

Hunterdon Historical Record



HUNTERDON
COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

hunterdonhistory.org

Hunterdon County Awards HCHS Grant

The nonprofit Hunterdon County Historical Society recently received a \$7,500 grant from the Hunterdon County Commissioners through the County History Partnership Program (CHPP).

County Cultural & Heritage staff applies to the New Jersey Historical Commission for funding to support local history through the CHPP grant. Local nonprofit organizations and municipalities are then invited to apply for these funds for either general operating or history project support. The application process is competitive, noted Natalie Zaman, executive director of Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage.

HCHS will use the grant toward general operating support. HCHS thanks the county and state agencies for this generous grant.

Atlas Has Many Tales to Tell — Here's One Three Cheers for the Beers! By John Allen



The building in Raritan Township that once served as the Alms House.

Happy 150th birthday! Yes, the *Atlas of Hunterdon Co. New Jersey* by Frederick Beers was first published in 1873, 150 years ago. It cites its publishers as “Beers, Comstock & Cline,” but F. W. Beers supervised the work, so it is commonly known as the Beers Atlas. There are maps for each of the county’s municipalities. The company’s maps are renowned for their detail, including existing structures and property owners’ names.

Frederick W. Beers was a New York map publisher, and the principal partner in F. W. Beers & Co. He was born on 17 August 1839 in Brooklyn, New York, and worked as a surveyor before going into the map-publishing business. He published maps and atlases from the 1850s to the late 1880s, creating both state and county atlases as well as regional maps of much of the northeastern United States. He died in Newtown, Connecticut in 1933, at the age of 94.

A user can compare the 1870 Federal Census with Beers’ 1873 maps and follow the enumerator’s path through a municipality. This is very helpful to historians and genealogists, since the 1870 Census also states the occupation of the homeowner. When combined with these maps, one can get a sense of what the area was like back then. A user can discern the location of the farmhouses, mills and blacksmith shops; what the workshops housed; and who worked there.

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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, an ongoing activity. The Society thanks our donors for these acquisitions.

Archives:

Dawson, Daniel. *Bethlehem Township Tax Collector Ledger, 1894-1912.*
 Day, Arthur W. *Thirteen boxes of genealogical notes, research, and manuscripts related to the Everitt Family, from Hunterdon County but also New York and Pennsylvania.*

Duffy, James. *Flemington H.S. Diploma of LeRoy Burton, 20 June 1929.*
 Flemington United Methodist Church. *Advertisement for "Henry's Wedding", a play performed at the Flemington United Methodist Church, n.d.*

Frank, Amy. *Flemington H.S. Class of 1948 reunion photographs (1973-2013) and some attendee lists.*

Franklin Archives, % Lora Jones. *A collection of day books and tax duplicate books from Pittstown and Quakertown (1862-1912).*

Hauck, Joseph. *A TB-free herd certificate of Leon Sutton (1955), a warranty deed for John R. Apgar (1858), and a package of Vought House research.*

Henniker Historical Society (NH). Three items:

- *Photograph, Mary Wagner and Mary Jane Robinson, n.d.*
- *Photograph, Joseph Cooper Leaw, ca. 1860*
- *Certificate of Appreciation to George Dunning from Irving Savings Bank for appreciation of service, 1936*

Hockenbury, Bruce. *Bound periodical, Hunterdon Republican, 8 August 1946 - 31 July 1947.*

Hunterdon County Library. *Two photographs of the Jones family in their front yard, Clinton, NJ. n.d. (See below.)*

Kendrick, Linda Deats Prince. *A collection of postcards, stationery, and envelopes featuring scenes from Flemington, NJ.*

Kinnaird, Carol. *Correspondence between Anne Moreau Thomas and Peggy Ann Black, 1985-2002.*



The Jones family posing on the front yard of their Clinton home.

Acquisitions *continued*

Koblish, Martha. A collection in two parts:

1. A large assortment of photographs, including class and school photographs, a photographic album, and loose family photographs of the Hoff and Mathews families.

2. Textiles:

- Christening dress from ca. 1910
- 2 dresses from 1920 worn for church and/or school
- a table cover owned by the family in Pittstown, NJ

Kuhl, Irene, and Donald Reilly. *A lithograph, a 1784 map reprint, and three photographs of the Three Bridges Fire Co. Auxiliary.*

Kuhl, John W. A collection of varied materials including:

- Todd family photograph album of Lebanon NJ
- James Bullock photograph album, Flemington NJ, 45 original images of Lambertville and Flemington
- Trimmer family photograph album of the Franklin and Kingwood Area, 95 images
- 1864 report of the Ladies Aid Society of Lambertville
- Printed list of drafted men of Lambertville, 1864
- Eligible Men and Exempted List, Raritan Township, Hunterdon County, 1862
- Correspondence of Rebecca Clifton, Quakertown, NJ, n.d.

Myers, Carol. *12 boxes and several rolled items containing research notes, genealogical research, and other materials on the Myers, McPherson, Holcombe, and Knightly families.*

Ramsey, Margaret. *Several boxes of genealogy information regarding the Ramsey, Haber, and Hoffman families, as well as two photograph albums.*

Riley, Dr. David. *Seven boxes of binders, notes, and genealogical research materials related to the Terri-Berry family of Hunterdon County.*

Rosett, Louise Rorer. *The Rorer-Crum Family Tree, including the lines of Crum, Moore, and Prall from Hunterdon County.*

Sciarello, Kathy. *Certificate of graduation for Nettie B. Housel from Bloomsbury Grammar School, 1912.*

Stevenson, Stephanie. Several different collections, including:

- Seven bound manuscripts pertaining to Whitehouse Station (1827-1934)*
- Two scrapbooks (PTA activities and Lt. Dale Haver Scrapbook)*
- A scrapbook (European Vacation), Readington Tax Maps (1972-1981), Califon History Research Maps, Posters, & Broadsides of Hunterdon County Ms. Stevens research subject files*
- Another collection of zoning, tax, and regular maps of Readington Township*

Stewart, Lois. *1 envelope with 11 photographs including the Amwell Brethren Church.*

Wetstein, Catherine Large O'Shea. *A collection of manuscripts, photographs, and museum objects from the history of the Large family of Hunterdon County.*

LIBRARY COLLECTION:

Arbor, Marilyn. *Tools & trades of America's Past: The Mercer Museum Collection* (1994). Society Purchase.

Brecknell, Ursula C. *Hillsborough: An Architectural History* (1996). Society Purchase.

Delaware Valley Regional High School Yearbooks, 2021 & 2002. Gift from DVRHS.

Overaker, David W. *The Huff-Fritts Homestead: A History of 40 Red Mill Road, Lebanon Township, Hunterdon County, NJ* (2022). Gift from the author.

Raser, Edward. *New Jersey Graveyard and Gravestone Inscription locators: Middlesex County* (2018). Gift from Pamelyn P. Bush.

Sinott, Mary Elizabeth. *Annals of the Sinnott, Rogers, Coffin, Corlies, Reeves, Bodine and Allied Families* (1905). Society Purchase.

Stevens, Stephanie B. A large collection of New Jersey and Hunterdon County books for the library donated in memory of her husband, Mr. Norman Stevens.

Stevenson, Robert P. with Meta Potter. *Oldtime Days in Mountainville and Surrounding Towns: Pictures, Maps and Historical Reports of Yesteryear* (1990). Donated by Patricia Barber

Through the Years: Early Delivery Days in Stewartville (Greenwich Township Historical Society, 1984). Donated by Rick Epstein.

BIBLES:

Rockhill, Geoffrey. Digital images of 2 family bibles.

- 1791 Robeson Family Bible. "Mary Robeson's Book . . .". Mary Robeson, b. 1743, was the 2nd wife of Joseph Robeson, 1731-1801. (Original Bible in the possession of the donor.)

- 1607 Rockhill Family Bible belonging to Robert Rockhill (b.1619) and his wife, Isabel. (Original Bible held at the NYPL, 42nd St.)

OBJECTS:

Saums, Floyd. A collection of objects that belonged to his family including two powder flasks, a muzzle-loader gun, a woven coverlet dated 1844, and one hand axe.

Stevens, Stephanie. One Round Valley Mills buckwheat flour bag. Also, a medallion commemorating the Merck & Co. groundbreaking ceremony in Readington that took place on April 6, 1989.

Stewart, Lois. A collection of textiles, including bonnets; a hat from the Town Pump (a store in Flemington) in the original box, circa 1960; women's pants from 1926 and a cape. Also, two caps: a Flemington Fire Department cap that belonged to former fire chief Donald B. Anderson; and a Freemason's cap once owned by C.A. Niece. Also a collection of business promotional items such as a ruler from Henry A. Lubsen Insurance; a pen knife labeled Carver's Auto Parts; a glass piggy bank from the Hunterdon National Bank; a small thermometer and calendar from 1956 promoting Cottrell-Anderson Pontiac Co. that was located on Route 69 (now Rt. 31) and 202 Circle in Flemington; and several pencils and pens, including one promoting the Flemington Agway Co-op.

The Day Frenchtown Took Up Smoking

By Rick Epstein

Six people died in the Milford train wreck of 1877. But there's no telling how many died as a result of Alexandria Township's cigarette train wreck of 1968.

On Saturday, Sept. 21, on the Belvidere-Delaware line, a broken axle sent 13 freight cars off the rails into Sylvester Compton's cornfield just south of the Milford paper mill. Several of them were boxcars filled with cigarettes, and at least one of them had broken open like a piñata, spilling thousands of cartons of cigarettes out among the tall corn.

The cleanup involved cranes mounted on railcars, which helped replace hundreds of feet of damaged track and lifted the boxcars and tankers back onto the rails. In some cases, new sets of wheels had to be welded on. The sparks from that operation set a wooden boxcar floor on fire, and that cigarette-filled car was rolled down to the Porcelain Field near Twelfth Street, where Frenchtown firefighters could extinguish the flames. To give them access, railroad workers pulled out the cargo and spread it on the ground.

"My folks always called it The Day Frenchtown Took Up Smoking," recalled Chris Hargrave.

The Delaware Valley News reported, "From Saturday night through Tuesday, persons were taking away armfuls and carloads of cigarettes, with railroad salvage crewmen helping them." Richard Aller said, "The railroad people were giving them away because they said they were contaminated from the smoke and were going to be destroyed."

Daniel Brown, 12, rode his bike to the scene. "There was a lot of people there, probably between 40 and 50. There were thousands of cartons of cigarettes thrown all over the ground. The crowd of people were filling up their cars and pockets with the cigarettes," he said. "I filled up two of my cloth sacks that I used for [delivering] newspapers with cartons and rode them back to the house for my parents." He made two trips. "My father took the Salem cigarettes, as they were his brand, and my mother took the other cartons and sold them in the vending machine she had in her restaurant"—Vi Brown's Little White House, a block away.

Bill Sheetz said, "Our next-door neighbor had 20 peach baskets full of cigarettes in his basement!"

"I was up there at the wreck," said Jill Thatcher Haver. "I ran home and told my parents, and we loaded up the station wagon with tons of cigarettes."

Kevin Stone was 12. He came uptown with his friends Russell Pinkerton, Eddy Frank, Bobby Fisher, and a boy named George, whose nickname was Froggy. Stone said the railroad workers offloading the boxes were jolly, and one of them "handed us a box and told us to take it to our parents."

"From Saturday night through Tuesday, persons were taking away armfuls and carloads of cigarettes, with railroad salvage crewmen helping them."

Instead, the boys took the box to Russell's garage to go through it. They found Camel and Lucky Strike cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, and chewing tobacco, which Kevin sampled. "It made me sick as hell," he said.

The cigarettes and cigars weren't too much better, but the boys took their loot up into their tree fort on the hill behind the roller rink at the south end of town.

Stone recalled that despite the foul taste, with so much adult contraband in hand, "We were kings!" They never told their parents about the box.

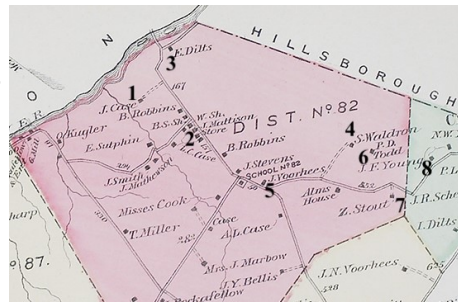
The cornfield site of the derailment was secured, but Compton's 17-year-old son, Lew, had access. "I got a bushel basket and gathered up some cigarettes and stashed them in the barn," he said. They might've been Winstons, but whatever the brand, it was the start of a 50-year habit. Apart from a pickup-truckload of menthol cigarettes claimed by his aunt, the rest of the goods spilled at that site were buried by a bulldozer, he recalled.

It cost the Pennsylvania Railroad a lot of money, but for the tobacco companies it turned out to be a novel way to recruit new customers. Old Gold cigarettes used to claim, "Not a cough in a carload." But medical science would disagree, and there was surely a good deal of coughing in Frenchtown in the ensuing years.

Adapted from Rick Epstein's new book, Frenchtown, due out this summer. For more information, email him at RickEpstein@yahoo.com.

Three Cheers for the Beers (continued from page 1)

This was done using the Raritan Township map from the atlas (figure showing numbers for residents identified in the 1870 census) on which there is a structure marked as the “Alms House” (see portion of Beers map, right). Based on the names of “paupers” residing in what is labeled in the Census as the “Poor Farm,” and comparing the adjacent names against the 1873 Beers Atlas map, we are able to say who resided in the Alms House.



“For an amazingly long three hundred years prior to the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935, the only aid available to people who were poor, elderly, disabled, widowed, orphaned or otherwise in need came from local authorities who administered the ‘Poor Laws’, laws which came to the United States with English settlers in the 1620s.” That’s the opening sentence on an online article entitled *“The Poorhouse: America’s Forgotten Institution”* by Dr. David Wagner of the University of Southern Maine.

The aforementioned article by David Wagner distinguished between indoor (institutional) and outdoor (remaining in your residence) relief. Raritan Township apparently opted for indoor relief; the “Alms House” on the 1873 Beers Hunterdon County Atlas’ Raritan Township map. This site is now marked with an historical marker on Clover Hill Road between the Amwell and Old York roads.



By the late 19th century, residency in a poor farm or alms house was apparently voluntary. Some “inmates” resorted to them for the companionship offered, or to avoid the cost of heating their residence over the winter months. That does not appear to have been the case in Raritan Township, however.

The federal censuses were usually taken mid-year, and many of the residents of the Poor House can be found at the same location for 10, even 20, years. They are frequently recorded as “insane” or “idiotic,” although this judgment might be questionable in modern times. Other cases are, perhaps, more clear-cut. One person is a resident of the Poor House from at least 1850 through 1880. She is listed as “idiotic” in each census . . . and has aged only five years in census records separated by 30 years!

The July 1870 Federal Census shows eight residents in the “Poor Farm.” Several of these residents still lived in the Poor Farm according to the 1880 census, which also includes an individual’s “disability.” Two list “old Age” as their “Disability,” one of whom is also enumerated as “idiotic.” Two residents are categorized as “idiotic,” one also “Maimed, Crippled, Bedridden or otherwise disabled.” Three residents could neither read nor write. One is apparently a single mother, age 45, with a three-month-old child. Excluding the infant, residents ranged in age from 40 to 87. Residents were both black and white, male and female. All but one were born in New Jersey.

None of the 1850 through 1880 Poor Farm’s residents’ names appear in Find-A-Grave, which suggests either:

- These individuals moved out-of-state before expiring.
- The Poor Farms had a burial ground that remains unidentified.
- They were interred in a known cemetery, but in unmarked graves.
- No Find-A-Grave volunteer has created a “monument” for these people yet.

A sad end for those having led a difficult life.

What follows are three verses of a 21-stanza poem written by Will Carelton in 1872, telling the tale of the poorhouse from the position of a soon-to-be inmate whose children had no further use for her:

1
*Over the hill to the poor-house I’m trudgin’ my weary way—
 I a woman of 70 and only a trifle gray—
 I, who am smart an’ chipper, for all the years I’ve told,
 As many another woman that’s only half as old.*

3
*What is the use of heapin’ on me a pauper’s shame?
 Am I lazy or crazy? Am I blind or lame?
 True, I am not so supple, nor yet so awful stout:
 But charity ain’t no favor, If one can live without*

21
*Over the hill to the poorhouse—my childr’n dear,
 goodbye!
 Many a night I’ve watched you when only God was nigh:
 And God’ll judge between us; but I will al’ays pray
 That you shall never suffer the half I do today.*

Thank You Donors and Welcome New Members

Thank You Donors For Supporting the Nonprofit HCHS

Richard Ireland
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In Memory of Peter Crowl
Tamar Small & Jonathan Greif

In Memory of Anne Moreau Thomas

Susan P. Durnan
Janice Luce
Lee Maitland Pearce
(10/21/1956-2/9/2020)
From the three Pearce chil-
dren.

Welcome New Lifetime Member

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Welcome New Members

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Kathleen Becker
Paul Carluccio
Daniel Dawson
Tracey Eurice
Samantha Gervasi

Karen Giffen
Lynn Goodliffe
David Goessling
John Hughes
Jon & Toni Johnson
Jamal & Kate Kadri
Russell Klein
Ed & Maggie Murphy
Michael Murphy
Karen O'Brien
Linda Stokes

Join Us for These Upcoming History Programs

Monday, July 10, 7 p.m.

Explore the fascinating history of downtown Ringoes with Dave Harding, administrator for the Hunterdon County Historical Society and a member of the East Amwell Historic Preservation Committee. You'll learn about Rev. Morton and why his parishioners locked him out of his own church; why the Marquis de Lafayette fell ill in town; what the father of the American Lutheran Church had to say about his visit to the Ringoes Tavern; the two kings who came to Ringoes; and the former Ringoes Grange member who supposedly slept with Clark Gable. The free program will be held at the Ringoes Grange, 1101 Old York Road. Registration is required; contact Charity Rinker at 908-782-0616 and leave a message to save your seat.

The programs listed below are being co-hosted by HCHS and the Hunterdon 300th. All Sunday programs will be held at the Hunterdon County Library's main branch on Route 12. A \$5 donation is suggested to benefit HCHS's collections, and refreshments will be served.

Sunday, September 10, 2 p.m.

Join HCHS Trustee John Kuhl as he describes parks that either existed in Hunterdon County but are now gone, or that were never built. He'll discuss Bellewood Park, Packard's Island, the Aerodrome and more. Also, HCHS will have items from its collection on display relating to former Hunterdon County parks.

Sunday, October 15, 2 p.m.

HCHS Trustee John Kuhl returns to share fun facts from the collections of the Hunterdon County Historical Society! You will marvel and be delighted as he discusses the more peculiar items found in our

collections and the fascinating stories behind them.

Sunday, October 22, 2 p.m.

Join military collector and historian John Dwyer for a fascinating look at the life and times of the Continental soldier.

Friday, October 27, Time TBD

Join County Historian Emerita and former HCHS Trustee Stephanie Stevens as she spins a grisly tale of a murder, trial, hanging and supposed haunting that occurred in 19th-century Hunterdon County. Learn about why Little Jim attacked Mrs. Beakes, and check out the murder weapon, which is in the collections of the Hunterdon County Historical Society.

This talk will be held in the Doric House, 114 Main Street in Flemington. Attendance is limited, and reservations will be required. (Details to be announced on our website in the near future.) A \$5 donation is suggested to benefit the Hunterdon County Historical Society's work to preserve our county's historical treasures.

Sunday, November 4, 2 p.m.

Join Milford Historian Rob Castagna for some fascinating stories drawn from the registry of the old Gibson House Hotel in Milford. The 1902-1915 registry can be found in the collections of the Hunterdon County Historical Society.

Please make sure to visit our website at www.hunterdonhistory.org. We will have updates on additional programs — including our annual fall meeting — in the near future.

The Cost of Preserving Hunterdon County History

By Don Cornelius

Familiar readers of this space know that I often choose this newsletter column to communicate information regarding the latest donations to the HCHS Archives. As I write, I sometimes picture eager genealogists and local historians rubbing their hands together, looking to see what new goodies will be available to them (eventually).

If you have not already done so, please take a look at the "Acquisitions" section appearing earlier in this newsletter. It is impressively large, just as it has been since the end of the lockdown portion of the pandemic. And we thank you very much for your donations. Donating materials like this to the Hunterdon County Historical Society enables us to fulfill the "collect" portion of our mission statement: to collect, preserve and share the evolving social and material history of the entire County of Hunterdon, New Jersey. Nevertheless, it does present a challenge.

The challenge is that our mission does not end with collections. That is just where it begins. Collections, to be shared and enjoyed, must be preserved. And preservation comes with costs. Would you, as a material donor, consider helping to preserve the item(s) you have donated and perhaps help care for other items in our collections? That is the question I will ask everyone who donates historical materials to the Archives.

Every time someone donates materials to the Historical Society they (eventually) receive a form in the mail, that indicates a formal and legal transfer of ownership of the item or collection donated to us. For the first time, I will be including a letter in that mailing asking for said donors to consider making a tax-deductible monetary donation to help pay for the preservation of that and other items.



It takes archival supplies, time, and preservation costs to turn an unorganized donation into a preserved collection accessible for use by the public.

Would you, the readers of this newsletter, be willing to help with the preservation of the items that you read about? Recently, the cost to preserve museum and archival materials has increased dramatically. The cost of one bundle of archival quality folders, the lifeblood of archival preservation, has climbed to more than \$50 for 100 folders. The price for a standard archival document case has risen to more than \$10 for one box. And the price for a standard textile or quilt box has risen to a whopping \$60 for just one box! And these are only the material costs; the cost of professional care and work time must be factored in too.

But wait, you wonder . . . you asked for historical donations, and I have given them to you. Isn't that good enough? The answer is yes and no. Yes, we want people to donate historical material for all to share. But giving us those donations also demands an immediate preservation cost from us. Essentially, when accepting a donation, the Society is incur-

ring a cost necessary to preserve that donation. The Society gladly accepts that cost because we are eager to fulfill our mission. But we cannot do it alone for long. We encourage all our material donors to also consider providing some assistance for the preservation of your donated material and, if possible, other items in our important collections. Remember, the Hunterdon County Historical Society is not a public governmental agency. We are a private 501(c)3 charity that receives no tax money or direct county support. The only public money we receive are those available in the form of competitive grants through publicly available programs.

We also encourage our donors to become members if you are not already one! Please join us in our mission to collect, preserve, and share Hunterdon County's history together. Thank you for your support!

Spotlight on Collections: Quite the Racket

By Dave Harding

A punster might quip that love was in the air that day in 1881 when Hannah Coryell Anderson grabbed her new tennis racket and scooted outside to play. The racket, in the Hunterdon County Historical Society's collections since 1968, is claimed to be the "first tennis racket used in Lambertville," according to a tag attached to it.



Though the history of the tennis racket dates back in some form to the 16th century, the first lawn tennis racket was manufactured in 1874 by Major Walter Clopton Wingfield (1833-1912), a Welsh inventor and British Army officer. The racket was constructed of solid wood and wrapped with a leather grip. A long strip of flexible yet strong wood -- typically ash -- was steamed around a mold that shaped the racket's head, according to the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Rochester, New York.

Anderson's racket has some of the common features from the time including gut strings and a convex throat wedge that's secured to the frame with a screw. In that wedge you can see Anderson's initials in red, and the date of 1881; as she was born in 1858, Anderson would have been 23 when she first used this racket. The obverse reads "Bussey GG

London" with a logo showing the letters GGB with an arrow running through. The racket was made by George G. Bussey & Co., the largest manufacturer of athletic goods in London during the late 19th century. Bussey is credited with playing a key role in the development of modern tennis racket technology.

Anderson was the daughter of John and Cornelia Anderson and lived on North Union Street for most of her life. She never married and passed away after a five-year illness on July 13, 1944. Her opponent on that day in 1881, and how she fared using that "first tennis racket" are unresolved mysteries.

Made possible with funds from the Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage Commission, a partner of the New Jersey Historical Commission.



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