complete biography of the Signer.

The meeting and subsequent social hour with refreshments is open to members and guests. Plan to attend on November 20, at 2 p.m.

HUNTERDON HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER

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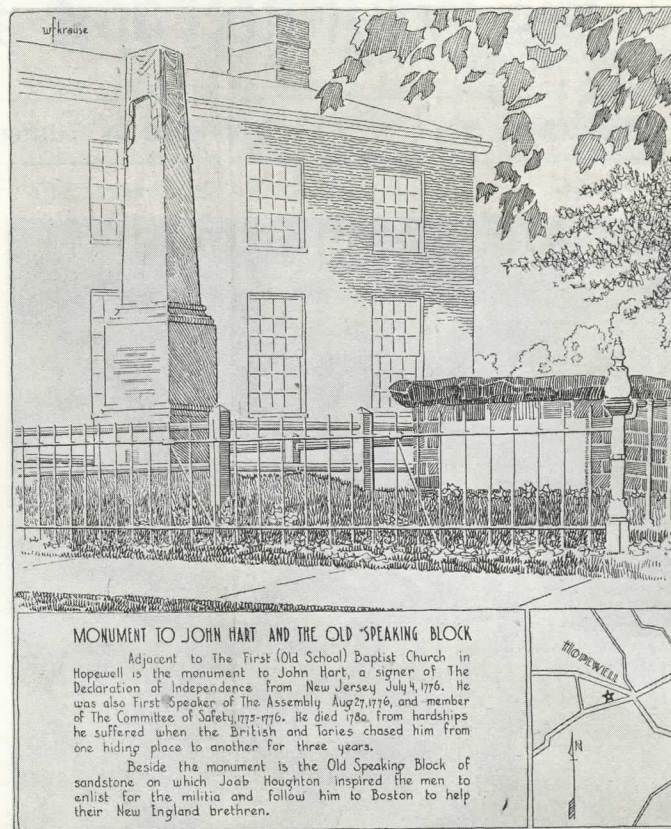


When the author became interested in Mr. Hart, there existed very little published material on which to draw. The lives of John Hart and his family had been chronicled as early as 1820 by Robert Waln, Jr., whose efforts to ascertain the facts appear to be minimal. Subsequent biographers simply borrowed from or paraphrased the early work. With the exception of an article appearing in a Trenton newspaper which contained the reminiscences of Hart's youngest child, no primary sources had been consulted. Mr. Hammond began his quest by checking all previously published sources and proceeded to the many primary sources that still exist. The resulting book is well-written and constructed, reading more like a novel than a history book.

This book has several unique features. Foremost of these is the arrangement of the text into a short biography followed by seventeen topic chapters. Each chapter deals with one aspect of the mystery that has surrounded Mr. Hart's life and it is in these that the full depth of the book is revealed. One in particular describes the turmoil surrounding the settlement of Mr. Hart's sizable estate. His death in 1779 left his family to settle debts during a time of great economic disarray after the Revolution. His executors were never able to satisfy the covenants of his will and his sons were forced to leave New Jersey and seek their fortunes on the frontier. The footnotes, arranged at the end of the book, are quite thorough. There is an excellent index.

We can thank Mr. Hammond for reminding us that all of history has not been written and that searching for and interpreting new material can be great fun.

Kathleen J. Schreiner

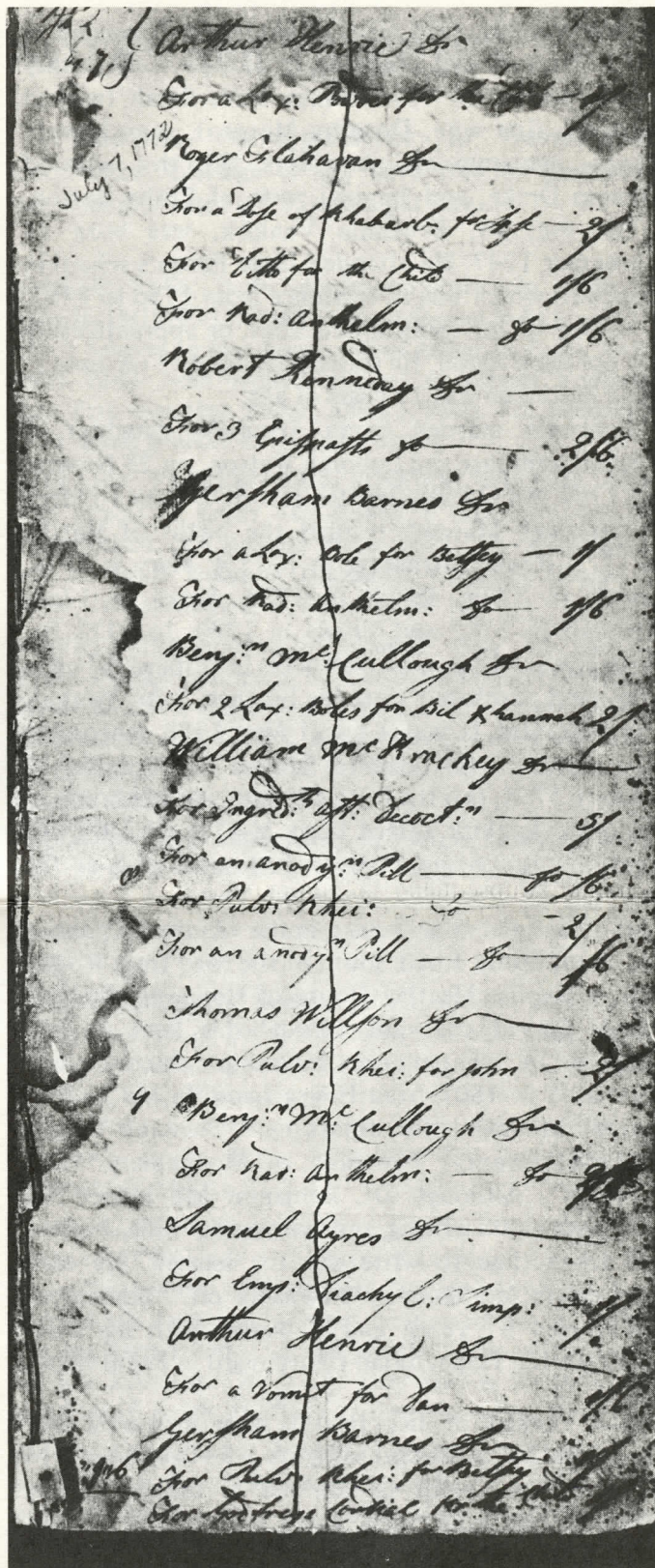
**Membership Report**

A warm welcome is extended to the following persons who have joined the Society since our last NEWSLETTER.

Grayce Harper Alsterda, Mt. Prospect, Ill.
Mrs. Philip C. Backer, Flemington, N.J.
Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Baldwin, Allentown, Pa.
Howard E. Bonham, Columbus, Ohio
Everett N. Case, Hornersville, New York
Richard Case, Phillipsburg, New Jersey
Hans Coebler, Whitehouse Station, N.J.
Dr. & Mrs. Jay Comeforo, Flemington, N.J.
Alex Everitt, Jr., Lafayette, New Jersey
Robert A. Frone, New York, New York
Cynthia Furlong, Whitehouse Station, N.J.
Cecil V. Gary, Tampa, Florida
Jesse Lipka, Flemington, New Jersey
Mr. & Mrs. Geoffrey A. Nicklen, Stockton, N.J.
Mrs. Roy L. Patton, Flemington, N.J.
Granville V. Robinson, Annandale, N.J.
Randall B. Shirts, Cambridge, Mass.

Mrs. Frederick H. Stothoff,
Membership Secretary

Hendrick, later known as Henry Vankirk, was in Hopewell Township as early as 1737. Gedney cites, "Hendrick Vankirk elected constable at a town meeting of Hopewell on 14 March 1737". In 1747 Hendrick's name appeared on the vendue list of John Runyon of Rocky Hill. Henry Vankirk and



A page from the Vankirk Day Book



Joseph Vankirk paid taxes in Hopewell Township in 1753. Henry's will probated in Hopewell Township in the spring of 1776 names wife, Sarah (second marriage, first wife, Dorothy Morgan), sons Joseph, Henry, Benjamin and daughters, Dorothy, wife of Thomas Drake, and Jemima, wife of Elisha Barton.

His son, Dr. Benjamin Vankirk, was born 15 November 1747. He attended Isaac Eaton's school in Hopewell which was in existence from 1756 to 1767. A record of his medical education or apprenticeship has not been found. He started his practice on June 1, 1768 before he was 21 years of age.

Benjamin married Sarah Armitage, daughter of Reuben Armitage and Deborah Watson, on 23 November 1769. An old handwritten record of their children in Hopewell Museum records the births of Martha in 1771, Reuben Armitage in 1773/4, Mary in 1776, Enoch in 1779, Ralph in 1781, Sarah in 1785, Deborah in 1787 and Ursula in 1790. In 1778 Dr. Benjamin paid taxes on 109 acres in Hopewell Township, land purchased from his brother, John Vankirk and wife, Ose, [Ursula] on 21 May 1778. According to a Daniel Coxe deed to Samuel Stout dated 14 January 1755, this tract of 109 acres was the home of Hendrick Vankirk. (Deed Book M-477) By 1812 Dr. Benjamin had acquired over 400 acres east of the borough of Hopewell along the Province Line between East and West Jersey, in the vicinity of present day Aunt Molly Road, south of the road from Rocky Hill to Baptist Meeting House of Hopewell. Beden's Brook flowed eastward through his land to mill property in Montgomery Township which he had purchased in 1807 from Henry Lane. In his medical journal he noted the following: "Pleasant Valley, Somerset County, Township of Montgomery 1807 June 28". Although Dr. Benjamin had helped his neighbors with writing and witnessing wills, he had not taken time to write one for himself. He died intestate in Montgomery Township on 2 September 1815, aged 67 years, and is buried with his wife, Sarah, in the Presbyterian Churchyard in Pennington, N.J.

The Vankirk medical records have been used over the years by a few genealogists who had access to them. Several heads of families or individuals are listed therein only once. Many are charged for services or products over a period of years with reference to spouse (never named, a pity!), children sometimes by name, parents, slaves and siblings. The ledgers are a fine medical history of kinds of drugs prescribed, setting of fractures and dislocations, extraction of teeth, minor surgery such as dilating of wens, breasts, hands and sewing of wounds, deliveries of spouse of son or daughter and enoculations, especially during the years of 1787 and 1802.

Benjamin loaned money frequently, hoping to have it repaid at a later date as noted on one account. Many accounts were never settled. "Settled in full" indicates the patient might have expired or moved away or changed doctors. Many patients paid by barter of farm products and services such as weaving, shoemaking, masonry, carpentry, blacksmithing and farm work. Other physicians named in the records were Drs. George W. Case, Beavers and Reves; the last named studied in France and practiced in Rocky Hill. Many references to wench, boy, girl, black men, free slaves, especially Fryday True, were made by Dr. Benjamin. Increases in his charges from time to time indicated severity of illness or difficult delivery of child. Favorite drugs prescribed by him were laxatives, calomel, anthelmintics, paragor and laudanum liquid. The last, used as an anesthetic, was frequently charged with deliveries. Separate charges were written for each visit, drug, purge, vomit, clyster and venesection when performed for the patient. During the last ten years of his practice, heads of families were more often cited for farm, distillery and mill products than for medical services. The wealth or size of families is apparent from the pages of care or services the householder was responsible for. A few good examples were Colonel Ira Stout, Nathan Drake, "the taylor", Benjamin McCullough, Ezekiel Anderson, Israel Hunt and his relatives, the Vankirks. To differentiate between three or four persons of the same name, Dr. Benjamin would use occupation, son of, widow of, junior, senior, the elder and even town or township of residence.

In Account Book B, the United States is charged for the care of soldiers and light horsemen from 25 June 1777 to 6 November 1777 and from 21 May 1778 to 3 September 1778. The New Jersey State Library Archives has only one notation of Revolutionary service for Dr. Benjamin Vankirk, "care of Capt. Peter Snook who had been wounded at the Battle of Monmouth on 28th of June 1778; attendance from 30 June to 25 July 1778."

At least one thousand surnames are contained in these records. Several lost Day Books are covered well by Account Books for that time period. The sixth Account Book was reconstructed by the meticulous examination of the last four Day Books with subsequent recording of families not listed in earlier Account Books. Hopefully, few persons or families were omitted from this microfilm. In addition, surnames noted on family accounts were also indexed by Account Book and page.

Anyone interested in purchasing the microfilms may write to Hopewell Museum, 28 East Broad Street, Hopewell, N.J. 08525.

Betsy A. Errickson

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- Hunterdon County Deed Books.
- New Jersey State Library, Revolutionary Service Record File, Manuscripts 6006 and 7400.



Form of Bequest

(This form is recommended for use in making a bequest of real property, in a Will or otherwise, naming your society as beneficiary)

ITEM: I bequeath the sum of \$_____ to the Hunterdon County Historical Society, Flemington, N.J.

ITEM: I bequeath to the Hunterdon County Historical Society, Flemington, N.J., without restrictions title to and full possession of historical materials and objects, (real estate, account books, diaries, Family Bibles, documents, papers, photographs, programs, newspapers, clippings, books, records.) etc.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

NOTES and QUERIES

Address correspondence to Genealogical Committee. Listings of ten lines free to members, non-member rates are 25 cents per line.

PARKS/PARKES: Desire information relating to Aaron V. Parks [6/18/1808 - 11/5/1853] son of Samuel Parks [-1811] who is believed to have been a son of Alexander Parks. Alexander Parks' farm located adjacent to present Voorhees State Park near High Bridge. Alton J. Parks, 122 Beelzebub Road, South Windsor, Connecticut 06074.

EVELAND, PARKER, VAN BUSKIRK, WELLER: Who were parents of Esther Van Buskirk, b circa 1770, wife of John Eveland, and Rebecca Parker [9/2/1757 - 6/21/1831] wife of Jacob Weller of Greenwich Township. George J. Weller, 213 Moody Avenue, Freeport, NY 11520.

SCHERTZ/SHIRTS/SHURTS: Seeking data on Michael Shurts, Palatine immigrant, d. Hunterdon County 1759; son George Shurts d. Hunterdon 1758, grandson Michael Shurts, b. Hunterdon circa 1750, d. Columbiana County, Ohio, 1830. Will exchange data. Randall B. Shirts, 16 Peabody Terrace, Apt. 21, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

EVELAND: Desire information on Eveland family members past, particularly Josiah b. 1817, son of Joseph b. 1780, who was son of Peter the Revolutionary War patriot. Mrs. Edward O'Keeff, 71 Pennsylvania Avenue, Freeport, NY 11520.

TICE, WILLIAMSON: Desire information about the children and descendants of David Williamson and wife Sarah. David baptised Neschanic Church 4 June 1786, son of John and Lucretia [Tice] Williamson. He resided in Amwell Township, later perhaps in Somerset County. Will exchange data on Williamson family. Leroy Williamson, 858 Dudley Street, Galesburg, IL 61401.

LANNING, REED: What was Mercy Lanning Reed's husband's given name? She was a daughter of Lt. Ralph Lanning (d. circa 1798) resident of Maidenhead, Hopewell Township. Also desire death dates and/or burial location of her son Ralph Lanning Reed [1790 -] and his wife Christina (Christian) Eversole Reed [ca. 1796 -]. They lived in the Dreahook area. Glenn P. Smith, 312 Doty Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48103.

BURROUGHS, HART, HOWELL, MOORE, TITUS: Information solicited on/from descendants of Rev. John Moore and wife Margaret Howell for inclusion in revision of *Descendants of Edward Howell*, now underway. Effingham P. Humphrey, Jr., 228 Booth Lane, Haverford, PA 19041.

LEIGH, NAYLOR, ROCKEFELLER: Joseph Leigh [23 March 1790 - 13 February 1870] buried Sandy Ridge Cemetery; m. Margaret Rockefeller 1 January 1814, owned farm in Pine Hill (near Sergeantsville) and was father of Samuel Leigh and Deborah Leigh who married John M. Naylor. Who were Joseph Leigh's parents and how is he related to the other Leighs of Hunterdon County? James Mason Fritz, 517 Crafton Avenue, Pitman, NJ 08071.

HUNTERDON'S LAST VETERANS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

JOHN CLIFFORD

John Clifford was a twenty-seven year old bachelor, managing his widowed mother's farm in Bethlehem Township, Hunterdon County, at the start of the Revolutionary War. Before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, he offered to serve on the side of the patriots, and soon received a Lieutenants commission from the Provincial Congress of New Jersey. He immediately saw action in New York, and from 1776 to 1781 served intermittently in the Hunterdon County Militia, in which he was First Lieutenant of the Second Regiment.

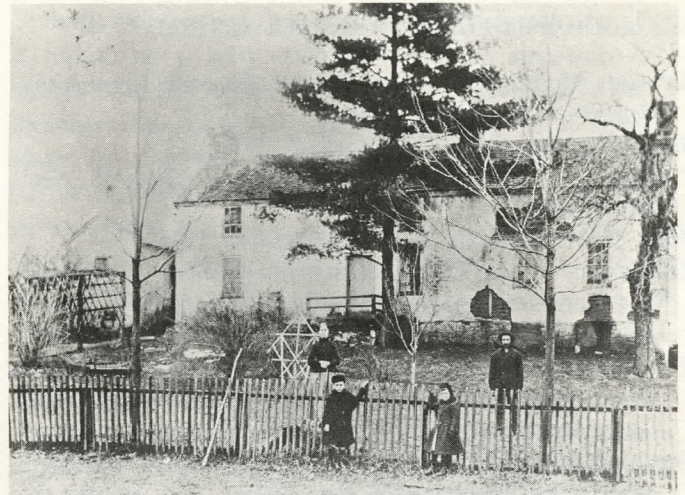
Lieutenant Clifford, in command under Captain Jacob Houghton, in Colonel Philip Johnson's Battalion, was among the first troops called from Hunterdon County for the defense of New York. Marching to that state, he was among those in the Battle of Long Island, fought on 27 August 1776. He was subsequently engaged in the Battle of White Plains, on 28 October 1776, and was part of General Washington's army during the retreat across New Jersey.

Though the first term of service, which lasted for five months, proved to be Lieutenant Clifford's most active, his remaining periods of service in the War were none less exciting. In December 1776, as First Lieutenant in Captain Jacob Gearhart's Company, he was with a detachment of companies of Captain Daniel Bray and Captain Thomas Jones, under Major Nathaniel Pettit, to "collect all the water craft that could be found in the Delaware River between Easton and Sherreds ferry [Frenchtown] and bring them to assist General Lee's army in crossing the Delaware from New Jersey to Pennsylvania." After performing this duty, Clifford crossed over the Delaware with Major Pettit and joined General Washington's army as a volunteer, acting as Lieutenant with the army until Christmas Day 1776, when he returned to New Jersey.

Discontent was prevalent among the commissioned soldiers in Hunterdon County in the early stages of the Revolutionary War. Failure to issue new commissions resulted in Colonel Joseph Beavers, of the Second Battalion, Hunterdon County Militia, sending the following letter "To His Excellency Governor Livingston at Haddonfield":

Alexandria May 10th 1777 -

Yesterday the officers of this Battalion met Expecting New Commissions By me, under your Excellency, and as I had none, Except for



The Clifford-Williamson House, listed on the national roster of the Historic American Buildings Survey, was owned by Revolutionary War soldier John Clifford (1749 - 1842). At his death, ownership went to his bachelor son, Enoch Clifford (1780 - 1861), who in turn left it to his niece, Charity Clifford (1808 - 1901), the daughter of Charles Clifford, and wife of Peter R. Williamson, who owned it in 1873, at the time of the original publication of the *Beers Atlas*.

those now ordered on Duty, they Unaniomusly Requested me to Send Immediately, and Pray your Excellency Would be Pleas^d. to Send New Commitions for the whole Battalion, as several of the old Commitions are Nearly wore out, and Some Intierly Lost or Gone . . .

With Colonel Beaver's letter to the Governor, was a list of the various officers of the Second Battalion, including:

Jacob Karhart Capt ^t .	}	Kingwood
John Clifford 1 Lt.		
John Farley 2 Lt.		

Colonel Beavers added, after listing the officers:
I do hereby Certify the within & above Named Officers was Duly Elected and Chosen by the Privates of their Several Companies

Jos: Beavers Col^l.

John Clifford apparently was commissioned First Lieutenant, and as such served two weeks in June, 1777, when, under Captain Gearhart (Karhart) and Colonel Beavers he went to New Brunswick, New Jersey, the day after the British evacuated. One year later, under the same officers, he fought in the Battle of Monmouth on 28 June 1778. During the following three Junes of 1779, 1780 and 1781, Lieutenant Clifford served approximately two weeks in each. By the end of the War, he had served ten months and six days altogether.

During his early service in the War, Lieutenant Clifford married Martha Armitage. They were the parents of the following children, all of whom were

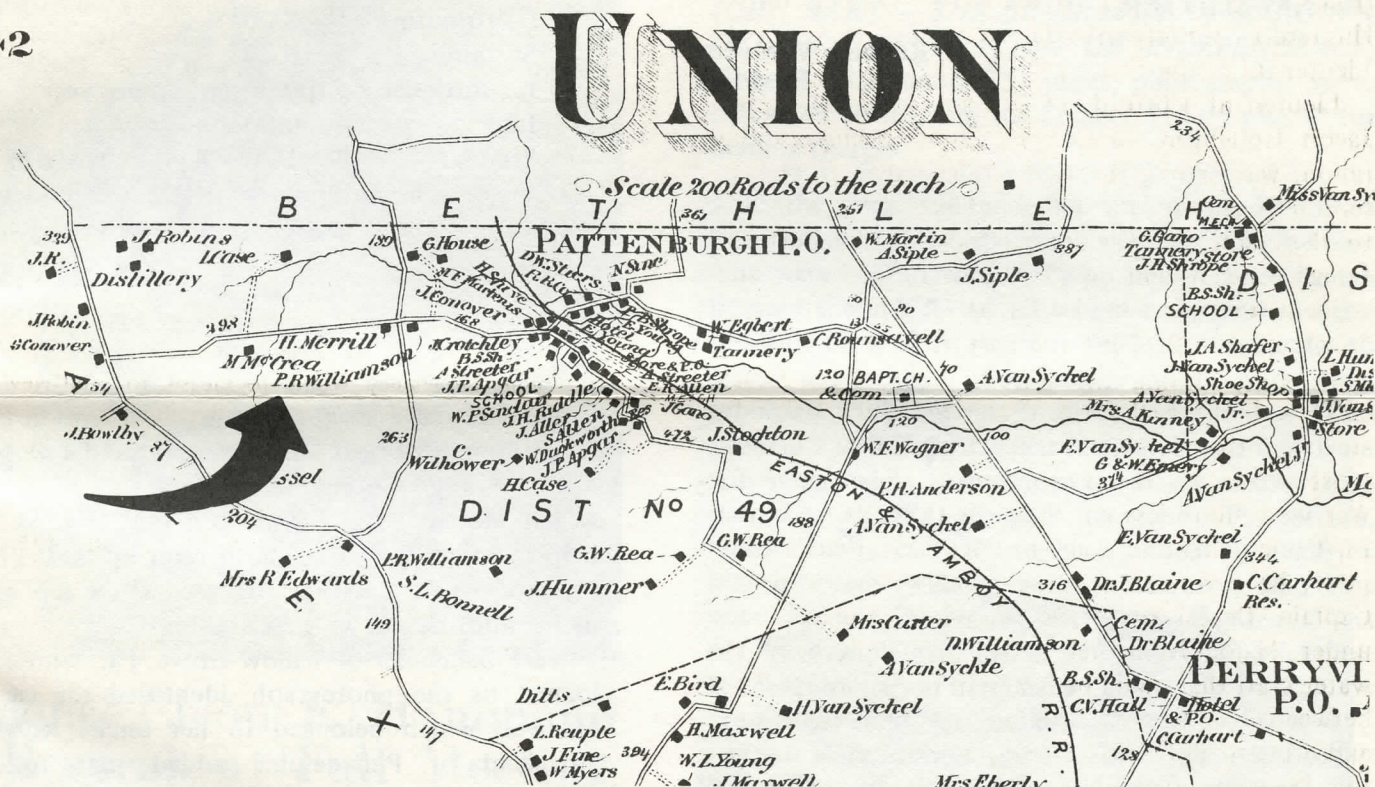
born on their father's farm near Pittstown, Bethlehem Township, (now Union Township), Hunterdon County:

1. Charles Clifford, born 2 March 1778; died 31 December 1856; married Leah.
2. Enoch Clifford, born 28 January 1780; died 15 September 1861; never married.
3. Elizabeth Clifford, born 10 July 1782; died 10 March 1870; married, 18 March 1802, Kitchen Hartpence.
4. Martha Clifford, born 28 October 1784; died 11 March 1809; never married.
5. Ann Clifford, born 16 December 1786; died 31 July 1794.

John Clifford lived out his many years on his farm

in Bethlehem Township. He died at his home on 2 August 1842, in the 94th year of his age. In an extensive obituary which appeared in the *Hunterdon Democrat* on 10 August 1842, it noted that he "... left this transitory scene at an age among many thousand that is born, but few arrive at." The article made mention that John was "... in full possession of his mental faculties at the time of his death." The funeral was conducted by the Reverend Holloway W. Hunt, of the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, to which John belonged for many years. Appropriately, the minister remarked at the funeral "... on the reminiscences of the Revolution, the dangers, losses, and suffering of those Patriots, who lived and acted in those times that tried men's souls."

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The home of Lieutenant John Clifford, located in the eastern sector of Union Township, was owned by his great granddaughter's husband, P.R. Williamson, at the time of the publication of the Beers *Atlas of Hunterdon County* in 1873, from which this map comes.

ATTENTION MEMBERS: BEERS ATLAS IS NOW AVAILABLE

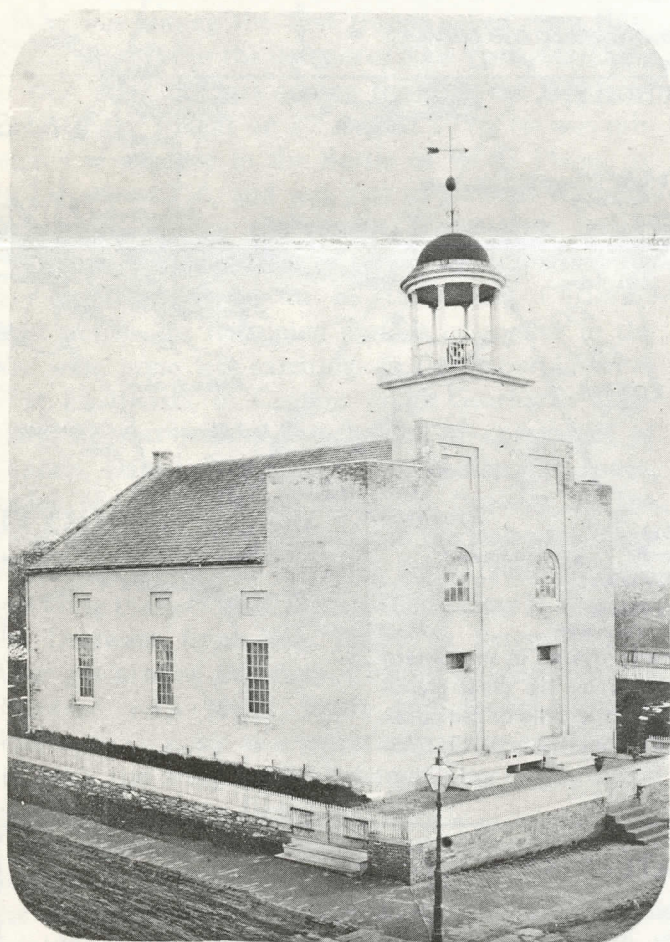
The Society is offering for sale the remaining copies of a limited edition of 200 reprints of Beers, Comstock, and Cline's 1873 *Atlas of Hunterdon County, New Jersey*. This book, containing maps of the 14 townships then in existence as well as maps of 32 villages and towns, is selling for \$25 per copy. The maps show family surnames identifying home, shop and business locations. The history buff on your Christmas list may appreciate a copy of *Beers Atlas*. Copies of *History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties New Jersey* by James P. Snell, reprinted by the Society in 1976 are still available at \$37.

The Trustees are contemplating another reprint and would welcome comments to ascertain interest in *Hunterdon County Marriage Records 1795-1875* compiled by the late Hiram E. Deats or other suggestions of items to reprint.

Well Done, Lenore

Thank you Lenore Vaughn-Eames for having served as editor of the NEWSLETTER for the past four years. Your leadership and help in getting the NEWSLETTER published at regular intervals during that time is very much appreciated. We are all very proud of the job you and your committee did. Communication is a popular word nowadays, for organizations, as well as individuals. Very often one's success or failure hinges on how well he "communicates." The Society is no exception. One of the Society's most important functions, it seems to me, is our official communication three times each year in the form of the NEWSLETTER.

**Kenneth V. Myers,
President**



IS THIS CHURCH IN HUNTERDON COUNTY? Mrs. Anna Domas, Curator, Religious Americana Museum, Ringoes, New Jersey, received the above photograph from someone a distance away who believed this church was located in our County. To date no one can pinpoint its location. If you recognize the church and know where it is located, please contact the Society.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

For some time the Trustees of your Society have been struggling to balance its income and expenses.

The primary concerns of the Society which account for most of its expenses are; first, the maintenance and operation of the Hiram E. Deats Library; secondly, the Doric House, and perhaps of greatest importance, the publication of the *Newsletter*. The latter is costing in the neighborhood of \$1400 per year.

In order that dues cover these costs the following schedule of dues is proposed effective January 1, 1978:

Annual	\$ 8.00
Family	\$ 10.00
Contributing	\$ 25.00
Sustaining	\$ 50.00
Institutional	\$100.00 and up per year
Life	\$150.00
Student	\$ 1.00 (18 years of age or less)

I sincerely hope our membership will understand the Society's need and continue with very generous support.

**Kenneth V. Myers
President**



The last page of the Spring 1977 edition of the *Hunterdon Historical Newsletter* featured a picture of a group of young people on their way to a parade which preceded the Flemington Fair. We asked for help in identifying the photograph by means of the car model and the styles of dress. Three replies gave us the information we were seeking.

Vera Schneider of Willow Grove, Pa., whose sister loaned us the photograph, identified the car as a Maxwell which belonged to her uncle. Robert E. Hoagland of Philadelphia added that following research at the Automobile Reference Collection in the Philadelphia Library, he could identify the car as the 1910 model of the Maxwell G.

The photograph also provided a kind of reunion for one Hunterdon Historical Society member, Lloyd M. Felmly of Brielle. Mr. Felmly lived in Flemington for fifteen years, until 1908. During that time he knew the Weiss family, Irma Apgar and other occupants of the car, and by their apparent age and dress he guessed that the photograph was taken in 1912. At the same time, Mr. Felmly provided information about the people in the photograph and what happened to them. We are hoping to make photograph identification a feature of every issue if the response continues to be as enlightening as with our first attempt.