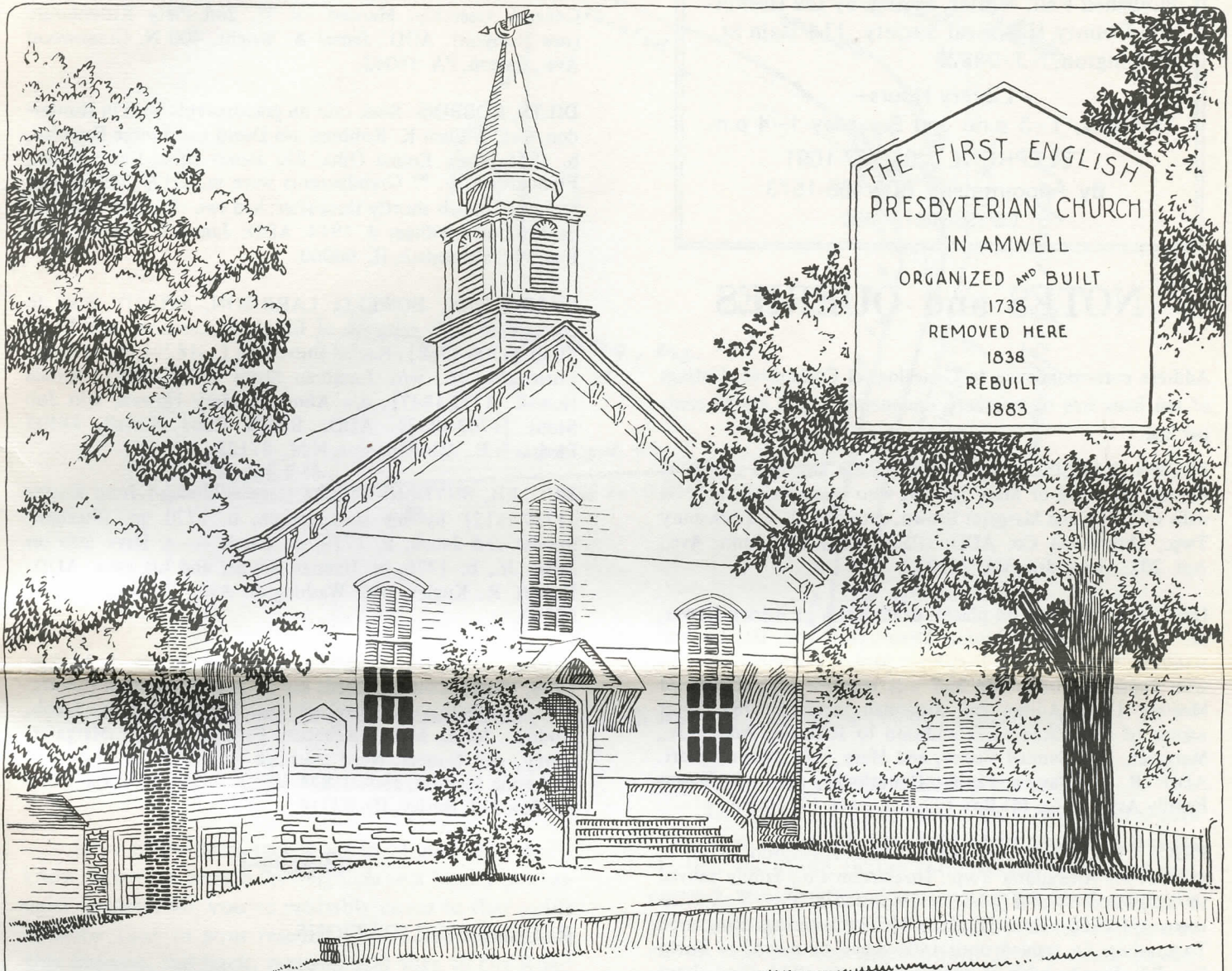


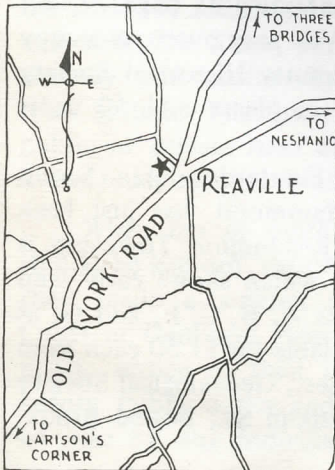


# Hunterdon Historical Newsletter



wfkrause

## Dr. Gershom Craven, Surgeon of the Revolution



The Fall Meeting of the Hunterdon County Historical Society will be held November 19, 1978, at 2 p.m. in historic Amwell First Presbyterian Church located on the Old York Road in Reaville. Dr. Craven worshipped with the congregation of this church occupying "pew number 2 west of the pulpit on the north side" in 1785. Dr. Kenneth Craven of New Providence will share with members and guests information concerning his direct ancestor, Dr. Gershom Craven [1745-1819], who practiced medicine in Ringoes beginning in 1771.

Lewis Cook of Philadelphia has tied much of his material together in his 500 page manuscript, "Thomas Craven, Schoolmaster, of London and of New Jersey, U.S.A. and His Descendents". Our speaker will have the benefit of Lewis Cook's important genealogy, his grandfather's records, other collections, his own background as a literary scholar specializing in the eighteenth century and any additional information a genealogical search in England in August produced.

Join us Sun., Nov. 19, 2 P.M. in Reaville-Refreshments follow



**HUNTERDON HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER**

Published Fall, Winter, Spring, by the Hunterdon County Historical Society, 114 Main St., Flemington, N.J. 08822

**—Library Hours—**

Thursday, 1–3 p.m. and Saturday 1–4 p.m.

TELEPHONE; 201/782-1091

By Appointment: 609/466-1573

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**NOTES and QUERIES**

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

**BROWN, CARLISLE:** Anxious to locate any info on David Carlisle, husband of Mary Brown, who was administrator on wills of James and Margaret Brown, dated 1760, in Tewksbury Twp., Hunterdon Co. ADD: Gladys Lail, 800 Tenn. Ave., Apt. 202, Alexandria, VA 22305.

**DAWES:** Desire info on places, death dates of Adrian Dawes, Sr. and Susannah Wilkinson Dawes, his wife. He, by oral tradition, d. in NJ 1787. They were parents of John Dawes, Sr. who came to Hunterdon and was received into Kingwood Meeting 1776. Adrian and Susannah received 1781. Want names of their children in addition to John Sr., Adrian Jr., Margaret, w/o Samuel Fisher, and Mary, w/o James Egbert. ADD: R. M. Dawes, Family Genealogist, John W. Dawes Family Association, PO Box 122, Schriever, LA 70395.

**PRICE, THOMPSON:** Desire info on Thompson Price, b. 8/15/1764, Alexandria Twp., Hunterdon Co., family moved to Kingwood Twp. 1764-65. He enlisted as Priv. Vol. Pitts-town 4/1/1780. Hon. Disch. 1/81. Returned to Kingwood Twp. where he resided until 1800 when he moved to Bucks Co., PA. Family bible in sister's family in 1834. Died about 1856. ADD: Wm. W. Price, 137 Ackley Ave., Johnson City, NY 13790.

**HULL, LARUE, WILLIAMSON:** Who were parents of John Hull who died in Amwell Twp. 1794? His widow, Margaret Williamson Larue, widow of Daniel Larue. ADD: Mrs. Curtis F. White, Jr., Box 366, St. John, WA 99171.

**LEQUEAR, TROUT:** Who were parents of Garradus Lequear (Luquer) b. 1711, d. 1755 in Amwell? His daughter Hannah m. George Trout who died 1809 in Amwell. George and Hannah had two sons and nine daughters, all of whom left descendants. Desire any information. ADD: Marian L. Worrall, 1636 Kenora Dr., Escondido, CA 92027.

**HARSHEL, LEWIS, SMITH (SCHMIDT):** Seeking info on Mathias Schmidt, wife Christee, of Amwell Twp. Children John [1724-1774] m. Mary Harshel [1729- ], Lowdowick, Mathias, Abraham, Jacob [1739-1821] m. Elizabeth Lewis [1741-1790], Christeen. ADD: Mrs. Frances Smith, 996 Rymal Road, E., Hannon, ONT. Can. LORIP0.

**RITTENHOUSE, RUNYON, WRIGHT:** Need parents, birthplace, etc., Benjamin Wright, b. 3 March 1747 NY?, d. 9 February 1826, Alexandria Twp. Freeholder, magistrate, member General Assembly. Married 1st ??, 2nd Piety Rittenhouse (nee Runyon). ADD: James A. Wright, 400 N. Greenwood Ave., Easton, PA 18042.

**DILTS, ROBBINS:** Seek info on grandparents born in Hunterdon. Grf. William K. Robbins, s/o David and Louise Robbins, b. 1855. Grm. Emma Dilts, d/o James Dilts, Harrison St., Frenchtown, b. ?? Grandparents were m. 1/17/1889, moved to Long Branch shortly thereafter; had two children, Emma d. ca 1902 and William d. 1944. ADD: James F. Robbins, PO Box 591, Mundelein, IL 60060.

**BURROUGHS, HOWELL, LARRISON, STOUT:** Wish to correspond with relatives of Elizabeth Larrison, w/o David Stout [1706-1788]; Rachel Burroughs [ -1829], d/o Thomas Burroughs, Jr., w/o Jonathan Stout [1727-1798]; Rhoda Howell [1772-1847], d/o Abner & Mary Howell, w/o Job Stout [1763-1833]. ADD: Rhoda Rudd Howell, 14104 Piedras N.E., Albuquerque, N.M. 87123.

**KUGLER, SNYDER:** Seeking grandchildren of John Kugler [1739-1812] by his sons Joseph, b. 1770, m. Elizabeth Snyder and Jacob, b. 1779, m. Sarah ——. Have info on John, Jr., b. 1776, m. Hannah Snyder and his issue. ADD: Robert R. Kugler, 400 Washington Ave., Haddonfield, NJ 08033.

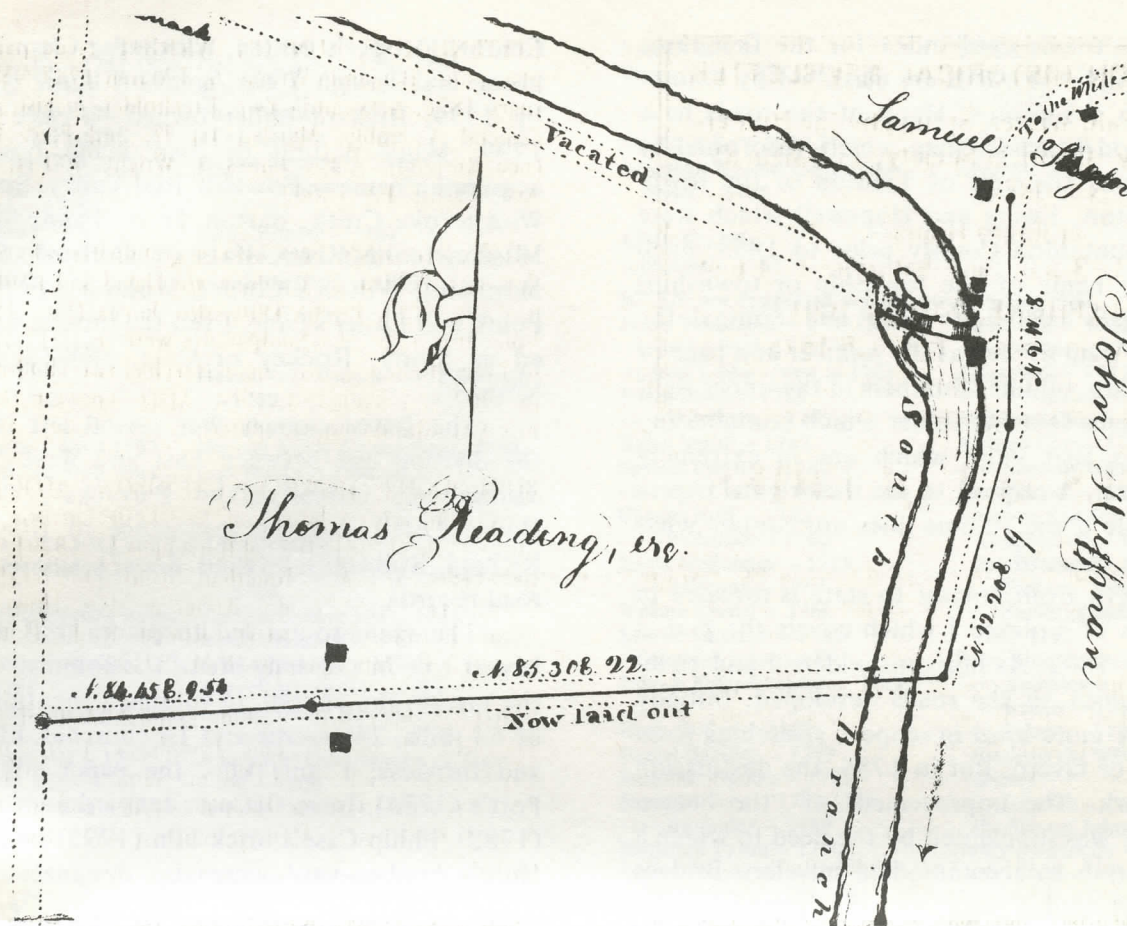
**JACKSON, ROSE, WHITE:** Info on John Rose, d. 28 Apr. 1798, Sussex County. Deeds say he is of Hunterdon County. Wife Elizabeth, ch. Elizabeth, m. Daniel Jackson, Jacob, Andres, John, Mary, Rebecca, Esther, Rachel, Margaret, Mercy, and Naoma. Need marriage date of John White and Catherine Jackson, about 1835. ADD: Mrs. Ezra E. Davidson, PO Box 314, Burley, ID 83318.

**RECENT PUBLICATIONS**

"The Flemington Fair Story" by Kenneth V. Myers, published by the Board of Directors of the Flemington Agricultural Fair, was received in time for the opening of the 1978 Fair on August 29. This is a soft cover book containing 95 pages of text and over 175 photographs. You may purchase a copy for \$2 at the Hunterdon County Historical Society headquarters. For mail orders please add 50 cents for postage.

Another map in the Hunterdon Map Series, prepared by D. Stanton Hammond, has just been printed. Sheet E covering Readington Township is the latest one in this series which shows early land divisions and owners. Sheets A, B, C, F, and G, as well as the new one, are available for \$1.50 each from Mrs. D.A. Stratford, Corr. Sec., Genealogical Society of New Jersey, 132 W. Franklin St., Bound Brook, NJ 08802.





Road laid out on this map is now Minneakoning Road which dead ends at Hunterdon County Democrat building.

## ROAD RETURN – VOLUME I

How often have you thought “I give up! I don’t know where to look next?” If you’re a family genealogist or historian, you’ve probably come to that point at some time in your research. Next time you reach this impasse, fall back, regroup and turn to the Road Return Books for help. “What pray tell are they?” you may ask.

Naturally the first settlers utilized the existing Indian paths but the ensuing influx of settlers created the need for additional roads. The colonial legislature and later, the State, developed laws to provide consistency and uniformity to the expansion of the road system. The laws established the width of a public or private road and the procedure to be followed in laying out, vacating or altering any road.

When ten or more freeholders thought a road should be laid out, vacated or altered in their vicinity, they made a written application to the Inferior Court of Common Pleas of their county after giving public notice of their intentions at least ten days before. Public notice and the application were required also by any individual who wanted his private

road taken into consideration by the court.

The court then appointed six highway surveyors (including those of the petitioners’ township) who studied the route taking into consideration the best ground, the shortest distance and the least injury to private property. On this basis, the surveyors approved or rejected the application. If the route passed through several townships or crossed county boundaries, additional surveyors were appointed and the procedure expanded.

The surveyors’ report or “return” of the road first gave a brief description of the road stating its starting point and its destination. This was followed by a detailed description of its metes and bounds, including the remarkable places and improvements through which it passed as well as the adjoining property owners. Later reports were usually accompanied by a map. The court clerk then recorded the information in a book kept for that purpose in accordance with the law.

There are seven road return volumes covering the period from 1761 to the present located in the Office of the Clerk of Hunterdon County in Flemington. There is no surname index hence the search can be time consuming but never dull and often reward-



ing. There is a fragile card index for the first three volumes in which the roads are classified by county with township sub-groups. Many of the roads have been located on a master map which unfortunately does not include the City of Trenton or the townships of Trenton, Ewing and Hopewell which were part of old Hunterdon County prior to 1838. Each card gives the name of the township or townships in which it was/is located, its outset and terminal, the existence of a map as well as the number and page of the Road Return volume. Numbers in the upper right hand corner refer to a file folder which contains any original papers that exist which are in extremely fragile condition. A request to see the original papers should be made if the volume does not contain what is indicated on the card.

The growth from colony to state is revealed in the 259 pages of Volume I which covers the period from 1761 to 1802. As horizons widened and civilization encroached so the roads developed. Initially the roads were more local in scope — stretching from home to mill or tavern. But in 1786, the destination was New York. The improvement of “the beaten path” of 1761 was supplanted by the need to widen a road to four rods to accommodate travelers. Bridges replaced fording places and ferries. The improvements and remarkable places changed from farm, tavern and mill to weaver’s or blacksmith’s shop, general store, church and cemetery. Ringoes tavern became old Ringoes tavern.

Volume I opens with the report of the surveyors of Trenton and Hopewell Townships in regard to William Burrough’s application for a two rod road giving him access to the Kings Highway from his home. In 1764, Abigail Hunt of Maidenhead (the only female applicant) requested a road to her meadow be laid out. In 1783, Richard Sutton wanted a private road “for an outlet for his creatures”. Others wished “to go to mill and market, to take advantage of the hill” or to find a way over a mountain.

Bounds varied — “a spring in the road, the low water mark on the Delaware River, the swinging gate where the fences cross, the bank of a hollow where the road is dug into, from the southward door of John Dycker’s dwelling house.” Many species of trees, including the pepperage or tupelo, mayberry and sassafras were boundary markers no matter what shape or stage of life — from sapling to stump, growing “two out of one stump” or “three out of one root”. In July of 1775, one bound was a tree “formerly struck by thunder”. There was a considerable difference in the homesteads. In 1762, Cornelius Skinner owned a log house and barn, Thomas Lyttle a dwelling house and John Rockhill a plantation.

Colonel Hooper’s garden, Alexander Chambers’ brick house and Joseph Titus’ mansion home were in use by 1779. Richard Miller owned “a cake house” in 1799. Many natural or man made bounds soon acquired a name — Fox Hill, Bud Valley, Spruce Run, Wickhecoke Creek, Barton Tract, Lamington Ridge, Musconetcong River, Halsey’s Orchard, Schooley’s Mountain, Wilcox’s Corner, Wolever’s Ford, Squires Point, and Fidler’s Lane. Even the brooks were honored as Stony, Rockey or Cold, Mallard, Honey or Neshanic.

The Revolutionary War period left its mark — the division line between East and West Jersey was disregarded; instead, “the Barracks”, “the State House Lott” and the resurgence of titles (“Major Richard Stillwell’s kitchen door”) appeared in the road records.

The main routes led to places that played the largest role in the daily life of the colonist — the mill, the tavern, the church. In volume I, mention is made of 64 mills, 24 taverns and 14 churches. Eight forges and furnaces, 1 lime kiln, the paper mill of Stacy Pott’s (1774), Isaac DeCou’s tanyard and bark house (1782), Philip Case’s brick kiln (1793) and Abraham Hunt’s lumber yard were also designations in later days. Twenty-one ferries were run by enterprising owners.

Especially for the genealogist, Volume I is a partial index of the county with such tidbits as mention of the widow of Alexander Reed of Kingwood. There is no record of a settlement of his estate in Hunterdon County.

Anyone who has attempted to trace land transaction will appreciate the inclusion of ownership changes. For example, John Rockhill’s plantation was purchased by Henry O’Donnell by 1762. The mills of Hugh McCann were in possession of Daniel Handley in 1769.

Therefore, the next time you come to a stumbling block in your research, remember the road return volumes as possibly holding the solution to your quandry.

## ROAD RETURN — VOLUME I 1761 — 1802

### TAVERNS:

Boars Head — 1762-1799  
Hickory — 1769-1799  
Ringoos — 1770-1786  
John Bohonan — 1773  
Abram Bunnel — 1779  
William Campbell — 1779  
---- Coolbaugh — 1779  
Andrew Mershon — 1779  
Alexander Gordon — 1780  
---- Burk — 1780  
Joseph Hart — 1780

White House — 1782  
Peter Covenhoven — 1786  
Andrew Muirheid — 1787  
Union — 1789  
James Hart — 1791  
Joseph Lewis — 1792  
Isaac Rittenhouse — 1795  
---- Jonson — 1795  
Cornelius Lake — 1796  
Nathan Price — 1799-1800  
---- Vansickle — 1801



**FERRIES:**

--- Correll (Coryell) - 1762-1800  
 (Garret) Johnson - 1767  
 David Howel - 1768-1779  
 Jacob McClain - 1775-1786  
 ---- Price - 1762-1778  
 (Joseph) Reading - 1781  
 Lower Belmont - 1779  
 ---- Pettit - 1779  
 Israel Howell - 1786  
 ---- Black - 1793

**FORGES & FURNACES:**

Wm. Johnson - 1762  
 Changewater - 1762  
 Norton - 1763  
 Union Iron Works - 1764-1792  
 Samuel Johnson Esq. Iron Works - 1768

**CONGREGATIONS/CEMETERY/PARSONAGE:**

Bethlehem Frame Meeting House - 1762  
 Bethlehem Baptist Meeting House - 1762  
 Burying place near Cornelius Wyckoff - 1765  
 Kingwood Baptist Meeting House (MH) - 1767  
 Kingwood Quaker MH - 1767  
 Hopewell Baptist MH - 1767  
 Methodist MH (Trenton) - 1774

**SAW MILLS:**

James Snyder - 1762  
 John Snyder - 1762  
 Peter Ruttenhouse - 1779

**GRIST MILLS:**

John Phillips & Jacob Green - 1761  
 at Squires Point Forge - 1764  
 William Chamberlin - 1768  
 Samuel Johnson - 1768  
 John Phillips - 1773

George Beatty - 1782-1793  
 Daniel Huger, Esq. - 1794  
 Thos. Pursley - 1795  
 Thos. Lowrey - 1795  
 Widow Reading - 1795  
 (Samuel) Tumbleson (Tomlinson) - 1800  
 Jacob Painter - 1801  
 ---- Prevost - 1801  
 ---- Longstreth - 1802

Messrs. ---- Potts & ---- Dillworth - 1769  
 ---- Beakman - 1769  
 Michael Ruble & John Bunn - 1769  
 Iron Works at Trenton - 1772-1793

Dutch Church Burying Ground - 1784  
 Trenton Quaker MH - 1774  
 North Branch MH - 1774  
 Readington MH - 1794  
 Amwell MH (new) - 1795  
 Amwell Dutch MH - 1799  
 Amwell Baptist MH - 1799  
 Anabaptist Congregation of Trenton - 1800  
 Amwell Parsonage - 1800

Philip Antonig (sic) - 1796  
 John Besson - 1799  
 Jno. Stout - 1801

John Syder - 1775  
 Noah Hixon - 1780  
 Capt. Nathan Hixon - 1796  
 David Fox - 1801

**PAPER MILL:**

Stacy Potts - 1774

**GRIST & SAW MILLS:**

Jonathan Woolverton & James Drake - 1786

**LIME KILNS:**

unnamed - 1762

**MILLS: not designated as grist, saw, or fulling mills**

Jacob Vanderbilt - 1749 (Road return recorded 1767)  
 Andrew Leake - new in 1761  
 James Stout - 1761  
 ---- Van Horn - 1762  
 Ralph Smith - 1762  
 Samuel Everitt - 1762  
 ---- Van Cort - 1762  
 Charles Huff - 1762  
 ---- Polhamus - 1763  
 David McKenney - 1765  
 ---- Atkinson - 1765  
 William Everitt - 1766  
 Samuel Johnson - 1769 (probably a grist mill)  
 John & Philip Granden - 1768-1772  
 Hugh McCan - 1769  
 Daniel Handley - 1769  
 Benjamin Opdike - 1769  
 Samuel Henry - 1769-1781  
 ---- Broomley - 1769  
 Benjamin Tyson - 1770  
 Samuel Kitchen - 1770  
 Jacob Snyder - 1771-1784  
 Mathias Van Horn - 1771 (could be the --- Van Horn above)  
 Charles Coxe - 1772-1778  
 David Cook - 1773  
 Union - 1773  
 ---- Earwine - 1779  
 John Snyder - 1780-1786 (perhaps the saw miller)  
 Benjamin Cornwell (Cornell) - 1782

**BRICK KILN (KILL)**

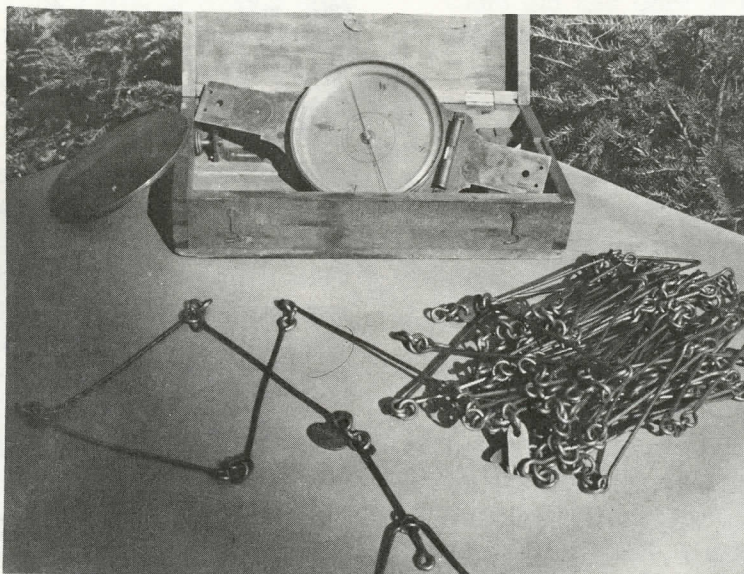
unnamed - 1761  
 Philip Case - 1793

**FULLING MILL:**

Abraham Skirm - 1773

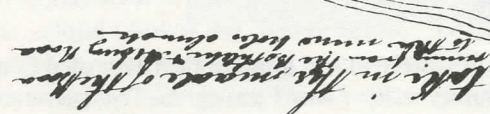
Rocky Hill - 1782  
 ---- Durling - 1783  
 Adam Hall - 1783  
 Dr. ---- Barnet - 1785  
 Nathaniel Hunt - 1785  
 Richard Lott - 1786  
 ---- Sentony (sic) - 1786  
 John Snook - 1786  
 Abraham Van Horn - 1787 (could be the 2 Van Horn entries above)  
 ---- Parker - 1787  
 ---- Shuler (Sheeler/Shiler) - 1787-1795  
 Peter Rittenhouse - 1788  
 ---- Hutchinson - 1789  
 ---- Warner - 1790  
 ---- Everitt - 1790-1801 (perhaps the William Everitt above)  
 ---- Johnson - 1792 (perhaps the Samuel Johnson above)  
 Henry Dusenbury - 1792  
 Daniel Hunt - 1795  
 Abraham Van Dyke - 1795  
 Luther Colvin - 1799  
 Peter Case - 1799  
 ---- McCullough - 1800  
 Samuel Runk - 1801  
 Jonathan Hutchinson - 1801 (perhaps the Hutchinson above)  
 John Hageman - 1801

Phyllis D'Autrechy



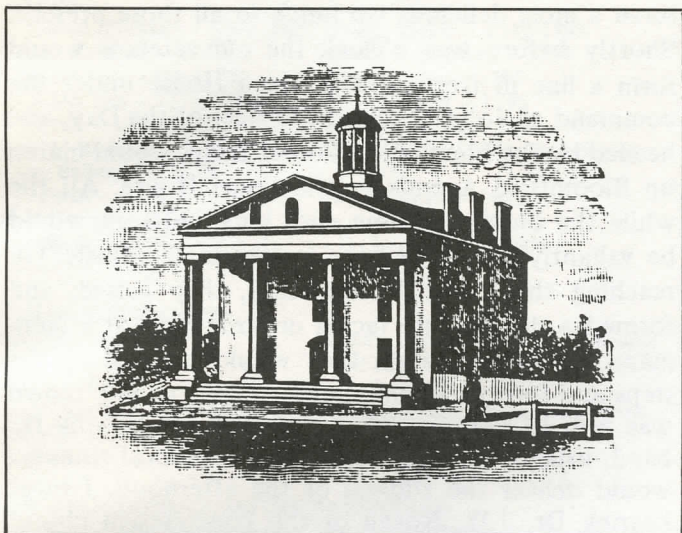
Surveyor's compass and chain owned and used by John Schenck Higgins (1828-1894) and given to the Hunterdon County Historical Society by his son, Professor L.R. Higgins. John S. Higgins, a farmer and surveyor, lived near Flemington. The measurement surveyors used in laying out early roads was the chain. This chain consisted of 100 links identical in size, measured 66 feet. In early deeds, road records, and maps measurements may appear as 9.54 (9 chains, 54 links). To convert this to feet and inches multiply  $9.54 \times 66 = 629 \frac{64}{100}$  feet. A chain is equal to four rods, thus a four rod road, referred to as a King's road, was 66 feet wide.





This road, now Station Road, is County Route 647 in Bethlehem Township. John Bigler's name appears on this map. The *Newsletter*, Vol. 13, No. 1, contained an article about him as one of Hunterdon's last veterans of the Revolutionary War.





## OUR COURTHOUSE

### REMINISCENCES ABOUT HUNTERDON'S COURTHOUSE

The old Courthouse in Flemington, burned in the winter of 1828 and the prisoners were transferred, to the jail in Somerville. Among the inmates at the time of the fire was the little black boy, James Guise, who was in there for the murder of a woman near Hopewell, that area then being part of Hunterdon. Naturally, Mr. Painter didn't go into all the gruesome details, how after he was hanged, his body was carted off in a spring wagon to Runk's Mill, in what is now Idell, where by the light of a lantern, Dr. Coryell, proceeded to cut the little fellow up, just what he expected to find I never found out. The story is told that on the way to Runk's Mill, the driver of the wagon stopped at the tavern in Sergeantsville, presumably for a nip to steady his nerves a little. While he was inside some boys from around the neighborhood, being curious, of course, lifted up one corner of the canvas which had been thrown over the corpse to see what he looked like. What they saw nearly scared them out of a year's growth. After the hanging there were a lot of yarns and myths that grew up concerning little Jim's ghost. I forget all the details but one was that his spirit, for some reason, was supposed to haunt the area around Pittstown much to the discomfiture of the Pittstownians. It was, of course, all a lot of poppycock but it made something to talk about on the long winter evenings.

Back in 1828 a hanging was a public spectacle. Everybody attended; men, women, and sometimes children, if their parents would permit. I remember a story about a woman, very anxious to go to a hanging.

She had a whole raft of young ones and in her haste she got them all ready and dressed to go along, she wound up going to the hanging and forgetting one or two kids. Little Jim was hanged in an open field on the north side of Mine Street, someplace between Main Street and what is now Park Avenue. Some say it was on the other side of Park Avenue, not far from the Catholic Rectory. I never knew anybody who attended the hanging. I was born a bit too late for that. The story goes that when little Jim was being taken out to the gallows, he saw some boys up in a tree who didn't want to miss anything. Little Jim told them they had better watch out or maybe the same would happen to them.

Somewhere around the place, the Historical Society should still have the horse yoke with which Little Jim killed Mrs. Beakes when she refused to lend him a gun. Well, I guess Little Jim lived too soon. Today, I doubt if he would have been hanged. In all probability they would have tried to rehabilitate him and turn him loose so that he could commit another murder. Sounds cynical, but it happens every day.

What I know, or think I know, about the construction of the new Court House is all too scanty, but they seem to have lost no time in going about replacing the burned out building. It does appear that local labor was employed but where they got the stone I wouldn't know. One of the stone masons was John E. Trimmer, Sr., who lived up in the Swamp in the Gary Rake Factory neighborhood. When he became old and once in a while would come to town, after a few beers, he liked to stand in front of the Court House, and pointing proudly at the building, tell the by-standers, "I carried up the southeast corner of that building and there she still stands just as plumb as the day she was laid up." Surely whoever was in charge of the construction work, had an eye for beauty, for the finished building was for those days an architectural gem and to the folks of Hunterdon a thing of pride and joy. Up until I was grown up, the first floor was still the county jail. The picture on the front of the Newsletter (Vol. 14, No. 1) shows a frame leanto on the north side behind a board fence. That was the jail kitchen where the meals for the prisoners were prepared. Not only did the new building provide for a court room, but also for a jail, a law library, a sheriff's office, a room in which to sequester jurors when sent out to agree on a verdict, and living quarters for the sheriff and his family. How they found space for all this seems incredible but up until the new jail was erected, most sheriffs moved into the Court House right away after they were sworn into office.



Of course, the Hauptmann trial brought the old Court House into national prominence. Throughout the nation there must have been but few who did not see it in pictures and read comments about how quaint it was in its bucolic setting. To all of which I used to say "Bosh." To me this trial was but just one incident in its long, long history. Years ago it was the only available place in town for holding political rallies. Both parties held their annual conventions here to choose their slate of officers to run for county offices. Band concerts were held here during the winter months, some of which I had the pleasure of attending. In the late 1880's, Fred Douglass, the great black abolitionist leader lectured here, much to the disgust of some local political leaders. If I mistake not, for many years the old, big Board of Freeholders met here once a month. That was back in the days when each municipality was represented by a member and, in addition, the city of Lambertville sent one from each of its three wards. One of my most prized possessions is a picture of the old Board taken on the Court House steps in May 1898. Twenty Freeholders are in the picture, including old Godfrey Lott, the Director. Also in the picture are Paul A. Queen, counsel to the Board, Ed. Humphrey, County Collector and John Shurts, clerk of the Board. I take pride in the fact that I can name everyone in the picture and give you the name of the municipality from which he came. The Society has a better picture than mine, which is faded. Some years ago I wrote on the reverse side just who every one was. I think it would be just fine if it could be found, put in a suitable frame and displayed on the library wall. I think it deserves that. The annual County Teachers' Institutes were always held in the court room until the new high school building was completed on Bonnell Street.

Of all the events taking place in the old court room, none do I recall with a greater feeling of nostalgia than the annual Decoration Day exercises under the auspices of the long defunct Lambert Boeman Post, No. 48, G.A.R. My great uncle, Bill Scott, was an active member of the Post and every year on the 30th of May he would dress up in his double breasted blue suit with the brass buttons, put on his black felt hat with the gold braid around the crown having on the front an insignia of a gold wreath with the letters G.A.R. in the center. I still treasure the gold braid and the insignia. Sometimes, he and Aunt Hann would take me along down to Flemington. The Grand Army Post had a meeting room somewhere in the upper regions of the old Opera House. Here the veterans would hold their annual meeting. After the close of the meeting, the ladies of the Women's Relief Corps, made up of local veterans' wives, would

serve a most delicious lap lunch to all those present. Shortly before two o'clock the old veterans would form a line in front of the Opera House under the command of John Foran, the Officer of the Day, and headed by the Flemington Cornet Band, would march up Bloomfield Avenue to the Court House. All the while the old men, some with long whiskers, would be valiantly trying to keep in step to the music. On reaching the Court House steps, they halted, and formed a double line facing inward. Then at a command to countermarch, they would proceed up the steps and into the court room, where a goodly crowd was usually waiting. After a number or two by the band, usually the pastor of one of the local churches would deliver the address of the afternoon. I recall hearing Dr. J.W. Rogan of the Presbyterian church and Rev. Levi D. Temple of the local Baptist church. The latter was an orator of unusual ability and I still remember his address on the flag in which he gave an explanation of the meaning of the three colors in the flag.

After the exercises the veterans were provided with bouquets and they marched first to the Baptist burying ground and then back to the Presbyterian yard where they placed flowers on the graves of their departed comrades. The trip up to Prospect Hill was considered just a bit too much walking, so a committee was delegated to take care of those buried in that cemetery. When the exercises were all over I would go along with Uncle Bill to Joe Chamberlin's stables where "Dode" Mount would hitch old Tom to the buggy and after a short stop in front of the Union Hotel to pick up Aunt Hann who would be waiting in the hotel parlor, we would start the long climb up Thatcher's Hill on our way home.

Alas the old Opera House is long since gone; the old soldiers who marched that day, have one by one, just faded away, like Douglas Mac Arthur said all old soldiers do; the little boy who watched it all with such fascination is now an old, old man with only his memories. And the Court House? Ah, like old John Trimmer said so many years ago, "There she still stands."

Sunday, as I made my way slowly up the broad stone steps, once trod by feet long since turned to dust; I thought, as I looked at the great stone pillars of the portico, how many bustling lawyers, how many harried and anxious clients, nervous witnesses under subpoena and the sometimes reluctant jurors, had once passed between those great stone columns. The great, the near great and just plain folks like the most of us, at one time or another, all walked that stone floor. As I approached the double doors I wondered how many victorious parties in a legal battle had emerged exulting in their good fortune believing that in their case, justice had been done and conversely how many who had lost came forth cursing their luck, proclaiming to all and sundry, "You





Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Hunterdon, Clerk, Collector and Counsel, taken May 9, 1899 on the steps of the Courthouse.

The photograph was given to the Hunterdon County Historical by Mrs. Herbert Van Pelt in 1968. Frank E. Burd has provided the identification of these gentlemen.

Front row: left to right: John Shurts, Lebanon Twp., Clerk of the Board; Godfrey C. Lott, Norton, Director, Bethlehem Twp.; Paul A. Queen, County Counsel, Flemington.

Second row: Edward Humphrey, Glen Gardner, County Collector; Samuel Wilson, Allerton, Clinton Twp.; Jeremiah K. Roberson, Quakertown, Franklin Twp.; Willard Apgar, Woodglen, Lebanon Twp.; Edward H. Durham, Ringoes, East Amwell Twp.; William Bonnell, Mt. Pleasant, Alexandria Twp.; W.W. Dorland, High Bridge; John R. Smith, Holland Twp.; James Wyckoff, Clinton Borough.

Third row: Jonas Warman, Lambertville, William Parkes, Headquarters, Delaware Twp.; John V.L. Schomp, Pleasant Run, Readington Twp.; S.M. Woolfinger, Lambertville; Amos Thatcher, Flemington, Raritan Twp.; Albert Ganchy, Lambertville; Richard Runkle, Mt. Airy, West Amwell Twp.

Fourth row: David Clark Farley, Mountainville, Tewksbury Twp.; John W. Melick, Clinton, Union Twp.; Watson F. Kugler, Idell, Kingwood Twp.

don't ever want to come to Flemin'town for justice."

While the Hauptmann case was by long odds the most famous trial ever held in the old court room; yet many another drama in days gone by was played through to its conclusion within these walls. Some strange and bizarre, some tragic and even some with comic overtones. Among the first of which I have recollection was the trial of Sylvanus Souders for the murder of his father-in-law, Herbert Quick of Bunn Valley in 1913. He was convicted and sentenced to be electrocuted. A sensational trial early in this century was that of Mrs. Susie Dobilinski, proprietor of the Belmont House on York Street in Lambertville. She was convicted of the illegal sale of liquor. The fact that she had been a ward of the Weedons, a socially prominent family in Lambertville made the case the more interesting. About this time John W. Scott, proprietor of a local foundry and a bridge builder, was indicted for alleged fraud against the county, as part of the aftermath of the sensation investigation of doings of the old big Board of Freeholders. Scottie was acquitted much to general satisfaction as it was generally felt that he was the victim of an attempt to make him the scapegoat in the affair. About 1930 the State Troopers were tried there for their part in the celebrated Battle of Jutland in which Miss Beatrice Meaney was accidentally shot and killed. Then in 1933 there was the serio-comic

case of Opdycke vs. Opdycke in which Hiram Opdyck of West Portal sued his neighbor George E. Opdycke for damages in a neighborhood dispute. The defendant was acquitted. In 1916 I attended the trial of William Henry Wyckoff of East Amwell Township accused of the murder of his uncle, Richard Wyckoff and the latter's housekeeper, Katherine Ann Fisher. The evidence against William Henry was all circumstantial but things looked bad for him the day I was there. During all this time detectives had been working on the case and finally arrested Montford Udell and his companion William McLoughlin and they were convicted and sent to prison. In the early 1870's those who took part in the famous Pattenburg riot were brought to trial here. If memory serves, the case sort of fell apart for the lack of conclusive evidence.

In the 150 year history of the present Court House, two trials have been particularly sensational: the Hauptmann case and the trial of John E. Schuyler charged with the murder of Manning Riley in 1909. Schuyler was from the upper part of the county and had been at the outs with Riley and the evidence against him, while mostly circumstantial though was very conclusive, so much so the jury had no trouble in bringing in a verdict of guilty. Schuyler was sentenced to be hanged. Executions in those days were still carried out in county jails. The gallows was



brought and set up in the jail yard then in the rear of the jail. I was then in my third year in high school. During noon recess several of us boys would come down town, sneak into the courtroom and on back into the law library which was then where the corridor now goes to the jail. There was a window on the north side which we could raise and we would lean out and call down, "Hey Schuyler can you see your gallows? They're going to stretch your neck on that one of these days." After awhile the authorities caught on and the library door was kept locked. Schuyler didn't hang. His lawyer, H. Burdette Herr, grandfather of Ryman and Cowles Herr, moved heaven and earth, so to speak, to get him reprieved and finally succeeded. It must have been a great relief to Sheriff Jacob Dilts who was serving as Sheriff E.W. Opdycke's deputy; his duty it would have been to spring the trap and he loathed the prospect to the extent of almost worrying himself sick. Instead Schuyler went to prison and, if I am not mistaken, several years later was released.

When I was teaching at Pattenburg I attended the trial of the man accused of the murder of the Queen family at Mt. Pleasant in June 1917. The accused was the most repulsive specimen of humanity I have ever seen before or since. He had retained Harry L. Stout, Flemington's Clarence Darrow, as his lawyer. I remember thinking to myself, as the overwhelming evidence against him piled up, just what would Stoutie find to say in his defense in his closing plea to the jury. Well, Stoutie was equal to the occasion — he talked for an hour and a half, pulling out all the stops and shedding the usual tears. The jury was unimpressed and brought in a verdict of guilty and the accused went to the chair.

The monotony of murder trials, damage suits, breach of contract cases and actions in Tort were once in awhile relieved by a real spicy case involving a charge of rape, selling liquor or maintaining a bawdy house. When in high school I had a wait of over two hours after school before train time. Often I would drop into the court room to hear what was going on. One case I recall I even cut a class or two to attend.

Of these particular cases one of the most salacious was that of Yawger vs. Cleveland for extortion. Also I recall having heard folks talk about the case against the men who tarred and feathered Julia Beam in the early 1890's. One that roused great interest locally up my way was that of Rockafellow vs. Steigler, over a watercourse. The case of Williamson vs. Creveling took place while I lived in Pattenburg. I had moved to South Bound Brook before the case of Hann vs. Bonnell for alienation of a wife's affections took place. A horse case of unusual interest

was that of Dr. Johnson vs. Gilbert A. Van Doren over the sale of a horse. Times have changed, horse cases have long since passed into limbo. There was a time when at every term of court at least one or more horse cases would be on the calendar. Before each term of court began the papers used to publish a long list of cases about to come up entitled "The List of Causes". Sometimes it would run to almost a column in length. That too has gone by the board.

A complete list of all the lawyers who at one time or another appeared before the bench in the old court room would run on to an interterminal length. I shall mention only thirty. Some of whom I knew by sight, some personally, the others I had heard about. I have tried to include none who were admitted to the bar after the turn of the century. It goes without saying this short list includes some men of great ability whose names were once household words. Many of them were long remembered for their court room forensics and histrionics. Here is the list: By no means in proper order but as I recall them. Peter I. Clark, Alexander Wurts, George C. Maxwell, Nathaniel Saxton, Samuel Southard, Charles Bartles, John C. Rafferty, A.E. Sanderson, John A. Bullock, John T. Bird, Bennett Van Sycle, A.V. Van Fleet, O.P. Chamberlin, George A. Allen, John N. Voorhees, George H. Large, William A. Cotter, Lambert Sergeant, Edward P. Conkling, H.G. Chamberlin, R.S. Kuhl, John L. Connett, Willard C. Parker, Harry J. Abel, Oliver C. Holcombe, H. Burdette Herr, John H. Nunn, Walter F. Hayhurst, William C. Gebhardt, Harry L. Stout, and Henry A. Fluck.

Until Sunday, I hadn't been in the old court room for over forty years. I knew extensive renovations were made a few years ago but I wasn't quite prepared for all that met my eye. Gone were the white painted seats, replaced by more comfortable new ones. There was a new bench for the judge which seemed less elevated than the previous one. The tables covered with green baize at which the lawyers sat when they were trying a case were gone



Mr. Burd and Mrs. Stothoff in former library headquarters.



too and fine new hardwood tables have taken their place. The old straight chair, high up on a platform, in which witnesses once sat and squirmed and sometimes cringed under a merciless cross examination, too had disappeared and I am told is now ignominiously sitting down in the furnace room. The jury box looked pretty much the same though it seems to me there used to be a window where there is now a door in the northwest corner. The long line of old arm chairs under the window on the south side of the court room looked much the same. It was there the members of the bar, not actively engaged in trying a case often sat as observers.

This letter has run on to a much greater length than I had intended. There seemed so many things that needed to be said. There is much more that could be said. It is a vain wish, I know, but just maybe, were I younger, we might collaborate and put together a definitive history of this old historic building. I didn't touch on the long line of sheriffs who have had charge of the jail, nor some of the more notorious prisoners the jail has held, the prison escapes, the tramp problem and the riot among the tramps in the jail when "Doc" Poulson was sheriff. Well, I hope you will find at least some of what I have written interesting.

Frank E. Burd

#### EDITORIAL NOTE:

The Courthouse, on its 150th anniversary, has been featured in the last two issues of the *Newsletter*. These two articles by Kathleen J. Schreiner and his visit to the Courthouse on the occasion of the Society's 1978 Annual Meeting prompted Frank E. Burd to write the letter printed here to Ms. Schreiner.

Mr. Burd has been a contributor to past issues of our *Newsletter*. His love for history is evidenced by the hours and hours he has given to volunteer service to our Society and its members and to any persons who have sought his help. A member of the Hunterdon County Historical Society since January 14, 1911, Mr. Burd served for a number of years as Vice President. Following his retirement as principal of Robert Morris School in South Bound Brook, he served as a volunteer in the Society library both in its former location over the Flemington Public Library and its present location in the Doric House.



## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

A warm welcome is extended to our new members who have joined since publication of the last *Newsletter*.

Mr. and Mrs. William Bellerjeau, Lebanon, NJ  
 Mr. & Mrs. Tom Bellis, Arlington, VA  
 Mr. & Mrs. Ted Blew, Pittstown, NJ  
 Mr. Richard E. Choyce, Delanco, NJ  
 Mrs. F. Willson Daily, Savannah, GA  
 Mrs. Claire M. Foster, Glen Gardner, NJ  
 Mr. Richard M. Dawes, Schriever, LA  
 Mrs. Shirley L. Kanora, Flemington, NJ  
 Mrs. Rachel E. McCloskey, Port Allegany, PA  
 Mr. James A. Murray, Staten Island, NY  
 Mr. William W. Price, Johnson City, NY  
 Mrs. Frances M. Smith, Hannon, Ontario Canada  
 Mrs. Marian L. Worrell, Escondido, CA

Mrs. Frederick Stothoff  
 Membership Secretary



## HOW TO JOIN

Hunterdon County Historical Society  
 114 Main Street  
 Flemington, New Jersey 08822

Please enroll me as a member of your Society

|                         |                                  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 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) |

for which I enclose my remittance in the amount of \$ . . . . .

Name . . . . .

Address . . . . .

. . . . .

## 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.



### "PONY EXPRESS" 1978

The chronic problem of delayed delivery of newsletters caused the cancellation of the July 8 visit by Society members and guests to Liberty Village. Less than 20 reservations were received by the cut-off date of July 5, so the visit will be rescheduled.

The *Newsletters*, approximately 500, went to the Ringoes Post Office, presorted by zip code, bundled and labeled as to destination, two weeks before the meeting. Postmistress Gritzmacher and her staff quickly processed the mailing and it was dispatched from Ringoes.

Delivery time was normal to some places, including many outside New Jersey; exceedingly slow to others. Historical Society President Kenneth V. Myers called to my attention that his copy was received at his office in Flemington on July 10.

The Pony Express carrying mail swiftly on horseback, with a relay of horses at stations 25 miles apart, carried Abraham Lincoln's Inaugural Address from St. Joseph, Missouri, the eastern terminus of the Pony Express, to Sacramento, California, a distance of approximately 2,000 miles, in seven days and seventeen hours. True, our *Hunterdon Historical Newsletter* is not as important historically as Lincoln's speech, but can't we hope for at least service equal to 1860?

After careful consideration of our mail delivery problem and how we might resolve it, the Trustees approved a motion to mail future issues of the *Newsletter* at first class postal rate and raise membership dues \$1 to cover the increased cost. Much as the Trustees hoped to avoid raising dues, there seemed to be no alternative if the *Newsletter* was to continue as the means of announcing Society meetings and trips.

Mrs. Roxanne K. Carkhuff  
Corresponding Secretary



WILLOW HILL—Rear section was home of Dr. Craven. Later Rev. Jacob Kirkpatrick, Presbyterian minister in Ringoes resided there. From collection of Edward H. Quick.