

# Hunterdon Historical Record



HUNTERDON  
COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

[hunterdonhistory.org](http://hunterdonhistory.org)

## Library to Reopen!

The Hiram E. Deats Memorial Library reopens on Tuesday June 1 on an appointment-only basis. To ensure your safety, only three visitors will be admitted at a time.

Hours are from noon to 4 p.m. every Tuesday (except the second one each month) and Thursday. To schedule an appointment, please contact us one week in advance at [hunterdonhistoryadm@gmail.com](mailto:hunterdonhistoryadm@gmail.com) using the subject line “Library Appointment” and tell us what you wish to research. The more information you supply, the better we can serve you.

Two-hour appointments can be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. Please schedule only one appointment at a time to be fair to everyone.

All visitors must adhere to a few basic rules: If you feel sick, stay home! (We’ll gladly re-schedule.) Wear a mask. We will review other safety rules with you when you arrive. Also, we have hand sanitizer and will clean each work station after use.

## Grants Help Protect Hunterdon’s History

by David Harding

The Society has received several grants these past few months that will greatly benefit our ceaseless efforts to preserve, protect and share our county’s rich history.

★ **THE ASTLE-ALPAUGH FAMILY FOUNDATION** generously awarded HCHS \$4,000 to help fund the digitization and online cataloging of one of our most precious collections, The Capner Papers. These papers—one of our most requested information sources by researchers—include records of national and local significance and are a treasure trove to genealogists. HCHS aims to bring this collection of letters, drawings, maps and other papers to a worldwide audience by having it available via our Past-Perfect software—a collections database used by historical societies and museums, which can be accessed on our website. The collection will aid the efforts of researchers to understand and interpret early American history in general, and Hunterdon County’s agrarian community, in particular. Later this year, when the collection is available online, we will announce programs to familiarize you with this important collection. HCHS extends its deepest gratitude to Astle-Alpaugh for this grant.

★ **HOLT CHARITABLE FOUNDATION:** A \$2,000 grant from the Holt Charitable Foundation will go a long way toward fully protecting our bound manuscript collection! Through the years, HCHS has amassed a truly wonderful collection of over 1,800 bound manuscripts that represent a rich source of primary historical data and is one of our more highly utilized research collections. In fact, some of our most historically important manuscripts are part of this collection. We care for these items professionally by storing them in a climate-controlled vault and wrapped in acid-free paper. And these funds, that allowed us to purchase 230 “clamshell” protective boxes, will greatly further those preservation efforts. These boxes are an ideal way to protect these bound manuscripts as they address a host of issues that cause deterioration over time: handling, air circulation, pollution, light, rapid changes in temperature and humidity, and shelf storage. Thank you Holt Charitable Foundation!

★ **HUNTERDON COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE:** The Hunterdon County Historical Society received an operating support grant from the Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage Commission, with funds from the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State. This \$8,000 regrant will help us handle the important day-to-day expenses that are vital to our efforts to protect our county’s rich history and care for the Doric House Museum, the Archive Building and the Hiram E. Deats Memorial Library. We are incredibly grateful to Hunterdon County, its Cultural & Heritage Commission and the state agencies who made this possible.

★ **HUNTERDON COUNTY:** HCHS is eagerly anticipating beginning the work this Hunterdon County Historic Preservation grant will fund: the restoration of the Doric House portico and drainage work to protect the 1845 building. The project will replace the deteriorating floorboards on the front porch and the crawlspace underneath will be cleaned and repaired. The column base trim will be replaced too. The soffits above the portico will be reinforced by adding structural framing in the attic. This grant totaled \$64,623. We thank the county for supporting our efforts to protect our historic Doric House Museum.

★ **THE LARGE FOUNDATION:** HCHS received \$3,000 in operating support as we continue our constant efforts to broaden and diversify our audience, and to expand the use of our facilities. Funding that allows us to fulfill our mission is crucial to our present and future success. We are so very grateful for all the support The Large Foundation has shown our organization.

**HUNTERDON HISTORICAL RECORD**

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**EDITORIAL BOARD**

David Harding, Lora Jones, John Kuhl  
Layout: Lora Jones

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Fourth Friday each month, 12 to 4 pm  
Friday morning by appointment only  
Fourth Saturday each month, 10 am to 4 pm

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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.

Anderson, George Moncrief. An advertisement for The Clothing Mansion, Flemington, ca. 1950.

Armstrong, Janice. *Milford Borough, 1911-2011 Centennial Celebration; Vought Family: Loyalists in the American Revolution* / Donald E. Sherblom [2008].

Barth, Linda J. 3 postcards of Hunterdon County, including an aerial view of Flemington, 1967 and two images of the Black River and Western Railroad, n.d.

Cline, Sue. A box of records of the Lebanon Township Parent Teachers Association, including subject files, project files, and minutes, ca. 1952-1964.

Dilts, Wayne T. *Time's Best Jewel: the too-short life of Richard Michael Barad, M.D.: a memoir* (2017). Gift of the author.

Epstein, Rick:

◇ A series of 6 blueprints by the NJ Dept. of Transportation, ca. 1940, depicting Rt. 29 through Hunterdon County.

◇ A photograph of Pattenburg students outside the schoolhouse, n.d.

◇ 2 recipe books: 1912 Dutch Reformed Church Cookbook by the Ladies' Aid Society, High Bridge, and "our Receipt Book" from the Sisters of the Riverside Grange, Three Bridges, NJ.

Harding, David. A menu from the Doric House Restaurant in Flemington, NJ, 1955. (at right)

Henniker Historical Society. One block quilt from October 1857 made by Mrs. William Wagner with signatures of Kingwood Township students.

Hunt, Alan. Collection of 6 wooden crates filled with glass plate negative photographic images from photographer Asher Stryker, ca. 1900-1920. The collection also includes binders of black and white developed out prints and photocopies of some of the images in the collection, primarily from Flemington and the greater Hunterdon County area.

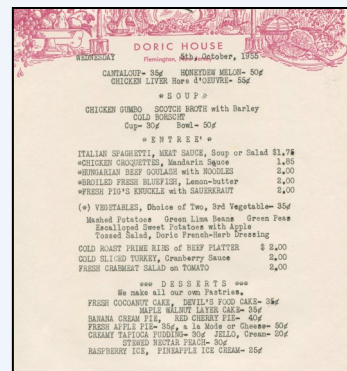
Kimmer, Wilton. 13 Souvenirs from Bellewood Park, Pattenburg, NJ, including ceramic and china pieces made in Germany of various shapes and sizes. Also includes a binder of Bellewood Park postcards, a 1913 Bellewood Park train schedule, and a copy of the blueprints and layout of the park.

Kingwood Township Historical Society, c/o Betty DeSapio. A large collection (26 boxes) of archival material from the Kingwood Historical Society including Poor Farm Records, Election Records, Vital Statistics, Tax Records, Road Records, Historic Preservation Files, Miscellaneous documents and manuscripts, records of the Kingwood Patriotic Order Sons of America, Township financial records, the diaries of Joseph Nagy, township audit records, school records, scrapbooks, tax maps, records of the Lehman family, a group of tax and other maps, the corporate records of the Kingwood Historical Society, ca. 1778-2019, and two Kugler family bibles and one Hann family bible. Also includes these books for the Library Collection:

◇ *A Farm Boy Goes to College: an autobiography* / Stephen Gordeuk, Jr. [Baptistown] (1999).

◇ *Delaware and Raritan Canal* / Linda J. Barth (2002).

◇ *New Jersey School laws and rules and regulations prescribed by the State Board of Education with notes, blanks, and forms for the use and government of the school officers: 1911.*



continued next page



- ◇ *Search for Early New Jersey Toolmakers / Alexander Farnham; photographs by Donald D. Kahn (1992).*
- Lamendola, Russ. 2 commemorative glasses from Flemington High School, circa 1954.
- Leonard, John W. III. Genealogical chart of the Taunton Leonard's, 6 plates or pages; English ancestry of the Leonard family.
- Mackey, Bea. Group photograph of the Directors of the Flemington Auction Market, 1959. (below)



- Milford Public School Board, c/o Milford Borough Historical Society. 8 boxes, Milford School Registers, 1913-92.
- Morris County Historical Society, c/o Katherine Kurylko. 4 slide images, including the Swift Sure Stagecoach historical marker and barn in Readington, and the Holcombe Farm in Lambertville.

Myers, Carol:

- ◇ A folder of records of Charles Burkett, including receipts, estate papers, stock certificates, and insurance certificates, ca. 1911-1917.
- ◇ 2 boxes of the papers of Rogers Lewis Aspelng, including family research, research notes on Mt Hope, and other cemeteries, ca. 2005-2008.
- Robertson, Beverly. One handmade wool winder, 1818, signed by Samuel Hope, the son of Adam Hope.
- Society Library Purchases:
  - ◇ *A Brief History of Religious Architecture, 1703-1900 / Frank L. Greenagel (2020).*
  - ◇ *Bright Liberty's Forgotten Sword and the Battle of Princeton / John Lawrence Brasher (2020).* Gift of the author.
  - ◇ *Diary of Lewis C. Paxson, Stockton, NJ, 1862-1865 / Lewis C. Paxson (Reprint of 1908 publication.)*
  - ◇ *Official Varieties and Synonyms of Surnames and Christian Names in Ireland / Robert E. Matheson (2009).*
  - ◇ *Our Vanishing Landscape / Eric Sloane (1955).*
  - ◇ *Revolutionary Princeton, 1774-1783: the biography of an American town in the heart of a civil war / by William L. Kidder (2020).*

Stewart, Lois. A small collection of programs and newsletters of events in the Flemington area, 1933-2011, a photograph of the Flemington Auction market, n.d., a print of Flemington doorways from 2013.

Woodward, Thom. A series of 9 photographs of a gathering of motorcyclists in and around Flemington, NJ, 1967.

## Welcome, New Members

Mike G. Brown, Flemington, NJ  
 John Goyette, Flemington, NJ  
 Wilton H. Kimmer Jr., Hampton, NJ  
 Geoffrey Rockhill, Montclair, NJ  
 Michael Sales, Annandale, NJ

## BOARD MAKES HISTORY

Our organization is typically in the business of preserving and protecting history. But this past April, we made a little history of our own.

HCHS elected its first female Board of Trustees president. **Janice Armstrong**, who has served on the board for a decade, was unanimously elected to the post. A lifelong Hunterdon County resident, Armstrong is a heritage educator and historic preservationist, who has created and led walking tours in Flemington and several other towns. She is an associate with Dennis Bertrand Historic Preservation Consulting.

"I'm honored to be following in the footsteps of Hiram Deats, founder of HCHS, and other past presidents in preserving and sharing Hunterdon County history," Armstrong said. "I look forward to the easing of pandemic restrictions so we can open up the Society's Library and Doric House to share our wonderful collections with all."

Also, at the April trustees meeting, the board elected **Patricia Christie** as treasurer. She will take over the post from John Kuhl, who has served as either treasurer or secretary of the organization for decades. **Kenneth Cummings** will continue as board vice president, and **John Matsen** as recording secretary.

HCHS elected three new trustees at its March meeting: **Roger Ahrens** (who actually joined our board late last year replacing Mary Ellen Soldavin), **Ray Simonds**, and **Suzanne Bennett**. The latter two replaced long-time board members Charles Fisher, who had served as our board president since 2013, and Lora Jones, who has graciously agreed to continue on our editorial board for this and our fall 2021 newsletters.



Janice Armstrong elected President of the Board.

## Thank you, Donors!

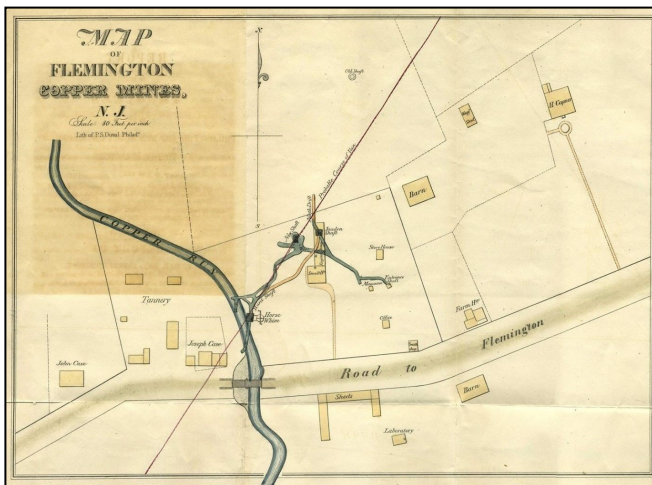
Brian Alles, Westminster, MD  
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 Patricia Christie, Lebanon, NJ  
 Frank & June Curtis, Owens Cross Road, AL  
 A. Wayne Fisher, Ringoes, NJ  
 Doreen Grieve, Montgomery, TX  
 Joyce Kintzel, Columbus, NJ  
 Martha Koblish, Naples, FL  
 Paul and Ann Lawrence, Flemington, NJ  
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 or in-kind service

# When Miners Rioted in Flemington

By David Harding

**THE COPPER MINING INDUSTRY** had been poking around Hunterdon County for many years in a frustrating and fruitless search for riches, when workmen digging a new farmhouse cellar on Hugh Capner's farm--located on the east side of the Walnut (or Mine) Brook near the present-day Case-Dvoor Farmstead--discovered good copper ore. Mining fever broke anew, and Capner sold his farm property for \$35,000 on September 20, 1846. Roughly five months later the Flemington Copper Company was chartered.

The copper business ignored a geologist's advice against over-expansion, and hired a large crew of Irish miners, opened a number of experimental shafts and put in an anthracite smelter. Several miners' homes were built between the Case-Dvoor farm house and St. Magdalen's Roman Catholic Church. A recent archaeological dig there uncovered pipes, broken glass and other items believed to have belonged to the miners.



An 1847 map of the Flemington copper mines from our archives.

Long story short: A number of copper mining companies were incorporated to exploit the discovery in the 1840s and 1850s. By March 20, 1858, the Hunterdon Copper Company was incorporated and held mineral rights to 400 acres in fee, together with surface rights to 17 more acres and permission to appropriate any part of the 400-acre tract necessary to reach or work the ore, as noted in the New Jersey Geological Survey, *Bulletin 57, Geologic Series, Copper Mines and Mining in New Jersey* (Woodward, 1944).

**UP UNTIL THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1861**, a Captain Girardeau was in charge of the mines and lived quite handsomely in one of Flemington's hotels. He was supposedly quite popular with the miners because he treated them fairly and drank beer with them. But in early 1861, he was replaced by a new captain, and as the *Hunterdon Gazette* reports, things quickly turned ugly on April 3, 1861.

"The facts are these: The week previous the company selected and sent on from New York to the mines, a new

captain, with instructions to pay off and discharge (with a few exceptions) all hands then and there employed. This was done, and the miners manifested their indignation, by riding the new captain on a rail."

(Interesting sidelight: Riding someone out of town on a rail was a literal thing, and it didn't mean sticking someone on a train. According to tradition, the "rail" was either a fence rail or iron bar, and the subject of everyone's ire was forced to straddle this rail while two men held each end. The person was then carried to the town's border before being unceremoniously dumped.)

**THE CAPTAIN REPORTED TO HIS BOSSES** in New York. They sent him back on Tuesday, April 2, with a small force of hired hands to renew operations at the mines. The miners who had been thrown out of employment gathered in front of the Union Hotel, and when the captain stepped from the stagecoach, greeted him with throaty cries and raised fists. Although great confusion prevailed for some time, no acts of violence were attempted, the *Gazette* reported.

The miners, after some 15 or 20 minutes of shouting, dispersed. About 8 p.m., the captain set out for the mines but was urged to turn back when about halfway there after receiving serious warnings of violence. He reportedly feared he would be executed.

On Wednesday morning, accompanied by Sheriff Robert Thatcher, he tried again. As soon as the sheriff and captain were in sight, the miners "commenced riotous conduct again." They cornered the sheriff and captain in the engine room. This small room was packed with angry miners and their even angrier wives, who appeared ready to tear the captain to pieces.

**"TAR AND FEATHERS**, we understand, [were ready] also an affair prepared upon which the captain was to take a ride," the *Hunterdon Gazette* reported, "as soon as he could be taken from the Sheriff."

But neither the tar nor feathers nor rail were used. "The Sheriff stood his ground like a soldier and protected the captain from violence, until assistance arrived from town, when there was a regular stampede of the miners, and hot pursuit by the citizens for their arrest. The only injury the captain received was the loss of a very good coat, which the women destroyed," the *Gazette* noted.

Thirteen miners were arrested and jailed for rioting. They were tried, convicted, and fined \$20 each plus court costs. The *Jerseyman* publication noted that the purported ringleader, a Captain Hicks who was responsible for the outbreak, escaped arrest and punishment.

Newspapers more or less dropped writing about the Flemington Mining riot with good reason. Two days after the *Hunterdon Gazette* reported the outbreak, Confederate guns opened fire on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina. The Civil War had begun.

Sources: *The Hunterdon Gazette*, April 10, 1861; *Rural Hunterdon* by Hubert G. Schmidt; *The Case-Dvoor Farm Site Management Plan* courtesy of Hunterdon Land Trust; and *The Jerseyman*, April 1891, "A Sketch of the Copper Mining Enterprise Near Flemington, New Jersey."



# First Aeroplane in Hunterdon County

By Russ Lockwood

According to the Federal Aviation Administration, 2,691 aircraft are registered in NJ in 2021, of which 185 are in Hunterdon County<sup>1</sup>. But who owned the first airplane in the County?

Alexander Waliky of Hamden was the first County resident, or at the very least one of the first, to own an “aeroplane” as it was called in a newspaper article marking the event. Among the copies of papers given to HCHS by his daughter, Jean Waliky, the transfer of title was dated March 6, 1931 and the US Commerce Department’s Aeronautics Branch assigned the official identification number 7604 on March 7.

Records are sketchy at the dawn of aviation. The Commerce Department’s Aeronautics Branch was created in 1926 and didn’t formally register aircraft until 1927. NJ created its Department of Aviation in 1931.

Waliky, a noted race car mechanic with a shop in Clinton, received a student pilot permit on Oct. 25, 1930. He had an idea about starting an air transport business for mail delivery. He purchased the Advance Aircraft Company’s Waco 9 aircraft for \$1,100. The three-seater, with manufacturer’s serial number GF-1, had a 90hp engine and had been in use at Westfield Airport. It would arrive at his farm in March 1931.

Delivered towards the end of the day in front of a crowd of “several hundred” spectators, the pilot gave Waliky a quick overview, but no actual flying lesson. Waliky learned to fly on his own, because he noted professional piloting classes cost about \$5,000.

And fly he did. Alas, his low-level flying on Sundays drew an April 24, 1931 complaint from neighbor A. K. Schanze, who hired lawyer Anthony M. Hauck Jr. Apparently, Waliky ignored the complaints, which ultimately prompted a letter from the NJ Department of Aviation Manager Gill Robb Wilson on August 14. Waliky traveled to Trenton to provide information and an explanation, although daughter Jean noted he later became good friends with Wilson.

Less than a month later, on September 16, the aircraft caught fire within the barn serving as a



Advance Aircraft Company’s Waco 9 aeroplane.

hangar. Although Waliky tried to save the aircraft, the wheels were off and the aircraft was up on jacks for maintenance. He salvaged the engine from the flames, but the rest was a total write-off. On October 5, the US Aeronautics Branch removed the aeroplane from its register.

Waliky searched for a replacement fuselage so he could reuse the engine, but without apparent success. He never bought another aircraft, but for a brief moment, he was a pioneer of flight in Hunterdon County.

## Air Facts

Hunterdon County’s only airport dedication listed in the American Air Mail Catalog was established as an auxiliary field with an airway beacon on the trans-continental air mail route in 1921. Thor Solberg, pioneer aviator, purchased the field in 1939, had it officially licensed in 1941, and held a dedication on July 20, 1941.

--From *Solberg Airport Dedication*, by James Walker

<https://njpostalhistory.org/media/archive/146-mayo2njph.pdf>

--And Solberg Airport website

<https://www.solbergairport.com/about/>

To celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of US Air Mail Service, which started on May 15, 1918, the US Post Office held a week-long nationwide event with air mail service to every town that wanted to participate. Postmasters Edwin Case of Flemington and Nelson Pickel of Clinton swore in pilot Marvin Everitt, manager of the Northwest New Jersey Airport (sited just east of the Foster Wheeler building along I-78 in Union Township), as an “Air Mail Pilot for the Day.” The flight was sponsored by Riegel Paper Company of Milford. On May 19, 1938, sacks containing 3,084 letters were loaded onto a Piper J-3 Cub at Northwest New Jersey Airport and Everitt flew them all to Newark Airport.

--From *Air Mail Week in Hunterdon County 1938*, by James

Walker; <https://njpostalhistory.org/media/pdf/Hunthistory.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> <https://registry.faa.gov/aircraftinquiry/Search/StateCountyInquiry>

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# The Flood of 1841 & George Fell's Wild Ride

By Rick Epstein

The Delaware's big flood of 1841 was only the river's seventh biggest, but it provided one young man with a night to remember.

On January 8, 1841, all the river bridges from Easton to Trenton were swept away except for half the Lambertville-New Hope bridge.

At the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that flood, the *Frenchtown Star* examined the newspapers that had been published the week after the flood and retold the story for posterity. This report is adapted from the Star's rendering, with a little help from the 1840 Census:

Early in the morning of January 8 along the Delaware “the roaring of the water was heard and hundreds hastened to the scene of destruction.” The river was filled with “floating piles of lumber, logs and fragments of buildings. The river was then rising at a rapid rate, and continued to rise until about 3 o'clock, when it appeared to be on a stand. It was then five or six feet higher than was ever before known by the oldest inhabitant. Many citizens residing along the river were preparing to leave their homes. The lumberyards, store houses, mills, and other property situated along the river were in immediate peril throughout the day.”

George B. Fell, 25, of Solebury Township, Pa., was a substitute toll taker on the covered bridge spanning the river from Centre Bridge, PA, to the hamlet that would later be named Stockton. Just before 11:00 p.m., Fell was crossing the bridge to get to his post, when the bridge tore loose from its piers and floated off. “Fearing danger from the crushing timbers overhead, and seeing a portion of the roof floating near him, he succeeded, with the aid of a plank, in reaching it and freed himself from the main body of the bridge.”

Just downstream, the Lambertville bridge was in trouble. “The water was nearly up to the bridge; the ice and drift still increased and struck the bridge with tremendous force. Large coal boats and heavy saw logs and cakes of ice were loaded against it and had forced apart one of two piers on the Jersey side.” Then two massive pieces of the Centre Bridge span “were seen floating down a short distance above by the resistless current in terrible grandeur.”

That current was booming along at 12 mph instead of the Delaware's pokey average of two mph or less.

Somewhere in the onrushing debris was George Fell, riding on a plank. Upon reaching the Lambertville bridge, he “was obliged to lie flat upon it to avoid touching the

bridge.” But those two aforementioned big pieces of wreckage would touch the bridge and then some.

“One of the pieces struck about midway with an awful crash, passed through and carried away one of the arches of the bridge. The other soon followed and took with it another arch on the Jersey side. The Jersey pier soon gave way, and the third arch followed and lodged a short distance below. Thus, one-half of that structure, which had stood the freshets for nearly 30 years, had been suddenly carried away.”

Attempts to rescue Fell were unsuccessful, and the current carried him onward, “almost dry, suffering but little from the cold until he reached Yardleyville, when he struck a pier” and got splashed. (It strains credulity

that he could have been almost dry up to this point, but that's what we're told.) He had no sooner passed under that Yardleyville bridge than “the whole structure was precipitated into the stream behind him.”

“He continued to float with the current, gathering pieces of lumber, which he kept together, forming a raft by which he was able to steer into still water, where he was taken up in safety” by a bateau three miles above Trenton. He had traveled about 15 miles.

“After his rescue, he immediately proceeded to Lambertville, where he was received with the most extravagant demonstrations of joy by the citizens, who immediately raised a telegraph announcing his safety, and fired a cannon, which was responded

to from the opposite shore in the most clamorous shouts and cheering from the joyous multitude. Mr. Fell being satisfied that his friends were apprised of his safety, then retired to bed and took a refreshing sleep and then returned to his home, where he was anxiously received by his family.”

Note: Witnesses checked their clocks at key times during Fell's misadventure, which is why, 32 years later, federal engineer Mansfield Merriman was able to calculate the speed of the current.

Although the National Weather Service offers no data on the severity of the 1841 flood, the *Frenchtown Star* put it at “3 feet and some inches” below that of 1903. NWS figures on the water depths of later floods make comparisons easy. At the Frenchtown bridge, where a depth of 16 feet is considered “flood stage,” see 10-year gauge measures in box.

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

Gauge Measure	Date	Cause *
27.79 ft	20 Aug 1955	2 hurricanes
24.40	10 Oct 1903	heavy rain
23.60	4 Apr 2005	heavy rain
23.40	29 June 2006	heavy rain
21.93	19 Mar 1936	snowmelt
21.70	13 Mar 1936	snowmelt
21.40**	8 Jan 1841	?
20.70	19 Sept 2004	tropical storm
19.02	9 Sept 2011	Rain, tropical storm, hurricane
18.60	24 May 1942	Heavy rain

\* Delaware River Basin Commission.

\*\* minus “some inches”



## Curator Cornelius Relishes Glass Plate Negative Donation

Frequent readers of this column know that I often use this space to highlight recent acquisitions to the Society's archival collections. This edition is no different—the only problem is *which* new addition to highlight. Based on the quantity and quality of recent donations, I can only assume that many people used the downtime of the pandemic to sort through their attics and basements, and we have been the beneficiaries.

There is one donation that everyone here *oohed* and *aahed* over when it came in. In March of 2021, Alan Hunt of High Bridge donated six wooden crates of glass plate negatives taken by Asher Stryker, ca. 1900-1920. The images, predominantly of the Flemington and surrounding Hunterdon County area, were found in Stryker's attic years later by his daughter, Jean Stryker Hunt. The six crates hold an estimated 900 glass plates, making this a major photographic image donation. In addition to the plates themselves, there are five binders filled with developed out prints and filmstrips of a portion of the collection.

**ASHER STRYKER** is chiefly remembered as the gentleman who operated a variety store on Main Street in Flemington, NJ. In his younger days he must have been quite the amateur photographer. If so, he would not have been alone. The creation of a new gelatin emulsion photographic process in the late 1800s made photography changeover from a long, slow, wet process into a faster, dryer one (though not quite as easy as it is today). Gelatin emulsions came in pre-manufactured form for the first time on standard sized paper, film, or glass plates, and could just be slid into a camera. The resulting negative images produced a positive image, when developed, that had rich black shadows and white highlights, and had more contrast in reflected light than many of the preceding photographic processes. As a result of all this, photography became more available to the amateur enthusiast than it used to be, and thusly more popular.

Glass plate negative images are a challenge for archivists. We love to receive them, of course,

because they document history before photographs became widely available and popular. They also, if they have been stored properly, tend to retain their image without significant fading. Another upside to them is that they are somewhat easy to date. The dry glass plate photography period had a fairly well defined popularity period from about 1895 to 1920 before it was quickly replaced by an even better new photographic process. So glass plates can be confidently narrowed down to a couple of decades.

The downside to the archivist and to the HCHS is that they are made of a highly fragile material—glass. One wrong move, and you've lost an image; heaven forbid you drop a box. These images have to be placed into individual wraps of acid-free tissue paper and then placed in stacks of five plates each. The stacks are placed into acid-free storage containers that have an interior slotted and cushioned divider that holds five stacks, for a total of 25 plates per box. And, of course, you really do not want to have to get these plates back out once you do that. So, before you put them away, you have to create a positive image (we scan them these days) for each plate. That way, we can safely store the originals and just use the scans for access and research purposes. Scanning and handling glass plates is nerve wracking.

I cannot honestly tell you when this multitude of glass plates will be ready for researchers to study. Processing a collection like this one will take a long time and require a lot of resources. Still, the process is worth it. These glass plate negatives will add significantly to the architectural interpretation and understanding of Flemington Borough over time.

Just the limited number of images already printed from some of the plates shows a breathtaking photographic documentation of local life, recording nature, street scenes, structures, ruins of fires, groups of people, organizations, and so much more. I look forward to working on these images in the next few years and making sure we can share them with our members and the public alike.

Top: Henry Fink family and home, ca. 1900-1920

Bottom: Baseball and Bellis, ca. 1900-1920



# Spotlight on Collections: A Scarifier

by David Harding

If you're not particularly fond of vaccination needles, imagine what it felt like to be treated with this!

A scarifier (or scarificator) was used by doctors, typically in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a bloodletting tool. For centuries before germs were discovered, physicians thought a healthy body needed a balance of four humors: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. If someone was sick, their humors were not in balance.

One of the most common means to restore balance in the body was bloodletting. Physicians employed several tools for that over the years including lancets, fleams (type of lancet), and —brace yourself—leeches.



This scarifier, which can be found in the Historical Society's collection, works by pushing a lever at the top of the instrument, enabling a spring to push out three rows of tiny blades, like a brass piranha.



Typically, the physician would hold the scarifier next to your arm and pull the lever, slicing the skin. Sometimes when treating a patient with a scarifier, a physician would place a cup over the wound as a receptacle for the blood.

As you can imagine, the bleeding was rather significant. And, there was little gain to this pain: the treatment, despite persisting for centuries, did little good.

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