



HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1991

GENERAL MEETING -- PEARL HARBOR ANNIVERSARY

December 7, 1991 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of one of the most noted events in American history, the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. Joe Doyle, one of our fellow residents of Hightstown, was stationed at Wickham Field on that fateful day and was an eyewitness to America's first battle of World War II. The Society is honored to have Joe as the speaker for our general meeting to be held on Monday, November 18, at 7:30 P.M. in Ely House. Joe will give important and interesting personal comments on several controversies surrounding the attack. Most importantly, he wants everyone to know that "We were not asleep" when the attack struck. Refreshments will be served following the program.



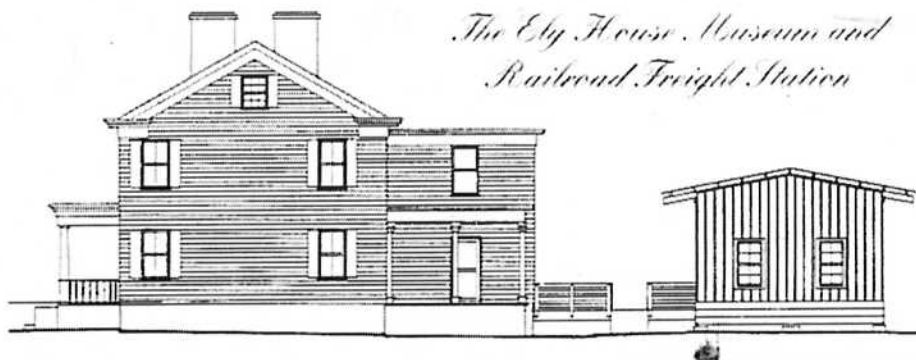
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November

- 2 Freight Station Work Day (11AM)
- 3 H.A.C.N.J. Meeting (2PM) (Page 4)
- 6 Executive Committee (7:30PM)
- 10 Open House (2-5PM)
- 17 Open House (2-5PM)
- 18 General Meeting (7:30PM)
- 23 Holiday Greeting Card Deadline

December

- 4 Executive Committee (7:30PM)
- 8 Christmas Tea (2-5PM)
- 3rd Week - Publication of the Holiday Greeting Card



*The Ely House, Museum and
Railroad Freight Station*

FREIGHT STATION PROJECT MOVES AHEAD

When progress was last reported in the spring, the foundation work was about to begin. Heavy rains caused extensive delay in pouring the footings, keeping the building on the Bank Street lot longer than planned. In late April, our moving contractor, towed the building the final few feet to its permanent site behind Ely House and positioned it over the new footings. The foundation walls were built up to the point that in June the building was lowered onto the walls and the mover removed his steel. The concrete floor was then poured, the walls and new wooden sill plates were completed, and the site was backfilled in August. In September, the soil was graded and seeded, and grass has begun to grow around the building.

Our thanks go to the contractors, Ranalli & Sons, building movers; Earl Groendyke, masonry; Patten Construction, carpentry; and Leroy Hutchinson, landscaping.

Completion of this contract will mark the end of the first phase of the rehabilitation project. Planning for the second phase is beginning. This phase will include structural repairs, a new roof, and work on the outer walls of the building.

Volunteers who have carpentry skills will be very much needed. We will also need a volunteer with a pick-up truck to help out in a variety of ways. A work day is scheduled for Saturday, November 2nd, starting at 11 A.M. If you wish to take part, please contact Bob Craig, at 586-4702.

CHRISTMAS TEA

This year the Christmas Tea will be held on Sunday, December 8th from 2:00 to 5:00 P.M. The theme for this year will be **A Santa's Christmas**. In addition to Ely House being decorated with beautiful holiday finery it will also be filled with Santas! Other memorable highlights will be: homemade cookies, hot spiced cider, candycanes for the children, hostesses in traditional costume, holiday music, a christmas tree with handmade decorations, antique toys, etc. All ages are welcome and especially the children. Please do not miss this unique chance to experience an old fashioned holiday and see Ely House at its best!

NOVEMBER OPEN HOUSES AND DOLL HOUSE DISPLAY

The Ely House Museum will resume its "open house" schedule on November 10th from 2 to 5 P.M. The renovations to the sitting room and dining room are complete and the Museum Committee has done a wonderful job to decorate these two rooms. The society wishes to thank all the volunteers involved with this project.



The feature display for November will be doll houses. On November 10th, the owners of the doll houses will be present to explain the history of their doll house. If anyone has a doll house and would like to include it in the display, please contact Robin Smith at (609) 448-8487.

Also on display will be three wonderful hats dating back to 1906 which belonged to Bertha Cox Taylor. These hats originally came from two fine millinery shops in Hightstown: Mrs. C. R. Chamberlin and Miss F. M. Schron. The society wishes to thank the Taylor family who donated these hats in memory of Ruth Taylor Hazel.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Volunteers are needed for the following Society activities:

- (1) Library
- (2) Freight Station Rehabilitation
 - a. Laborers will be needed for small repairs and clean up.
 - b. An architect will be needed to help prepare measured drawings.
 - c. Persons with carpentry and wood working experience.
 - d. At least one person who can furnish the use of a pick-up truck.
 - e. We will also need one or more extension ladders.

HISTORIC SITES IN HIGHTSTOWN AND EAST WINDSOR

(The Fourth Installment in a Continuing Series)

East Windsor Township Municipal Hall Of 1915 (356 Etra Road)

This building was the second of the four buildings that have successively served as East Windsor's municipal office during this century. However, it is the first which still remains within the bounds of the present Township.

Built in 1915 and superseded in 1958, it was in use as a municipal building for a longer period of service than any of the others. It is a stark reminder of the township's rural origin, its sparse farming population during the early 20th century, and of the long period it was governed by a three-person Township Committee, a time when it was possible to conceive of housing the entire local government in a single, small one-room building. East Windsor's population in 1915 was recorded in a state census as 839 people.

Traditionally, through the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries, townships in New Jersey held their public meetings at taverns, and East Windsor was no exception. The need for a municipal building in the township did not become apparent until the close of the nineteenth century. Even though Hightstown Borough had been incorporated in 1853 and had built a Borough Hall after the Civil War, the Borough did not become fully independent from East Windsor until the 1890's. Until 1894, the Borough was considered to be "part" of East Windsor. Once this split was completed, however, it became inappropriate for the Township to hold its public meetings and elections in Hightstown. A place in the Township had to be found. As early as 5/2/1902, the Township began discussing the building of a new office. On 7/22/1904, the Township decided to purchase a lot on the south side of Franklin Street from Gertrude Maxwell for \$150.00. By 11/12/1904, the Township had a new Municipal Hall erected by Nelson Deats for \$425.00.

On 4/2/1913 the New Jersey State Legislature approved an act allowing

the Borough of Hightstown to annex a portion of East Windsor Township. This act was conditioned on the positive outcome of a special election to be held within thirty days and that only registered voters from the Township who were located in the proposed area to be annexed could vote. The special election was held on 4/29/1913 at the Township Municipal Hall and resulted in a tie vote, 21 votes for and 21 votes against, which resulted in defeat. The same act was reintroduced and approved by the New Jersey State Legislature on 4/8/1915 with the same conditions. The special election was held on 5/4/1915 at the Township Municipal Hall and resulted in ratification by a vote of 33 for and 16 against. The act took effect immediately, and as a result, East Windsor Township lost between 10 to 15% of its population.

The portion of the Township annexed included the East Windsor Township Municipal Hall. This left the Township in the same dilemma it faced back in 1894. On 7/22/1915, the Township Committee approved a new site in Etra which had evidently been obtained from Enoch A. Ely, the last known owner of record, in 1909 (Enoch A. Ely served on the Township Committee from 1864-1901 and as chairman from 1867-1901). The proposed Hall was to be 16-foot square which was smaller than the Hall on Franklin Street. The construction of a new Township Municipal Hall was awarded to George M. Perrine for \$202.00 on 8/18/1915. Lumber was purchased from Shangle & Hunt and paint and oil from Stults & Rhenow. The painting was done by George L. Engel. By 9/22/1915, the new Township Municipal Hall was completed. On 11/20/1915, the Township sold the first Township Hall at public sale to Harry L. Weller for \$558.00. Ironically, Harry L. Weller, who had been the Clerk of East Windsor Township, lost his position because his home was in the annexed area.

The new Township Hall was to be used as an office and voting place. Light

was supplied by oil lamps, heat by a wood burning stove, and there was no indoor plumbing. W. Lyle Sweatt was in charge of the maintenance of the Township Hall. There is the question of how much office use the new Township Hall ever provided. Apparently as early as 1916, the Office of the Township Clerk was located in the Clerk's home. The Township Hall was used primarily for Township meetings and elections and County elections. The Hall was also rented for non-governmental use, e.g.: in 1917 the Board of the Union Transportation Company met there (one of the two railroads that ran through the Township). On 5/21/1918 a special election was held in the Township Hall to determine by ballot the question of prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors as a beverage in the Township.

Little changed regarding the use of the Township Hall until 2/7/1956 when the Township Municipal Court was moved there. Prior to this the Township Court had used the court facilities of the Borough of Hightstown. This change in location had been ordered by the Assistant Administrative Director of the Courts. "However, permission was given to receive violations within the Borough inasmuch as the Township surrounded the Borough." Improvements to the building were as follows: the inside of the building was painted a green semi-gloss, the floor was painted grey, the outside of the building was painted white, the old stove and safe were disposed of to provide valuable room, a flag and standard were obtained, a suitable sign for the outside of the building was obtained (the sign was not attached to the building but posted at the front of the lot), and an arm chair and small desk were obtained for the use of the magistrate. It should be noted that the color scheme mentioned above matches the color scheme of the present building. The Township's first Violations Clerk, Jeannette Campbell, was hired. The magistrate held court at 4 P.M. every Tuesday and requested that a fire be made every week just in case he should have cases in court. The fire was made for many years previously and in the future by Richard Lanning. Later additions included a filing cabinet for the violations clerk and a telephone. The first magistrate to use this building

HOLIDAY GREETING CARD

As strange as it may seem, when you read this newsletter, the holiday season will have drawn ever closer. And with the ever faster pace of time your society must begin its early planning for the annual Holiday Greeting Card. What a wonderful way to send holiday greetings to neighbors and friends! Simply arrange to have your name appear - listed as you would like in our holiday card to be published the third week in December in the Hightstown Gazette and the Windsor-Hights Herald. We encourage everyone to participate whether you are a member or not. New listings are always welcome! Your early words of good cheer will usher in the holidays on a note of expectancy that will be welcomed by all the Hightstown-East Windsor community.

Two options are available for you

to participate in this annual fund-raiser. You can fill out the form below, or you can wait and be contacted by telephone. The deadline for inclusion is November 23, 1991. Please tell us exactly how you wish your name(s) to be listed and the exact spelling. We want you to be pleased with your listing on the holiday card. Your contribution will be \$12.00 for an individual and \$15.00 for a family or business. Please mail your check payable to HEWHS (and the form if applicable) to: William W. Craig, 12 Dover Lane, Hightstown, NJ 08520.

We send our thanks in advance to all of you for your generosity and support - along with all good wishes for happy holidays and peace and prosperity all year long.

If you have questions please call (609) 448-2965.

was Sam Bard. The annual report of the Municipal Court stated that 2,072 cases were heard in 1956, of which 2,030 were traffic cases.

The move of the Township Court to the Municipal Building triggered a search for larger quarters for the Township Offices. The Office of the Township Clerk had already moved to the Clerk's home in 1916. The population of East Windsor Township had doubled from

839 in 1915 to 2,300 in 1960. Mr. Conover was asked to get a price on his father's lot at the corner of York and Airport Roads on 2/6/1956. Apparently this query never bore fruit, and the Township decided to purchase land from Tracy H. Norton on East Ward Street instead. It should be noted that Tracy H. Norton was the father of Grace Norton Rogers. On 1/16/1957 a special

Continued on Page 4

HOLIDAY GREETING CARD FORM

Please print or type name(s) as you want it or them to appear:

Contributions are \$12.00 for an individual and \$15.00 for a family or business. Check enclosed for \$_____ payable to HEWHS.

Please mail to:
William W. Craig, 12 Dover Lane
Hightstown, NJ 08520.

REMEMBER THE DEADLINE IS NOVEMBER 23, 1991!

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meeting was called to introduce an Ordinance to purchase the land on East Ward Street for the new Township Building. The Ordinance authorized \$2,500 for the purchase of the land and \$500 for the demolition of the existing buildings on said land. On 3/18/1957 the papers for the site of the new Township Building were signed at the home of Tracy H. Norton on East Ward Street. A Bond Ordinance was introduced on 4/3/1957 for the construction of a Township Hall and Garage including necessary furnishings and equipment for \$42,000. On 9/3/1958 East Windsor Township moved its governmental functions to the new Hall on Ward Street.

Interest in the old Township Building in Etra was expressed on 12/3/1958 by Mr. Turton of the "Pillar of Fire" faith. He desired to purchase the building and hold Church services there. On 5/9/1959, "a delegation of 6 members of the Hightstown Gospel Mission headed by Robert S. Turton III, appeared before the Committee to request permission to buy or lease the old township building

at Etra for Church purposes." The Township Committee was in favor of selling the old building but could not obtain clear title in order to sell it. Apparently they also felt they could not be responsible for renting it either. The old Township Hall in Etra still remains the property of the Township of East Windsor. It is currently under the custody of the Department of Public Works and being used for storage, however, the contents are materials that can be best described as Church related.

THE ORR'S RELOCATE

John and Gloria Orr, life members, have moved from Spring Hill, Florida to Kentucky. Their new address is: 417 Normandy Road, Versailles, KY 40383. John continues to write articles for his series "Reflections from the Shrine", appearing in the Windsor-Hights Herald.

H.A.C.N.J. MEETING AT ELY HOUSE

The Historical Association of Central New Jersey will hold its next meeting at the Ely House on Sunday, November 3rd at 2 P.M. This informal group of seventeen member historical societies, including our own, meets twice each year to sort out common issues, try to solve common problems, and to foster cooperation among our organizations. This autumn, as part of the observance of our Society's 20th anniversary, we will host the fall 1991 meeting. It will give representatives of the other societies—many of whom have never visited Ely House before—a chance to see both the house and the freight station. It will also give some of our members an opportunity to meet leaders of the historical societies throughout Mercer County, as well as Cranbury, Jamesburg, Allentown, and elsewhere. If you would like to attend on November 3rd, please call Bud Perrine, at 448-1376.

**Hightstown-East Windsor
Historical Society**
164 North Main Street
Hightstown, New Jersey 08520

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