

# Hunterdon Historical Newsletter

Vol. 1—No. 2

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Winter, 1965

## Comments on Hunterdon Botanist, Dr. Best, To Introduce Film on Pioneer Naturalist

Remarks about Hunterdon botanist, Dr. George N. Best of Rosemont, N.J. by Vincent Abraitys - one of Hunterdon's present-day naturalists - will introduce a color film on pioneer English naturalist, Mark Catesby, at the ANNUAL MEETING, Sunday, January 9, 1966, at 2 P. M., on the first floor of the Free Public Library, 118 Main Street, Flemington, N.J.

Catesby (1679-1749) travelled in America 1710-1719, and 1722-1725. He introduced many American trees and shrubs into English gardens by the publication of his "Hortus Britanno-Americanus", in 1737. He wrote and illustrated what was to be the most significant book on natural history for the next 150 years his NATURAL HISTORY OF THE NEW WORLD.

Today's old-timers may recall Dr. Best, (1847-1926) who lived and practiced in Rosemont. He became an expert in the field and several mosses were named in his honor.

Best researched Hunterdon County from a botanical viewpoint. While riding along dirt lanes to visit the homes of his patients he would stop his topless buggy to collect unusual plants and mosses.

His findings and some of his specimens are in herbariums in Eastern U.S.

Librarian B. A. Sorby reports: The only publication in our Library relating to Dr. Best located so far is "North American Roses; remarks on characters with classification". (In Trenton Natural History Society: Journal. v.2, no. 1. (Jan.1889) pp.1-7.

Mr. Abraitys is eager to learn more about Dr. Best. He invites anyone having any knowledge of this earlier botanist to contact him or the Society, or come out to the meeting and share your comments with us.

### ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, January 9, 1966, at 2 p.m.

Free Public Library—First Floor

118 Main Street, Flemington, N. J.

TALK—FILM—REFRESHMENTS

## Myers Takes Up Search for Papers of Col. Thomas Lowrey, Revolutionary Era Merchant

BY KENNETH V. MYERS

One of Hunterdon County's most important merchants in the Revolutionary War era was Thomas Lowrey of Flemington, N. J.

Since acquiring the house in Milford in which Lowrey last lived (now in a much changed state, I'm certain), I have thought it interesting to review such documents and papers as are available to gain an insight into the family life and business affairs of the typical merchant of his time.

Lowrey was renowned as a land speculator, a representative from Hunterdon to the first Provincial Congress of N.J. in 1775; a member of the N.J. General Assembly in 1791-92; a deputy commissary for the state during the Revolution as well as a colonel in the State Militia. He was U.S. Marshall for N. J. from 1791 to 1803. In 1791, he was elected to the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

One further highlight in his life which gives him a claim to the attention of Hunterdon County folks is that he lived with Samuel Fleming for whom Flemington is named and married Fleming's daughter, Esther.

(Continued on page 2)

### THE HUNTERDON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

President . . . . . Norman C. Wittwer  
 Vice-President . . . . . Charles T. Deats  
 Vice-President . . . . . Frank E. Burd  
 Secretary . . . . . Edward H. Quick  
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 Librarian . . . . . B. A. Sorby  
 Editor . . . . . Mrs. Marian B. Godown

The library of the Society at 1 Maple Ave., Flemington, N.J., is open each Tuesday and Thursday from 1 - 3 p.m.

## Search for Lowrey Papers

### Continues

(Continued from page 1)

And, while Sheriff Samuel Tucker put Samuel Fleming's tavern and possessions up for sale in 1766 to satisfy the tavern-keepers debtors, son-in-law Thomas Lowrey enjoyed financial success in the store and grain business, first in Flemington, later in Philadelphia and Frenchtown and, finally in Milford.

So far, there has come to light little or no correspondence from the hand of the obviously once very busy Thomas Lowrey. There is, however, in our Society's Library, a couple of documents that seem enlightening enough to mention in connection with events and places of Hunterdon's past.

The first manuscript concerned activities in Flemington during the American Revolution. It was labeled, "Return of Furrage (Forage) Issued at the Post of Flemington in the months of January and February, 1779", and was signed by William Lowrey, quartermaster, Flemington.

A good part of the Continental Army was quartered in the winter of 1778-79 at Middlebrook, about 15 miles away from Flemington. The troops suffered greatly that winter because of a lack of provisions. It appears, from this document the suffering was, in some

small part, at least, relieved by the work of the quartermaster at Flemington, William Lowrey, son of Col. Lowrey.

Also of interest, to local historians is a hand receipt given by Thomas Lowrey to Jacob Race for a debt collection against Gabriel Hoff. It reads:

"Millford, January 7, 1809

"Received of Mr. Jacob Race twelve dollars seventy-three cents in full execution issued by William Potts, Esq. against Gabriel Hoff for a debt owing to me.

Test: J. Morte Signed/THOS. LOWREY "

You will note that the village of Col. Lowrey's last residence has been severally called Burnt Mills, Lowreytown, Lowrey's Mills, but at least, the old man regarded the proper name to be Millford in the year of his death, 1809. Some local historical articles mistakenly date Lowrey's death down as 1806.

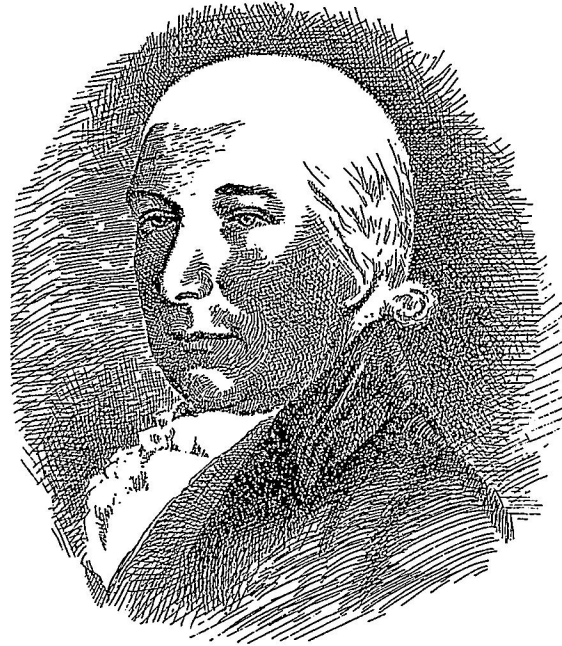
The search for further writings of Col. Thomas Lowrey continues. I'm sure if we can track down more of his papers, a great deal would be disclosed concerning Hunterdon in the last half of the 18th Century. Any assistance in this will be appreciated.

**DEATS  
 CATALOGUING FUND  
 REPORT**

Accessioned to date:  
**2095 volumes**



Esther Lowrey.



Thomas Lowrey.

## Have You Seen These Portraits?

Portraits of Col. Thomas Lowrey and his wife, Esther Fleming Lowrey, done in pastel c.1796, by the noted Philadelphia artist James Sharples.

... Long in the possession of the Rhoads family of Philadelphia thru descent from Sally Lowrey, daughter of Thomas and Esther Lowrey, wife of Joseph Mort, whose daughter married Joseph Seal. Amanda, daughter of Joseph Seal married Joseph Rhoads.

... Offered for sale in 1942 by a Philadelphia art dealer who, at the time, expressed a wish that a buyer would present them to Flemington Castle, in Flemington.

... The Frick Library in NYC has no record of these pastels.

## Results of New Jersey Landmarks Preservation To Be Published Soon

Two important steps in furthering historic preservation in New Jersey took place this month.

The N.J. Historical Society, with the assistance of over 80 volunteers, undertook a re-check of 750 structures in the state listed by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in the past 30 years.

This re-check was done for the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the results will appear in a book published January 15, 1966. The Ford Foundation made funds available for the study, intened to focus attention on the state of preservation in the USA and in several European countries.

New Jersey was the one state selected for up-to-the-minute checking, along with four communities: Alexandria, Va.; Chicago, New York and San Francisco.

In Hunterdon County, there were only 15 structures included, mostly houses, but others, such as Green Sergeants Covered Bridge, a Mahlon Fisher-designed law office, (now the office of the county supt. of schools and the county courthouse.

Results of the re-check must await publication of the book, but it can be said that the destruction of architectural resources is a greater problem in urban areas than in rural. Destruction by neglect, disinterest or for economic gain, however, are common everywhere.

The HABS, originating as a W.P.A. program for unemployed architects in the 1930's, is being continued by the National Park Service. The coverage in any given locality was dependent not upon the number of structures deserving to have measured drawings made of them but rather on the number of architects available to make them.

The National Trust and the State Historical Society also collaborated on a N. J. Landmarks Conference last Dec. 3 & 4, attended by 240 at

Society headquarters in Newark.

Authorities on preservation from the American Institute of Architects, the Urban Renewal Administration, the National Trust and N.J. groups gave advice on defining the problem of preservation, resources available for use in solving it and the end results.

Emphasis was put upon area preservation rather than on individual structures, on varied use of the buildings instead of turning all into museums.

## In Our Library

Historic American Building Survey.

Hunterdon County Landmarks. 66 photos & captions; 125 blue-print measured architectural drawings, 51 history data sheets.

(Gift of Clinton Woman's Club)

(Include Trimmer House, Califon Fleming Castle, Reading-Large House, John G. Reading House & Union Hotel, Flemington; Holcombe House, Lambertville; Williams House, Larison's Corner; Clifford-Williamson House, Pattenburg; Saxtonville Tavern, Raven Rock; Anwell Academy & Dawliss Grist Mill, Ringoes; Covered Bridge and John Opdyke Farm "millers" house, Sergeantsville.

## Welcome . . . New Members

Dana M. Campbell\* . . . . . Chicago, Illinois  
Mrs. Ezra E. Davidson . . . . . Burley, Idaho  
Mrs. Margaret Searle McConnell . . . . . Phila.  
N. W. Overstreet . . . . . Jackson, Miss.  
Mrs. Mary Worrell . . . . . Wheeling, W. Va.  
John L. Ely . . . . . West Orange  
Fred Sisser, III . . . . . Somerville  
Mrs. Charles R. Meyers . . . . . Hampton  
Mrs. Joseph C. Fisher . . . . . Flemington  
Richard H. Stothoff . . . . . Flemington

\*Contributing

## For Sale

Marriage Records of Hunterdon County, N. J.  
Compiled by Hiram E. Deats, Flemington,  
1918 (unbound) \$10.00

Tombstone inscriptions from Hunterdon County  
Cemeteries, 72 p. Lists 9 cemeteries  
(unbound) \$ 5.00

The Centre Bridge (Stockton, N.J.) By Elmer  
Roberson, Flemington: 1929 10p. \$ 1.50



## Notes &amp; Queries

- MOORE, Joseph. Early minister of the Society of Friends and member of Kingwood Monthly Meeting. Information wanted on his MS Journal kept during a trip to Detroit, published in "Friends' Miscellany" v.6 (1835). (Thomas B. Wilson, Librarian, Friendship Library, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Madison, N. J.) 1-2-18
- HUNTERDON SILVERSMITHS: Information wanted on American silversmiths from Colonial times to 1865 for a comprehensive index being compiled by John P. Reid, 2703 Branch Pike, Cinnaminson, N.J. 1-2-19
- BELLES-BELLESFELT, Peter of Danville, Ky. and his brother, Wm. of N.J., Mrs. E. E. Davidson, Box 34, Burley, Idaho. 1-2-1
- COWDRICK, Alton (Mrs. Cora L. Kellog, 1440 East Ave., Bronx, N.Y.) 1-2-2
- CLARK FAMILY (Everitt J. Clark, 2305 Benson Dr., Dayton, Ohio) 1-2-3
- STIRES, Mary Ann, wife of Mahlon Fisher (Edward J. Fisher, 326 S. 19th St., Philadelphia, Pa.) 1-2-4
- GREEN, Samuel (Mrs. S. J. Benson, 13381 Del Monte Dr., Seal Beach, Calif.) 1-2-5
- HOWELL, Rednap (Mrs. Hazel Bates, Palmyra, Mo.) 1-2-6
- HENDERSON, David (Mrs. Zina B. Hatch, Woodruff, Arizona) 1-2-7
- INGHAM FAMILY of N.J. (Mrs. James B. Colaw, 115 W. Parkwood Lane, Wichita, Kansas) 1-2-8
- JOHNSON, Tunis (Mrs. O.R. Burden, 4410 Montego Dr., Wichita Falls, Texas) 1-2-9
- LABAW-STOUT: Frances Labaw, wife of Deliverence Stout (Mrs. James Wood, 3208 Henrietta St., La Crescenta, Calif.) 1-2-10
- OAKS, John (Mrs. Edna E. Liddle, 2504 Grand St., Williamsport, Pa.) 1-2-11
- QUICK, Samuel (Mrs. Ernest M. Mills, Kensington Ave., Plainfield, N.J.) 1-2-12
- READING-REID FAMILY, (Mrs. Robert Pretlow, 1412 Clay St., Franklin, Va.) 1-2-13
- WILLIAMSON, Abraham (Mrs. Ira M. Williamson, 2525 N. 23rd St., Orange, Texas) 1-2-14
- WILLIAMSON, Peter (Mrs. Noah M. Overstreet, 747 Belhaven St., Jackson, Miss.) 1-2-15
- THATCHER, Hillman (Mrs. Nellie Thatcher, 6446 Regular St., Detroit, Mich.) 1-2-16
- THATCHER, Amos, b.1764 (Mrs. Galdiola Wriston, 2848 N. Yumac St., Phoenix, Arizona) 1-2-17

## Recent Acquisitions

- Daguerreotype portrait of Jacob H. Huffman, (1808-1863). Born in Lebanon, N.J., Huffman was Hunterdon's representative in the N.J. State Assembly, 1861-62; Hunterdon County Freeholder, 1847; v.p. County Agricultural Society, 1857; and justice of the peace in 1843 and 1860. (Gift of Mrs. A.L. Francis, Sepulveda, Calif.)
- Warrell, Mary Margaret. How Our Little Family Grew. (mimeo. 97p. 1964) Gift of the author, Mrs. M.M. Warrell, 84 Joan St., Wheeling, West Va.)
- Milford-Delaware River Bridge Company, MS Minute Book 1839-1932. Gift of Kenneth V. Myers, Milford, N.J.)
- MS: mathematics school copy book, inscr. on cover "W. Higgins, Flemington Academy, Feb. 18, 1840".
- MS: unidentified general store day book, Flemington, N. J., 1856-1890. (Both MSS gift of Mrs. Samuel Higgins Bamber, Flemington, N.J.)
- MS: Mt. Airy, N.J. 4-H Dairy Club Minute Books, 1923-1935, (Gift of the Club, Van Titus, sec'y., Lambertville, R.D., N.J.)
- N.J. Bell Telephone Co. Tales of N.J. (n.p. 1963) Published in commemoration of N.J.'s Tercentenary. (Gift of Frank P. Townsend, 540 Broad St., Newark, N. J.)
- Pratt, Dorothy and Richard. The Second Treasury of Early American Homes, N.Y. (1959) (Gift of Mrs. Marian B. Godown, R.D. 5, Flemington, N.J.)
- Boyd, Julian P. Fundamental Laws and Constitutions of New Jersey, N.Y. 1964. (Gift of J. H. Prescott)
- Van Horn, J. H. Historic Somerset (N.P.) 1965 (Gift of the author)

## Speaking of Books

Historical Sites of Warren County  
Published by Warren County Board  
of Freeholders, 1965 (196p., 255  
photos.)

Are you interested in a sketch of Jonathan Robeson's Oxford Furnace, which operated between 1741 and 1884? Is your curiosity piqued by the origin (pre-Revolutionary?) of the name, "Shades of Death Road"?

Can you stand before the courthouse in Belvidere and conjure up the picture of the hanging of three murderers in 1845 or the hanging of the minister who fed his wife a poisoned apple? Had you but lived in that day you might have been one of those fortunate enough to receive invitations to witness these spectacles.

These and many other historical nuggets can be found in "Historical Sites of Warren County. As its part in commemorating the 300th anniversary of the founding of New Jersey, the Warren County freeholders elected to publish a guide to the historic sites and points of interest in the county.

A committee of five aided by 18 other contributors undertook the task of preparing historical sketches and guided historical tour information for each of the county's 24 municipalities. The result of their labor is a book which might well serve as a model for efforts in this field.

The municipalities are handled separately and in alphabetical order. In each case, a historical sketch of the township precedes the site-by-site guided tour. Each site is fully described and directions are carefully spelled out. A liberal sprinkling of photographs enhances the book's usefulness and appeal.

With their attention to the relics of earlier days, the contributors have not overlooked more modern points of interest: the ruins of an old grist mill gaze with venerable wisdom across the

page at a photo of a new-born giant, the powerhouse of the Yard's Creek power project.

Buildings - old and new - aerial views, scenes of natural beauty and modern industries, all have found their way into this guide book, some in seeming defiance of the title.

Warren County, its freeholders, and all who contributed can well be proud of this book. Congratulations to our neighbors over the Musconetcong!

Norman C. Wittwer

## Recently Published Books

Rivinus, Willis M. A Wayfarer's Guide to the Delaware Canal 28p., map  
A walk book for the area between Bristol and Easton \$1.00

-----, Early Taverns of Bucks County, 84p., illus. with map \$1.50  
A delightful guide-book to the old inns and inn signs of Bucks and nearby counties.

-----, The Red Man in Bucks County New Hope: 1965, 32p., illus. map \$1.00  
Excellent guide to the Indian sites of Bucks.

All three of these publications available by writing the author at R.D., New Hope, Pa.

## Lacking in Our Library

Early American Industries Association Chronicle Lacking scattered numbers 1952, 1954-55, all of 1956, scattered nos. 1957-61, and all of 1961 to date.

Anderson, John A. of Lambertville, N.J. The Train Wire. A discussion of the science of train dispatching. N.Y. 1891.

Bogart, John Ashbel Welch. Memoir prepared from Proc. Am. Soc. Civil Engineers N.Y. 1883.

## A Notable Family Record

The Abraham Van Dyke (1776-1854) Family Bible was recently donated to the Society by Miss Rachel E. Potter of Bernardsville.

Though too long to reproduce here, we would like to point out some interesting entries.

“Abraham Van Dyke and Sarah Honeyman were married January 14, 1802”. Abraham was the son of Abraham Van Dyke who operated a fulling mill below Pottersville on the Hunterdon side of Lamington River, (now Brady Camp). Sarah was the daughter of John Honeyman, the famous Tory or double-spy of the Revolution.

Births of the four children of Abraham and Sarah include “John Van Dyke born April 3, 1807”. John Van Dyke was a bank president, congressman, abolitionist and judge and one of the founders of the Republican Party in New Jersey.

In 1873, he wrote for “Our Home” magazine, the account of the Revolutionary activities of his grandfather, John Honeyman, based largely upon information given him by his aunt, Jane Honeyman.

Deaths of John Honeyman at 94 years, his wife, Mary, and unmarried daughter, Jane, are noted in the record. Also, among the deaths we find John’s son, James Honeyman, tavern-keeper, auctioneer, wit and entrepreneur of Oldwick, who was father of Dr. John and Merchant Robert M. Honeyman of Oldwick, and grandfather of A.V.D. Honeyman.

Robert M. Honeyman’s wife who died in November, 1836, was the mother of Hunterdon’s Civil War Colonel, R.R. Honeyman.

All told, the record includes seven marriages, seven births, and 31 deaths, plus accounts of the cornerstone laying and dedication ceremonies of the Lamington Presbyterian Church in 1826.

## Family Bible Records Photocopied

Other family Bible records recently photocopied for the Society’s files are those of Elisha Waldron, (1809-1868); Robert Craig, (1734-1797); and William Craig, (1784-1844), all in possession of the Misses Marion and Helen Waldron of Oldwick and that of George Pickel (1784-1864), in possession of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Beavers of Oldwick.

## Our Society Salutes

Volunteer Worker - Frank E. Burd

As a boy, Frank E. Burd used to sit by the fire and listen wide-eyed when his neighbor, a farmer-drover in Quakertown, described exploits in the Revolution and Civil War.

The exciting tales imbued in Frank a life-long love for history. When he joined the Society 55 years ago, he was a bright-eyed youngster of 20 and the youngest member. Meetings took place only once a year, Frank recalled in an interview, his blue eyes still twinkling.

With a career in education behind him, Frank became a volunteer in the Fall of 1963 in our Library, serving every Thursday afternoon. He says he enjoys meeting people and trying to answer their questions.

Frank has compiled thumbnail sketches of old families in the area. To him, “they are not just names but flesh and blood”, he reveals. His main hobbies are reading and amateur genealogy, and he finds himself looking up “endless relatives” on his mother’s side dating back to 1720.

Born in 1890, Frank grew up to be a teacher. (He received his BS degree from Rutgers). He taught at the one-room school at Stanton and for five years at Pattenburg, where he helped work the roller-coaster at the Bellewood Amusement Park, (then at its height) during the summer.

He was principal of the South Bound Brook Elementary School for 26 years. Although he lived in that community for 43 years, he has always retained an interest in Hunterdon. He returned to the Hunterdon scene two years ago to live near his daughter, Mrs. Margery Grover, a teacher at Delaware Township School, and his four grandchildren.

### HOW TO JOIN

Please enroll me as a \_\_\_\_\_ member. Annual, \$4.00 per year; Contributing, \$10.00; Sustaining, \$25.00; Institutional, \$25.00; Life, \$100.00; Patron, \$1,000.00; Student, \$1.00 (18 years old or younger)

For which I enclose \_\_\_\_\_

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**HUNTERDON HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER**

Published Autumn, Winter, Spring

by

**HUNTERDON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

1 Maple Avenue

Flemington, New Jersey 08822



**ANNUAL MEETING**

Sunday, Jan. 9, 1966 at 2 P.M.

Free Public Library - First Floor

118 Main Street, Flemington, N.J.

TALK • FILM • REFRESHMENTS