

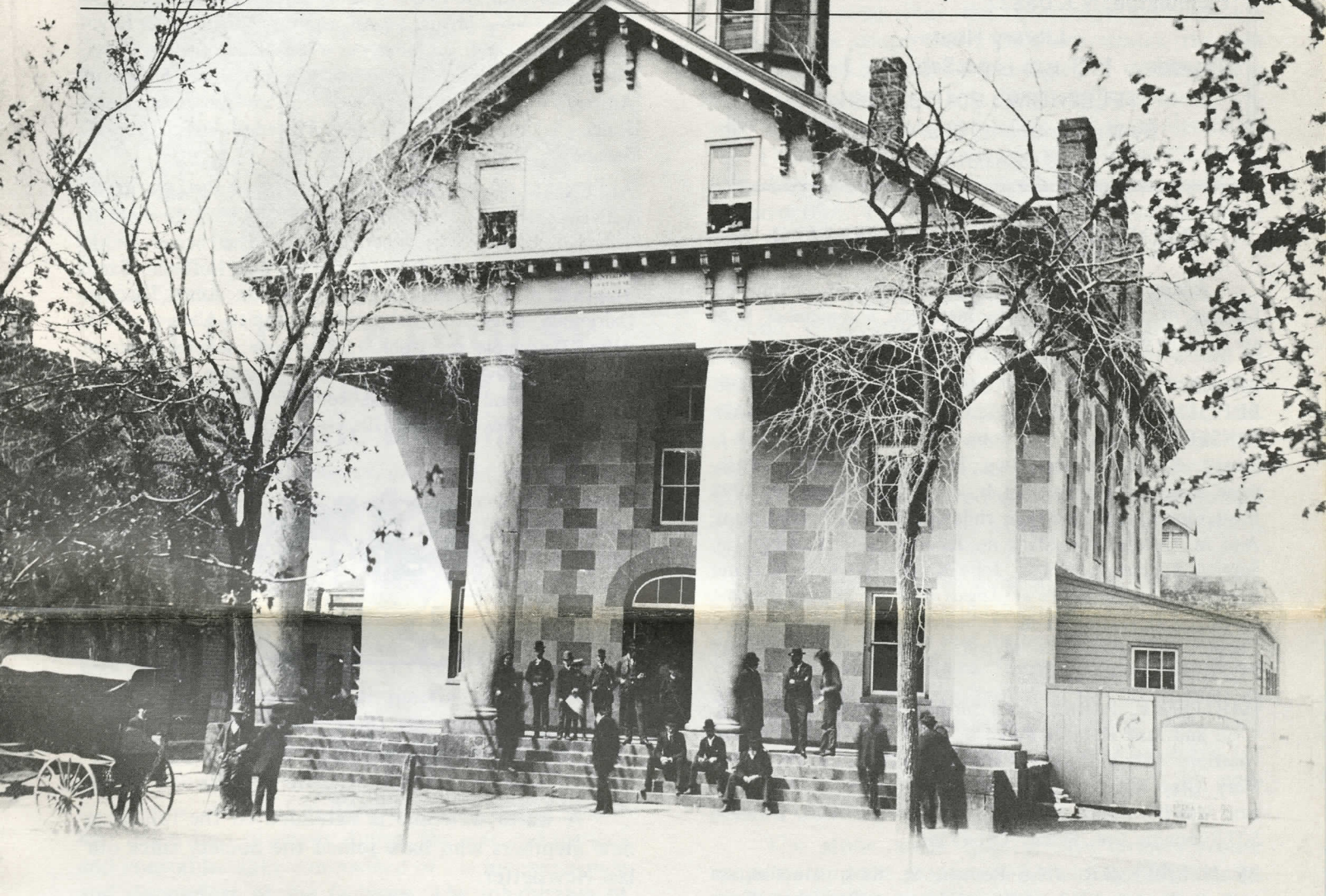


Hunterdon Historical Newsletter

VOL. 14, NO. 1

Published by Hunterdon County Historical Society

WINTER 1978



Mr. H. Alan Painter Will Recall Early Reporting Days at Annual Meeting in County Courthouse, Sun., April 2, 2 p.m.

H. Alan Painter, a career newsman, will be the speaker at the Annual Meeting of the Society to be held in the Hunterdon County Courthouse April 2, 1978, at 2 p.m. Mr. Painter will recall his experiences as a news reporter covering the Courthouse during the time of his employment at the *Hunterdon County Democrat* from 1934 to 1942 which included the time of the most famous trial ever held at the Courthouse — the Lindbergh Kidnap Case.

After graduation from Middlebury College in 1933, our speaker started the study of law at Columbia but decided newspaper work was more to his liking so he took a position as a news reporter with the local paper. He held that job until he left Hun-

terdon County in 1942 to manage the *Hackettstown Gazette* for D. Howard Moreau who had just acquired that paper.

He later took over as owner and publisher of the *Hackettstown Gazette*, served for a time as president of the New Jersey Press Association and after a period of some thirty years, disposed of his interest in the Hackettstown paper but continued to be active in press work in Morristown.

Mr. Painter is the grandson of Dr. O.H. Sproul, one time President of the Hunterdon County Historical Society.

The Doric House will be open for tours following the meeting and refreshments will be served there.

HUNTERDON HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER

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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.

ANDERSON, APGAR, CLOVER, CONINE, COOPER, CORBETT, EMANS, KINNEY, METLER, PIERSON, REA, SHARPENSTINE: Desire info on John Peter Clover, b. ca. 1718 in Prussia, d. 1766 Lebanon Twp., Hunterdon Co., NJ, m Catherine Sharpe (Sharpenstine) b. ca. 1720 Holland, d. 1798 Hunterdon Co., NJ and their children: Peter m. Sarah Emans; Ann m. George Rea; Mary m. Jacob Conine; Elizabeth m. Samuel Anderson; Eliza m. John Kinney; John m. Margaret Metler; Catherine m. Peter Apgar; Paul m. 1) May Pierson, 2) Nancy Metler; Sarah m. William Corbett; Philip m. Mary Cooper; and Isaac. Mrs. Myron J. Clover, II, 315 Philray Rd., Richmond VA 23235.

HARTPENCE, PARKE: Info birthplace of Ozias Parke b. 1756 and Jane Robbins Parke b. 1753, their parents names, vocation. Also birthplace, parentage, any family history of Mary Gray Hartpence, wife of John Hartpence/Heartpence who was born July 10, 1766. ADD — Mrs. C.A. Zwiebel, 507 Sycamore Ave., Sidney, OH 45365.

BEAMER/BEEMER: John Beamer, Sr. took naturalization oath Burlington 1762, giving residence as Bethlehem Twp. John and wife Elizabeth had died by 1805 when his 190 acre farm in Bethlehem Twp. was sold. Have exhausted what may be found in organized search. If while doing your research you come across isolated bits of data on the name appearing in a deed, will, tax list, church record, etc., I would appreciate receiving it. Richard K. Beamer, 565A Washington Ave., Nutley, NJ 07110.

BLUE, VAN VLEET, VOORHEES, WILLIAMSON: Who were parents of: 1) Nicholas Williamson of Amwell, his will proved December 1760, and wife Rachel; 2) Martha Voorhees, w/o Ezekial Blue, d. 1813-1828; 3) brothers Peter, George, Jerome and Garret Van Vleet, in Amwell during Revolution? Mrs. Thor. B. Andersen, 41 Park Rd., Maplewood, NJ 07040.

BELLIS, HOUSEL, WILLIAMSON: Desire information on Jennie and John Housel ca. 1750. John Bellis b. 1750, m. Nellie Williamson of Larison's Corner. Two of her sisters married John Housel and Richard Williamson. Who are these two sisters? Add: Mrs. Patricia Burton, 41 Collins Rd., Mercerville, NJ 08619.

SLEIGHT, VAN HORN; Who were parents of James Van Horn, b. 4/3/1740; m. 1760 Elizabeth Sleight, b. 1737? Add: Paul E. Van Horn, 235-B Mayflower Way, Jamesburg, NJ 08831.

MYERS/MIERS, SUTTON: Joshua Sutton, a teacher, b. 1760 in NJ m. ——— Myers. To Augusta Co., Virginia after Revolution. Had children Jonas, b. 1783 NJ, Cornelius, Peter, Catharine and Mary. Was Joshua a son of Jonas Sutton of Amwell, who willed £25 in 1797 to "my son Joshua's son Jonas . . . when 21"? Add: Mrs. Porter M. Powell, 903 N. Second St., Garden City, KS 67846.

ALLEN/ALLER, DALRYMPLE, DILTS, HOFFMAN, ROWLAND, SMITH, THATCHER: Desire info on Bennett B. Thatcher, Edwin H. Thatcher, Bessie R. Thatcher m. Smith, ch of Geo. Trout Thatcher & Harriet Eliz Hoffman; Sarah Thatcher b. 1806, m. Geo Dalrymple ch: Amos Thatcher Dalrymple, Mary Ann Dalrymple m. James Aller or Allen, Alfred Dalrymple and Robt. J. Dalrymple; Lareine Thatcher m. John T. Rowland, ch: Caroline m. Reading Dilts, Eliz & Martha Rowland. ADD: Mrs. Roberta Thatcher Watts, 643 Terhune Dr., Wayne, NJ 07470.

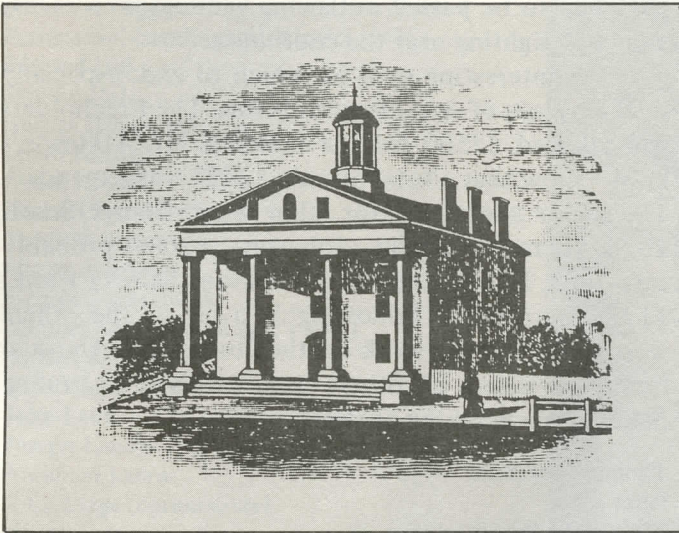
**Membership Report**

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members who have joined the Society since our last Newsletter.

Paul Aanonsen, Clinton, NJ
 Mrs. Doreen L. Baker, N. Plainfield, NJ
 Mrs. Mary S. Bodine, Quakertown, NJ
 Mrs. Thomas Chittester, Clarendon, PA
 Dr. Louis P. Doyle, Flemington, NJ
 Frank Gary, Jr., Crosswicks, NJ
 Mrs. Frederick D. Hyatt, Dover, NJ
 *Michael G. Morris, Ringoes, NJ
 Mr. & Mrs. David Oxman, Stockton, NJ
 Mrs. Pauline P. Rabinsky, Pittstown, NJ
 Mr. & Mrs. James S. Studdiford, Morrisville, PA
 Mrs. Kenneth M. Wheeler, Grosse Pointe, MI
 John E. Wolverton, Chicago, IL
 David Wright, Whitehouse, NJ
 James Wright, Easton, PA

Mrs. Frederick Stothoff
 Membership Secretary

*LIFE member



OUR COURTHOUSE

Annual Meeting to be Held in an Historic Building

Among the old ledgers, day-books and journals in the Society's manuscript collection are many stories waiting to be told. One such set of documents, the gift of Elias Voseller, are the ledgers and account sheets relating to the building of Hunterdon County's first courthouse in Flemington.

In 1785, the new nation was struggling to its feet after nine long years of war. The courts of Hunterdon County had been meeting in Trenton for forty-five years. Since 1740 the population distribution had changed considerably, the greatest portion of the people now lived in Amwell Township. The courthouse and gaol in Trenton, built in the 1740's had fallen into disrepair during the war and justices and constables alike complained of the inconvenience and discomfort of the facilities. The inhabitants of the county petitioned the Legislature of the State to allow them to meet in Flemington. They met there informally until 1790 when an election was held to determine where the new courthouse and gaol should be built. The Board of Freeholders ordered that the election be held at Meldrum's tavern in "Ringo's". It began on the 12th of October, 1790 and ended nine days later. The results showed that the people wanted the new facilities to be "In the town of Flemington, extending half a mile on each of the public roads from the house of George Alexander, innkeeper in said town."

By January 1791, the Freeholders had moved their meeting place from Meldrum's tavern in "Ringo's" to Alexander's in Flemington. Mr. Alexander had offered to give the county a half-acre of land at the south-east corner of his dwelling lot. At this time Flemington had fewer than 15 dwellings, at least one

tavern and one store. It was on a major road leading north and south but probably lacked regular stage service. At this same meeting the Freeholders chose a design for the building, simple enough but still the most imposing structure in the village.

The design that the Freeholder's chose was described as being "60' x 35', two stories, the first nine feet, the second 14 feet high." It would closely resemble the Reading home built in Delaware Township in 1787. Mr. Joseph Atkinson, local merchant, Mr. Thomas Stout, justice, and Mr. William Chamberlain, Freeholder, were chosen to be managers of the construction. The sum of £2500 was appropriated and the tax collectors were authorized to raise the money.

In late May 1791, after most crops were in the ground, construction began with digging the foundation and well. This was vital as much water would be needed for mixing mortar and until the well was finished, it would be hauled from the river. Mr. Atkinson began his accounts at this time and the first entry is for "one quire of paper" and "one Pasteboard". It is quite likely that this first purchase still exists in the form of the ledger and receipt book in which it is recorded.

The digging was all done by hand, and Flemington's red clay and shale undoubtable proved a formidable obstacle. Powder and brimstone (sulphur) appear in the next week's entries. The well digger John Ryan and his assistants were probably not local men as they were boarding with Susannah Smith. Their work was dirty, difficult and dangerous and an entry for "5 gallons and 3 pints of spirits allowed to well-diggers" is self-explanatory.

The stone walls rose slowly, farmers whose crops were in the ground used their time and wagons to find and haul stones. Some spent a few days laying stone under the direction of George Scott and Henry Lott, masons. The stone came from various places, much of it was quarried at "Large's" and "Case's". Water, sand, lime and hair were also hauled. The hair came from Phillip Case's tannery.

In August, work had progressed far enough to require a "raising". The main framing members would be mortised and tenoned on the ground and the joints numbered. On raising day, neighbors and friends would gather with their teams and tackle to raise the heavy timbers. A list of lumber in the ledger shows two "sticks" 10" x 12", 40 feet long. Cut from chestnut, these sticks would have weighed nearly 1400 pounds. Oak would be considerably heavier. Therefore, many hands were necessary to fit them in place. The "raising" became a social event and the accounts show entries for bacon, butter, veal

and flour. Susannah Smith was paid for "cooking and attending on raising day". Add to this the rum and spirits allowed and the picture of a colonial social event becomes clear.

After this, the entries indicate that efforts were directed towards closing in the building before the rains of autumn began. Nine thousand shingles were brought from New Brunswick as were window glass and finishing lumber. The coming of winter would bring the craftsmen who would do the finishing work inside the building. All of these men appear to have been local except David Thomas, who glazed the windows and painted. He boarded at various places around the town, perhaps because of his habit of drawing his pay in "spirits".

1792 seems to have been taken up in the work on the interior, although the gaol-yard was walled in and the necessary built. Samuel Runk, blacksmith, supplied hinges and iron doors. In the summer, it appears that the new well went dry as they were again hauling water, this time for the inside plastering. Mr. Thomas mixed his own paints and quantities of red litherage and white lead, "oyl" and tinting compounds were brought in. Yellow ocher, prussian blue and spanish brown were used as well as white-wash and lamp black. Pine floors were laid. Mr. Runk created a vane for the cupola and the ball was made and gilded. The firm of Hamilton and Ross made the bell and it was hung. By spring term, 1793, the courthouse was ready for use.

In the early months of 1793, after all construction was complete and the freeholders had begun meeting in the building a strange thing happened. Mr. Samuel Stewart, attorney for Susannah Smith, appeared before the board and put forth a claim to dower rights for the land on which the courthouse was built. Since the widow Smith had been involved with the construction since the beginning, we can only speculate why she waited so long to claim her rights. Her attorney and several of the Freeholder's were asked to look into the matter and eventually a quitclaim deed was given for the sum of £4.5.4. No record can be found of the nature of her claim or of the quitclaim deed.

In May, 1793 the courts of Hunterdon County met in their new home. The courtroom was probably on the second floor, the first being the home of the jailer and his family. Prisoners were kept in the cellar. Flemington was well on its way to becoming the largest town in the county. The Swift Sure stagecoach diverted its route from the Old York Road to enter Flemington and lawyers began making the town their home. Mr. Alexander surely profited from his generosity by the influx of new business. In these days, the court sessions often had a carnival atmosphere and

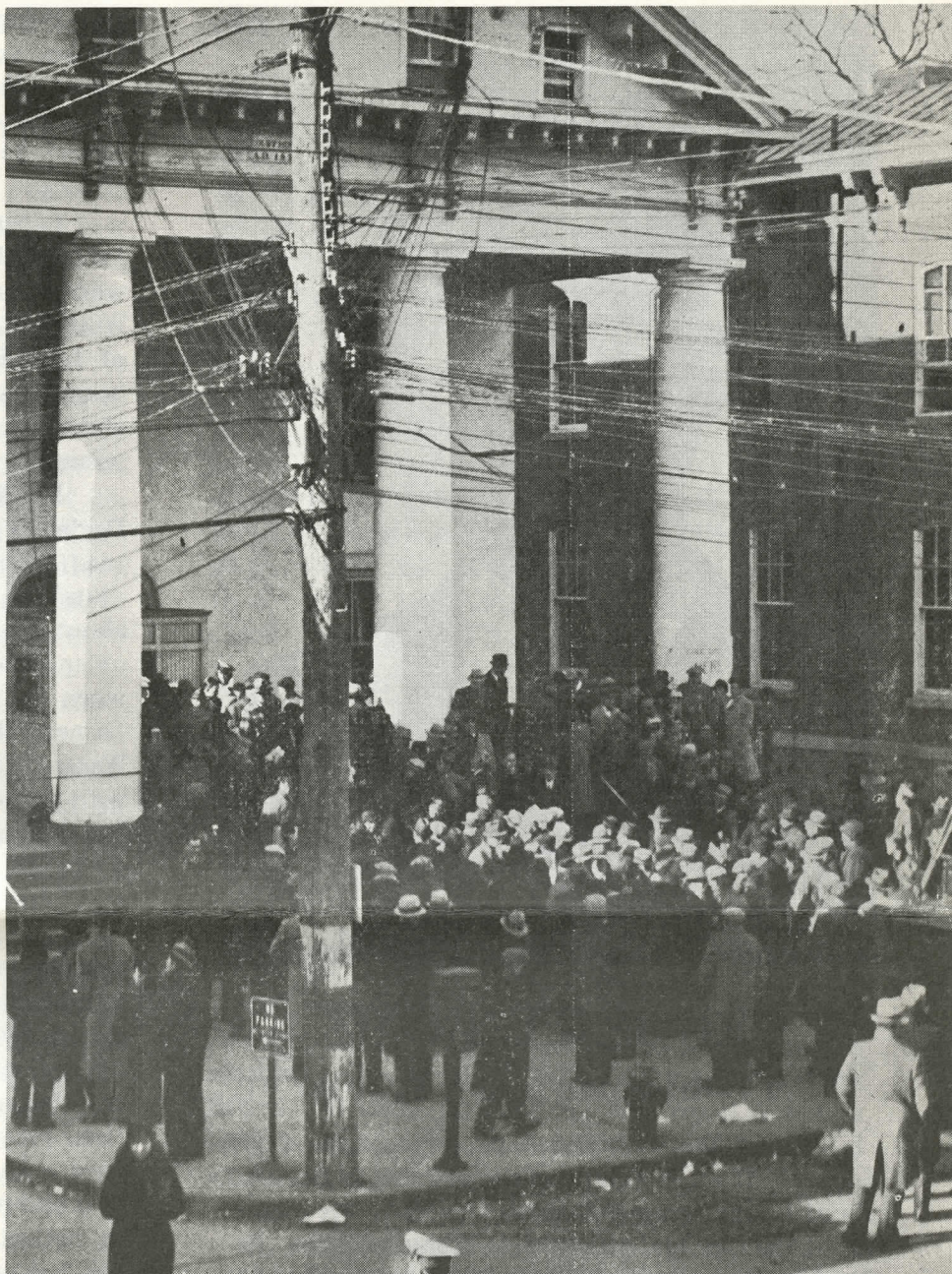
laws had to be passed outlawing gaming, horseracing and cock-fighting near the courthouse.

An interesting note on which to end, especially in these days of cost overruns is this. The Freeholders had allowed £2500 for the building. Mr. Atkinson's books show that a total of only £2427 was expended. The major allotments for labor were: George Scott, £326, mason; Martin Johnson, £208, probably carpenter; Henry Lott, £174, mason; Samuel Runk, £122, blacksmith. Following is a list of the others who were paid for work on the courthouse. Unusual items are noted, all others were involved in hauling materials or perching of stone.

Thomas Alexander
 Peter Allen
 Richard Anderson
 Henry Bailey
 John Barcroft
 William Barnes
 Adam Barrack
 William Barrack
 Benjamin Blackwell (bricks)
 Elijah Blackwell
 Roger Bowman (well rope)
 Samuel Buchanan
 Ann Case (stone hauled)
 Christopher Case
 Hontice Case
 Jacob Case
 Martin Case
 Peter Case
 Phillip Case
 Tunis Case
 Thomas Carhart
 Elijah Carman
 William Chamberlain
 Barnet Chrise
 Cornelius Colbeck
 Adam Conrad
 Christopher Cool Jr.
 Paul Cool
 Abraham Coryell (hanging bell)
 Joseph Coryell (hanging bell)
 John Derrick (digging foundation)
 Daniel Dilts
 George Dilts
 Jacob Dilts
 William Dilts
 Jacob Drake (in behalf of Peter Aller)
 John Drake
 Jacob Fulper
 Peter Gary
 Agesilous Gordon
 John L. Gordon
 Isaac Gray
 John Gray
 John Gregg
 James Gregg
 Rebecca Havilland (stone hauled)
 John Henry
 Judiah Higgins
 Jonathan Higgins

Nathaniel Higgins
 Francis Hill (tending well digger)
 Richard Hill
 Samuel Hill
 George Hoppough
 Jacob Housel
 Adam Humer
 Harbert Hummer Sr.
 Tunis Hummer
 Martin Johnson
 George Jones (brick)
 Thomas Kelly (well digger's asst.)
 Samuel Kikendall
 John Kugler (lime)
 John Lake
 Joseph Landis
 Abraham Larew
 John Large (cornerstone)
 Henry Lott
 John Lupp (gilding ball)
 William Marsh
 John Merrell
 John Miller (tending well digger)
 David Mitchner
 Samuel Opdycke
 Thomas Opdycke (sawing scantling)
 Edward Parlier
 Benjamin Pary
 John Phillips
 John Plumb (making ball)
 John Pool Jr.
 Cornelius Polhemus
 Jacob Polhemus
 John Rake
 Daniel Reading
 Jonathan Reading
 Joseph Reading
 Thomas Reading
 Samuel Runk (blacksmith)
 William Runk
 John Runkel
 John Ryan (well-digger)
 George Scott (mason)
 John Shank
 Jasper Smith (lawyer)
 Susannah Smith (boarding, cooking, cleaning)
 William Smith
 Peter Stout
 Nathan Sutton
 Jacob Swallows
 Samuel Taylor
 Elijah Thatcher
 Samuel Thatcher
 David Thomas (painter)
 Cornelius Tietfort (turning bannisters)
 Jonathan Trimmer
 Tunis Trimmer
 John Vannest
 Gibert Van Camp
 John Vliet
 Rem Voorhees
 Derrick Waldron
 James West
 Phillip Yawger

— Kathleen J. Schreiner

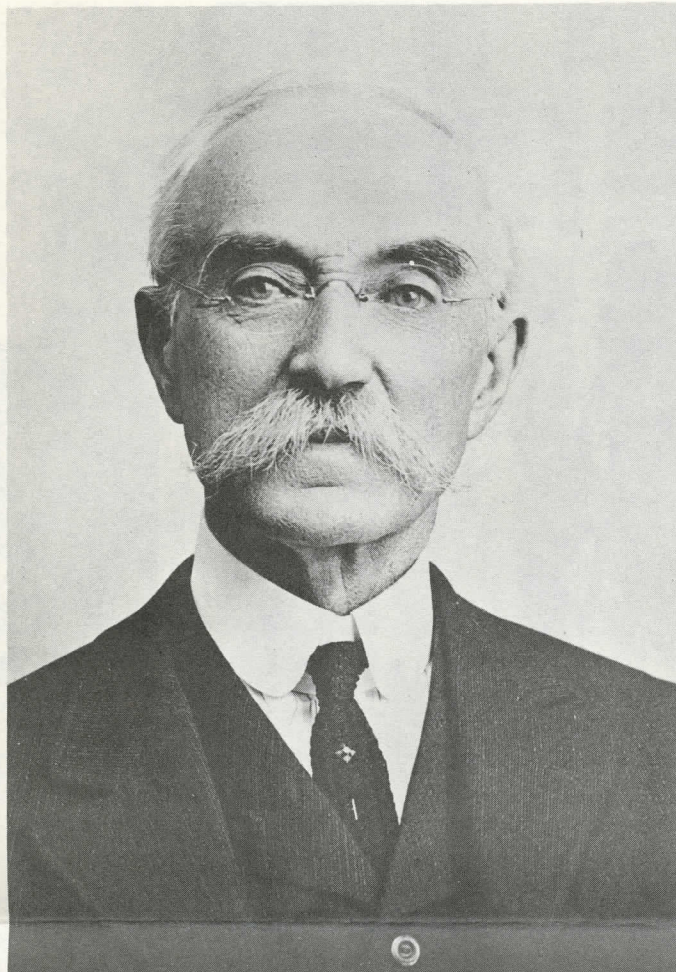


A MAZE OF WIRES AND HUMANITY SURROUND THE COURTHOUSE ON JANUARY 2, 1935 DURING THE LINDBERGH KIDNAPPING TRIAL.



BEER'S ATLAS & SNELL'S HISTORY AVAILABLE

AFTER THE ANNUAL MEETING AT THE COURTHOUSE, VISIT US JUST DOWN AND ACROSS THE STREET AT OUR DORIC HOUSE HEADQUARTERS FOR REFRESHMENTS. THE BEAUTIFUL BEER'S ATLAS AND SNELL'S HISTORY OF HUNTERDON AND SOMERSET WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE. THESE REPRINTS WILL SOON BE GONE.



EGBERT BUSH

"A Gentleman and a Scholar"

Egbert Trimmer Bush first saw the light of day, June 21, 1848 on a farm on the east side of the road, about a mile and a half north of Croton. He died at the home of his daughter at Center Bridge, Pa., Sunday, November 21, 1937. On October 28, 1871 he was united in marriage to Miss Sarah Eleanor Willson, daughter of Samuel Willson, Jr. They became the parents of two children: Percy W. and Evelyn. The latter passed away, July 16, 1977 at the age of ninety-four.

Egbert's parents were Sidney L. and Elizabeth McPherson Bush. His father was a farmer who pieced out his income by shoemaking in his spare time. His mother was a descendant of the McPherson family who once lived on the "stillhouse farm," just outside of Quakertown. This farm lies directly back of the Franklin township school. A few years ago it was owned by a man named Snyder; who has it now I don't know. In early days there was a well restored distillery on the property — hence the name. There are several members of the McPherson family buried in the old Nixon burying ground.

Egbert's grandfather was Jacob Bush, who if I mistake not, at one time kept a store at Croton, then called Allerville. His wife was Sarah Trimmer. Their grandson, Egbert Bush, was probably named for Egbert Trimmer, a relative. Unfortunately, that is all I know about the ancestry of Egbert Bush.

Egbert Bush had two brothers: Sidney M. and John Wesley Bush. There were three sisters: Sarah, who married William Potts; Mary who married William B. Painter and Editha who became the wife of John Buchanan. Sarah, the first mentioned, was born December 26, 1846, so Egbert was a second child in order of birth, while John Wesley was the youngest.

Mr. Bush received his early education at the old Drybrook school that stood on the east side of the road about a quarter mile north of Croton. In later years he wrote, with many touches of nostalgia, about the happy days at old Drybrook. As he grew older he had to lend a hand with the farm work and, when not needed at home, work for the neighboring farmers. His story, "Working for Uncle Jakey for big Wages," is an amusing account of his experiences with an honest but close-fisted old farmer who lived just across the road from the Bush place. All the while the thirst for more education became keener and keener. By the time he was in his late teens he had begun to walk to Flemington two or three times a week for tutoring in special subjects. It runs in my mind he was tutored in Latin and higher mathematics by lawyer Edward P. Conkling, who was to die many years later in New York City under such sad circumstances. As for the balance of his education, he was largely self taught. Mr. Bush seems to have been one of those fortunate individuals able to read and to understand the printed page by themselves, in marked contrast to those of us who are able to do our best only with the aid of a capable teacher.

By the time he had reached his majority he had passed the county examination and had been awarded a third grade county teachers' certificate. This was eventually followed by a second grade and a first grade certificate. By the time he had ended his long career as a teacher he had acquired a first grade state certificate. No small achievement for a poor boy raised up in the "Swamp." This was all under the old system of certification which was abolished about 1912 and replaced by the present method of certifying candidates for teaching.

Young Egbert was now ready for teaching. One of his first teaching positions, if not the very first, was in the newly finished building at Croton, built to replace the old Drybrook school, but now on the other side of the road in Delaware township. A news item in one of the local papers in 1871 tells about

how proud the local residents were of their fine new building. It concluded by stating that the trustees had been very fortunate in securing as teacher, "Mr. Egbert Bush, who we understand is a very cultured and talented young man."

Mr. Bush's teaching career covered a span of about forty years. Though I have no dates, my best information is that at various times he taught at Klimesville, Cherryville, Mt. Pleasant and two or three different times at Franklin No. 42 in Franklin township, about two miles southwest of Quakertown. At Franklin he taught in the new building completed in 1873. There seems to be no evidence that he ever taught in the old building some time ago removed from a farm near Quakertown to the grounds of the Franklin township consolidate school. In the 1870's he was principal of the Frenchtown school for a year or two, then back at Franklin for awhile. In 1887 he became principal of Reading Academy in Flemington. My father used to drive him down on Monday mornings and go after him on Friday afternoons.

Years later he wrote about his experience in the great blizzard of 1888. The storm had begun on Sunday night, March 11th. On Monday traveling was out of the question but early Tuesday morning he fought his way from his home to Quakertown. It was the day of the spring town meeting. He desperately wanted to vote for a friend who was a candidate for office. After he had voted he was determined to try to get to Flemington, disregarding the advice of concerned by-standers. He had a horrible trip. All the way the wind blew a terrific gale. He was in the road, over in the fields and nearly up to his neck in snow all the time. Finally, about noon, he struggled into Reading Academy, completely exhausted. There was not a single person in the building. What a let down! Later he rather ruefully admitted it had hardly been worth the effort but somehow a sense of duty had impelled him. All things considered, he had no regrets.

In a year or so he was back at Franklin again, but resigned in 1892 and moved to a recently purchased farm at Sandy Ridge. Then he taught at Van Dolah's for a few years, followed by a long term of service as principal at Stockton which continued until he decided to call it quits about 1911. During this time, with the capable help of his son Percy, he carried on farming and fruit growing for twenty years. These were, perhaps, Mr. Bush's "Golden years." At the end of that time he turned the farm over to his son and moved to Stockton where he lived until the death of Mrs. Bush, May 19, 1922. After that he broke up housekeeping and went to make his home with his daughter at Center Bridge, where he passed

away in the late fall of 1937.

It is always difficult to intelligently and fairly appraise the life and accomplishments of an interesting and unusual person. It is doubly hard to be completely objective if that person happens to be a relative. For Mr. Bush had married a sister to my maternal grandmother. Not only that, my mother had been one of his pupils at the Franklin school; also my father had worked for him on his farm at Quakertown for several years. As a consequence, I knew Mr. Bush very well. He was always called Uncle Bert or just Bert by members of the family or close acquaintances. To most of us of the younger generation he was Mr. Bush. Even to my father, after years of more or less close association, he was always Mr. Bush. As a boy I was a frequent visitor in his home. After I grew up and married that pleasant custom continued. Yet, though I had no reason to feel that way I always stood a bit in awe of him in spite of the fact that he was always most cordial and concerned about my progress as a teacher.

To characterize Mr. Bush as a grouch would be untrue and grossly unfair. Over the years I was to learn that under a sometimes gruff exterior was a sensitive nature, deeply appreciative of the beauties of nature. I can recall his listening with great care and evident pleasure to the singing of the birds. It must have been a source of great satisfaction for he was apt to remark: "All my little feathered friends have a special message for me." His book of poems *When Leaves Grow Old*, is filled with much love and tender sentiment. In October 1921, in celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary, he wrote a tender little poem of appreciation, dedicated to his wife. I am including it below.

To My Wife of Fifty Years.

Fifty years of married life,
Storm and sunshine and of strife,
Only just enough to prove
Harmless folly of the love
That mistakenly supposes
Life may be a bed of roses.

Still together, you and I,
Working as the years go by—
Most things going as they should—
Find the old life still is good,
As the woman good and true
Ever makes it, thanks to you.

Always an interesting and entertaining writer, Mr. Bush in his younger days, at intervals, sent communications to the local papers under the pen name of "Mart Maple". Later he signed himself "M.M." and still later just "M." In 1904 he completed a full length novel, "In the Grip of the Expert," the theme of which was testimony in court of so-called experts can have dangerous consequences,

especially in cases involving homicide. There were many who thought it was an excellent story that should have had a much greater readership. There were also those who felt that Mr. Bush had made an unfortunate choice of publishers. That is hard to tell. Today there are literary agents who see to that sort of thing very successfully. His "When Leaves Grow Old," published in 1916 was a book of short poems of much beauty and vivid imagery. It too, seemingly deserved greater recognition that it received.

Mr. Bush was a long time member of the Hunterdon County Historical Society. He served on many of its committees and at one time was its president. Long interested in local history and genealogy, back in 1881 he prepared the chapter on Franklin township for Snell's *History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties*. At the bottom of page 430 he is given credit for his work, one of the few contributors to be so honored. At the urging of Mr. Moreau, in the late 1920's he began a series of weekly articles in the "Democrat", the last of which he wrote only a few weeks before his death. They are enjoyable, not only for their historical content, but for their little touches of human interest and interesting sidelights on the character of some of the people of long ago. Mr. Bush had a keen sense of responsibility as a historical researcher but at the same time he was able to see history's limitations. I think his attitude toward history may have been summed up in a little couplet he once included in one of his stories. I wonder, if at times, some of the rest of us haven't felt the same way.

"Fact and fancy, myth and mystery

Go, at best, to make what men call history."

Perhaps the most interesting thing about Mr. Bush was the variety of his interests, and that he could do so many things and do them all well. Having been a farm boy, he never lost interest in agriculture. In the middle 1880's, after much thought, he decided it was time to try out some of his ideas and theories on a farm of his own. In spring of 1886 he moved to the James Willson farm near Quakertown. This farm was later owned by Mrs. Annie Wolverton and occupied for many years by Henry W. Hendershot. Here Mr. Bush began, with some capable help, to farm and to experiment a bit, along with his teaching job. It was on this farm he established his first nursery for the propagation of fruit trees.

He remained on the Willson farm until March 1892 when he moved to Sandy Ridge to the farm he bought from Wesley Rockafellow. It was at Sandy Ridge, he gained his reputation, not only as a model farmer but became recognized as an authority on matters of agriculture. At first he gave much of his attention to raising melons and other vegetables but

gradually his interest shifted to fruit culture which had always been one of his interests.

His reputation grew to the point where he became much in demand as a speaker at Grange meetings and other places where farmers met to discuss their problems. During this time he became more and more inclined to try out new fertilizers and new methods of cultivation. His equipment was the very best for he was always on the lookout for the latest, efficient labor saving machinery. However he had not the slightest interest in dairying and poultry were an abomination. He maintained hens were inclined to scratch entirely too much among newly planted seeds.

When Mr. Bush moved to Sandy Ridge he found the out buildings in a rather delapidated condition. These he soon repaired or replaced entirely. By the turn of the century his farm had become a veritable show place. As his financial situation improved he was able to devote more time to writing and other pursuits in which he had an interest. Eventually the time came when he donned work clothes rarely, if at all. He acquired a handsome driving horse called Selim. He was very proud of his new horse, and rightly so. A small boy riding into Flemington or Lambertville in a shiny, red wheeled buggy, with Mr. Bush driving Selim, felt pretty important. When we would go into the stores, it was quite amusing to see how the clerks would almost trip over their own feet in their eagerness to wait on Mr. Bush. Tall, erect and always dressed in excellent conservative taste; he was really quite distinguished in appearance. One day he came home from Lambertville much amused. A lady had accosted him on the street and politely inquired if he were the new pastor at the Methodist Church. Life was good to Mr. Bush during those years and he could hardly be blamed for taking full advantage of his pleasant circumstances.

Not long after moving to Sandy Ridge he was instrumental in organizing a sort of cooperative local telephone company. I am inclined to believe this little line connected at Stockton with the M. and F. line or with what was then known as the Long Distance line. Perhaps it was with both, memory fails me there. Later on Mr. Bush was one of the prime movers in having a rural mail delivery service established from the Stockton post office. Mr. Moreau in his obituary for Mr. Bush gave him much credit for having helped to bring pressure to bear on a reluctant Congress to authorize the organization of a national rural delivery service then called the R.F.D.

In politics Mr. Bush was a life long Republican. Though he never held public office, he did exert considerable influence behind the scenes. Clinton Wilson in his column in the *Beacon* was of the opinion



THE VAN DOLAH SCHOOL HOUSE, JUNE 11, 1906. Photographed by J.A. Anderson

The Old Van Dolah School

by Egbert T. Bush

It's crowding on to seventy years,
Yet I recall each rule
We learned through all our hopes and fears
In the old Van Dolah School.

But I remember better yet
The laughing boys and girls,
With eyes of blue and eyes of jet,
And Prue with the sunny curls.

No, never was a girl like Prue —
For me, a living rule;
Her word my law and Gospel too,
In the old Van Dolah School.

It's crowding on to sixty years
She has slept that sleep divine,
While all the sighs and all the tears
And all the dreams were mine.

I've watched the merry children play,
As one might watch his own,
And children's children to this day,
Around that "heap of stone."

Alas, alas, condemned to fall! —
The need by no means clear —
With every crack in the crumbling wall
And every stone so dear!

Oh, gently pry those stones apart,
Suppress that careless shout;
Strike softly, 'tis an old man's heart
Thy pick is tearing out!

The new upon the old must rest,
A basis firm and fast;
Of all foundations, this is best —
The solid, tested past.

Farewell, dear shrine! Old hearts will trace
Love's emblems round thee still;
A loftier now will take thy place —
Will take, but never fill.

THIS POEM IS FROM MR. BUSH'S BOOK "WHEN LEAVES
GROW OLD", PUBLISHED IN 1916. SEVERAL COPIES
ARE AVAILABLE AT THE DORIC HOUSE.



that Dr. George N. Best of Rosemont, at one time, "had more political clout" than any other man in Delaware township. With that I can agree but Mr. Bush was a close second. He was especially good at pacifying party members who thought they had a grievance or at damping down little brush fires of discontent. How many farmers, uncertain about some political matter, came to Mr. Bush for advice and information before they voted, we shall never know — certainly they must have been many.

Only once was he induced to stand for political office. That was in 1888, when he was a candidate for State Senator. Ever since the election of John Runk, the Whig candidate in 1836, as sheriff in that year, the Democrats had held a tight grip on all the more important county offices. By the early 1880's rumblings of discontent were beginning to be heard.

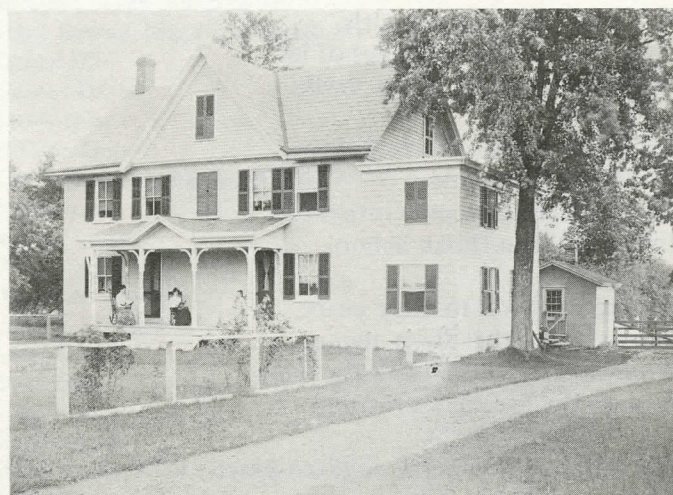
Young Democrats with political ambitions were irked by the repressive, heavy handed rule of boss, James N. Pidcock, Sr. The recent John Carpenter affair also had caused a deep split in party solidarity. The Republicans were quick to take advantage of all this. In 1885, after a particularly bitter and hard fought campaign the Republicans had elected George H. Large State Senator by defeating the Democrats' best vote getter, Moses K. Everitt. Two years later, flushed with success, they had put a Readington township farmer, John T. Cox, in the sheriff's office. Things were looking up in the Republican camp. In 1888, when the Republicans met in their county convention, they nominated Mr. Bush for State Senator. Meanwhile the Democrats had regrouped their forces, changed their tactics a little and papered over some old scars, and again put forth Mr. Everitt. After a rather dull and listless campaign, "Mose K." defeated Mr. Bush by about 1500 votes. Mr. Bush was not at all surprised nor did he feel too badly about it. Being State Senator would have been nice but it would have necessitated rearranging all his personal affairs. Afterwards he jokingly remarked he thought perhaps they had put him on the ticket, because he "would be safe and cause no trouble." I find it hard to agree with that sentiment. I believe the nomination was offered him in good faith and that it was overconfidence that lost the election. Success, like good wine is heady stuff, especially if you are not used to it. The Republicans still had some things to learn. In 1890 they nominated Mr. Bush's brother-in-law, William L. Scott of Quakertown for sheriff. Scott was a strong candidate but after another rancorous campaign, he lost to Howard Lake by 555 votes. That effectually stopped the Republican upsurge of strength. The Republicans had to wait eighteen long years before they were able to elect one of their number to an

important county office. Not until 1908 were they able to elect George F. Green, a Flemington blacksmith, to the office of sheriff.

After his defeat Mr. Bush continued to lend his support to the party as usual. He was very good at helping out Editor William G. Callis of the *Hunterdon Republican*. There were two Democratic papers in Flemington. Generally they were busy sniping at each other but once in awhile they would gang up on Mr. Callis in their editorials. Mr. Callis was a good man but these combined onslaughts were a little more than he could cope with. Then Mr. Bush would send in an editorial that would set Lew Runkle and Marty Voorhees back on their heels and silence them for a time.

Very early in his career, Mr. Bush acquired a transit, compass, chain and stakes after which he taught himself the procedure for surveying. He never pushed this work very hard but up until the amount of walking involved became a little too much for him, he would run property lines for those in need of this service. I doubt if any license was required for this work which has now become the exclusive prerogative of civil engineers.

Two major disappointments marred the otherwise successful career enjoyed by Mr. Bush. As one of the leading agriculturists of the state, he was appointed a member of the Board of Visitors to Cook College, an adjunct of Rutgers University. I am not sure just what the office entailed but it is unlikely the duties were very demanding. There was a certain amount of prestige attached that pleased Mr. Bush for it represented a recognition of his many years of service on behalf of agriculture. When after several years he failed of reappointment; he felt it keenly but accepted it as philosophically as possible. He didn't complain but merely remarked that sometimes the loser in the long run is the winner.



MR. BUSH MOVED TO THIS HOUSE AT SANDY RIDGE IN MARCH OF 1892.

Oliver Hoffman of Lebanon and later Edward M. Heath of Locktown, both colleagues and long time friends of Mr. Bush had been honored by appointment as county superintendent of schools. At the end of Mr. Heath's term in 1892 Mr. Bush applied for the appointment but was passed over in favor of Jason S. Hoffman. Afterward Mr. Bush tried again without success. His last attempt was in 1901, failing then, he let the matter drop.

After the death of Mrs. Bush in 1922, he established an office on the first floor of Colligan's Inn. He furnished the room with a flat top desk, his Oliver typewriter, a few filing cabinets and several old fashioned rocking chairs. For nearly fifteen years this was to be his headquarters where he did his writing, and as he put it, "The many things folks find for me to do." For a time he served as secretary of the Stockton Board of Education. He also wrote wills and helped with the settlement of estates. It was not long before he became very well informed on probate law and its requirements. From time to time he did some title searching and also acted as notary public. He felt that for none of this work could he legally make a charge but there was no law forbidding the acceptance of an honorarium when offered. All the while he was carrying out many of the small duties that usually fall to the lot of a busy attorney. There was never any objection as it freed the lawyers for better paying work. Indeed it would have been a pretty brash young lawyer who would have had the temerity to object. Throughout this time he continued to maintain his voting residence as Stockton, though perhaps technically he was a resident of Pennsylvania. As the years began to press down, he frequently expressed the wish to end his days as a Hunterdon County man. So, he being Mr. Bush, folks just ignored the matter.

When in Stockton I always stopped in to see him. Invariably I would find someone from the surrounding countryside comfortably settled in one of the rockers exchanging a bit of news, a funny story or some good natured badinage with Mr. Bush, before getting down to the business for which he had come. That inevitably would be some advice about business or a personal problem. I often wondered how he got any work done. Mr. Bush had a keen sense of humor and an endless stock of yarns and stories he had picked up and remembered during his long life. He was an excellent mimic and could put so much color and realism into telling a story, it was a delight to hear him. One I never grew tired of hearing was about a crusty old bachelor, named Gilbert Cronce who long, long ago lived up in the Swamp at Goosetown on what is now called Factory Road. It seems a zealous young religious worker

knocked on Gilbert's door and asked if he might leave some tracts. "Certainly, certainly young man leave as many as you want to and leave them all with the heels toward the house."

Though Mr. Bush never united with any church, the Society of Friends or Quakers was very close to his heart. The Quaker Meeting at Quakertown was for a long time in a dormant condition but it became the custom once a year to open up the Meeting House for a sort of homecoming. If at all possible, Mr. Bush was sure to be there. It was always interesting to watch the gray haired men, who when they saw him, would rush up anxious to shake his hand. After the amenities were over and they had stepped aside they were apt to say, "He was my teacher and he taught me about all I know. He wouldn't stand for any foolishness but if you had it in you, he would help you all he could."

In his younger days, Mr. Bush tutored and advised several young men who wished to become teachers, so that they were able to pass the county examination. The Myers boys: Samuel O., William and Voorhees often mentioned the debt they owed him for their subsequent success. He also helped Elias Dalrymple, Lambert Mathews and Benjamin Bloys to qualify as teachers. The last two later abandoned teaching for a career in business as merchants. I feel quite certain, had I the complete list, several more names could be added. Years later there occurred an incident over which I have often pondered. Early in May of my senior year in high school I was invited to spend the weekend with Mr. Bush and his family. I took the cars to Lambertville and then on up to Stockton. As I arrived a little early, I went down to the school to wait until dismissal time. Then we started the long walk up Stockton hill to Sandy Ridge. On the way, with perhaps a bit too much pride, I mentioned the fact that I had my third grade county teachers certificate and had a teaching job lined up for the coming year. He heard me out without comment and then in a rather sad tone of voice said, "Take an old man's advice. Don't do it." This was not the reply I had expected so I didn't pursue the matter any further. Somehow, I sensed something in his manner of speaking I couldn't understand. Was it an old schoolmaster, disillusioned after years of teaching, or was it one of those spells of frustration age is prone to experience when thinking back over a long life in which things haven't turned out quite as hoped for? The answer to that is something I shall never know.

As we grow older, the temptation to philosophize is something often hard to resist, and something our friends generally should be spared. In summing up I shall try to be as brief as I can. In our old age

we have to replace friends who are no longer with us with new and younger friends. That is as it should be. While we love these friends of our old age and the comfort they bring us; still there seems to be something missing. Perhaps it is that comfortable feeling of comradeship we unconsciously have that comes from being in our own age group. Who knows? Then again maybe time has enveloped the friends of our long vanished youth with an aura or mantle that was never really there.

Mr. Bush in his last years stood almost alone like a sturdy oak that has been spared the woodsman's axe. While he still had a host of friends, yet there must have been that sense of loneliness that comes with age. How keenly he must have missed Dr. Best, Elias Dalrymple, William L. Scott, William C. Barrick, Cyrus Van Dolah and so many others of whom I may never have heard! His friendship with Dr. Best was particularly deep and lasting, going back to the days in the late 1860's when he and William C. Barrick, then in their late teens, used to walk up the Trenton Road from the Croton area, at least once a week, to attend the meetings of the debating society, held in the old stone schoolhouse in Quakertown. Here they had an opportunity to try out their abilities as fledgling orators. It was here he met young "Newt." Best from over Kingtown way and a friendship was begun which was to endure for sixty years. Young Barrick, his companion went on to become a prominent Jersey City lawyer. Elias Dalrymple, a young mechanic, who saw no future in blacksmithing, had borrowed books from Mr. Bush and became a successful teacher. William L. Scott was bound to him by family ties deep and lasting, begun back in the days they were each courting one of Samuel Willson's daughters, Cyrus Van Dolah was a friend of his in later years. They were drawn together by a similarity of views and temperament.

In conclusion, for I am almost finished, I apologize if I have gone on at too great a length. This was for me a labor of love. I felt that there were certain things that needed to be said and it was up to me to say them. I have had only one purpose: a desire to keep the record straight. It is with no feeling of complacency that I say I am one of a rapidly dwindling few who knew Mr. Bush, not as an old man tottering about with the aid of a cane, but as a dominant, vibrant person, in the prime of life, with physical and mental abilities at their peak. I would be guilty of hedging if I failed to acknowledge there were a negligible few, who for reasons best known to themselves, charged him with being cold, aloof and hard to approach. That was their privilege. But as to his everlasting credit there were those, by the hundreds, who had found that behind that rather stern

exterior, there was a man of great intelligence, wisdom, honesty and a nature of great tenderness whom they could trust implicitly. There was an enduring regard and esteem, mingled at times with genuine love. Mr. Moreau in his editorial tribute to Mr. Bush said it so well in these simple words: *Egbert Bush, a gentleman and a scholar.*

—Frank E. Burd



Correspondence, diaries, poems and writings of the late Egbert Trimmer Bush were recently donated to the Hunterdon County Historical Society by his granddaughter, Mrs. Henry Hartman. The gift included a complete file of the columns Mr. Bush wrote for the *Hunterdon County Democrat* and "When Leaves Grow Old", a collection of Mr. Bush's poetry published in 1916. Several copies of this 32 page volume are being sold for the benefit of the Society. It may be purchased for \$10.00 at the Society headquarters or by mail for \$10.50.



Index Available

A full name index to the first ten volumes of *Hunterdon Historical Newsletter* is now available. To receive a xerox copy send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and \$1 to the Society, 114 Main Street, Flemington, NJ 08822.

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