

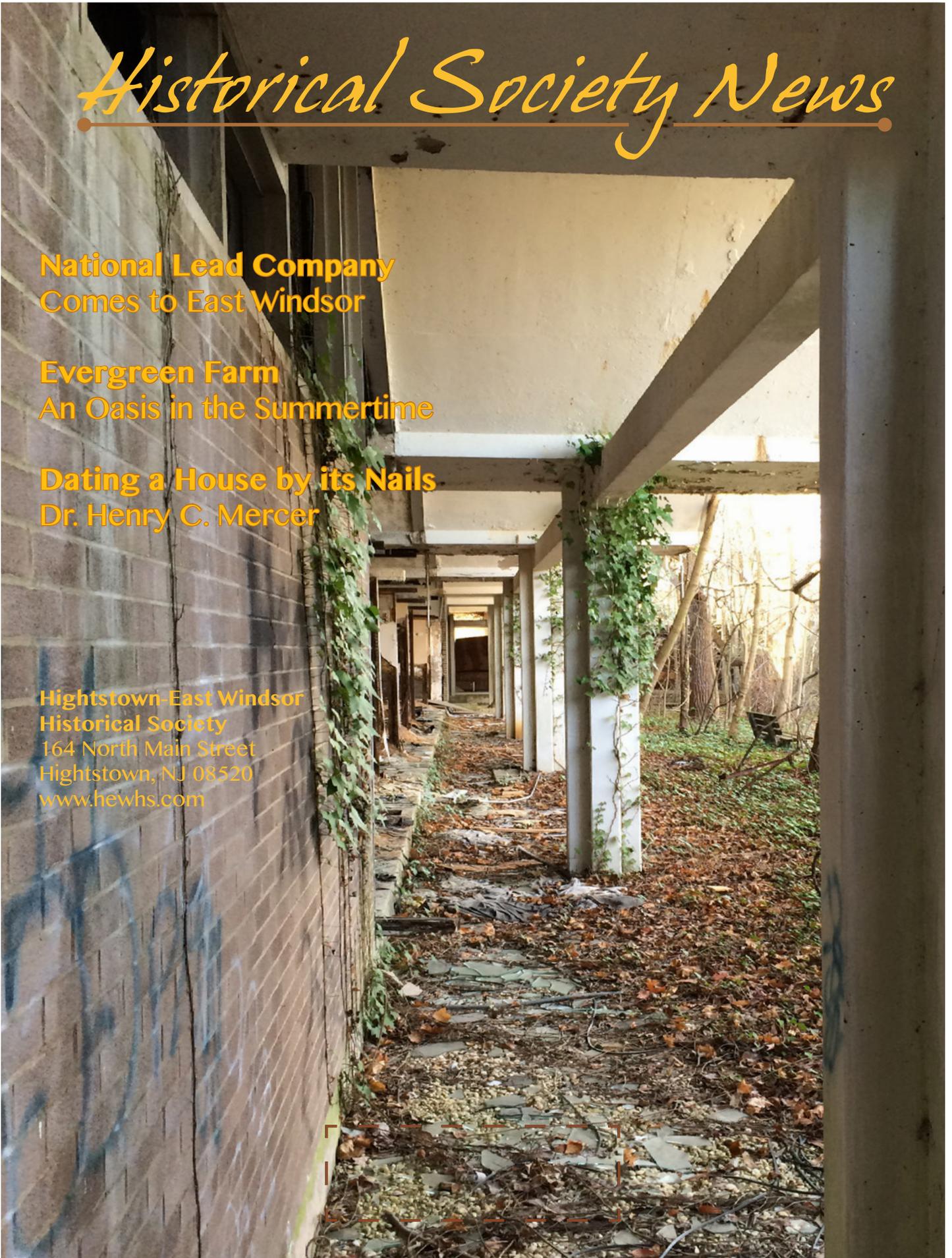
Historical Society News

**National Lead Company
Comes to East Windsor**

**Evergreen Farm
An Oasis in the Summertime**

Dating a House by its Nails
Dr. Henry C. Mercer

**Hightstown-East Windsor
Historical Society**
164 North Main Street
Hightstown, NJ 08520
www.hewhs.com



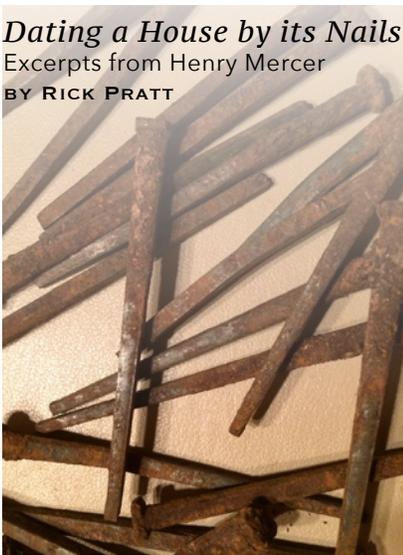
Features

- 3 **WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?**
National Lead Labs
BY RICK PRATT

- 4 *National Lead Company*
Comes to East Windsor
BY ROBERT W. CRAIG

- 6 *Evergreen Farm*
An Oasis in the Summertime
BY ROBERT W. CRAIG

- 7 *Dating a House by its Nails*
Excerpts from Henry Mercer
BY RICK PRATT



The Society announces that Charles S. Stults III has been named to fill the vacant role of Society president on an acting basis until an annual meeting can be held at which officers will be officially elected. Stults has been a member and strong supporter of the Society for many years. He was elected a Society trustee in 1991 and held the post of Recording Secretary from 1999 to 2011. He is the president of Allen & Stults Company, Hightstown's oldest insurance agency.

- 10 **PUZZLE**
Where is this?
Tell us where this picture was taken and win a prize!
BY RICK PRATT

- 11 **CROSSWORD #3**
A fun puzzle with mostly historic topics
BY RICK PRATT

- 12 **FINISHING TOUCH**
Re-creating a Masterpiece
Reconstruction of a grand staircase
COURTESY OF FINE
HOMEBUILDING MAGAZINE

COVER PHOTO
Courtyard of National Lead Company today
BY RICK PRATT

Editor's Note

Sometimes it's hard to find time to write a story, but a subject should still not be entirely neglected. Such is the case with Hightstown High School, which opened fifty years ago, almost as this is being written. Believing that no good anniversary should go unobserved, it seems worth a few words. While the high school as an institution has passed the century mark, and even though it occupies its third location, each of its buildings represents a major period of the community's development: the first, on Stockton Street, the heyday of the railroad; the second, across the street from the first: the era of the automobile and the state highway.

The present high school represents the era of the New Jersey Turnpike and the suburban development that overtook East Windsor in the 1960s. East Windsor had a population of nearly 2,300 in 1960, but nearly 20,000 ten years later. For the post-war baby-boom years the school district needed a new high school, and ground was broken for it in 1964. The school administration was hoping that it would be ready for the fall of 1965, but construction delays made that unworkable. It opened instead after New Year's Day, 1966, following a Christmas vacation remarkable for the behind-the-scenes shuffling that was needed to move all the school's equipment from the old to the new place in two weeks, in time for a seamless new beginning. The "new" HHS has now had a dominant presence in the community for five decades.

The whole story of National Lead / NL Industries has a personal dimension to me, since my father was a research chemist and information specialist there. He was also a member of the East Windsor Regional Schools' Board of Education that oversaw the construction of the high school, which even afforded me a privileged tour before the building was completed.

Annual Banquet Postponed to Spring

The annual banquet will be held on Sunday afternoon, May 1st, at Walnford, the 18th-century estate in Upper Freehold Township that is now a Monmouth County-owned historic property. Further details will be announced as the date approaches. Please mark May 1st on your calendars and save the date!

*What's the Difference...
at National Lead labs today?*



THERE ARE 4 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THESE TWO IMAGES. SEE HOW MANY YOU CAN FIND.



*Highstown East Windsor
Historical Society*

founded 1971

**to educate while preserving for
future generations, our people and
our community's history.**

Officers for 2014-2015

President- Charles S. Stults
Vice President- Vacant
Recording Secretary- Shirley Olsen
609-448-8388
Corres. Secretary- Vacant
Treasurer- Robert Szychowski
609-448-9490

Committee Chairs

Finance- Robert Szychowski
609-448-9490
Property & Grounds- Warren Olsen
609-448-8388
Library- Robert Craig
609-584-1806
Website- Gary Stevens
609-469-1860
Membership- Shirley Olsen
609-448-8388
Museum- Cookie & Christa Cummings
Newsletter- Robert Craig
609-584-1806
House Tour Committee- Robin Smith

Shirley Olsen
609-448-8388
Programs- Nancy Laudenberger
609-443-6536
Publicity- Shirley Olsen
609-448-8388

Building Committee

Christian Kirkpatrick, Suzann Fallon,
Shirley Olsen, Warren Olsen, Robert
Szychowski

Society Trustees

Marie Gerland & Irene Schubert

Layout by Rick Pratt
Printed by Old Hights Print Shop

Answers can be found at www.hewfhs.com



BY ROBERT W. CRAIG

NATIONAL LEAD COMPANY RESEARCH CENTER COMES TO EAST WINDSOR

New Jersey after World War II came to be the home of a great many corporate research campuses, to the point that at least one writer dubbed New Jersey “the Research State.” To a large degree, these were New York-based national and multi-national firms that were moving their research arms out of New York City, but wanted

put up shop near the Space Center. Also joining the chorus was the National Lead Company, a corporation best-known to the consumer for its line of “Dutch Boy” paints, which contained lead, but also a maker of lead-acid storage batteries and countless other products containing lead.

In 1961, National Lead reached a decision to move its R&D operation from Brooklyn, New York, where it had been at least since the 1930s, and join the rush to the suburbs. It broke ground before the end of that year on its new research laboratory, on a piece of former farmland along Wyckoff Mills Road bordering the east side of the Turnpike, where a water tower that the labs would require

National Lead Lab, main entry from 1963 and today.



them near enough to the home office. East Windsor benefited more than most New Jersey townships, with five corporations setting up shop here, due to the location at Exit 8 of the New Jersey Turnpike and the relative nearness of Princeton University, Rutgers, and other corporate campuses. The local corporate presence started with the Mettler Instrument Company, which came here in the late 1950s, then gained momentum and a healthy dose of prestige with the RCA Space Center. McGraw Hill came in 1963 and Creative Playthings

could be painted with the Dutch Boy logo, and even be illuminated at night! It would become an effective billboard for the company’s most popular product line and a landmark along the highway, just one mile north of the Hightstown exit.

The finishing touches were put on the building in the summer and autumn of 1962, and the company began to move in that July. The labs were designed in the manner that was fairly common among corporate research campuses: a single-story building with double-loaded corridors and interior partitions that were flexible and easily reconfigured if needed. The building’s footprint conformed to a modified H-plan, which was believed among laboratory designers to be conducive to collaboration among the scientists and technicians. It had a landscaped interior courtyard and an employee cafeteria. The rendering shown here accompanied invitations that the company proudly sent out to its employees for

continued on page 5



National Lead Lab, southwest corner under construction.

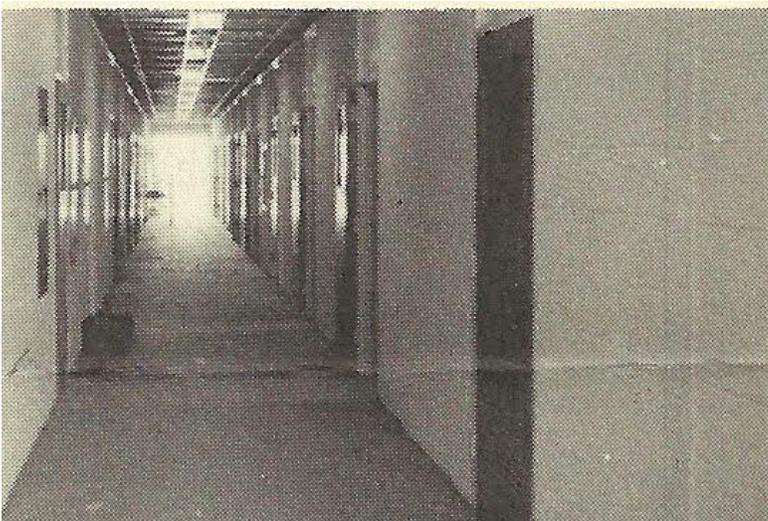
an open house to show off the new "Hightstown Laboratories" on September 29, 1962.

In 1963, National Lead also brought its titanium products division to East Windsor, building a second research building on the grounds. Titanium dioxide was an important ingredient in paints, increasingly being used to give white paint its whiteness (as a lead substitute). But National Lead in its titanium business faced a powerful competitor in Dupont, but even more fundamentally, its core business was built upon a key ingredient--lead--that the world increasingly wanted to have less and less of. Lead, in its various manifestations was



National Lead Lab, southwest corner today.

increasingly seen as a hazardous material, especially by the environmental movement, and that lead compounds were inescapably toxic to plants, animals, and people. Further use of lead as an ingredient in interior paint was prohibited in 1971, and its use in exterior paint was prohibited in 1978. Lead was removed from gasoline in 1974, and the introduction of new types of battery chemistry cut into the demand for it in the automobile business.

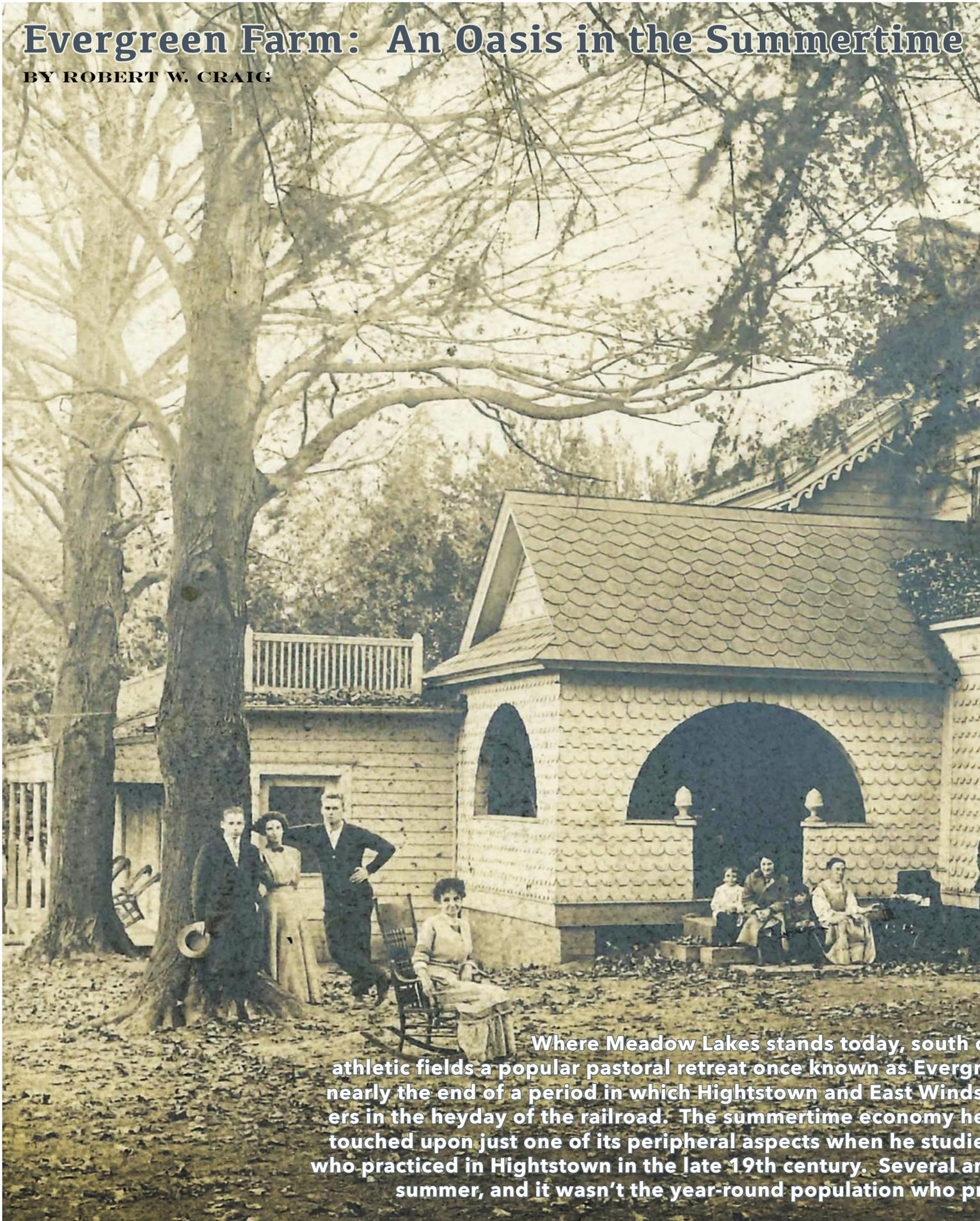


National Lead Lab, hallway.

National Lead responded: it sold the Dutch Boy paint division, and changed its name to NL Industries, thereby reducing the public's association of the company with the unpopular metal. It also tried to refocus its business providing support services to the oil industry. NL's fortunes faded, however, as the 1970s went along, and in the second half of the decade, the company began to downsize its research staff. Several waves of layoffs followed, and NL finally closed its Hightstown Laboratories in 1980. It was able to eventually sell its titanium division building, but it simply abandoned its Hightstown labs. ■

Evergreen Farm: An Oasis in the Summertime

BY ROBERT W. CRAIG



Where Meadow Lakes stands today, south of
athletic fields a popular pastoral retreat once known as Evergreen
nearly the end of a period in which Hightstown and East Windsor
ers in the heyday of the railroad. The summertime economy here
touched upon just one of its peripheral aspects when he studied
who practiced in Hightstown in the late 19th century. Several arrived
summer, and it wasn't the year-round population who pro



of Etra Road and across from Peddie School
Green Farms stood a century ago. In fact, 100 years ago marked
or were favored summertime destinations for many city dwell-
ere has not yet been carefully looked into by anyone. John Orr
ed the surprisingly large number of commercial photographers
among them who came during the summer came here only for the
provided their trade, it was primarily the summer visitors.

The *Gazette* editor in 1892 commented that more than 2,000 visitors had come to Hightstown that summer and that in at least one train such visitors filled four cars. By the end of the 1890s entire trains would pull into Hightstown station on a weekend to discharge sometimes as many as 200 or more passengers seeking a restful week or two in the country. They would fill up the Lantz Hotel and the Railroad Hotel downtown, or they would pay for extended stays at some of the local farms, who fitted themselves out for the purpose. In June 1899 the *Gazette* editor noted that the Riggs family, which owned a property known as "Brookside Farm," averaged twelve boarders a day in the summertime.



Little is known about the people who came here, and not much more about the hotels and the farms that served them. But a graphic record of one family from at least one of their summertime visits has survived, thanks to the Condell family, who visited Hightstown during the summers of the 1910s. A member of that family has recently donated digital scans of several photographs, a few of which are shown here. These photos show views of Evergreen

Farm not previously published, nor captured in the Society's other collections.

The photos show a house that was actually quite old, probably of 18th-century construction, built when the land was owned by the Joseph South family, for one can see many construction details that reflect the building practices of that period. The size and form of the main body of the house and its principal wing both convey this message, together with the prominent stone foundation and the exposed chimney back laid up in the pattern known as Flemish bond. But the photos also show that it was a house that had been enlarged and remodeled--at least twice. The windows, the scroll-sawn cornice ornament and the slate roof shingles all speak to the years on either side of the Civil War. But the additions to the house, clad in several distinct forms of wood shingle and capped by a fascia with a row of rondels, must have been especially constructed "around the turn of the century," according to John W. Orr, when the property, "owned by Mr. and Mrs. John Jemison ... became a summer resort for wealthy families."

The photos are especially appealing for the images they provide of a family enjoying

continued on page 9



themselves, and because we haven't seen them before. But they are also revealing of how the properties, themselves, were enhanced to promote the visitation. These additions are expressions of what is known among architectural historians as the "Shingle Style," one of the few 19th-century styles that originated in the United States and was unique to it. This style is characterized by exterior walls that are clad almost entirely in diverse patterns of wood shingles, often left unpainted (but here painted white).

The Shingle Style, itself, gave some of the sense of a resort to a place. It was an upscale architecture, connected in many minds with Newport and the fashionable resorts of New England. It signaled the countryside, it was exurban, best expressed where there was land over which one could spread out horizontally. Some of the quietly fashionable Jersey shore towns, those with upscale ambitions such as Bay Head and Mantoloking, were being constructed largely in this style. (The historic district in Bay Head features the largest grouping of such buildings in the State.)

Hightstown was not such a town. It had very few houses that owed anything at all to the Shingle Style. It was a popular style in the 1880s and '90s among the more well-to-do, and many were architect-designed, as the Evergreen Farm remodeling may have been. The style largely by-passed Hightstown and the Albert Norton House (1899) on East Ward Street at the western edge of Peddie Lake is its only good example. ■



Dating a House by its Nails

BY RICK PRATT

"Dr. Henry Chapman Mercer, Sc.D. (1856-1930) was a noted archeologist, anthropologist, historian, potter, and collector of Americana."

Dr. Mercer was a one-man task force, methodically assembling, measuring, labeling, and photographing details of old houses.

In 1923 he wrote a paper that was read to the Bucks County Historical Society, titled *The Dating of Old Houses*. In 1976 it was reprinted as a pamphlet and it is from there that the above quotations are taken, and that the following information is drawn:

He examined 120 old houses through Bucks County measuring, and photographing nail, hinges, door panels, thumb latches, screws, sawing methods, and carpenters methods. He used these articles and methods to determine the construction period for houses in Bucks County. The paper noted that these methods would apply to dwellings through Pennsylvania, New York and New England. I will generally describe only nail dating methods as I have used these in practice in Hightstown. Saw marks are another manner of dating and may be included in a later newsletter.

Prior to 1798 when Nathan Read of Salem, Mass., patented the cutting machine, nails were handmade, one by one. Soft iron was formed into a four-sided spiked shape by hammer, with the head of the nail rounded over. The head, unless severely rusted will show the hammer marks with each nail a one of a kind very small piece of artisan mastery. After 1798, nails were

cut from flat metal, by machine and were therefore cheaper and more readily available. However, it's not quite that easy. Because the ends of wrought iron nails would sort or curve or hook around as they were driven, they held fast a lot better than the newer machine cut nails. Thus the wrought nails continued to be used until about 1850 for battens of shutters, doors and room partitions.

The later cut nails were still worked by a blacksmith, but only to form the head, and feeding the metal plate into the machine. Picture a paper cutter of today and a strip of paper about two inches wide, with the narrow end against the blade. Now, slightly angle

continued on page 10

continued from page 5

Today it appears entirely overgrown and collapsed, as if a piece of Detroit's worst neighborhood has fallen on our doorstep. Recently, however, plans have been approved for the redevelopment of this site, demolition of the derelict laboratory building, and the construction of a warehouse there. Given this likely scenario, it seems fitting to look back on this piece of 1960s East Windsor.

The image to the left was taken in early December 2015 of a hallway in the research center. Over time, nature reclaims our impositions upon it. ■

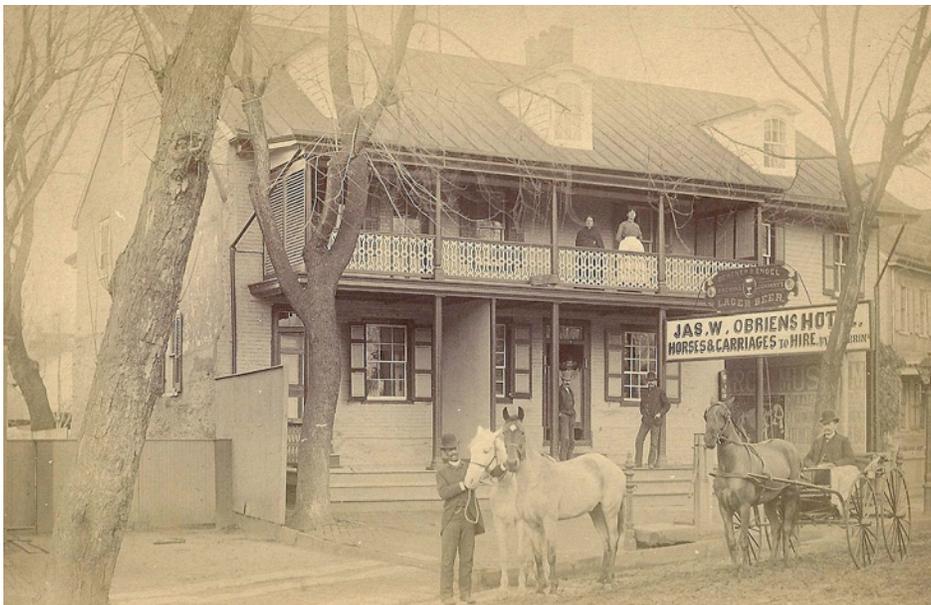


National Lead Lab, hallway today.

Where is this?

If you know where it is, send us the address either by mail (see page 10 for our address) or by email: HPC@HightstownBorough.com and include your address and phone number.

The first person to get it right will be entered into a drawing to be held at our annual banquet. The award will be determined by the membership committee.



There were no submissions for a location of the "Where is this?" photo from our Fall newsletter. A hint: it is situated on a road leading into East Windsor, and the photo was probably taken in early April, 1882, before the trees leafed out.

the strip down and slice a narrow piece off the end. For the second cut, straighten the paper and make another narrow strip, and so-on. This was generally the method used, but the blade was set on an angle and there was a stop beyond the blade so that the nails were all the same width. Thus the terminology, "cut" nails.

Between 1798 and 1825, the heads were hammered. Later the heads were stamped, further focusing the date of house construction. ■

Monthly Meetings

All are welcome to attend. We discuss progress of each committee and welcome your input for new ideas and offers to assist with our upcoming programs.

Meetings are held:

The 1st Monday of the month at 7 pm in Ely House. 164 N. Main Street, Hightstown.

ACROSS

1. Society Pres. 2016
2. Society Pres. 1996 __ Cox
3. State the Orr's moved to.
4. He painted the RR sign at the Society.
5. Second son of Asher & Sarah Appelgate.
6. 1st RR Death occured 18 __
7. "U.T." Stands for _____
8. Charles Winters, AKA Charles _____
9. 1st year Excelsior published
10. Grandson of 1994 Society President
11. "E" in Etra
12. Variant spelling of Hight
13. Date ETR Applegate born

DOWN

1. First name of Applegate on Etra.
2. Society President 1999
3. Variant Spelling of Hight
4. Nineteenth Century Clown, Dan _____
5. 1993 Society President
6. Christopher Hartman's Wife
7. Elizabeth Eldridge's father
8. "A" in HACNJ
9. Sara Hutchinson West Education Center was dedicated Oct. _____
10. Sara Hutchinson West's estate donated \$276,329. __

CROSSWORD HINTS

All answers were obtained from the Historical Society Newsletters of 1991 through 1999



Answers can be found at www.hewhs.com

Membership
~Application~
Support us this year at the following rates:

- Individual \$20
- Family \$25
- Booster \$40
- Sustaining \$50
- Life (Individual) \$200
- Life (Family) \$275
- Newsletter ONLY \$10

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email 1: _____

Email 2: _____

Where did you hear about membership?

Please mail the completed application along with a check payable to:

HEW Historical Society
Membership Committee
164 North Main Street
Hightstown, NJ 08520

I would not like to be part of the New Member Spotlight.

Volunteer Opportunities

I would like to volunteer to help out with the following committee(s):

- Property & Grounds
- Library
- Membership
- Museum
- Newsletter
- Programs
- Publicity



In his book *New Rooms for Old Houses* (The Taunton Press, 2007), architect Frank Shirley chronicles the restorative transformations of several classic examples of period architecture. One project, an 1880s shingle-style beauty, was rescued by a massive restoration that brought the home to a place possibly better than it ever had been.

The centerpiece of the house is a new grand entry hall and sweeping staircase. Based on interiors of a San Francisco Victorian that the homeowners had seen in a book, the stair design was brought to life by Shirley and Charron Construction of Danvers, Mass. In turn, Shirley hired woodworker Phillip Lowe to fabricate the newels, railing, and balusters.

Lowe's preparation included a trip to San Francisco to measure the original staircase. Built primarily of white oak, the staircase includes burl-paneled newel posts and a curved railing that terminates in a sphere covered with carved acanthus leaves.

One of the trickier stages of construction was shaping the ball; the railing easement and ball had to be a single piece of wood. Lowe began by carefully turning the bottom half of the ball blank on his lathe and carved the remainder by hand.



—Finish photos by Randy O'Rourke; shop photo by Phillip Lowe.

Re-creating a masterpiece

Reprinted with permission (c) 2009, *Fine Homebuilding* magazine, The Taunton Press, Inc.