

Hunterdon Historical Record



HUNTERDON
COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

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Donations During the Pandemic

Thanks to your overwhelming generosity, donations were still arriving as this newsletter was going to press. Several donations are noted on page 1345; we'll list more in our next issue.

If you haven't renewed your membership yet, we encourage you to do so. Your membership is vital in our ceaseless efforts to maintain our Doric House Museum, Archive Building, and Research Library; to protect our collections for future generations; and to continue sharing our past, whether it's by answering a genealogical query through the mail, or cataloging a collection and making it available to our membership.

Otis B. Davis: Raritan's Rebel Farmer

By David Harding

Around 1871, Otis B. Davis left his Brooklyn home, having purchased the former Case family farm on the outskirts of Flemington. One wonders how Davis must have felt as the large vernacular Georgian-style stone farmhouse, built in 1798, came into view for the first time.

You see, Davis arrived here expecting to die. His physicians had been quite adamant about that. His consumption was not treatable. Davis's life journey that led him to that farm was as full of turns as twisted and peculiar as the 19th-century roads upon which he traveled.

Otis B. Davis was born in Sandown, New Hampshire on March 21, 1830. We know little of his youth, but can presume he loved to travel. Early on, he left Sandown and found work as a salesman with the Fairbanks Scales Company, driv-



ing about New England in a horse carriage. During one trip to Massachusetts, he met Elizabeth Wyman Moses; they married on Nov. 29, 1855, a union that lasted 62 years. Davis's feelings for "his Lizzie" decades later were "still as young as upon their wedding day," as recorded in the *Brooklyn Eagle* in 1915.

Otis and Lizzie moved to New York City, where their son, Charles, was born in 1857. Davis is listed as working in "scales," in the 1857 NYC Directory. The next turn in Davis's life gets a bit puzzling.

DAVIS DISAPPEARS from the 1860 NYC Directory. Records in the National Archives (confirmed by the 1890 Veterans Census) show he volunteered in 1862 to serve in Company B of the Confederate Guards Regiment of the

Louisiana State continued on page 1347

March 14—2 pm Zoom Meeting

A Virtual Tour of Historical Flemington, NJ

All of us like to imagine what things were like in past centuries.

Toward that end, join us at our annual spring meeting held, because of the virus, via Zoom on Sunday, March 14 at 2 p.m. for a fascinating tour down Main Street, Flemington. You'll step back in time as we use historic photos from the Society's extensive digital archive. Enjoy the architecture and learn which buildings have been lost, saved, and altered.

Your "tour guide" is Janice Armstrong, heritage educator and historic preserva-

tionist with enthusiasm for the built environment and its history.

Janice is a lifelong Hunterdon County resident and has created and guided walking tours in Flemington and Milford, and also in Easton and Nazareth, PA. She is an associate with Dennis Bertland Historic Preservation Consulting and a Society Board Member.

To register for this free program, visit our website at www.hunterdonhistory.org. A Zoom link for the program will be emailed to you prior to the event.

HUNTERDON HISTORICAL RECORD

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Lora Jones and John Kuhl

Layout: Lora Jones

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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.

Armstrong, Janice. Varied donations including: National Register nomination packets for Frenchtown, Mount Airy, and the Bartles House (Tewksbury); Restore Hunterdon Anniversary Packet of Upper Black Eddy-Milford Bridge; packet for St. John Terrell Music Circus; and 85th Anniversary of Holland Township and Bicentennial program for Holland Township ca. 1964-2005; class photographs from the Three Bridges and Holland Brook Schools, ca. 1975-2001; A scrapbook of the 1994 and 1997 elections of the donor to Flemington Borough Council; Yearbooks from the Readington School and Hunterdon Central HS, 1966-1970; and various books and publications for the H.E. Deats Library.

Christen, Arthur. Papers of August W. Knispel, former Franklin Township Committeeman for 33 years, 11 term Mayor, and member of the NJ Mayors Hall of Fame, ca. 1940-1973. Donated in memory of cousin August W. Knispel.

Gellner, Barbara. A receipt for dues paid by Mrs. Ethel Mackenzie of Flemington from the National Organization for Public Health Nursing, 1929.

Harding, David. *The Delaware River Story: water wars, trout tales, and a river reborn* / Lee Hartman, 2020.

Hoffman, Susan J. Two photographs: 1) office of Odell Butler and Campbell Hoffman, 1944; 2) fundraising dinner featuring Hunterdon County officials, 1944 or 1945.

The Lindbergh Kidnapping: Suspect No. 1, the Man Who Got Away / Hon. Lise Pearlman (2020). Gift of the author.

Matsen, John. Collection of various materials related to historic home preservation and renovation including books, newsletters, and other publications.

Matsen, Sandra. Records of the League of Women Voters of Hunterdon County including scrapbooks, minutes, bulletins, publications, clippings, and ephemera, ca. 1970-2008.

McDonald, Constance; O'Donnell, Raymond; and Canzonier, Margaret. Three boxes of well-organized family papers and photographs of the Lowe family of North Branch, NJ, and Hunterdon Co., NJ, ca. 1850-1972. Donation in memory of Alice Marie Lowe O'Donnell.

Polhemus, John. 4 Scrapbooks created by Kate Polhemus of Larison's Corner, Hunterdon County, consisting mostly of news clippings and current events ca. 1938-1946.

Ryman, Bennet C. A yearbook, *The Breeze* of Hampton High School, 1932; and an unpublished manuscript entitled "Pioneering Repairs" by Donald Bill of Hampton, NJ, n.d.

Society Library Purchases:

The Butler Family of Northwestern New Jersey / John W. Butler (1996).

The Catholic Church of New Jersey / Joseph M. Flynn (2020 reprint of 1904 publication).

Colonial craftsmen and the beginnings of American industry / Edwin Tunis (1999 reprint).

Fraktur: Folk Art and Family / Corinne & Russell Earnest (1999).

Genealogy of the Hendershot Family in America, 1710-1960 / Alfred E. Hendershot [1961].

The Grants, Concessions, and Original Constitutions of the Province of New Jersey / Aaron Leaming and Jacob Spicer (2002 reprint of 1881 publication).

The Historical Directory of Sussex County, New Jersey, 1872 (2007 reprint).

History of the Zion Lutheran Church at New Germantown, New Jersey from 1715 to 1900, Vol. 1, Pt. 1 and Pt. 2 / Dr. John C. Honeyman

Acquisitions continued

(2012 publication of 1903 manuscript).
Index of Colonial and State Laws of New Jersey, between the Years 1663 and 1903, inclusive / John Hood (Reprint of 1905 publication).
James Jennings of Northern New Jersey / Michael Gesner (2011).
Landscapes and gardens for historic buildings: a handbook for reproducing and creating authentic landscape settings, 2nd ed. / Rudy J. Favretti (1997).
The Larison Family a biographic sketch of the descendants of John Larison, the Dane, through his son James Larison, and his grandson, Andrew Larison / C. W. Larison; a modern English translation by Tricia Antill (2020).
Memoirs of a Jersey Farm Boy / Pete Tucker (2016).
New Jersey's Covered Bridges (Images of America) / Richard J. Garlipp, Jr. (2014).
The Pleasant Valley School: a story of education and community in Rural New Jersey / William L. Kidder (2012).
The Ragged Road to Abolition: Slavery and freedom in New Jersey, 1775-1865 / James J. Gigantino, II (2014).
The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in New Jersey / Joseph G. Bilby and Harry Ziegler (2019).
Rodenbach to Rodenbough and allied families of Rockefeller, Hockenberry, Brown, Shatwell, Teel, Letsch, Cline, ... / Charles Dyson Rodenbough (2015).
Ten Crucial Days: Washington's vision for victory unfolds / William L. Kidder (2020).
 Snyder, Jean. A photograph of Anna Case, opera star from Hunterdon County, n.d.
 Soldavin, Mary Ellen. Varied donations including: 1) notes, records, and work papers of the donor while a member of the Hunterdon Preservation Committee, ca. 1980-1990; 2) 10 framed photographs of Mt. Pleasant, ca. 1880-1920; 3) notes, records, and work papers on research concerning Pittstown and Everittstown, ca. 1978-1982.
 Somerset County Historical Society. The Commission of Elias H. Trimmer, Hunterdon Co., as Paymaster of the Second Regiment, NJ Volunteers, 29 June 1861.
 Stewart, Lois. Photographs and programs of graduating and yearly classes from local county schools, ca. 1914-1986; an unpublished manuscript and assorted ephemeral items from Hunterdon County; and papers of the Stangl/Fulper Collectors Club, 1997-2014.
 Turner, Linda. A framed broadside advertisement for a production of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" at the "Ringoes Opera House," n.d.
 Wetstein, Catherine Large. Five oversized framed photographic portraits of George Hall Large, George Knowles Large, George H. Large and other government officials of 1888; photo of an unnamed female friend of the Large family, ca. 1925, and a Large Family Bible. Also includes the framed appointment of George H. Large as a Supreme Court Commissioner on 2/15/1887.
 Wible, Christine. *The Untold life of Peter Lee: "born of slave parents, the property of Colonel John Stevens"* / Holly Metz (2019).
 Zeng, Tom. Photocopies of Bible pages of William S.

Holcombe (1868-1930) and wife, Annie Prall Holcombe (d. 1943). Includes related loose records and photocopies of portraits of Freddie Holcombe and an unidentified woman.

Welcome, New Members

Roger Ahrens
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AMUSEMENT AREAS OF OLD HUNTERDON

By John W. Kuhl

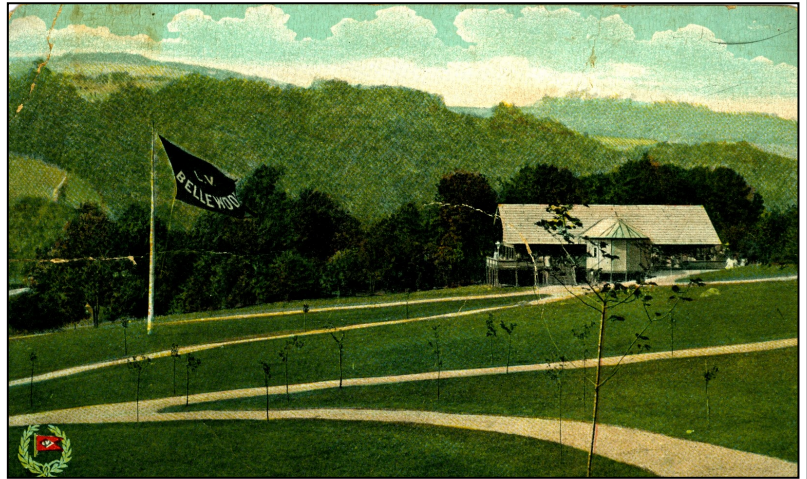
A few issues back, in response to a Society patron's query, we looked at the doings on Packer's Island, a local picnic ground north of Flemington which, thanks to the Lehigh Valley Railroad that sponsored it between 1881 and 1901, brought in crowds of up to thousands a day. In the end, it was done in by its limited size and its vulnerability to high river water. Most of the county's old recreation areas were indeed the creations of its railroads and at least three different local rail lines had sites of their own. The motivation of the railroads was, of course, the revenue from the passenger fares of the customers they hauled in, especially on the weekends when commuter traffic lagged. Perhaps the brief story of these other parks might be of equal interest to our readers.

The Lehigh Valley was the more aggressive. On the heels of Packer's Island, the railroad invested heavily in Bellewood Park, a giant new facility at Pattenburg. So much has been written on that park, we will glide over it only briefly. Opening in 1904 to a first-day crowd of over ten thousand, its 150 acres featured a roller coaster, carousel, miniature steam train, Ferris wheel, funhouse, tunnel of love, bowling alley, shooting gallery, penny arcade, dance hall, and German beer garden, to name only a few of its diverse attractions spread out along the southeastern slope of Musconetcong Mountain. Excepting the local opposition of those who detested the gambling, drinking, and carousing, especially on Sundays, Bellewood was hugely popular overall for a decade. Finally, newer, more spectacular competition elsewhere cut attendance and the park was closed at the end of the 1916 season. A large website gallery now available affords multiple views of old Bellewood, but a subsequent quarry on the site has obliterated most physical traces today.

The Central Railroad with its route across the county from Whitehouse Station to Annandale to Hampton on its way to Easton, also tried to get into the entertainment act. Existing concurrently with Bellewood was Iron Spring Park in Annandale. More of a true picnic site and far smaller and tamer, it was just a one-minute walk from that town's rail station. Unfortunately, fire attributed to arson destroyed its new pavilion in 1904. Momentum thus impaired, it never quite achieved the stature of its Pattenburg competitor. Annandale's venture was left to peter out finally with the coming WWI travel restrictions. Its old views appear also online.

A more serious effort by the Central Railroad came in the vicinity of its Asbury Station depot in Bethlehem Township on the northerly mountain slope just south of Asbury. The *Clinton Democrat* announced on 13 July 1905 that the railroad was to build a large park there on a strip of land it owned along the rail right of way. Surveyors were at work, said the paper, and in the event of a new park, a

ravine there would be dammed to make a small lake. Within a year or two, the name was changed to Ludlow Station to honor the 25th Governor of New Jersey (1881-1884), Hunterdon native George Ludlow, born in Milford in 1830. The 1880 railroad station house there was considered one of the finest on the line. It served for a



A hand-colored postcard from the Society's collection shows the beautiful vista leading to the dance pavilion at Bellewood Park in Pattenburg, which the Lehigh Valley Railroad ran from 1904 to 1916.

hundred years until torn down in 1981 after being damaged by a derailed train on the Ludlow curve. The involved plan for the park there was probably just too much for the economics of the railroad. It was never finalized, and we are left with only the Ludlow name itself.

In 1912 the *Hunterdon County Democrat* announced still another attempt by the Central Railroad. They were converting Pickell's Mountain near Whitehouse Station in Readington Township into a pleasure resort, said the paper, and large station sheds and platforms were being erected at the foot of the mountain. It is evident that the railroad's planners again far exceeded its builders' capacity as it does not appear ever to have opened.

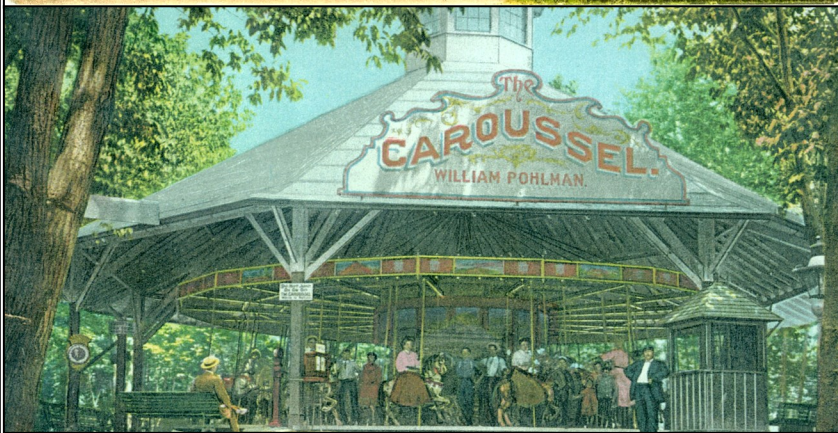
While in the Ludlow area, a mile or so just to the southwest along the same northern slope of the Musconetcong Mountain and in more recent times, was the farm and ski slope of the Osmun family. Built in 1962, it featured a short, steep downhill slope plus a safer half-mile run for beginners. Rope tows pulled the skiers to the top. It was claimed by some that it was then the state's largest. But it was soon eclipsed by the larger runs to the north in Sussex as the sport rapidly developed. The original lodge house still exists as a private home but the ski run itself, has been inoperative for years now.

The third railroad to try was the unlikely Rockaway Valley Railroad running from Whitehouse station up into

Morris County. Opening in 1888, it was more popularly and more accurately known as the “Rockabye Railroad” for the swaying movement of the rail cars on its flimsy roadbed of double spaced ties. Ardently conceived but underfinanced and underdesigned, it fought a losing battle for years, especially after the post-1900 San Jose scale decimated its potential peach freight. Although efforts to revive it would continue for some time, it ended real operations in 1913 and was ultimately sold for the World War I inflated scrap value of its abandoned rails. But even

depending on which side of the Black River it occupied. While relaxingly delightful it never achieved big time success, and proved totally insufficient in its scheme to rescue the railroad from its overwhelming financial woes.

A bit later and even more rustic than those named above was the Butler’s Park amusement area in Lebanon Township, a mile or so up the Musconetcong from New Hampton. Butler subdivided his land on the Warren County side in the late 1920s but also looked across the river where he opened a picnic park in 1929. While it was not far removed from where the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad from Washington had once bridged the Musky at Changewater on its way to a meeting with the Central at Junction (later Hampton), this one had no railroad involvement. It quickly became popular as a site for large picnics and community gatherings. Its attractions would include swimming, fishing, boat rides, merry-go-round, penny arcade, roller skating rink, shooting gallery, and snack bar. From the beginning, it was unpretentious at best. Our Three Bridges Sunday School held picnics there in the 1940s, and I remember it as a pleasant visit if you went without too many grand expectations. It gradually succumbed to old age and overly conservative management. Through the 1970s complaints about loud music, a large colony of rats “as big as cats,” garbage, and general neglect collectively resulted in its closing. The old penny arcade burned down in 1979—arson they said—leaving little left behind.



Top: The roller coaster at Bellewood Park, from the Society’s collection.

Bottom: A close-up view of the Bellewood [misspelled] Carousel from the Richard Klevze Collection.

this rustic home-grown railroad had hopes for growing its passenger revenue with a park destination, although more of the picnic variety. The *Hunterdon Re-publican* of 29 April 1891 reported steady improvements on the Black River Glen Picnic Park. A new passenger car was ordered for picnic parties and the grounds would open on 20 May with a strawberry and ice cream festival. The exact site is unclear as the Black River starts in Morris County, runs south to Pottersville and Somerset County, and then further south to Lamington where the river takes on that town’s name. As the railroad ran into Pottersville the park was obviously nearby and either in Hunterdon or Somerset

and planning process and never got off the ground. Afflicted with “dairyman’s knees,” poor Jim had to go back to milking his cows, and the valley returned to a semblance of normalcy. We all can imagine what unwelcome changes such a mega park might have brought to one of the prime agricultural areas of Hunterdon.

For data sources, see indexed Society files of old county newspapers in the Deats Memorial Library, 114 Main Street, Flemington.

Raritan's Rebel Farmer - continued from front page

Militia fighting for the Confederacy. How he wound up in Louisiana is a mystery.

Davis served under Captain George W. West and can be found in the muster rolls from March 8 to April 30, 1862. This unit was likely among the volunteer state militia that Louisiana Governor Thomas Moore transferred to Confederate Major General Mansfield Lovell for the defense of New Orleans.

MOST OF THESE MEN went into camps around the city for drill and discipline, according to Arthur Bergeron Jr., author of *Guide to Louisiana Confederate Military Units, 1861-1865*. New Orleans fell to the Union Army in April 1862. When Union General Benjamin F. Butler arrived, "the officers and men [in New Orleans] were arrested as prisoners of war, paroled, and those who did not take the oath, were exchanged," noted Napier Bartlett's *Military Record of Louisiana*.

Davis eventually returned north. Tax records for 1865 and 1866 indicate he was living in NYC, but didn't stay long. His wife's uncle, John Moses, a retired New York businessman, had purchased the Case family farm. (John Case, a descendent of Johan Philip Case, had sold the property a few years earlier to individuals interested



The 1798 stone house Lizzie and Otis lived in still stands at what we call Dvoor Circle and serves as the Hunterdon Land Trust headquarters. The appealing porch no longer exists. *Davis portraits and house photo from HLT.*

in copper mining; the mines were on the neighboring property now owned by St. Magdalen Church. Later Jacob Dvoor would purchase the farm, which is now preserved and serves as the headquarters of Hunterdon Land Trust.)

On May 19, 1871, Moses conveyed the farm and a lease for three adjoining houses to the Davis's.

The consumption that wreaked Davis's lungs was the leading cause of death in the United States between 1870 and 1910, when it killed three to four million Americans. Victims suffered from hacking, bloody coughs, and debilitating pain in their lungs.

Though Davis may have been thinking about the grave, he evidently wasn't going to let the grass grow beneath his feet. He got busy building several outbuildings to support his dairy business, including the large bank and perpendicular ell barns and wagon house, which all still exist.

Taking advantage of the farm's streamside meadows and nearness to Flemington's train station, by 1880 Davis had, by a wide margin, established the largest dairy operation in Raritan Township. The 1880 agricultural census records that the farm consisted of 70 acres of tilled land; 30 acres of permanent meadows, pastures and newly planted orchards; and three acres of woodlands. Davis had a herd of 30 cows producing 23,000 gallons of "milk sold or sent to butter and cheese factories."

DAVIS ADOPTED PROGRESSIVE FARMING measures, and produced 60 tons of hay from 40 acres mown, 100 bushels of corn from 10 acres planted, 90 bushels of oats from six acres, eight bushels of wheat from 12 acres and 10 bushels of potatoes on an unrecorded number of acres. Further, the three-acre orchard had 100 apple-bearing trees.

Davis also became a pillar of the community. He joined Darcy Lodge No. 37, Free & Accepted Masons in Frenchtown, and soon became an officer. He hosted picnics for the Croton Baptist Sabbath Sunday School. During the 1880s, he was very active in the Hunterdon County Agricultural Society, serving a number of roles on its fair committee, including superintendent of the sheep and swine departments.

In 1910, the Davis's sold the farm to Gregor Moser, returning to Brooklyn to live near their son. They likely settled into the Hotel St. George, where in 1915 the couple celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. Davis shared a chuckle with a *Brooklyn Eagle* reporter about his doctors' consumption diagnosis. A photo taken around this time shows Davis with a long beard that would have looked appropriate on a box of cough drops.

DAVIS RETURNED TO FLEMINGTON several times to visit friends, and remained in robust health until the end. He passed away at the hotel on Feb. 21, 1918, and is buried at Brooklyn's Greenwood Cemetery. "He was progressive in farming, a man of much intelligence and refinement," the *Hunterdon Democrat* lauded. "Farming was more of a pastime than an occupation, but with his use of intelligent methods he always made it a successful pastime."

Otis's beloved Lizzie followed him to the grave on January 26, 1931.

Curator Cornelius Recognizes Archival Donors

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of our lives. We have been as affected here at the HCHS as anywhere else. Our doors have been closed since March of 2020. The output of new material processed from the archives has slowed to a trickle. Continued activity in digital cataloging and inventory has been ongoing and useful, and helps to connect our collections to those who need to see them. But it does not seem as *personal* as being able to put a manuscript into the hands of a researcher in our library

One thing that has not abated is the amount and quality of the donations that have been given to the Society. After a severe slowing of donations in March through June of 2020, the number of materials donated since has been amazing.

Toward the end of the summer, a group of descendants of **the Lowe family** of North Branch and Hunterdon County donated three boxes of family photographs and records. The collection is well organized and includes many well identified photographs, making it an excellent contribution to the family history portion of our archives.

Two Society trustees contributed some excellent excellent historical material.

Janice Armstrong donated a large amount of material from her research on the towns of Frenchtown, Mount Airy, Tewksbury, and on Holland Township, as well as scrapbooks from her election to the Flemington Borough Council in 1994 and 1997.

Mary Ellen Soldavin donated a collection of working papers from her 1980-1990 research with the Hunterdon Preservation Committee, a fine set of photographs of Mt. Pleasant from 1880-1920, and research notes from her work on Pittstown and Everittstown from 1978 to 1982.

Sandra Matsen donated an excellent set of

records that document the League of Women Voters of Hunterdon County from 1970 to 2008, including scrapbooks, minutes, bulletins, and other materials.

Another set of interesting scrapbooks was donated by **John Polhemus**; they are in four volumes compiled during the years of WWII by the late Kate Polhemus of Larison's Corner.

Catherine Large Wetstein donated a fine set of large photographic portraits of prominent members of the Large family (pun intended) including George Hall Large and George Knowles Large.

Frequent contributor **Lois Stewart** gave us a set of photographs of graduating and yearly class photos of various schools in Hunterdon County dating as early as 1914 and as late as 1986.

Many smaller contributions were donated during the fall.

One included two photographs of County officials in 1944 and 1945 from **Susan J. Hoffman**, Hunterdon's Surrogate.

Linda Turner donated a broadside advertisement for the play "Uncle Tom's Cabin." The broadside was not dated but indicated that the performance would be held at the Ringoes Opera House, which caused a great deal of speculation here as to where that would have been located!

Despite the pandemic, the work of the archives crew here at the HCHS goes on. Donations like these are the lifeblood of our Society, and they add to the ongoing effort to document the rich history of the people, places, and organizations of our fascinating county.

We look forward to the opportunity to get back to work on arranging and describing these collections so that we can share them more fully with all of you. In the meantime – keep them coming!



Top images from Lowe Papers left: Anne Teneyck, b. 1820; right: Constance and Margaret O'Donnell, 1945.

Bottom left: Sheriff Odell Butler and Campbell Hoffman in the office, 1944. Right: Flemington High School seniors board a train for Washington, DC, 1927.

Spotlight on Collections: Lindy Flying Game

By Janice Armstrong

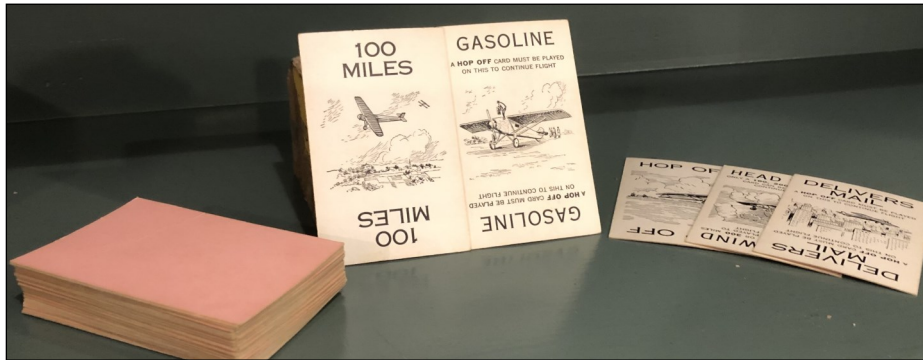
Charles Lindbergh left Roosevelt Field in New York on May 20, 1927 in his plane, *The Spirit of St. Louis* to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. He landed safely in Paris less than 34 hours later, becoming the first pilot to solo a nonstop trans-Atlantic flight. His achievement captivated the world and laid the foundation for the development of aviation.

Parker Brothers of Salem, Massachusetts capitalized on the public's intense fascination with the new hero and quickly introduced Lindy, the New Flying Game that they based on their 1906 automobile card game, Touring. That game in turn inspired the popular French card game, Mille Bornes, about cross-country auto racing in 1954.

Lindy, the New Flying Game requires players to collect mileage cards to win. Other cards help or hinder the

traveler's progress. The game consists of 99 cards, 51 of them mileage and 48, move and event cards. The object of this game is a race to be the first to total 3,200 miles across the Atlantic Ocean. Players encounter headwinds and other disasters like running out of fuel, ripped fabric, broken propellers, but get help from puncture-proof tires and extra gas cards.

A similar game, The Lindy Flying Game, by Nucraft Toys also came out in 1927. It was the subject of a lawsuit by Nucraft against Parker Bros, who won. This meant the Nucraft game had a more limited production and as a result, it is much



more valuable to collectors today.

The game (above) in our collection is missing a card or two, has no instructions, and is in a well-used box, which shows it has been enjoyed over the years. Similar sets can be found on eBay and other collector auction sites.

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.



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