

Hunterdon Historical Record



HUNTERDON
COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
hunterdonhistory.org

**Genealogy
Virtual Webinar
October 27**

Mark your calendars
and join us
Tuesday, Oct. 27
for a
virtual genealogy webinar
with E. Jean Pellicane.

Beyond Vital Records
is the ideal program
to help encourage you to
look at different resources
to enhance
your genealogical research.

Additional details
on this virtual program,
including information
on signing up,
will be available on
our website at
www.hunterdonhistory.org
or call us at
908-782-1091.

Open to the public

Deats/Thatcher Archeological Collection Is Subject of Fall Meeting on November 8

All are invited to join us for a special fall meeting focusing on our Deats/Thatcher Archeological Collection of Native American artifacts on Sunday, November 8 at 2 pm. We will announce at a later date whether the event will be held at a venue or will be virtual.

We'll welcome four speakers who have worked a great deal on the collection and share an intimate knowledge of it: Dr. Greg Herman, Mark Zdepski, Ed Fimbel III, and Roger Ahrens. They will discuss the fascinating history and intriguing future of the collection, and highlight noteworthy items in it. Greg is a geologist and current faculty member at Raritan Valley Community College; Mark also is a geologist; Ed is CEO of Fimbel Architectural Doors in White House, NJ; and Roger is a retired fundraiser.

The Deats/Thatcher Archeological Collection is one of the true treasures of the Hunterdon County Historical Society. It is comprised of a rich and varied collection of Native American artifacts and ethnographic pieces reflecting the interests of its collectors: Hiram E. Deats and John C. Thatcher.

Items from the collection can be found in the Flemington Public Library's all-purpose room on the second floor. As mentioned in a recent newsletter, future plans for the displayed items include installing LED lights in the cabinets to ensure better viewing, and reconfiguring the items to create a chronological and representational display of Hunterdon-centric artifacts from the Archaic to the Woodlands period.

The Thatcher component of the collection features several thousand pieces collected largely on the Thatcher farm, west of Flemington. The Deats collection was principally gathered on the Flemington Junction farm of the long-time secretary of HCHS, but some artifacts are from Europe, Latin America and across North America.

Don't forget you can view the Deats/Thatcher Archeological Collection on our website at: <https://hunterdonhistory.org/>



Dr. Greg Herman and Mark Zdepski install LED lighting into one of the display cabinets that will hold items in the Deats/Thatcher Archeological Collection. Many of the items in the collection can be found on the second floor of the Flemington Public Library. Other items are kept in the Hunterdon County Historical Society's Archives Building.

Doric House Master Bedroom Virtual Tour

Now you can take a tour of the second floor master bedroom of the historic 1845 Greek Revival Doric House at 114 Main Street in Flemington without leaving the comforts of your homes.

Go to www.hunterdonhistory.org. Find the tour listed in the cluster of rectangles at the right and click on it. When it opens, click where prompted to open a slowly moving panoramic photograph of the room and its furnishings. Click on a Point of Interest (white circle) beside an item to get a closer look at it and to learn more about it. For instance, by clicking on the wooden cradle, you'll learn it was used by Peter Dumont Vroom (1791-1873), who served as the ninth governor of New Jersey from 1829-1836.

HUNTERDON HISTORICAL RECORD

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Lora Jones, and John Kuhl

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Acquisitions

Artifacts and documents on the history of Hunterdon County and the families who resided here are welcome additions to the Society's Collections. Donated materials may not be available for research until they have been processed, a continuing activity. The Society thanks the donors for these recent acquisitions.

Case, Susan. A photograph of the Mattison family in front of a sawmill, n.d. (see below)



Castor, Ann Fuhrman. A collection of 77 postcards from Flemington, NJ, ca. 1904-1915. Directly below: Ice Cream Cones, Annual Carnival, Flemington, NJ, ca. 1908. At bottom: Main Street South from Bloomfield Avenue, Flemington, NJ, ca. 1910.



continued next page

Cummings, Ken and Marilyn. A donation of multiple items, including: a scrapbook of Hunterdon County historic sites by Hildegarde P.G. Kuhl, 1976; a scrapbook of records of the Hunterdon Sheep Marketing Cooperative Association of Hunterdon County, ca. 1952-1955; a copy of the Historic New Jersey Map Portfolio containing a series of reproductions of historic NJ maps and a collection booklet from 1983; an original "Distance Map of the State of New Jersey," by John T. Hammond from 1824; and 3 BroadSides of various events from the Quakertown area, 1921-1929.

East Amwell, book by East Amwell Historical Society (2010). Society Purchase.

Lamendola, Russ. A collection of musical programs, a vinyl recording, graduation programs, and yearbooks from Flemington schools, 1948-1952, plus two community cookbooks, 1970-1977.

Limongelli, Susan. Four vital statistics records concerning the Teel and Schultz families of Lambertville, 1891-1976.

Melsky, Michael. *The Dark Corners of the Lindbergh Kidnapping, Vol. III* (2019). Gift of the author.

Myers, Carol. A series of 8 binders; copies of the Interment Books, Lot Books, and notes from the Mount Hope Cemetery, ca. 2007.

Richard Grubb and Associates, c/o Allee Davis. Manuscript Report; HAER Documentation Report for Hunterdon County Bridge C-32 and vicinity, 2020.

Shea, K. A visitor's guide to Flemington, NJ by Turntable Junction, 1973.

Stewart, Lois. "Earth Rejoice," a booklet of music composed by Carol Weaver for the retirement ceremony of Rev. Pamela Reed, 2019.

Thatcher, Phil, c/o Ken Cummings. A publication, "The Siren," official publication of the New Jersey Division of Civil Defense and Disaster Control, 1964.

Zeng, Tom. Photocopies of the Bible of William S. Holcombe (1868-1930) and wife, Annie Prall; includes photocopies of related loose records and portraits of Freddie Holcombe and unidentified women.

Society Loses True Friends

Harold Oscar Van Fleet (1930-2020) died May 2 in Flemington. A generous supporter of the Society, he served as a trustee for 21 years until 2014, and was Vice President 14 of those years. His wife, Margery (Case) Van Fleet, survives him.



Harold O. Van Fleet

Among their many contributions, Harold and Margery funded the handsome sign in front of the Doric House, some furnishings for the house, and the weather vane atop the Archives building. A decorated U.S. Army Korean War veteran, Harold was honorably discharged with the rank of Sergeant First Class. He graduated from the New Jersey State Police Academy in West Trenton in 1959 and served for 27 years, retiring in 1985 as Lt., Regulatory Bureau Chief. He continued his career as a Security Investigator for the First Fidelity and Morris Savings Banks, finally retiring in 1990.

He was a life member of several military and police organizations and the Three Bridges Reformed Church. He is buried in Prospect Hill Cemetery in Flemington.

Michael T. Gesner (1945-2020) died on 26 July 2020 at age 74 in his home in Washington Township, Warren County, NJ. For years he and his wife Janet faithfully volunteered several times a month at our Deats Memorial Library. Always present was his trusty computer full of area names. Give him a cousin and he would find you forty thousand more, witness his large volumes of published genealogies for such local families as the Carkhuffs or the Kuhls. Mike was always in good spirits; he and his wry sense of humor will be missed.



Michael Gesner

His interest in history extended through Warren County to the north and to Monroe County, PA. He was drafted to serve in the army during Viet Nam and joined the V.F.W afterwards. In his youth he had a passion for hot rod cars and even did some street racing. Following up that vocation, he owned and operated Warren County Auto Parts in Washington. His wide interests included a stint as the "Wandering Gourmet Food Critic" for the *Express Times* of Easton. He leaves behind Janet, their family, and a huge vacancy in our library staff.

A Big Thank You to Donors

Edmund Abegg, Edinboro, PA
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 Jessica Birch, Garner, NC
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Remembering Other Lost Members



George E. Carkhuff, Rocktown, NJ
 Dale Moreau Killinger, Flat Rock, NC
 Dawn Stothoff Warner, Flemington, NJ

Did Dr. Deemy's Horse Burn Half of Frenchtown?

By Rick Epstein

“It's a bad thing to have a fire engine that won't do what is required of it when most needed,” warned the *Hunterdon Independent* in 1871. The wisdom of this statement was demonstrated most egregiously seven years later.

“At a quarter before 1 o'clock on the morning of Saturday, June 29, 1878, while our inhabitants reposed in slumber, the cry of 'Fire!' was heard. Two hours thereafter nineteen places of business, six dwelling houses and twenty-one business firms were entirely burned out. The business centre was a mass of charred ruins. Thousands of dollars of valuable machinery was reduced to nothing. The sad havoc which the *Press* had so often predicted was completed. Thanks be to God no lives were destroyed. Fortunes were swept away, but life and limb were spared.” – the *Frenchtown Press*

The writer, Charles Joiner, wrote from the heart; his press and other equipment had been ruined—

and he had let the insurance lapse.

The fire broke out in the barn of Emanuel K. Deemy, a physician raising a family and practicing medicine at 41 Bridge Street.

“Be it said to the credit of the ladies, they were the first to see the fire, and the first to make the alarm,” wrote the *Independent*. Those ladies were Sarah Slack and Thisby Hyde.

Deemy's barn contained carriages, two horses, his cow, and a son's two white rabbits. Running out in his nightshirt, Deemy managed to rescue his cow. But both horses and the rabbits perished.

The old pumper from a disbanded fire company was run out, but “the old dilapidated hand engine refused to throw a pint of water and was abandoned,” the *Press* noted bitterly.

In response to a one a.m. telegraph message to Lambertville, a pumper was mounted on a flatcar and the intervening 16 miles were covered in 19

Just three of the casualties of the 1878 fire were (clockwise from upper left) Albert Williams' building that was home to several businesses, including his drug store; the Temperance House hotel; and Press newspaper and print shop.



minutes, arriving at 2:36 – in time to help confine the fire to buildings already burning.

On a windless night, a fire goes in all directions that offer fuel.

It spread from the stables into the abundant wood of the wheel, hub and spoke works of Hann & Williams on Harrison Street. They had a lot of stock on hand, some of it ready for shipment, so its losses were maximized.

From there, it spread east, west and south. The Union National Bank on Second Street, which was also the home of banker William S. Stover, caught fire. He tended to his horse and children, while bank president Philip G. Reading and teller Abel B. Haring were rescuing important papers. Soon fire and smoke drove them out. The money was left in a large fireproof safe.

The fire went west, jumping Harrison Street, igniting a house, the *Press* office, a butcher shop, and the Temperance House hotel and its stables. The hotel had been fully occupied, but the dinner bell, rung by landlady Hyde, woke the guests, who all escaped.

George Salter rushed in to save some of the hotel furniture. Trying to exit, George found the back door blocked, so he ran through the burning hotel followed by a sheet of flame. At least that's how he remembered it 64 years later.

On the eastern corner of Harrison and Bridge, the fire attacked shops dealing in jewelry, drugs, harnesses, shoes, meat, furniture, undertaking, dress-making, and photography.

Next door on Bridge Street, the fire burned Levi Able's three-story building. It housed his barbershop, restaurant and bakery on the ground floor and his family's quarters upstairs. Only a 12-foot gap separated Able's inferno from the Deemy house. It survived because it was made of stone, men pushed Able's burning wall inward, and the timely arrival of the Lambertville firefighters.

On the western front, the fire spread from the hotel and raged down a row of three houses and a ladies' hat shop.

It tried to jump the alley and attack Hugh Warford's three-story brick residence, but carpets in the house were cut into strips and draped over the wooden trim on the hot side of the house. Men with ladders, ropes, and buckets worked in the blistering heat to keep the carpet well soaked, and the house was saved.

The new day dawned to show several chimneys standing tall amid the smoking rubble. Soon the town was aswarm with sightseers, plus eager insurance agents and manufacturers of safes and fire engines.

"The origin of the fire is not positively known," reported the *Hunterdon Republican* newspaper, "but it is supposed that it was the work of an incendiary as it broke out in a barn, where no fire or lights had been used." That was the assessment of the *Press*, too.

But the *Independent* thought, "It might have been caused by one of the horses treading on a parlor match in the litter, or upon one of those paper caps which so many boys are using, or the casting of a cigar stump into a dry manure heap by someone who went to the water closet...we would rather believe it was from the latter causes than that of the incendiary's work."

So Dr. Deemy's horse is a suspect, just like Mrs. O'Leary's cow was, after the Chicago Fire of 1871. But the *Independent* seemed to be reaching.

Some businesses and people bounced back, and others didn't. The bounciest proved to be the bank, which moved into a house across the street and was open for business at 9 a.m. just eight hours after the first cry of "Fire!" A new bank building on Bridge Street was ready for action that December.

Condensed from *Rick's Frenchtown Encyclopedia*, a work in progress.

Welcome, New Members

KJ Bentley, West Chester, OH
 Audrey Grabow, Chesapeake, VA
 Beverly S. Johnson, Atlantic Highlands, NJ
 Diane Legree, West Suffield, CT
 JoAnn Lieberman, Vera Beach, FL,
 Robert Loder, Glen Gardner, NJ
 Lori Lyon, Wallkill, NY
 Pauline Serafin, Ringoes, NJ

Plan TODAY to Preserve Hunterdon's History

Leaving a gift to the Hunterdon County Historical Society in your will or trust, by beneficiary designation, or another form of planned gift can make a lasting difference in preserving Hunterdon's history. For more information please contact our Administrator, David Harding, at (908) 782-1091 or email him at hunterdonhistoryadm@gmail.com.

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The 1918 Spanish Influenza Pandemic & Hunterdon

by Russ Lockwood

As we grapple with the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, we face the same prevention, treatment, and vaccine challenges that plagued Hunterdon County residents during the 1918 influenza epidemic. Both virus-based diseases proved contagious, resilient, and lethal.

On October 23, 1918, the *Hunterdon County Democrat* carried a statement by US Public Health Service Surgeon General Rupert Blue that asserted "epidemics of influenza had visited this country [US] since 1647...with the first epidemic brought here from Valencia, Spain."

He went on to describe 'Spanish Influenza' as a "very contagious kind of 'cold' accompanied by fever, pains in the head, eyes, ears, back, or other parts of the body. In most of the cases, the symptoms disappear after three or four days and the patient rapidly recovers. Some of the patients, however, develop pneumonia, or inflammation of the ear, or meningitis, and many of these complicated cases die."

1918 Flu Research

Medical knowledge and technology in 1918 proved of limited usefulness in combatting influenza. Because diagnostic tools could not detect viruses, which are smaller than bacteria, experts incorrectly believed the disease was caused by seasonal bacteria, usually striking in winter.

Efforts to create a bacteria-based influenza vaccine centered around 1892 research by German scientist Richard Pfeiffer. According to the *New York Times*, on October 2, 1918, as the second wave of influenza hit the US, Dr. William H. Park, head bacteriologist of the New York City Health Department, created such a vaccine and administered three doses to his staff. New York City Health Commissioner Royal S. Copeland touted the vaccine as an influenza preventive. By October 12, Park was vaccinating employees of large companies and soldiers of the US Army. Alas, by December 13, Copeland told the *NY Times* that the vaccines had no effect.

According to *historyofvaccines.com*, the US population was 103.2 million in 1918. During the three waves of the Spanish influenza pandemic between spring 1918 and spring 1919, about 200 of every 1,000 people in the US contracted influenza (about 20.6 million). Between 0.8% (164,800) and 3.1% (638,000) of those infected died from influenza or secondary pneumonia.

LOCAL REACH AND LOCKDOWNS

Rural Hunterdon County shared the misery in the last quarter of 1918.

The October 9, 1918 entry in Hiram Deats' Journal recorded "all public meetings are off, by order of [Flemington] Board of Health, on account of the epidemic of grip, or "Spanish influenza" as it is called this year." For October 20, 1918, he wrote, "The 'gasless' Sundays are past now, but all gatherings are 'verboden' on account of "Spanish influenza" or "Flu" alias our old grippe in a new form. So there was not much travel."

Meanwhile, the *Hunterdon County Democrat* and *Courier News* ran articles and obituaries covering the disease's toll on the population and the measures taken to counter the epidemic.

On October 1, 1918, the *Democrat* reported that, "the [Annandale] public schools are again closed this week. The Board of Health recently ordered all places of amusement, churches, Sunday schools, and other places where people congregate closed until further notice on account of the epidemic. The stores and bar rooms were permitted to remain open, but crowds are not permitted to congregate in them. So far, Annandale has had over a score of cases with two deaths: Charles Trimmer, 26, and Edward V. Weller, 27, both died after an illness of less than one week."

The October 3, 1918 *Courier News* noted, "There being 150 cases of influenza in Hampton, the public schools were closed Tuesday for the rest of the week. Glen Gardner reports 39 cases. The Glen Gardner schools also were closed for the week."

As the 1918 version of lockdown occurred, the infection rate dropped. On November 3, Hiram Deats recorded in his journal, "Quarantine on grip raised, but decided not to go to church. Lizzie went. Charles went back to college."

But influenza proved resilient. The *Democrat* devoted considerable coverage to health news of various County residents who became sick or died. Consider the Apgar family. At some point in the fall, Mrs. Wyckoff Apgar came down with influenza. On October 23, the *Democrat* ran a notice that Mrs. Wyckoff Apgar and others who had suffered from influenza had recovered sufficiently to be out and about. Yet the same issue also ran a short death notice among many: "Mrs. Keturah Apgar, 39, wife of George Apgar, dies after a short illness of pneumonia after an attack of Spanish influenza."

But Mrs. Wyckoff Apgar was not yet completely cured, since the December 10, 1918 *Courier News* noted, "The second outbreak of influenza has become so serious that the Clinton Township Board of Health has again closed the public school and has stopped rehearsals for the church Christmas entertainment. Among the new cases are Richard Manning and his family, Mrs. Wyckoff Apgar, Mrs. Silas W Eick, William DuBois, and Marion Furbeck."

COUNTERMEASURES

Besides the ineffective vaccines, at least two companies worked influenza into their marketing. Horlick's Malted Milk was "the diet during and after influenza." Meanwhile, Hill's Bromide suggested "Look out for Spanish Influenza. At the first sign of a cold, take Cascara Quinine." Alas, the papers that featured their advertisements offered no word on the effectiveness of these products.

It was not until the 1930s that researchers established that a virus, not bacteria, caused influenza.

Lockdowns proved effective in containing the spread of influenza. As the December 10, 1918 *Courier News* noted, "Influenza is a crowd disease. Avoid crowds as much as possible. Influenza spreads when ignorant or careless persons sneeze or cough without using a handkerchief. Cover up each cough or sneeze. Do not spit on the floor, sidewalk, in the street cars, or public places. Avoid the use of common drinking cups and roller towels in public places."

Sage advice then, sage advice today.

Curator Cornelius Reports More Searchable Data

In an article I wrote for the Spring 2020 newsletter, I explained that our volunteer program had been suspended and that I was working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Little did I know this would still be the case six months later! In that article, I explained that even though we could not work on our archival materials in the physical library and archives, we could work from home with data to make them more accessible to our users.

At that point in time, our librarian and I had worked to enter almost 40 of our archival collections from the pre-internet days into our searchable online catalog. This included both small and large collections that deserved to be more available to our researchers. I am happy to report that we have continued this theme over the past several months and that we have made much more of our content visible to internet searching.

Our librarian, Pam Robinson, has concentrated on a difficult data entry project that involved our bound manuscript collection. This highly valuable group of research materials includes bound documents that are not published. They include the day books and accounting ledgers of historical county individuals, businesses, and social groups. They also include personal diaries, compilations of the research notes of local historians and genealogists, and the draft versions of several published works. Also represented are bank ledgers, post office box rental lists, Doctor's appointment books, store receipts, shipment lists, and, many other types of manuscripts. This collection currently includes 1,859 items. Before the pandemic, only about 200 of these were described in our catalog and available to find online. Thanks to the efforts of our librarian, over 1,000 of these items—more than half the collection—are now available for online searching!

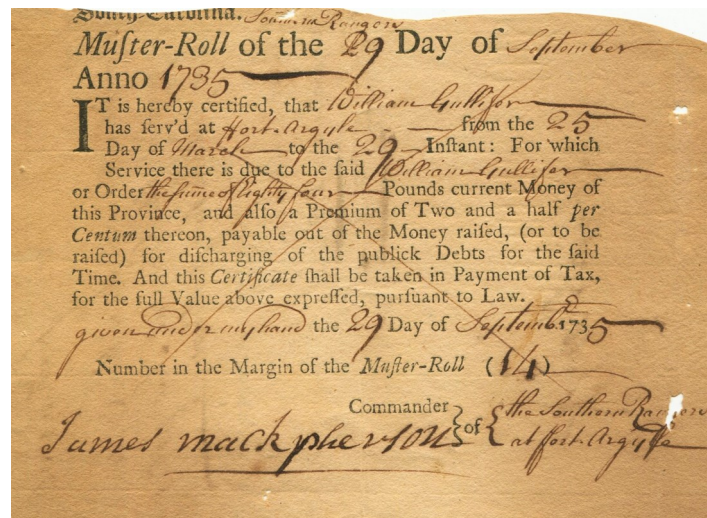
Another project we completed was the processing of the HCHS Corporate Archives. This collection comprises a portion of the corporate record of the Hunterdon County Historical Society, from 1885-1982. Essentially, it is the archive and the history of the organization itself. It includes the Society's foundational documents, by-laws, constitutions, minutes, reports, finances, and filings. It also includes historical papers, speeches, presentations, acquisition records, special projects, and photographs. The collection records the foundation, growth, activities, and debates of the Society. Although it largely covers the activities of the Society itself, there is a good deal of material that may be of interest to historical researchers

and genealogists. The collection finding guide for this material is now available online and is part of the online search platform as well.

In an even bigger step, we decided to start to reprocess other collections into our online search platform *and* to make scanned images available online as well. The first successful completion of this is Collection No. 17, the Slave Manumissions of Mercer and Hunterdon County. This is one of the Society's most precious collections; a collection of manuscripts that document the process of freeing slaves in Hunterdon County between 1805 and 1830. Documentary evidence of the lives of African American and other enslaved people from this time period is rare and historically valuable. The instruments of manumission themselves are historically important, but the value of these documents for genealogical and family history purposes are astronomical. Every manumission in this collection was imaged and posted online for reader's viewing. In the files where no manumission was present, the certification of examination was imaged.

We hope that collection proves useful to those who may not have had access to, or knowledge of, it before, and we hope to preset more of our legacy collections online in the near future. Our next target is Collection 19: the HCHS II Collection, which holds an amalgamation of information from several sources. In the past, researchers used this collection because it contains many deeds, surveys, and other important documents from the 18th and 19th centuries. Genealogically, it touches upon many long-time prominent Hunterdon County names. Before now, this collection was only available to use via a non-searchable inventory list. It now has been reprocessed into our online search database and we are currently scanning images to post with it. This is a much larger collection than the slave manumissions, and it will take time to scan the images inhouse, but we do eventually hope to have it ready for release and we think it will be very helpful when it is ready.

While no one can know the future, I hope that by the time of our *next* newsletter, we will all be back to work. I want to hear the sound of the archival team processing newly acquired and donated materials on our volunteer evenings again, and once again we will be able to announce new collections available for research. Until then, I hope our members and friends are happy with the increased access we have been able to provide to some of our existing legacy material.



Muster Roll and Pay Order of William Gulliford of the Southern Rangers, 1735 (Collection 19).

Spotlight on Collections: 1909 Interstate Fair Trophy

By Janice Armstrong

The 1909 Trenton Interstate Fair was quite the event. According to the *New York Times*, an all-time record of 65,000 people visited the fair on September 30, Politicians Day, to see New Jersey's 33rd Governor John Franklin Fort, United States Senators John Kean and Frank O. Briggs, and practically all the State and County officials. There were show dog exhibitions and horse racing on a remodeled track that cost \$1,000.

The highlight for New Jersey farmers was the cattle and agricultural exhibits. New sanitary, well-lighted, ventilated concrete animal sheds replaced the old wooden ones at a cost of over \$15,000. The cattle show was confined to



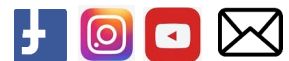
And The Award Goes To—Most Butter Fat!

dairy cows with prize money of \$3,000 set aside for the exhibitors of Jerseys, Holsteins, Guernseys and Ayer-shires.

W. M. Holcombe (1870-1933) must have burst with pride at receiving this silver trophy for his entry. The inscription reads "Awarded to W.M. Holcombe for Jersey Cow, Largest Amount Butter Fat, Trenton Fair 1909." Mr. Holcombe owned a farm in Ringoes, East Amwell and was married to Fannie Fisher Holcombe (1866-1934). They

had no children, but two nephews are listed in Mr. Holcombe's obituary: Russell and Stanley Wycoff. The Holcombes passed away just a year apart and are buried in the Pleasant Ridge Cemetery in Ringoes.

HCHS received an operating support re-grant from the Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage Commission, with funds from the NJ Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State.



Hunterdon's History

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